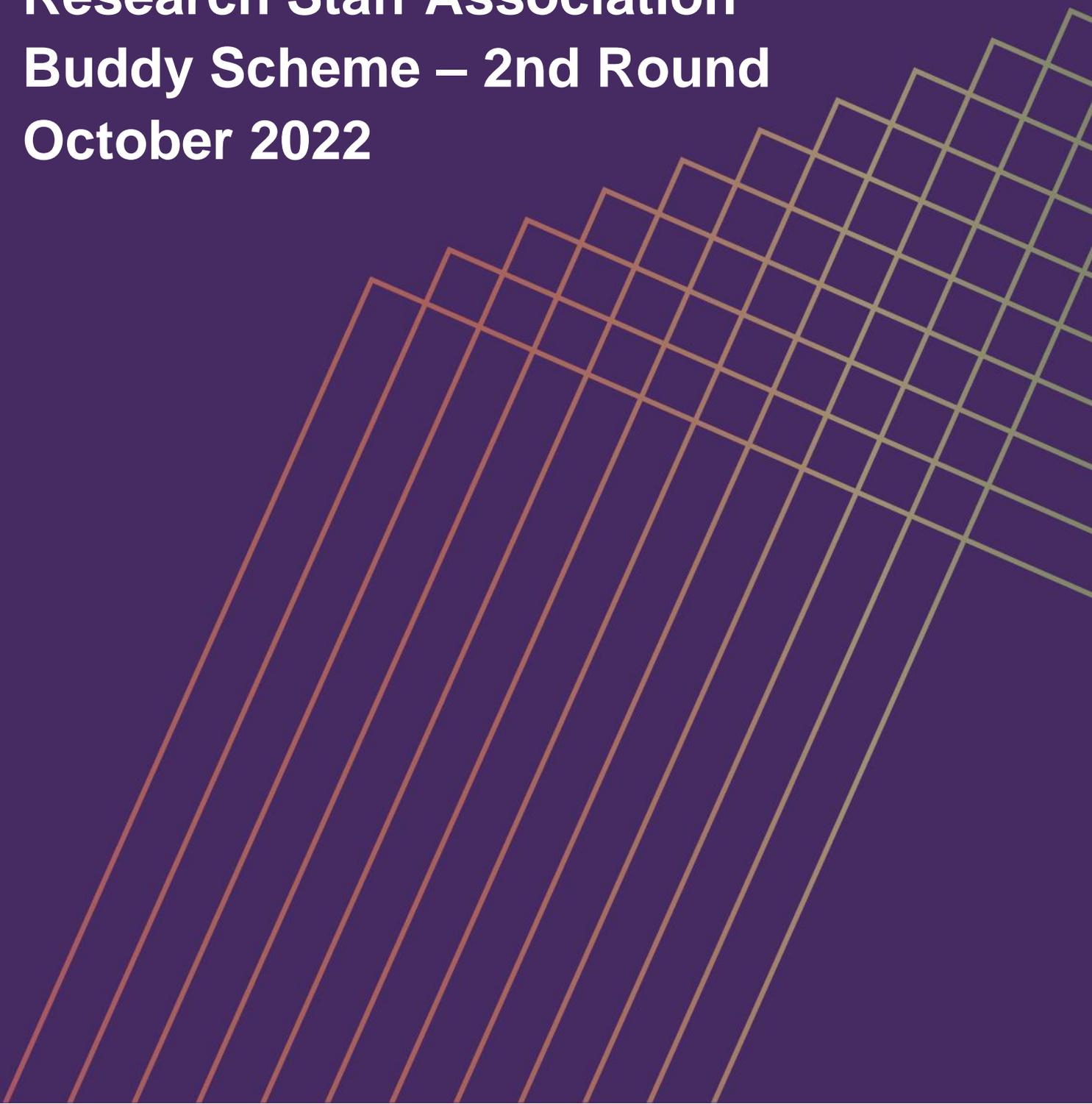


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ENHANCING RESEARCH

**Research Staff Association
Buddy Scheme – 2nd Round
October 2022**



Research Staff Association Buddy Scheme – 2nd Round.

Introduction

Following the successful pilot of the Research Staff Association (RSA) Buddy Scheme in Spring 2022, the RSA conducted a second round in Autumn 2022. The Buddy Scheme offers postdocs and early career researchers (i.e. staff on research only contracts) the chance to meet new colleagues, expand their networks and enrich their experience of the University's research culture in an informal setting. It is an opportunity to meet peers at similar career stages across all faculties, to build connections outside of their research group and to enhance their professional, research and social frames of reference.

The process

The second round of the Buddy Scheme followed the process used for the Spring pilot. The scheme was advertised via the RSA weekly e-bulletins and the University of Liverpool RSA twitter account. Further information was available via the RSA webpages (<https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/researcher/uol-rsa/buddy-scheme/>), which linked to a simple expression of interest form for research staff to complete. The questions on the form requested name, department, email address and reason(s) for wanting to take part in the scheme.

The expression of interest form was available between 5th and 28th September 2022. Each applicant was matched with two to three other postdocs or ECRs, resulting in nine groups of three or four people. Each group included participants from a mix of faculties. All buddies were emailed with the names and email addresses of the buddies in their group and groups were asked to arrange to meet by 24th October, either in person or online. The meeting guidelines were to respect the meeting preferences of all participants, for the meeting to last for around 30 minutes and to keep the tone of the meeting informal, supportive and respectful.

The participants

31 colleagues signed up to take part in the Buddy Scheme. The spread across faculties was:

- 18 Faculty of Health and Life Sciences
- 2 Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
- 11 Faculty of Science and Engineering

Evaluation

At the end of the scheme, participants were asked to complete a short, online, evaluation survey. 15 participants (48%) completed the survey by the deadline of 31st October 2022.

Of the participants who completed the survey, 87% met with their buddies within the 3-week window. The only reason given for not meeting was that buddies could not make the arranged group meeting time. Meetings took place online or in person (over coffee or lunch).

Over 86% of those who completed the survey found their meeting to be a positive experience, answering 'good' or 'very good'. 13% of respondents reported their meeting experience as 'fair' (see Figure 1).

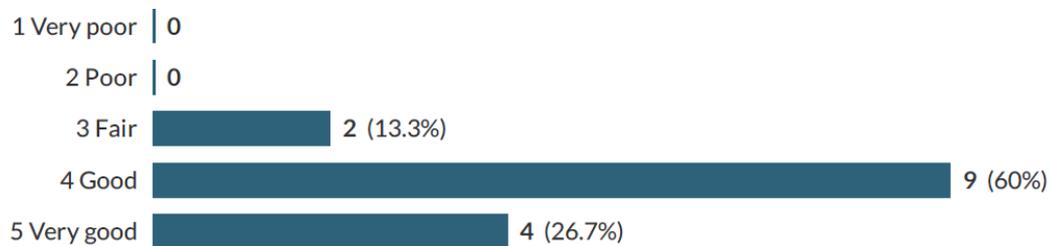


Figure 1 Graph showing participants rating of their meeting.

Reported highlights of the scheme were connecting with people from across the University from different backgrounds and different research areas. Respondents also enjoyed meeting colleagues from similar research areas, meeting new and interesting people, meeting people at a similar career stage and exchanging views on life of as a researcher.

Respondents suggested that the scheme could be improved by having informal meetings that included all participants in the scheme, perhaps over a tea break or as a speed networking event. There was also support for more regular (monthly) informal, in-person meetings.

Conclusion

This 2nd round of the RSA Buddy Scheme built on the success of the pilot event and was of great value to the participants. The third round will be advertised early in 2023 in time for sign up to be completed by the end of February so that buddies can be matched and meet at during March 2023.

For more information contact:
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