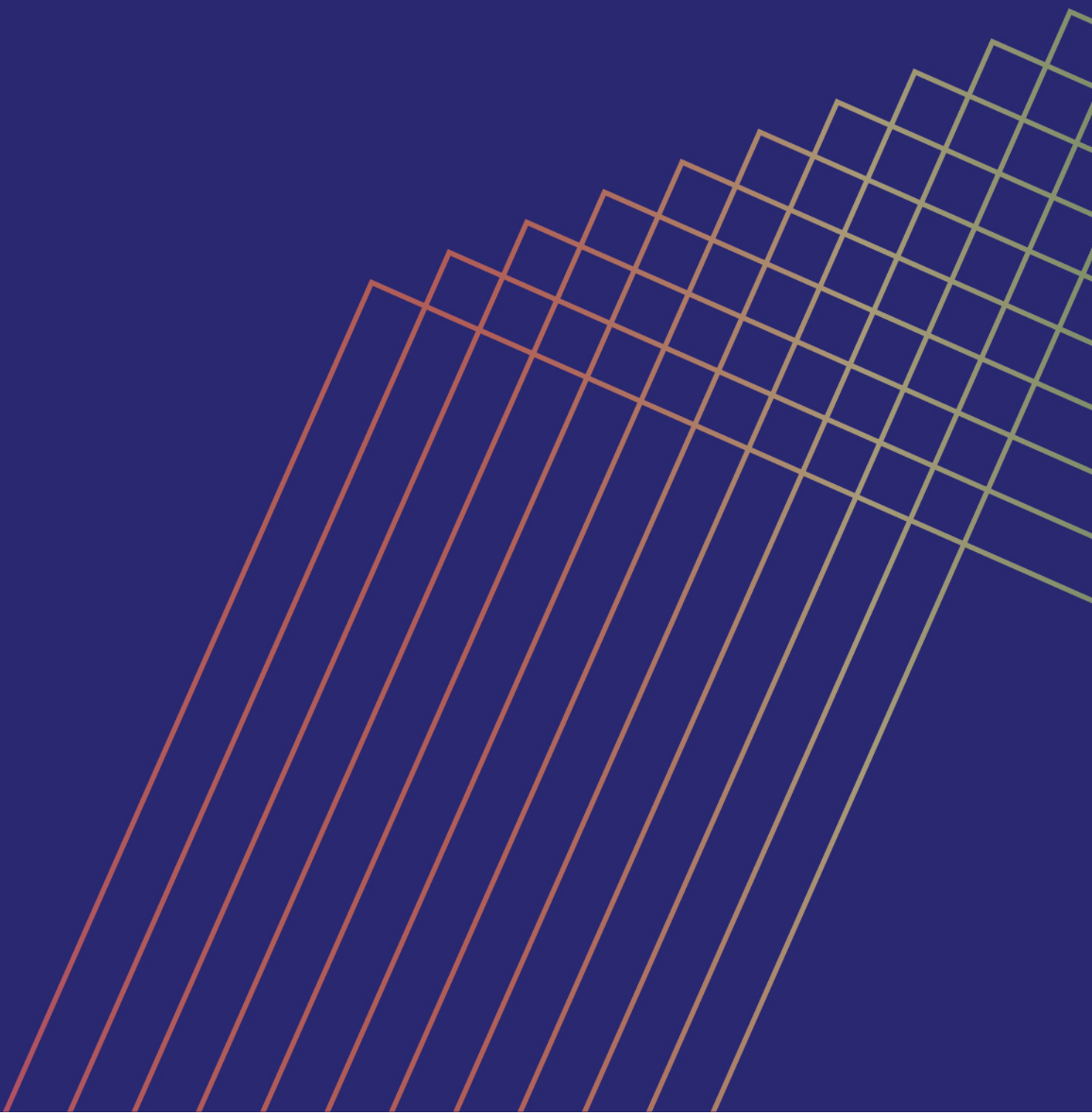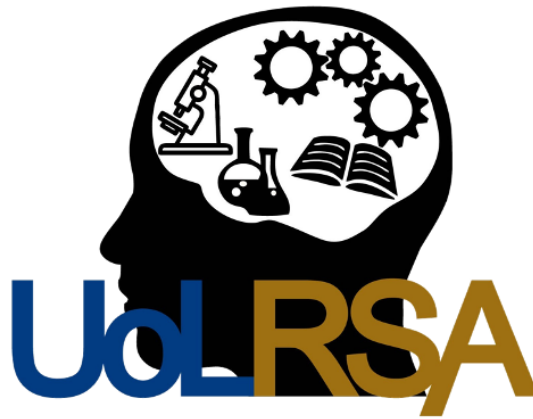UNIVERSITY OF
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ENHANCING RESEARCH

University of Liverpool
Research Staff Association
Annual Evaluation Report
2022

Co-Chairs 2022
Dr Claire Wilson
Dr Sophie Jones
Dr Bengt Tegner

Deputy Co-Chairs 2022
Dr Malaka De Silva
Dr Janette Greenhalgh
Dr Revathy Krishnamurthi
Dr Tahereh Nematiaram
Dr Selina Johnson
Dr Cordelia Dunai
Dr Rishav Agrawal
Dr Wenjing Zhang
Dr Stella Morgana

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1. Summary

The [University of Liverpool Research Staff Association (referred to in this document as RSA)](#) is a research community-owned and led initiative. Started in 2018, the RSA intends to provide a resource for all research staff at the University and be a link between the **Early Career Researchers (including Postdocs and Fellows) and Research Managers**. Membership of the RSA is automatic upon commencement of a research contract. In partnership with [the Academy](#), the goals of the RSA are to:

1. **Represent research staff** from all Faculties, Schools and Institutes on matters affecting researchers.
2. Provide a platform for **communication, networking and professional development opportunities** for research staff, both within their schools and institutes and across Faculties and the wider University community.
3. Coordinate **central support for researcher development** with that provided locally by faculties, schools and institutes.
4. Facilitate a **borderless community** for researchers to make the most of their time at the University of Liverpool.

In 2022 the RSA continued to play a key role in offering **support and career development opportunities for researchers.** As hybrid working became the new norm, the RSA combined the successful virtual initiatives developed in 2020 and 2021 with more face-to-face events.

Throughout the year we have held numerous events in partnership with the Academy represented by **Dr Saneeya Qureshi** and **Dr Angela Midgley**. We continued to run our **Lunch and Learn** sessions covering a wide range of topics, including career development, public engagement, understanding he Concordat, making the most out of your PDR, and advice on grant applications. These sessions were delivered via MS Teams and/or in-person where possible, with all sessions recorded and available to UoL staff online. We also supported the delivery of **Celebrating Researchers – Your Time to Shine**, an event held in July to recognise the celebrate the achievements of the University's postdoc and early career research fellows. To encourage researchers to connect in-person, we launched the RSA **Buddy Scheme**. After a successful pilot in March, we ran the second round of the scheme in October. Finally, we held our annual **Research Staff Conference** in December with the theme of 'Realising Your Potential'. In addition to organising and delivering events, we continued to **raise the profile of postdoctoral researchers** generally, and the RSA specifically, by posting on [Researcher Hub](#) (as [researcher case studies](#), showcased in [Celebrating Success](#), and writing [Researcher Hub blogposts)](#).

Our special thanks go to the amazing efforts of our 2021 outgoing co-Chairs **Dr Katy Roscoe** and **Dr Alex James** who laid the groundwork for many of the initiatives highlighted in this report. In addition, we thank our Deputy Co-Chairs who stepped down in 2022, **Dr Sandeep Amberkar** and **Dr Johann Ostmeyer**, and Co-Chair **Dr Shona Moore**. We also give special thanks to **Dr Angela Midgeley**, who steps down from her role in the Academy at the end of 2022.

To ensure that the RSA is representative of the entire researcher community, the Co-Chairs include members from across all Faculties, including the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences (**Dr Claire Wilson**), Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (**Dr Sophie Jones**), and Faculty of Science and Engineering (**Dr Bengt Tegner**). The Deputy Co-Chairs are from the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences (**Dr Malaka De Silva, Dr Janette Greenhalgh**, **Dr Revathy Krishnamurthi, Dr Selina Johnson**, and **Dr Cordelia Dunai**), Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (**Dr Stella Morgana**) and the Faculty of Science and Engineering (**Dr Tahereh Nematiaram**, **Dr Rishav Agrawi**, and **Dr Wenjing Zhang**).

In 2022, the RSA committee contributed to university wide initiatives and policies, serving as ECR representatives on key strategic committees (**Athena Swan, Concordat Steering Group, Race Equality Charter, Research and Impact Committee**). We also hosted a **focus group on HR policies and the Employee Assistance Programme** and liaised with the Research Support Office to improve signposting and communication of these resources to researchers. Leading on from our success with the NPDC21, we were also invited to be part of the **NPDC23 planning committee**.

In summary, the RSA continued to be fully committed to **advocating, galvanising and improving the culture and environment for all our researchers** in 2022. This year we have particularly focused on **creating an effective hybrid environment where all researchers can grow and flourish.**

2. Researcher updates from representation on key University Steering Groups

2.1. Research and Impact Committee (RIC)

The remit of the University's Research and Impact Committee (RIC) is to develop and implement strategies, policies and frameworks to promote research at international and world-leading standards across all disciplines in the University. The committee oversees the enhancement of the University research environment in support of these objectives, which includes research staff development and consideration of the postgraduate research experience. Chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Impact, **Professor Anthony Hollander**, the committee includes RSA representation (**Dr Sophie Jones**) to ensure that the voice of researchers is heard in the development of policies that will influence the research environment. Additionally, participation of the RSA in RIC meetings demonstrates an institutional commitment to support researchers and to synergise University policies with researcher activities.

There were 4 RIC meetings in 2022, and an RSA representative was present at each of them. The first meeting on 19 January 2022 was attended by outgoing RSA Co-Chair **Dr Katherine Roscoe**; the third and fourth meetings on 15 June 2022 and 20 October 2022 were attended by **Dr Sophie Jones**. There was no RSA representation at the meeting of 10 March 2022. The meeting on 15 June 2022 focused on the outcomes of the University of Liverpool's REF 2021 outcomes – which were overwhelmingly positive, across all three faculties – including analysis of the results and next steps for building on these results. The meeting on 20 October 2022 was the inaugural meeting with the Education Committee, with whom it was agreed that the RIC would meet on occasion throughout the year. The purpose of this measure is to ensure that sufficient attention is paid to both postgraduate taught and post graduate research matters. In both meetings, continued updates were given from Project RISE (Research in Inclusive Sustainable Environment), an initiative that members of the RSA committee participated in (see Section 2.3)

The next RIC meetings are scheduled for 09 March 2023 and 13 June 2023, and the RSA will continue to be represented by **Dr Sophie Jones**.

2.2. Research in an Inclusive and Sustainable Environment (RISE)

The RISE project was created in Autumn 2020 as one of the responses of the University of Liverpool to the COVID-19 pandemic. RISE is overseen by the Research and Impact Strategy Committee (RISC) and delivered by a Project Group working across the faculties and with a range of representatives from across our staff networks. The RISE initiative comprises of three phases:

- Listen: to identify the differentiated effects of COVID on the University research and professional staff. Focus groups with different networks were conducted and the responses collated.

- Consider: to determine new approaches and methods of working to add to existing best-practice.
- Report: to develop recommendations on new ways of working to support researchers to achieve their full potential.

In 2022, RISE remains in the report phase and more details can be found here. The RSA continues to work and support RISE. In January 2023, Prof Anthony Hollander and Sarah Jackson are planning to meet with the RSA to consult on the next phase.

2.3. Concordat Steering Committee (CSG)

The Concordat Steering Group (CSG), chaired by **Professor Anthony Hollander**, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Impact, has a mandate to drive forward and monitor the successful implementation of the Concordat and the University's Concordat Action Plan. It incorporates a broad but focused membership, representative of both the researcher community and those tasked with supporting their work and career development. The CSG reports to the Research and Impact Operational Group in terms of alignment to other R&I activities, and to the RIC (see item 2.1) in relation to planning and resource allocation matters.

There were four quarterly meetings of the CSG in 2022: 01 March 2022, 13 May 2022, 21 June 2022 and 21 September 2022. The RSA was represented at these meetings by **Dr Claire Wilson, Dr Bengt Tegner, Dr Sophie Jones, Dr Tahereh Nematiaram** and **Dr Shona Moore**. Postdoctoral representation for HSS also continues to be provided by former RSA Co-Chair **Dr Katherine Roscoe**. In 2021-22, the focus of the CSG has been reporting on actions completed against individual clauses of the Concordat. In this capacity, RSA members acted as ECR representatives, working within their respective faculty working groups to report on completed actions and to suggest new actions aimed specifically at postdocs and ECRs as part of a renewal of the Concordat Terms of Reference. From May 2022, the CSG has adopted a new template for reporting actions completed against the three principles of the Concordat, with principles and sub-clauses grouped under key sub-headings and themed to create an updated 'Action Plan to Support the Implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers.' RSA members continued to work with their respective faculty working groups to complete the template, considering each of the three principles in turn: namely, Environment and Culture (May 2022), Employment (June 2022), and Professional and Career Development (September 2022).

The dates for future meetings are 26 January 2023, 4 April 2023 and 20 June 2023 and the RSA will continue to be represented by 2022 Co-Chairs **Dr Sophie Jones, Dr Claire Wilson** and **Dr Bengt Tegner**.

2.4. Athena Swan

The Athena Swan Charter was established in 2005 and is a framework used across the globe to **support and transform gender equality within higher education and research**. Initially the charter

aimed at recognising the commitment of women in STEM employment. Now the charter is being used to address gender equality more broadly, and not just barriers to progression that affect women.

The Athena Swan Steering Group met on three occasions during 2022 (15th February 17th May and 19th October). The October meeting was held in-person with members also being able to attend online if needed. The RSA was represented by **Dr Claire Wilson**. I The emphasis of the meetings was the University Athena Swan application. In addition, discussions took place about maternity leave (especially in relation to postgraduate and international students), the equal pay audit report, Advance HE guidance on gender and sex, the updated UoL Bullying & Harassment Policy and the potential bias in student evaluations. In 2023, the RSA will continue to be represented at these meetings by **Dr Claire Wilson**.

2.5. UK Research Staff Association (UKRSA)

The UK Research Staff Association (UKRSA) aims, in association with Vitae, to provide **a collective voice for research staff across the UK**, through building researcher communities and influencing policy. In 2022, the UKRSA met on three occasions: 4th February 31st March, and 13th June. During this period the University of Liverpool was represented by **Dr Saneeya Qureshi** (The Academy), and **Dr Claire Wilson** (RSA Co-Chair). The meetings involved the discussion of recruitment of UKRSA roles and the future of the UKRSA, the Research Culture and Practice Forum, the UKRSA Concordat Action Plan and the National Postdoc Conference 2023. Relevant opportunities were promoted to UoL researchers through the RSA weekly e-bulletins.

2.6. Race and Equality Charter (REC)

The UoL has embarked on a bid for Advance HE's Race Equality Charter (REC). **Dr Claire Wilson** acted as ECR representative on the REC Sub-Group. The committee's responsibility is to successfully achieve an REC Award by February 2024. This includes, but is not limited to, setting out a project plan toward achieving the REC by coordinating adjacent working groups, creating an action plan based on working groups' analyses, communication of relevant issues and promotion of the work towards REC to colleagues at the University and relevant external partners.

The REC Sub-Group met 5 times in 2022 (29th March, 9th May, 28th June, 30th August, 21st November, and 13th December). The group has mainly focused on the REC application and has actively discussed data related to recruitment, training, promotions and appraisals/PDR. Claire has also shared with the group events related to race equality which have been organised by the RSA and recordings of relevant sessions. The RSA will continue to be represented at these meetings by **Dr Claire Wilson**.

2.7. Meetings with Prof Anthony Hollander

This year, the RSA Co-Chairs (**Dr Sophie Jones, Dr Claire Wilson, Dr Shona Moore** and **Dr Bengt Tegner)** along with **Dr Saneeya Qureshi** (The Academy) – have continued to meet on a quarterly basis

with Professor Anthony Hollander, the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and Impact, to report on matters concerning the researcher community. In advance of each meeting, the RSA prepared a short summary, covering previous activities, updates on the committee and any upcoming activities.

Besides being supportive of the RSA's activities throughout the year, Professor Hollander was particularly fond of the RSA Buddy Scheme, and how it could be incorporated into improving research culture around the university more broadly.

3. Lunch & Learn events

The Lunch and Learn series are events organised by the RSA and the Academy which give researchers the opportunity **to learn about new topics of interest during their lunch hour**. The events are succinct sessions that are not subject specific, but of broad interest to postdocs and ECRs. They vary from professional development ('From PhD to PI: Applying for and doing ECR research fellowships in Humanities and Social Sciences' and 'Pitfalls for Projects at Pre- and Post- Award'), personal development ('It's all about you: making your PDR fit with your personal and professional goals'), understanding the Concordat ('UK Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers: What it actually means for research staff at Liverpool') and how to showcase your work to the public ('Introduction to Public Engagement'). This year we introduced hyflex approach to sessions where possible, to allow people to attend in person or online via MS Teams/Zoom. All sessions were recorded and made available to UoL staff to rewatch in their own time. We have promoted these resources through #ThrowbackThursday on our RSA Twitter, and through our weekly RSA e-bulletin.

3.1. From PhD to PI: Applying for and doing ECR research fellowships in Humanities and Social Sciences – 8th February 2022

Many early career researchers aspire to lead their own major research project, but what lessons can we learn from new PIs on applying for and leading their own research projects? This **panel session** was led by UoL **prestigious fellowship holders from major funders** in Humanities and Social Sciences, including **Dr Ruth Nugent** (UKRI Future Leaders Fellow, Archaeology), **Dr Christian Cooijmans** (British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow, Languages, Cultures and Film), **Dr Michael Robinson** (Leverhulme Early Career Fellow, History) and **Dr Katherine Roscoe** (Leverhulme Early Career Fellow, Sociology, Social Policy and Criminology). This Lunch and Learn session saw the panellists share first-hand their tips for applying for competitive funding schemes and their lessons learnt about project management, leadership and collaboration. They were joined by **Maeva Zimmermann** (HSS Faculty Research Development Officer) and **Anna Taylor** (HSS Faculty Strategic Projects Coordinator) who spoke about funding opportunities and support available within the faculty. Although the session was primarily targeted at researchers in HSS, the panelists' advice and accounts of their own expereinces was invaluable for researchers from all faculties. By the end of the session, attendees were better prepared to apply for an early career fellowship by major funders.

3.1.1. Attendance

This session was the first hyflex Lunch and Learn event organised by the RSA. There were 31 participants; 6 attended in person while 25 attended online.

3.1.2. Feedback

The session was well-received, with the following feedback:

This was an excellent session, really helpful and the speakers were all fantastic.

Really useful advice on a range of schemes I'm interested in! Good range of perspectives on panel

…especially [useful] to hear the experiences of people who had 'been there and done that'

Feedback was also gathered on the effectiveness of hyflex formats in order to improve for future sessions: *The session worked well. It was nice to have the choice of how to attend.*

3.2. Introduction to Public Engagement - 24th March 2022

Engaging with the public is an effective way to elevate your research and make people aware of the importance of your research topic. We organised this Lunch and Learn event to give an **overview of the stages needed to create an excellent public engagement activity linked to your research** and **highlight the opportunities and support offered by the University.** The workshop featured **Dr Rebecca Glennon-Alty** (UoL Public Engagement and Science Communications Officer), and **Stephanie Hayton** (Central Public Engagement Officer). The presenters emphasised what public engagement is, why it is important, what makes a good public engagement event, the importance of evaluation and the support available. This session can be watched online.

3.2.1. Attendance

This event was attended by 5 people (4 online and 1 in person). A similar session had been held in specific faculties earlier in the year which may have contributed to the low number of attendees.

3.2.2. Feedback

We did not receive any specific feedback on this session.

3.3. UK Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers: What it actually means for research staff at Liverpool – 3rd May 2022

The Concordat is an agreement between funders and employers of research staff to improve the employment and support for researchers and those with research careers in UK higher education. But what does the Concordat actually mean for research staff at Liverpool? How can you benefit from it? This panel session featured research staff involved in concordat initiatives. The panellists where **Dr Claire Wilson** (Postdoctoral Research Associate, School of Health Science), **Dr Katy Roscoe** (Early Career Fellow, School of Law and Social Justice), **Dr Saneeya Qureshi** (Head of Researcher Development and Culture, The Academy) and **Dr Janette Greenhalgh** (Senior Research Fellow (Systematic Reviews), Health Data Science). This session can be watched online.

3.3.1. Attendance

This event was attended by 12 people (10 online and 2 in person).

3.3.2. Feedback

The session was well received with the following feedback:

'Good general overview, but a bit to focused on successes rather than the nut and bolts of how to do it'

'.... was good to be more interactive'

'IT issues at the start'

3.4. It's all about you: Making your PDR fit with your personal and professional goals – 12th July 2022

It is important researchers make the most of their annual Professional Development Review (PDR) to ensure the outcomes meet both their personal and professional goals. Researchers should feel comfortable and be well prepared in their PDR. In this session **Tracey Ellis** (Organisational Developer, The Academy) provided very practical tips to help researchers feel empowered to ensure that their PDR experience works for them whilst reaching a mutually beneficial outcome for both them and their PDR reviewers. By the end of the session participants should feel prepared for their PDR, be able to manage the power dynamics that might arise, be able to incorporate both personal and professional goals, and raise awareness of their contributions via the PDR. This session can be watched online.

3.4.1. Attendance

This event was attended by 9 people online – an in-person session was not available.

3.4.2. Feedback

The session was well received with the following feedback:

"Excellent presentation"

"A really useful session particularly liked the guidance on the categories for evidence of contribution"

"Useful and constructive information"

"Content of the presentation was extremely useful. Online format worked well"

"Level of engagement was fine, online did reduce the amount of time I needed to commit to be able to attend the session."

3.5. Pitfalls for Projects at Pre- and Post- Award – 18th October 2022

The University has more than 500 distinct research funders across 2,000+ projects, each with their own specific set of challenges. Fortunately, there are some common tips to keep in mind and common errors

to avoid, with resources available across the University to assist with navigating the (hopefully minor) perils associated with them. In this session, **Dr John Ellis** (Research Finance and Governance Manager, HLS) provided knowledge of the most common requirements for funders and information on where to go for different types of queries. This session can be watched online.

3.5.1.Attendance

This event was attended by 26 people online – an in-person session was not available.

3.5.2.Feedback

The session was well received with the following feedback:

"*Really enjoyable tone and approach - made the session fun and engaging*"

"*Perhaps a few more examples of pre-award issues - the ones that were included were really helpful*"

"*Online worked well - and the slides were fab*"

"*Good session online worked well. made it easier for me to attend*"

4. HR policies and Employee Assistance Programme focus group

4.1. Summary

In 2020 and 2021 the RSA ran informative focus groups relating to awareness and access to HR policies. In 2022 (23rd June) the RSA consulted with the research staff community to further discuss UoL HR policies as well as the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). The aim of the focus group was to co-develop ideas to improve awareness and accessibility of the policies and wellbeing services. Prior to the meeting we sent a short survey on staff awareness and access to HR policies to research staff and compared the results to a similar survey completed in November 2020.

4.2. Focus Group discussion

The focus group to discuss results from the survey was organised by **Dr Sophie Jones, Dr Claire Wilson, Dr Malaka De Silva** and **Dr Selina Johnson,** and facilitated by **Dr Angela Midgley**. It was attended by 7 individuals. The discussion was facilitated using visual whiteboard software Mural which had prompts and questions (see Appendix 13.1). Though number of participants was small, the group had a good range of experiences with the length of time at the University ranging from 7-12 months to over 4 years. One of the co-chairs of the RSA (**Dr Claire Wilson**) wrote a blog on "How to conduct effective focus groups in an online environment" which can be viewed here.

The **Awareness and access to University of Liverpool HR policies 2022 survey** was completed by 25 participants. When comparing the results of the 2022 survey to the 2020 survey, there was a general increase in awareness of HR policies. The Dignity at Work and Study policy remained the policy most people were unaware of. We asked the focus group what policy or information was most important to them. There were a range of responses with many members says they wanted to be made more aware of how these policies relate to people on short term contracts and what they were entitled to. In addition, members shared stories of individuals who had difficulties reporting harassment and bullying.

We then discussed how the UoL can increase awareness and access of HR policies. Many of the comments related to the need to improve the understanding of process of reporting issues, such as bullying, and how the complaint process works. In terms of signposting these policies, the RSA email was praised with suggestions of specific policy related emails and more signposting on local/faculty level emails made.

The second part of the focus group looked at wellbeing resources. We asked the group what wellbeing means to them. The most popular responses were related to flexible working, managing work-related stress, and having a positive work-life balance. There was also discussion on the importance of a healthy working environment. We discussed with participants their thoughts on accessing wellbeing resources. In general people agreed that they are aware of resources and thought the current ones are good, but it can be a challenge to access services such as the counselling services due to long wait times. In addition, participants commented that they thought some of the resources are "quite surface

level" and the university could be implementing more effective measures to make working life "easier". Examples included offering free parking when train strikes are occurring and sending emails when disruption in the working environment is expected (such as building work). Participants agreed there needs to be more communications advertising the wellbeing resources. Emails proved the most popular way to share these resources and regular emails throughout the year reminding individuals of the resources was suggested. This year the RSA have introduced a quarterly wellbeing version of the weekly RSA email (Section 11.2) which highlights resources and events which support staff wellbeing.

5. RSA Buddy Scheme

5.1. Summary

In Spring 2022, the RSA launched its Buddy Scheme: a pilot which offered postdocs and ECRs the chance to meet new colleagues, expand their networks and enrich their experience of the University's research culture in an informal setting. The Buddy Scheme was inspired by similar successful initiatives (e.g., through the Prosper programme) and was promoted as an opportunity for postdocs and ECRs to meet peers at similar career stages across all faculties, building connections outside of their immediate research groups and enhancing their professional, research and social frames of reference.

The scheme was advertised via the RSA weekly e-bulletins and the RSA twitter account, with further information available via the RSA webpages. Interested staff were to complete a simple expression of interest form, and they were matched to two or three other postdocs from across the University. Participants were then provided with the names and email addresses of their designated 'Buddies' and asked to arrange a meeting within three weeks (which could take place in person or online, depending upon the group's preference). The meetings were arranged independently of the RSA, but the RSA recommended that meetings should be short – around 30mins – and that their tone should be informal, supportive and respectful for all.

Following the success of the first round, a second round of the Buddy Scheme was launched in Autumn 2022. The second round was conducted in the same manner as the first, with a [reflective blog](#) written by Co-Chair **Dr Sophie Jones** to help promote the scheme.

5.2. Participation

5.22 Round 1 (Spring 2022)

31 colleagues participated in the pilot, including:

- 16 from HLS
- 10 from HSS
- 5 from FSE

Feedback from the pilot (52% response rate) indicates the Buddy Scheme was a success: 94% of participants met their buddies within the three-week window, meeting online or in coffee shops. Respondents overwhelmingly (75%) found the meetings to be a positive experience, and some groups met more than once. Participants enjoyed meeting people from other parts of the University and feeling reassured to learn that others have similar challenges and/or concerns to their own; others enjoyed taking time out of their day to have a chat with someone new.

5.23 Round 2 (Autumn 2022)

31 colleagues participated in the second round, including:

- 18 from HLS
- 2 from HSS
- 11 from FSE

Again, feedback (48% response rate) was overwhelmingly positive: 87% met their buddies within the three-week window, with meetings taking place online or in person (over coffee or lunch). Respondents overwhelmingly (86%) found the meetings to be a positive experience. Highlights were as follows:

"Meeting very friendly people from really diverse backgrounds."

"Its great opportunity to meet people from various disciplines "

"The opportunity to meet postdocs from other faculties, outside your own research bubble."

6. Making an Impact 2022

6.1. Summary

Making an Impact was run over five weeks, between 9th May and 10th June, and covered a range of topics to support and sustain researchers from all disciplines on how to make an impact. Notable this year was a revised framework, which mapped the various sessions against five different themes, which gave researchers a better understanding of how the different sessions worked together. The sessions were also mapped against the Vitae Researcher Development Framework, to aid researchers in choosing the best sessions for their needs and current career stage.

As in previous years, certain sessions, such as 1:1 career consultation, filled up very quickly whereas other sessions, such as the pre-recorded ones, were less popular.

In summary, the revised framework allowed researchers to customize a program to fit their needs and interests.

For more details, a full report (prepared by the Academy) can be found here.

7. Celebrating Researchers – Your Time to Shine

This in-person, invitation-only event was a celebration of researchers' achievements, successes and strengths. Starting with a welcome message from the Pro Vice Chancellor for Research and Impact, **Professor Anthony** Hollander, it was an opportunity to show that researchers' contributions are appreciated, recognised and heard. The event was also an opportunity for attendees to connect and engage with other researchers and appreciate the rich tapestry of who we are and what we bring to the University. In a session led by **Daniela Bultoc** (Higher Education Consultant, Researcher Developer, and Professional Development Trainer), participants had an opportunity to explore their strengths, motivations and contributions, and become further aware of how to articulate and build on them. We explored who we are at our best, what helps us be at our best and how we can best recognise and appreciate all that we do.

Attendees were nominated by their peers and managers, all of which spoke of the important contribution the researchers make to university life and the inspiration and support they provide to others. The nominations can be found at https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/researcher/celebrating-success/time-to-shine/

The event concluded with a BBQ social in the Quad (with vegetarian and vegan options), marking the return of the first RSA BBQ social since before the Covid pandemic.

7.1. Summary

The day consisted of the following session components:

Presentations and activities:	There was a combination of short presentations from speakers and activities to help them engage with one another and connect.
Buddy pairs:	Participants were given a pre-allocated buddy with whom to share their stories, insights and at the same time connect with, and feel supported
Group activities:	Participants took part in group activities where they were invited to exchange experiences

7.2. Attendance

A total of 49 people registered for the event, with 25 people attending.

7.3. Feedback

The celebration was well-received, with participants feeding back that:

Celebrating researcher event was great. It helped me to meet people from different stages in their research career and learn from their experiences.

I enjoyed the Celebrating Researchers event; it was an amazing opportunity to meet researchers in different areas and to learn more about myself.

The celebrating success event was a wonderful way of showing appreciation while also helping us connect with others. The group activities (especially the card activity) were an insightful way of bringing about conversations about what makes us who we are and seeing the world and ourselves through different eyes. Sometimes the best way to understand our own paths is by having meaningful conversations with people who started the day as strangers.

8. National Postdoc Appreciation Week (NPAW)

8.1. Summary of the event

Established in 2009, National Postdoctoral Appreciation Week (NPAW) takes place annually during the third week of September to celebrate the significant contributions postdoctoral staff make to research and discovery in higher education institutions. In 2022, NPAW was held from 19th–23rd September. The roster of events for NPAW aim to celebrate the contribution of postdocs and researchers towards research and academic life in the UK and Republic of Ireland.

The national events included **The Postdoc Toolbox**. Taking place online, the event provided insights into the "tools" that may already be in Postdocs' toolbox arsenal, and resources on how they could better equip themselves. Speakers during the event where **Dr Steve Cross** (Freelance Comms and Engagement Trainer, Founder of Science Showoff), **Dr Sarah Ashworth** (Researcher Developer, University of Manchester), and three members of the **Prosper Team** – **Dr Stefania Silvestri** (Researcher Developer, University of Manchester), **Dr Andrew Holmes** (Research Staff Developer, University of Liverpool), and **Dr Eamon Dubaissi** (Research Staff Developer, University of Liverpool).

As part of NPAW. The Academy and RSA hosted a **Mid-contract career development check in**. The 2 hours online-only information session included bite-sized presentations that showcase the information, guidance and tools available to all Liverpool research staff to support and empower next steps by focusing on future goals and how to work towards them. This session can be viewed online here and the contact details and links to related resources provided during the session can accessed here.

9. Virtual Coffee with the RSA

9.1. Summary of the event

Initially introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic, the RSA continued to host virtual coffee meetings throughout 2022. These are held on Zoom on the fourth Thursday of every month and provide an informal opportunity to meet other researchers from across UoL. It is an invaluable part of community-building, especially during hybrid working and for new starters (who are encouraged to attend as part of their Welcome Email, see 11.4). The monthly coffees are advertised via the RSA's weekly e-bulletin. Following a decline in attendance, from May 2022 the Virtual Coffee was trialed as a morning session (10.30) rather than an afternoon session (14.30); this improved attendance, with several new starters attending, and the change has been made permanent. In December, we will be hosting a festive virtual coffee with Christmas jumpers and/or mugs encouraged.

When?

The fourth Thursday of every month at 10:30-11:00am.

9.2. Attendance

The RSA does not tend to record participation for these informal meetups, but the number that attend usually ranges from 5-20.

10. Research Staff Conference 2022

10.1. Summary of the event

On 1st December 2022, the RSA hosted the [fifth annual RSA conference](#) (the 4th annual conference had been held in 2020 with the National Postdoc Conference held at Liverpool in 2021). Unlike the events in 2020 and 2021, this event was held in person – the first since the pandemic. The RSA was able to secure funding for the event from IBM, Merck and Facebook Reality Labs. The programme for the event can be found online [here](#). This year's theme was "**Realising Your Potential"** and the conference provided practical advice on career development, networking, research impact and collaboration. Continuing with the tradition of past staff conferences, the day began with an opening from **Professor Anthony Hollander** (Pro-vice Chancellor for Research and Impact) who provided an update on the research landscape at the University. This was followed by an update from **Professor Georgina Endfield** (APVC Research Environment and Postgraduate Research) who spoke on the importance of our research environment and culture in supporting colleagues to realise their aspirations and their potential. The morning session also included a **public engagement and pathways to impact showcase** with speakers from each faculty – **Dr Sophie Jones** (HSS), **Jon Newnham** (S&E) and **Dr Heather Allison** (HLS) - and our keynote speaker **Professor Jonathan Tonge** (Politics) who spoke about the pleasures (and occasional pitfalls) of academic research and dissemination through a variety of prisms. During the lunch break, we provided the opportunity to connect and meet sponsors as well as provide some wellbeing-focused activities including a self-guided walking tour, desk yoga and meditation. In the afternoon session, we held two parallel sessions - "Outsourcing your brain – how others can help you realise your career potential" facilitated by **Prosper** and "Having a fulfilling research career in industry" facilitated by **IBM**. Our final session was a panel discussion on how to "**Build a better research environment".** The panel members where **Dr Shaima Hassan** (Research Associate, EDI Lead for the Department of Primary Care and Mental Health and representative of the UoL BAME Network), **Dr Niamh Thornton** (Reader in Latin American Studies and LGBTQ+ co-Chair), **Dr Jenna Kenyani** (Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing Advisor for the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences), and **Dr Kudzai Dominic Chiwenga** (Lecturer in the Department of Operations and Supply Chain Management). We hope to continue holding annual Research Staff Conferences in person and continue to encourage researchers to join together, engage, and discuss important topics related to research culture.

10.2. Attendance

A total of 86 people registered for the event with approximately 70 people attending throughout the day.

10.3. Update by Prof Anthony Hollander and Prof Georgina Endfield

Professor Anthony Hollander (Pro-vice Chancellor for Research and Impact) and **Professor Georgina Endfield** (APVC Research Environment and Postgraduate Research) both gave updates.

Professor Anthony Hollander gave an update on the research landscape at the University as well as talking about his own personal experiences of engaging with the public. Professor Georgina Endfield reflected on the importance of our research environment and culture in supporting colleagues to realise their aspirations and their potential. Georgina also focused on the people, processes, practices and partnerships that are in place to support our research journeys, wherever they may take us, and encouraged us to think about how we can all contribute to creating an inclusive environment in which a very broad variety of skills and talents can be recognised.

10.4. Public engagement and pathways to impact showcase

This session featured talks from **Dr Heather Allison** (Clinical Infection, Microbiology and Immunology), **Jon Newnham** (Chemistry) and **Dr Sophie Jones** (History). The speakers each provided examples of some of the public engagement, knowledge exchange and pathways to impact activities that they had conducted within their respective disciplines and shared some of the lessons that they had learned along the way. The speakers were drawn from different faculties and at different career stages, ensuring the broadest possible appeal.

10.5. Keynote – Realising Your Potential – and Enjoying Your Career!

Our keynote speaker this year was **Professor Jonathon Tonge** (Professor of Politics) who spoke about realising your potential. The talk covered the pleasures (and occasional pitfalls) of academic research and dissemination through a variety of prisms, including drawing upon experience serving on REF panels and government commissions, writing research impact case studies and undertaking lots of media work.

10.6. Outsourcing Your Brain: How Others Can Help You Realise Your Career Potential (Prosper)

One of our parallel sessions was delivered by **Prosper** and was titled "Outsourcing Your Brain: How Others Can Help You Realise Your Career Potential". The session was a mix of short Prosper presentations and practical activities involving participants circulating around the room. The Prosper team provided tips on how you can realise your career potential by harnessing your professional network and provided the opportunity to try out some of these tips live. They also provided practical ways on how you can find an overlap between what's important to you and what you want out of your career.

10.7. IBM session

The other parallel session was delivered by **Dr Edward Pyzer-Knapp** from **IBM** and was titled "Having a Fulfilling Research Career in Industry". There is a longstanding feeling that moving to the industry will mean a move away from blue-sky thinking to only caring about the next quarter's results. But is this really true? This session shed some light on this myth by showing how IBM has used grand challenges

to overcome some of the largest obstacles in science and build the world's largest and oldest corporate research lab. They used real examples to help you create a toolkit for building a successful and fulfilling research career in the industry through the three pillars of value, timing and context.

10.8. Panel discussion – Building a Better Research Environment

We held a panel discussion titled "Building a Better Research Environment" which involved researchers from the university who are involved with improving equality, diversity and inclusivity in research. The aim of the session was for participants to learn practical initiatives which they can implement in their own research. The panel members where **Dr Shaima Hassan** (Research Associate, EDI Lead for the Department of Primary Care and Mental Health and representative of the UoL BAME Network), **Dr Niamh Thornton** (Reader in Latin American Studies and LGBTQ+ co-Chair), **Dr Jenna Kenyani** (Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing Advisor for the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences), and **Dr Kudzai Dominic Chiwenga** (Lecturer in the Department of Operations and Supply Chain Management).

10.9. Networking events

On the day of the conference, we offered a mix of synchronous and asynchronous networking opportunities: people could meet the sponsors in-person at their stands in the breakout space, or there were plenty of teas, coffees and other refreshments over which participants could meet colleagues old and new. For those who wanted to stretch their legs or get some fresh air there was a self-guided walking tour of Abercrombie Square (produced by **Dr Sophie Jones**), as well as a 15-minute Desk Yoga video streaming for those who wanted to rebalance their chakras. For those attending online, there was an 11-minute virtual tour of sculptures around the University.

10.10. Images of Research competition

Following the success of the images of research competition, 'Research in the time of Coronavirus', conducted as part of the 2020 Research Staff Conference, in 2022 the RSA again ran an images of research competition. The competition was an opportunity for UoL research staff to showcase the diversity and importance of research conducted across the University, to foster their professional skills, and to communicate their research to non-specialist audiences in an engaging and accessible way. There were 12 submissions to the competition.

Entrants submitted an image which showcased their research, along with a 150-word abstract. Images were judged by a judging panel – **Professor Georgina Endfield, Professor Jonathan Tonge**, and **Dr James Howard** – and there was also a public vote on the day of the conference. The winners of the competition and the prizes are as follows:

Prize	Name and department	Title of Image	Prize (voucher)

Winner of the Judges' prize	Dr Radhika Aiyappa-Maudsley (Department of Molecular and Clinical Cancer Medicine)	I heart you	£60
Judges' 1st Runner Up	Dr Rudi Verspoor (Department Infection, Veterinary and Ecological Sciences)	Termites - A Future Food?	£30
Judges' 2nd Runner Up	Dr Katherine (Katy) Roscoe (Dept of Sociology, Social Policy and Criminology)	The sun hasn't set on locking up Aboriginal people	£20
Winner of the Public Vote	Dr Natasha Bayes (Dept of Psychology)	On the breadline: the wall of shame	£60
Runner Up of the Public Vote	Dr Lewis Reid (Department of Mechanical, Materials & Aerospace Engineering)	Surfing on waves of plasma	£20

Feedback

"*The session on diversity and inclusion was very much needed*"

"*Was a good opportunity to be able to come together and sessions were the right length*"

"*The sessions in the full day conference were perfectly organised*"

"*I think it a really nice conference with lot of take-home messages. My suggestion would be just to organise more of this event maybe each time focusing on different aspects (if possible, I can imagine they require a lot of effort). Anyway, thank you for organising this*"

"*All the arrangements are on spot and am very happy to attend further events in this setup*"

"*I think it was a good mix between talks, panels and workshops. I would have liked to be able to attend both workshops, but that would have made for a very long day*"

"*I didn't think all the talks were necessarily applicable to me, but I also think that would never be achieved, so overall I think it was well done*"

"*There was a long time of 'chalk and talk' in the morning. Would have been good to have made it more interactive so that the participants were engaged and not passive. Also, very 'top down' (senior people talking rather than giving a voice to the postdoc and PGR community)*"

"*I particularly enjoyed the session showing great examples of public engagement, that was definitely the most useful and inspiring for me*"

"I feel as though the sessions ran for a good amount of time, so that they stayed informative and engaging and the order they ran in suited the timeframe of the day"

"I already attended a "research impact" 2 days' workshop, so the session was not relevant. The Keynote was positive and fun, but not sure how it fits in the staff conference "realizing your potential". I liked the IBM talk, really interesting"

"I felt like the day needed a little more focus/framing. This is possibly more of a reflection on the individual talks rather than the day as a whole but there were a few times in the morning sessions where I really wondered what the aim of the sessions were, who the speakers thought the audience was, and what the speakers thought the audience would get out of it"

"I would have like the sessions with multiple presenters to be a little longer (perhaps an extra 15 mins or so)"

"Lots of food for thought. It would be nice to clarify whether when you talk about post Docs you do mean only post Docs or any researchers though"

"The morning sessions were particularly good. The afternoon was less useful but still interesting. The format and structure worked well, and the breaks were sufficient for networking. I was able to connect with staff from other faculties. This was the first conference that I had attended of this type, and I would attend again. I know that other attendees felt the same way."

"Really enjoyed the day. Speakers all interesting"

"A really good an interesting day which gave me much to reflect on and think about. It might have been useful to have put up a poster of the day's itinerary in the breakout area."

# 11. RSA promotion and communication

During 2022 we have continued to reach the wider research staff community via the following communication channels.

11.1. RSA weekly bulletin

The RSA is committed to sending a weekly email bulletin to all research staff containing opportunities and information which may be of interest. Adapted from an earlier design introduced in 2020 and curated on a weekly basis by the RSA Deputy Co-Chairs via a rota system, the weekly bulletin is an important channel for communicating activities organised by the RSA, general opportunities for research staff, but also information related to wellbeing and support. The process for curating the weekly bulletin has been documented by Deputy Co-Chairs and is used to support the training of new Deputy Co-Chairs.

The format of the bulletin is designed for easy weekly customisation, divided into different sections:

• Header: with RSA logo, including a link to all development opportunities available to research staff

• Weekly opportunities and information: dynamic section filled with most up-to-date information. RSA-organised events appear first, with subsequent items arranged chronologically. Immediate deadlines are highlighted.

• Feedback: Introduced in 2021, this section invites researchers to contact the RSA with any queries or suggestions that they may have.

• Important updates: information related to COVD19, resources from the Academy and other relevant updates or resources.

• About the RSA: list of current Chairs' and Co-Chairs' names, pronouns and faculties, as well as the RSA's aims

• Top tips: includes a 'did you know?' dynamic section with tips, and static information about the 10 days of development as part of the statement of expectations

• Contact details: how to reach the RSA and stay in touch (email and twitter handle)
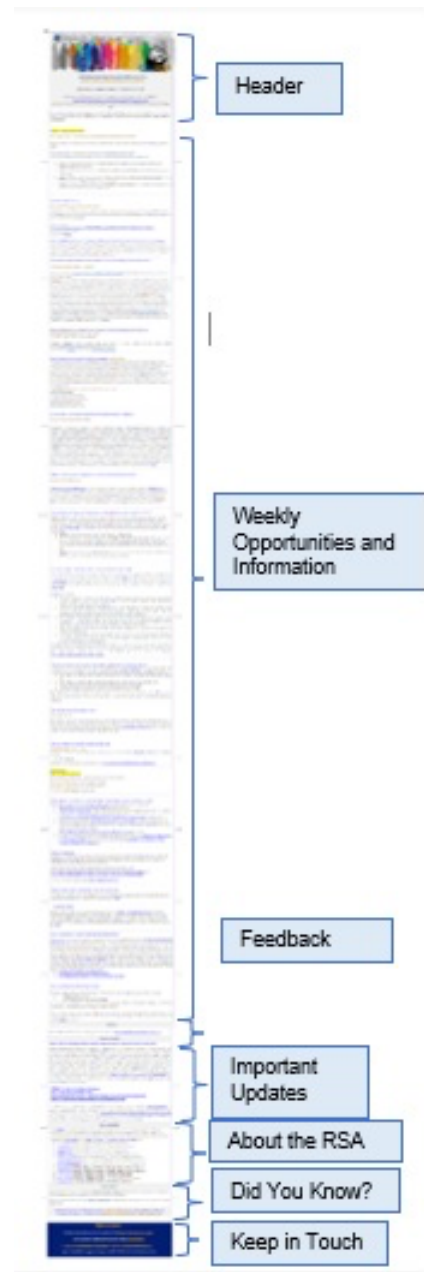
11.2. RSA weekly bulletin – wellbeing issue

In 2022, in line with Concordat action ECI3 (Promote good mental health and wellbeing) the RSA introduced a wellbeing edition of the weekly email. This version of the weekly email is circulated quarterly and signposts a range of resources and events which promote wellbeing and mental health.

The Wellbeing Issue follows a different colour scheme to the weekly e-bulletin and is circulated in February, June, September and December. It is structured as follows:

• Header: with RSA logo, including a link to all development opportunities available to research staff

• Resources and Information: dynamic section signposting resources and events relating to wellbeing (personal and professional). This section contains the most up-to-date information including live events, but also pre-recorded sessions (e.g., desk yoga).

• Feedback: Introduced in 2021, this section invites researchers to contact the RSA with any queries or suggestions that they may have.

• Important updates: information related to COVD19, resources from the Academy and other relevant updates or resources that are important for personal and professional wellbeing.

• About the RSA: list of current Chairs' and Co-Chairs' names, pronouns and faculties, as well as the RSA's aims

• Top tips: includes a 'did you know?' dynamic section with tips, and static information about the 10 days of development as part of the statement of expectations

• Contact details: how to reach the RSA and stay in touch (email and twitter handle)

11.3. Twitter

The Twitter account @UoL_RSA is monitored and managed by the Deputy Co-Chairs. We continue to maintain regular engagement, particularly surrounding the promotion of RSA organised events.

11.4. Welcome email

In addition to the weekly bulletin and wellbeing bulletin, the RSA is committed to sending a 'Welcome to the University' email to all new starters. Curated on a monthly basis by the UoL Deputy Co-Chairs, the welcome email aims to provide a warm welcome to newly appointed research staff, to introduce them to the RSA, to notify new starters about relevant events and opportunities, and to invite them to RSA-organised events – in particular, the monthly Virtual Coffee. Redesigned in the Summer of 2021, the 'Welcome Email' also provides links to important resources for new starters, including the

Researcher Hub and HR Policies and Procedures. This email is of particular importance to new members of staff joining the University who are home-based or hybrid working.

The format of the bulletin is designed for easy customisation, divided into different sections:

• Header: welcoming new starters to the University and introducing the aims of the RSA

• RSA-organised Events: invitation to the RSA Virtual Coffee and upcoming Lunch and Learn sessions

• Current Co-Chairs and Deputy Co-Chairs

• About UoL and the Academy: up-to-date information about UoL and the Academy, including how to join the RSA

• Other information: dynamic section filled with the most up-to-date information, such an annual professional development, Prosper, the mentoring network, English language clubs, and updates on development activities

• Keep in Touch: how to reach the RSA including contact details (email and twitter handle)
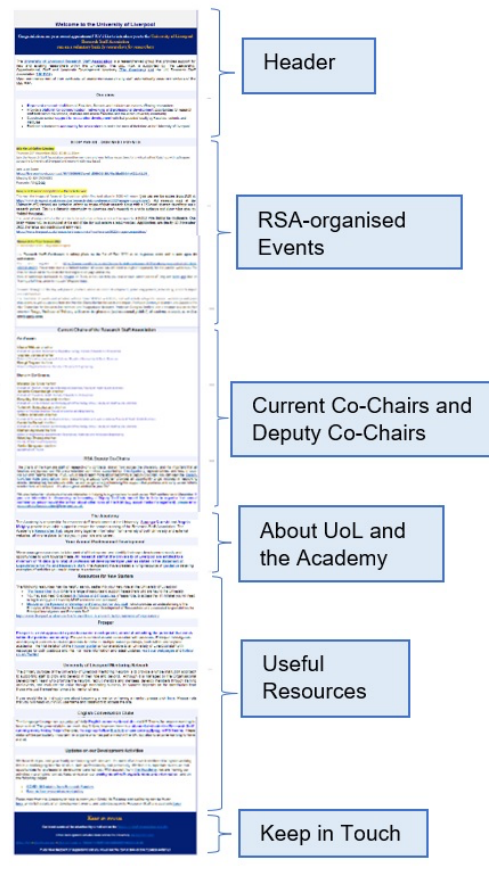
11.5.   RSA teams

The main channel of communication for RSA is using the Microsoft Teams platform. We have designated channels for Chairs and Officers, General Information, Emails Received, and Conference Organisation.

In 2022, the RSA began using Microsoft Planner to capture and assign tasks, and to provide a space to collate items for the agenda for tri-weekly meetings. The RSA Planner can be accessed through the RSA's Teams channel.

12.   Other activities and future plans

12.1.   Blog posts

Members of the RSA have continued to engage in **raising the profile of the RSA** at the University of Liverpool. Members of the RSA have featured as **Researcher Case Studies**, which presents evidence of how UoL sustains a research culture that encourages autonomy, nurtures success and supports the exploration of different paths for career development in research.

- **Dr Janette Greenhalgh** - **A reflection on the support and opportunities available to researchers**
- **Dr Sandeep Amberkar - A postdoc's journey through fixed term contracts**

In addition, members of the RSA have written posts for the **Researcher Blog**.

- **Dr Sophie Jones** - **Buddy Scheme**
- **Dr Claire Wilson** - **How to conduct effective focus groups in an online environment**
- **Dr Revathy Krishnamurthi** - **What does it take to pursue science for a woman from a rural background? From 609503 to L69 7ZB**
- **Dr Selina Johnson** - **New opportunities and support for clinical research staff**

Members of the RSA have also been highlighted as part of the Academy's Research Hub in Celebrating Success: Members of our Research Staff Association.

12.2.   Representation within the Faculty

RSA committee members also represent ECRs on committees at faculty level, including:

- **Dr Claire Wilson** is part of the ISMIB Post Doc Society and chairs the ISMIB Concordat Steering Group
- **Dr Sophie Jones** is part of HSS's Faculty Research and Impact Committee

12.3.   Planned future activities

Lunch & Learn Sessions

Lunch & Learn sessions planned for 2023 are:

- 13th February - **Data Management**
- 23rd March - **Research Integrity**
- 18th April - **Discover how career development can help you Prosper**
- 3rd May - **Professional Development Review (PDR) drop-in session**
- 17th October - TBC

Wellbeing event

The RSA will continue the tradition of hosting a BBQ and wellbeing event aimed at postdocs and early career research fellows with the **Celebrating Researchers – Your Time to Shine** event planned for 5th July.

Research Staff Conference 2023

The **Research Staff Conference 2023** will be held on 30th November. We hope that this will once again be and in-person event with a focus on research staff development.

13. Appendices

13.1. HR policies and Employee Assistance Programme focus group MURAL