

# Making an Impact 2025 Report



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# Executive Summary

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Making an Impact 2025, led by the Academy's Researcher Development and Culture team, focused on developing individuals' practice and enhancing their skills and knowledge in engagement and impact. The programme was purposely designed to provide the space and time for colleagues to reflect on their own strengths and areas of impact development through self-directed resources and coaching.

## Key themes for 2025

- **Strategic Collaboration:** Building high-impact partnerships across disciplines, sectors and global networks to drive meaningful change
- **Media Influence and Research Visibility:** Mastering media engagement to amplify research impact, shape public discourse and enhance credibility
- **Project and Team Leadership:** Cultivating dynamic leadership skills to inspire, empower and drive research engagement and impact
- **Planning for grants and REF2029:** Developing robust strategies for securing funding and maximising REF2029 success through high quality research planning

## Programme Design:

- The 2025 programme ran over four weeks throughout May 2025, compared with five weeks in 2024, with 2 weeks of live activities and 2 reflection weeks.
- Fewer live activities were run per week with an increased number of 1:1 coaching sessions to encourage participants to focus on one key area for development followed by supported reflection on how they can best embed their new learnings into their day-to-day activities

## Session Delivery:

- The programme included 9 workshops and masterclasses, 50 individual career coaching sessions, and 4 tours of university sites.

## New Elements:

- Specialised 1:1 coaching for all academic staff from postdocs to research fellows to principal investigators (PIs), on the following themes:
  - Research project management
  - Working with stakeholders beyond academia
  - Enhancing your contribution to research engagement and impact
- These opportunities provided valuable opportunities for staff to reflect on their own strengths and areas for development in engagement and impact
- Updated Making an Impact Framework to link to the strategic priorities outlined in [Liverpool 2031](#) and the seven perspectives of knowledge exchange activity outlined in the [Knowledge Exchange Framework](#)

## Participation and Feedback:

- The programme saw 415 registrations, with a reduced no-show rate (35%) compared with previous years
- Post-event evaluations indicated significant improvements in attendees' knowledge and confidence in applying session topics.
- Long-term impact surveys from 2024 showed increased awareness of professional development needs, understanding of knowledge transfer, and confidence in delivering research impact.

## Areas of Success:

The 2025 programme achieved notable success through a streamlined and user-friendly structure. Key achievements include:

- **Improved Accessibility:** A simplified session table allowed staff to easily identify and attend sessions most relevant to their roles
- **Increased Engagement:** Clear thematic focus led to higher attendance, as participants could better prioritise sessions aligned with their interests
- **Targeted Support:** Themed 1:1 coaching sessions enabled more tailored support, helping participants select sessions that met their specific needs
- **Positive Outcomes:** Post-event evaluations indicated a significant boost in participants' knowledge and confidence in applying session content to their professional practice

## Areas for Consideration for Future Programmes:

Following the success of the 2025 programme, areas for improvement have been identified to enhance future delivery:

- **Programme Timing:** Feedback indicated that scheduling during marking and assessment periods limited academic participation. For 2026, alternative scheduling options are being explored to better align with staff availability
- **1:1 Coaching Uptake:** Although coaching sessions were well-received, some experienced low initial uptake and required rescheduling. In response, group coaching formats are being considered to increase accessibility and engagement

## Looking Ahead to Making an Impact 2026:

Building on insights from 2025, the 2026 programme will:

- Introduce a revised schedule that supports year-round skills and knowledge development
- Strengthen collaboration with university-wide engagement and impact initiatives, making development opportunities more visible and accessible to staff

# Aims and Objectives of Making an Impact 2025

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## ***Delivering the University's Strategic Objectives***

The [Knowledge Exchange Framework \(KEF\)](#) led by [Research England](#) is a metrics-driven assessment framework providing a range of information on the knowledge exchange activities of universities in England, and how they work with external partners for the benefit of the economy and society. KEF results allow universities to better understand and improve their own performance in knowledge exchange.

The seven KEF perspectives, Research partnerships, Working with business, Working with the public and third sector, Skills, enterprise and entrepreneurship, Local growth and regeneration, IP and commercialisation, and Public and community engagement, are incorporated into the updated [Making an Impact Framework](#), which is embedded in the design of the Making an Impact programme.

The 2024 results of the [KEF \(KEF4\)](#) show that the University of Liverpool remains in the top 20% in the sector for Research Partnerships, Working with Business, and Working with the Public and Third Sector. This year, the University also increased its performance in IP and Commercialisation, where we now sit in the top quintile.

The [Knowledge Exchange Concordat](#) includes contains eight guiding principles, including Principles 5: Capacity building. Making an Impact offers a clear programme of activities that enables researchers to boost research impact productivity, develop their personal and professional research impact attributes, and strengthen the cohesion, resilience and sustainability of the University's knowledge exchange potential. Furthermore, it promotes the accessible support for staff at all levels and PGRs wanting to establish and grow new enterprises or activities.

The University of Liverpool is committed to developing researchers for future roles in careers both within and outside of academia. This is a key area of focus in our [Researcher Development Concordat Action Plan](#), of which Making an Impact plays a part by delivering a variety of activities that support the development of skills and knowledge in working with different sectors, networking, and IP and commercialisation. Moreover, the Making an Impact Framework is designed as a guide to enable researchers to create a bespoke development plan for their learning needs over the programme.

The objectives of Making an Impact 2025 were:

- Streamline the Making an Impact programme to focus on the University's key strategic priorities
- Provide more time and space for researchers to reflect on their knowledge and skills via facilitated coaching and asynchronous resources
- Build the skills and experience in researchers and research enablers to successfully engage in knowledge exchange activities at the university

# Planning, Design & Delivery

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## ***Planning and designing 2025***

The Making an Impact programme is reviewed annually, based on the Kirkpatrick model of evaluation, via feedback surveys to both programme contributors (such as speakers and facilitators) and participants. We also invite all internal facilitators to provide further feedback on their experience in meetings after the programme has concluded. We survey participants again 6-months post-event to explore further impact and outcomes upon their practice.

The [Making an Impact Report 2024](#) includes a full summary of the programme and feedback received. In brief, the participant feedback survey (n = 130) shows that 89% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the session they attended was relevant to their needs and 83% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they felt inspired to apply their learning in practice. However, further feedback flagged that the number of available sessions could be overwhelming as it could be difficult to choose from the variety on offer.

The contributor feedback survey (n = 14) shows the majority were grateful for the support and organisation from the Researcher Development and Culture Team (79% definitely found the pre-session information adequate and 93% definitely found the support for the session on the day adequate). However, some respondents commented that the low attendance was a barrier for their contributions, due to the work required to create content compared with the number of participants who attended.

In summary, while most attendees and contributors found the sessions impactful and engaging – the high number of sessions offered on the programme and the broad remit of the programme may have contributed to difficulty in all groups finding the relevant sessions.

Making an Impact 2025 took this feedback into account and more closely aligned the programme with the University's strategic priorities and an element of 'going back to basics' in terms of the objectives and content of the programme. This streamlined the programme and created clear themes that helped individuals to understand which events are relevant to their development needs, focused on the core value of the programme in enhancing participants' ability to deliver innovative and impactful research, and maximised the impact of our contributors.

Therefore, Making an Impact 2025 focused on the level of experience that the participants have with engagement and impact to enable individuals to easily identify the appropriate

## ***Enabling accessibility and inclusivity***

As per policy in the Researcher Development team of The Academy, facilitators and/or speakers were informed of any accessibility adjustment requests one week before the session was to take place to ensure they could respond positively to any requests. Instructions were also provided at the beginning of any online sessions that ensured that all spoken guidance was added to chat and encouraged participants to contribute by unmuting or using the chat, whatever they felt more comfortable with.

The Academy's Code of Conduct:

<https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/researcher/development/conduct-events/> was also shared at the beginning of all sessions. Additionally, live captions were available for all sessions and all recordings included captions.

## **Session delivery**

All Making an Impact 2025 sessions were between 6<sup>th</sup>– 30<sup>th</sup> May. Sessions were a mix of online and in-person formats and included:

- **9 independent** workshops, bootcamps, masterclasses, and panel discussions, both online and in-person
- **50 individual** 1:1 career coaching sessions for all academic staff from postdocs to research fellows to principal investigators (PIs), on the following themes:
  - Research project management
  - Working with stakeholders beyond academia
  - Enhancing your contribution to research engagement and impact
- **4 tours** of different university sites

In total, 63 sessions were delivered. Of these sessions:

- **6** were available to external audiences
- **4** were open to Sumy State University

## **New elements of Making an Impact 2025**

- Specialised 1:1 coaching for all academic staff from postdocs to research fellows to principal investigators (PIs), on the following themes:
  - Research project management
  - Working with stakeholders beyond academia
  - Enhancing your contribution to research engagement and impact
- Updated Making an Impact Framework to link to the strategic priorities outlined in [Liverpool 2031](#) and the seven perspectives of knowledge exchange activity outlined in the [Knowledge Exchange Framework](#)

## **Communications strategy and competitions**

Multiple approaches were used to promote and raise awareness of Making an Impact 2025 and its resources. This included:

- Three staff and news articles, released before and during Making an Impact 2025
- Internal and external comms kits sent to relevant internal- (e.g. within Faculties) and external-facing (e.g. alumni team) staff across the University
- Emails and a comms kit targeted for Sumy State University staff and students
- A social media campaign across LinkedIn with 1-3 posts scheduled weekly before and during the programme of events
- Weekly emails to all those registered for sessions during Making an Impact 2025 raising awareness of upcoming events and resources from previous sessions
- Posts on different University Teams channels, targeting specific groups of staff, such as university research fellows

## **Key numbers**

Table 1 highlights the key figures from the Making an Impact 2025 Series. This programme was open to all staff who research, PGRs and research-related staff at all career stages across all faculties.

Making an Impact 2024 had a total of 420 registrations (Table 1); over the four-week Series, there was an increase in registrations from all job role and faculties when compared with

Making an Impact 2023. The breakdown of participation by Faculty and role for each session can be found in Appendix 1. While there was a decrease in total registrations compared with previous years' (due to the more streamlined programme and fewer sessions), there was a higher % capacity booked (98%) and a decrease in the approximate non-attendance rate of 30% (down from 40% in 2024; Table 2).

*Table 1. Key numbers for Making an Impact 2025*

Item	Registrations
Registrations	435
UoL	303
non-UoL	118
Resources requested	74
Faculty participation	
HLS	157 (31%)
HSS	108 (21%)
SE	96 (19%)
Central services	20 (4%)
Job Role participation	
PGRS	99 (19%)
ECR	119 (23%)
A,T,RS	66 (13%)
ER	18 (4%)
RRPSS	31 (6%)
CRS	2 (1%)

This table highlights the changes in participation and programme from Making an Impact 2025. Abbreviations: UoL: University of Liverpool; HLS: Health and Life Sciences; HSS: Humanities and Social Sciences; SE: Science & Engineering; PGRS: Postgraduate researchers; ECR: Early career researchers; A, T, RS: Academic, teaching and research staff; ER: Established researchers; RRPSS: Research-related professional service staff; CRS: Clinical research staff.

*Table 2. Attendance data by role and faculty*

Role	Faculty				Total
	Central Services	Health and Life Sciences	Humanities and Social Sciences	Science and Engineering	
A,T,RS	2	14	16	13	<b>45</b>
ECR	1	55	28	39	<b>123</b>
ER	0	11	14	6	<b>31</b>
PGRS	0	27	27	17	<b>71</b>
RRPSS	6	8	1	3	<b>18</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>294</b>

This table shows the overall attendance numbers for Making an Impact 2025, by job role and faculty. There was an overall non-attendance rate of 30% for this programme. Abbreviations: A,T,RS: Academic, teaching and research staff; CRS: Clinical research staff; ER: Established researchers; ECR: Early career researchers; PGRS: Postgraduate researchers; RRPSS: Research-related professional service staff.

# Feedback

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## **Overall evaluation of Making an Impact**

The Kirkpatrick model of evaluation was used to evaluate the impact of this programme, which includes an immediate assessment of session relevance and knowledge gained (Levels 1 & 2) followed by a 6-month post-programme evaluation of how participants have used the knowledge gained in their day-to-day work (Levels 3 & 4). This longitudinal evaluation captures data from those who have attended 1 or more years, which offers significant insights into the evolving needs of the academic and research staff and University of Liverpool. This helps to steer the thematic focus of the programme each year.

## **Making an Impact 2025 immediate post-event evaluation**

Participants were asked about their understanding/knowledge of the session topic and their confidence in applying it in their day-to-day work when registering for any session and asked to re-assess this in a post-session survey within 2 days of the session completion. In total, 39 attendees provided their feedback.

The overall evaluation the programme showed that after attending a Making in Impact session, on average, 38% attendees stated that they now knew a great detail about the topic (up from 2% before attending). Further, 80% of attendees stated that were confident or very confident in applying the session topic to their day-to-day working environment/professional practice (up from 12% before attending).

General feedback from sessions included:

*"[How to engage and influence UK Parliament] session was very interesting and gave me confidence to consider doing this in the future."*

*"The online format worked well, break-out rooms were beneficial and there was good discussion amongst researchers, there was in general a nice mix of theory and practical application of the ideas. Really enjoyed the session."*

*"I found the program highly practical. I also really appreciated the interactive format of the session, especially the breakout rooms. It provided a great opportunity to engage with colleagues from different institutions. The participants shared practical tips, relevant tools, and even links to AI platforms."*

*"In-person format was perfect! Thank you to the Special Collections team at SJL who facilitated the tour. I loved the informal format and the chance to check out some of the material as well as the digitisation suite."*

*"The [Elevate your impact evaluation: Going above and beyond the evaluation form] session highly engaging and informative. The positive atmosphere throughout the session made it easy to stay focused and motivated ... [the facilitator's] ability to make complex evaluation concepts accessible and practically applicable was a highlight."*

Attendees responded with the following, when asked what they will do as a result of the session they attended:

*"I'll consolidate an actionable plan to enhance my research profile and improve my capacity to make impacts."*

*"Will be using in a future funding application. This will hopefully improve my application and chances of success."*

*“I will think about how to include impact activities and goals in my next research proposal following the suggestions and guidelines learnt in this session.”*

### **Long-term impact of engaging with Making an Impact**

The follow-up survey sent 6-months after Making an Impact 2024 received 13 responses. The data showed that:

- 77% respondents reported becoming aware of their own professional development needs as a result of attending Making an Impact 2024
- 92% of respondents were more mindful of the potential for knowledge transfer in and out of Higher Education
- 69% of respondents had more understanding about the importance of research impact as a process
- 54% had more confidence in relation to delivering research impact
- 46% had engaged in more enterprising activities
- 54% had broadened their network across the University
- 23% reported that they had frequently applied the skills/knowledge gained from attending Making an Impact 2024 in their professional setting

Specific examples of how respondents had used their skills included:

*“I integrated new AI tools into my research workflows, boosting data analysis efficiency.”*

*“As an impact officer, I have applied the learnings on impact-related reporting when advising research teams.”*

*“The knowledge, skills, and experience gained during Making an Impact 2024 will be integrated into my work by improving the quality of interaction with students and stakeholders, summarising new information received during lectures, and forming a new approach to teaching disciplines.”*

Data from the 6-month follow-up survey for Making an Impact 2025 will be available in the Making an Impact 2026 report.

## **Overall Reflections**

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### **Areas of success**

1. **Streamlined programme** with simple table of sessions to help staff easily navigate to the sessions of more relevance to them
2. **Higher attendance rates:** The focused, streamlined programme with clear themes enabled participants to prioritise the sessions that were important to them and make time to attend
3. **Themed 1:1 coaching:** Being more specific about the theme of the coaching sessions enabled participants to more easily select a session to register that suited their specific needs
4. **Positive Feedback:** Post-event evaluations showed a significant increase in attendees' knowledge and confidence in applying session topics to their professional practice.

## ***Areas for Improvement***

1. **Timing of programme:** Feedback reflected that scheduling Making an Impact during marking and assessment weeks made it challenging for some academics to attend. In 2026, we are exploring different programme schedules that will enable more staff to attend within their busy schedules.
2. **1:1 coaching:** While all those who attended coaching sessions found the experiences very positive and impactful, some sessions were rescheduled due to initial low uptake. In 2026, we will explore the possibility of group coaching for academics, which will help avoid low uptake and enable peer-to-peer learning.

## ***Plans for Making an Impact 2026***

Making an Impact 2025 will build on the feedback and experiences of our facilitators/ speakers and attendees, while improving in the areas that have been flagged in 2024 and the 6-month survey.

This includes:

- An **updated Making an Impact schedule** that supports skills and knowledge development throughout the academic year
- **Greater collaboration** with engagement and impact activities across the University to enable staff to navigate the development options available more easily
- **Working closely with** the Associate Pro-Vice Chancellors for Research and Impact to shape the programme

Table 2. Making an Impact 2025 session registration by faculty

Session title	Date	Time	Total registrations	Ticket type			Faculty/Service				
				UoL	Non-UoL	Non-attendee; send just resources	HLS	SE	HSS	Central Services	Other
Preparing for impact in REF2029	7th May	10-1pm	21	16	1	4	9	5	5	1	0
Policy 101		1:30-3:30pm	14	8	1	5	4	5	4	0	0
Introduction to Nature Masterclasses	8th May	2-3pm	19	14	0	5	9	4	6	0	0
Writing for the Conversation	9th May	10:30-11:30	86	80	0	6	38	18	18	0	0
Tour of the Sydney Jones Library	19th May	09:30-10:30	14	14	0	0	0	7	6	0	1
Tour of The Spine		12:00-13:00	16	16	0	0	4	2	6	2	2
Using Artificial Intelligence in Engagement & Impact		13:00-16:00	57	27	15	15	13	11	14	1	3
Integrating impact into your funding proposals	20th May	10:00-13:00	74	13	49	12	13	9	4	2	1
Finding your angle: How to make your research appeal to journalists and non-expert audiences		15:00-16:00	22	15	0	7	7	6	9	0	0
Tour of the Garstang Museum	21st May	12:00-13:00	10	8	2	0	1	3	3	0	1

<b>Elevate your impact evaluation: Going above and beyond the evaluation form</b>	22nd May	10:00- 13:00	74	18	48	8	10	4	7	1	4
<b>Tour of the MIF</b>		1-2pm	5	5	0	0	2	2	1	0	0
<b>Tour of the Energy Centre</b>		13:00- 14:00	4	4	0	0	0	2	1	0	1
<b>How to engage and influence UK Parliament</b>		14:00- 15:30	44	30	2	12	20	8	14	0	0
<b>Total</b>			<b>460</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>13</b>

Abbreviations: UoL: University of Liverpool; HLS: Health and Life Sciences; HSS: Humanities and Social Sciences; SE: Science & Engineering. Please note that the 1:1 coaching has not been included to maintain anonymity.

Table 3. Making an Impact 2025 session registration by role

Session title	Date	Time	Total registrations	Ticket type			Role							
				UoL	Non-UoL	Non-attendee; send just resources	PGR	ECR	ER	A,T,R	RRPS	RTP	Other	CRS
Preparing for impact in REF2029	7th May	10-1pm	21	16	1	4	1	0	3	7	2	0	0	0
Policy 101		1:30-3:30pm	14	8	1	5	3	2	0	1	2	0	0	0
Introduction to Nature Masterclasses	8th May	2-3pm	19	14	0	5	9	3	0	1	1	0	0	0
Writing for the Conversation	9th May 19th May	10:30-11:30	86	80	0	6	22	46	0	10	6	0	0	2
Tour of the Sydney Jones Library		09:30-10:30	14	14	0	0	7	4	2	2	1	0	0	0
Tour of The Spine		12:00-13:00	16	16	0	0	8	4	0	2	4	2	0	0
Using Artificial Intelligence in Engagement & Impact		13:00-16:00	57	27	15	15	7	8	2	6	5	0	0	0
Integrating impact into your funding proposals	20th May	10:00-13:00	74	13	49	12	1	9	2	3	3	0	0	0
Finding your angle: How to make your research appeal to		15:00-16:00	22	15	0	7	7	4	0	4	1	0	0	0

<b>journalists and non-expert audiences</b>														
<b>Tour of the Garstang Museum</b>	21st May	12:00-13:00	10	8	2	0	3	3	0	2	0	0	0	0
<b>Elevate your impact evaluation: Going above and beyond the evaluation form</b>	22nd May	10:00-13:00	74	18	48	8	4	6	2	6	1	0	0	0
<b>Tour of the MIF</b>		1-2pm	5	5	0	0	3	1	1	0	0	1	0	0
<b>Tour of the Energy Centre</b>		13:00-14:00	4	4	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
<b>How to engage and influence UK Parliament</b>		14:00-15:30	44	30	2	12	15	9	2	6	2	0	1	0
<b>Total</b>			<b>460</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>

Participants self-reported their role at registration. All participants could select up to 2 different role types. Please note that the 1:1 coaching sessions have not been included to maintain anonymity. Abbreviations: UoL: University of Liverpool; PGR: Postgraduate researcher; ECR: Early career researcher; A, T, RS: Academic, teaching and research staff; ER: Established researchers; PI: Principal Investigators; RRPS: Research-related professional service staff; CRS: Clinical research staff.