



University of Liverpool Research Staff Association Annual Report 2019

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1. Summary

The University of Liverpool Research Staff Association (UoL RSA) is a research community-owned and led initiative. In partnership with the Academy, the UoL RSA offers an important bridge between the 950 postdocs and research fellows and senior managers at the university. Research staff automatically become members of the UoL RSA upon commencement of their contracts.

The aims of the UoL RSA are to:

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

To date, the UoL RSA has been an integral channel for improving the research culture at Liverpool and 2019 has been another productive year for the UoL RSA, building on the success of our inaugural year.

Sarah Arrowsmith and Nicola Beesley took over from Helen Cauldbeck as co-chairs, and Mary Jane Monaghan joined Alison Savage as deputy co-chairs. To improve the visibility of the RSA across the University we have introduced a Welcome e-mail (Appendix 9.1) to engage with new research staff as soon as they start at the University.

We have organised 10 different events including two flagship events: a wellbeing event in the summer and the annual RSA conference in the winter. Our summer wellbeing event (Section 5) was a great success: people enjoyed the format and being able to take the time to learn about resilience and coping strategies to improve their own wellbeing. Our winter “Magical Mystery Tour” conference (Section 7) was also a great success with people enjoying the format of short informative talks followed by panel discussions, and saw us use the skills of our own staff and alumni to provide a range of different talks.

Our lunch and learn seminars have been diverse and informative, focusing on areas we felt, as researchers needed more guidance, and feedback has been good. In particular, our session from Vitae on the new Concordat (Section 3.5) was very well received, with those that attended the seminar now being able to act as ambassadors to discuss The Concordat in their

departments. Our events are advertised via a combination of staff news articles, e-mails and social media. Latterly we have used information from needs analyses, surveys and event feedback to direct our activities organising seminars on intellectual property (Section 3.6) and a future session on finance.

In addition, we have continued to represent the views of research staff on a number of key University Steering groups including the Concordat Steering Group (CSG), Athena Swan (AS) and the University's Research and Impact committee (RIC), as well as provide researcher representation on the University Staff survey tender group and the committee for organising the University's wellbeing week (Section 2).

The RSA strives to raise the profile of researchers across the university. UoL RSA is gaining traction, as evidenced by the number of requests received from various university departments to disseminate information about development opportunities and policy changes. To keep researchers abreast of these local initiatives (and some from further afield) we also now send a weekly bulletin email to the researcher staff list which compiles all the useful events taking place which provide further professional development opportunities to the research staff community. Going forward we will also be including a weekly 'top-tip' at the bottom of the email to remind researchers about ongoing initiatives and the support available to them at the university. Examples include the Employee Assistance Programme, mentoring opportunities as well as courses run by Liverpool doctoral college, CSD and the wealth of information available to researchers through Vitae.

One of our main challenges has been researcher engagement and getting researchers to consistently be involved with the Association. Due to the difficulties faced, we refined and reduced the roles of the committee members (Appendix 9.2). We have also asked our liaison committee members to circulate information directly to their respective institutes / schools and to organise their own activities e.g. for postdoc appreciation week (Section 6). To improve researcher engagement, we have also approached faculty research impact managers to disseminate calls for researchers to be liaison committee members, and have personally contacted researchers whom we felt either attended RSA events regularly, were part of the organising team for MAI2019 or the researcher conference or whom had expressed an interest in becoming a representative for their area but had not followed up a request for further information. This is an area that requires urgent attention to ensure the continuity of the UoL RSA and should be a priority going forward.

2. Researcher updates from representation on key University Steering Groups

The UoL [Research and Impact Committee \(RIC\)](#) oversees the development and implementation of strategies, policies and frameworks within planning units across all disciplines in the University. It oversees the enhancement of the University research environment, including research staff development and consideration of the overall experience of researchers. The PVC Research and Impact chairs the RIC and the Concordat Steering Group, which both have UoL RSA representation signalling institutional commitment to researcher support at the highest level and enabling alignment and synergy between activities. The following sub-sections are reports in the words of the research staff representing the RSA across various steering groups and committees.

2.1. Research and Impact Committee

“As a member of the Research Staff Association (RSA) and research staff representative on the University of Liverpool Research and Impact Committee (RIC), I attend the RIC meetings as a collective voice for research staff across the University, providing input as required by RIC and RSA members. In addition, I gather relevant information at the RIC meetings concerning developments in the University research environment and support/initiatives available for researcher advancement and impact that can be fed back to members of the RSA as appropriate. The RIC held four meetings in 2019 of which I was able to attend three. Although, the main focus of the RIC meetings in 2019 was the upcoming REF2021, considerable work was also being undertaken on understanding and improving the postdoctoral career pathway such that high-quality researchers can be retained, as well as planned mentorship schemes for postgraduate research students. In particular, projects such as ‘PROSPER’ aims to enhance researcher skills by working with a range of employers across the UK, enabling flexibility in longer-term career choices. Initial discussion also took place around capturing public engagement activities by researchers as it was felt that this activity often happened but was not recorded.”

2.2. Concordat Steering Group

“As co-chair of the RSA I have provided researcher representation on the Concordat Steering group and have contributed to the drafting of the University’s Concordat Action Plan which is focussed on embedding the principles of the Concordat in supporting the career development of researchers at Liverpool. This role has also enabled me to act as a conduit for dialogue between university researchers and senior management, raising areas of concern and researcher need whilst also sharing examples of good practice with the different Faculty groups, to help drive a significant positive cultural change across the university.”

2.3. Tender Committee for Staff Survey

“As a member of the RSA committee, I was given an opportunity to sit on the Tender committee for the new staff survey. In doing this I was able to provide insight on how post-docs may view the staff survey and help edit the language of questions to make the survey more inclusive and of relevance to post doctoral research staff. Due to my role as Chair of the Disabled Staff Network (DSN) I was also able to provide insight into the needs of this group of staff resulting in changes in accessibility and presentation.

I also was part of the committee for the University’s Wellbeing Week. I was asked to sit on this committee due to my role as Chair of the DSN. However, there was little representation for post-doctoral or PhD researchers so I was able to offer insight into their needs. This led to the first event specifically for PhD students to be organised which was a great success. However, I feel like more work needs to be done to provide support for post-docs and academic staff around wellbeing.”

2.4. Athena Swan Steering Committee

“After recently joining the University as a PDRA, I was keen to get involved with the RSA initiatives. Following on from conversations around researcher representation on senior steering boards during a Concordat action planning meeting, attended by the RSA co-chairs, an opportunity arose for a postdoc to sit on the University’s Athena Swan (AS) self-assessment team. In attending the most recent AS meeting, chaired by Prof Wray and Dame VC Beer, I have become more aware of proposals for developing Equality and Diversity activity across the university and training programmes to reduce unconscious bias against women in the University. I have been able to take some of these initiatives back to my own Faculty as well as to inform the RSA for wider dissemination. In future AS meetings I hope to be able to raise awareness of issues for postdocs with caring responsibilities and identify examples of good practice for sharing with the wider RSA community.”

Going forward, in addition to researcher representation on the above committees, there will also be representation on the Prosper Planning Board. Initially Sarah Arrowsmith and Nicola Beesley will take on the role of research staff representatives to provide continuity between steering groups, with a view to the subsequent RSA co-chair becoming more involved next year.

3. Lunch and Learn Events

In 2019 the UoL RSA organised 6 Lunch and Learn/seminar sessions, which were followed by a half hour meeting of the Steering Committee. The Lunch and Learn sessions given, focused on a wide range of topics of interest to researchers at UoL and importantly addressed current researcher training gaps. They have included seminars on; public engagement, REF, mentoring, intellectual property, teaching in higher education, responsible research and ethics and research policy. These sessions are also important networking events enabling research staff from different institutes across the University to come together regularly.

Approximately 20-30 researchers attend each session. Various presentations and stream captured talks from the lunch and learn session can be viewed [here](#).

3.1. Seminar on Public Engagement, REF, Open Data – 4th February

3.1.1. Agenda

13:00 – 13:05: Introduction from Sarah Arrowsmith and Stephnie Kennedy

13:05 – 13:25: Talk from Laura Winters: Public Engagement at the University of Liverpool

13:25 – 13:45: Talk from Bob Cooney: REF Code of Practice: Ensuring a fair, open and inclusive submission process for REF 2021

13:45 – 13:50: Talk from Judith Carr: Love Open, Love Research, Love Data

13:50-14:00: RSA update

14:00-14:30: RSA Steering committee meeting

3.1.2. Summary of the event

Newly appointed co-chairs of the RSA, Sarah and Stephnie welcomed researchers to the seminar and gave a brief overview of their research backgrounds and ideas for the RSA going forward.

Laura Winters, the Public Engagement Officer within HLS, discussed Public Engagement (PE) including: what it is, the benefits from all perspectives of being involved and how to plan an activity. She also discussed the process of finding and applying for a grants to fund your own ideas.

Bob Cooney, the Research Policy Manager at The University of Liverpool, discussed the Research Excellence Framework (REF) including what it is, why we do it, what it measures as well as the current development of the UoL REF code of practice.

Judith Carr, a Research Data Manager and part of the Research Data Management Team at The University of Liverpool, promoted Love Data Week which is to be held 11th-15th February.

Sarah Arrowsmith used the opportunity to highlight the remit of the RSA and make a call for researchers to get involved and take up a role of the RSA steering committee.

3.2. Seminar on CIE, The Academy and Mentoring – 22nd March

3.2.1. Agenda

- 13:00 – 13:05: Introduction from Sarah Arrowsmith and Stephnie Kennedy
- 13:05 – 13:25: Talk from Simon Thompson, Centre for Innovation in Education
- 13:25 – 13:30: Eli Saetnan, Educational developer from The Academy:
- 13:30 – 13:50: Talk from Tracy Ellis, Mentoring lead at UoL
- 13:50-14:00: -RSA update
- 14:00 – 14:30: RSA Steering committee meeting

3.2.2. Summary of the event

Simon Thompson from the Centre for Innovation in Education (CIE) introduced the remit of the CIE to support innovation in learning, teaching and assessment through enhanced curriculum development. He also discussed the Curriculum framework (C2021) focusing on research-connected teaching and how researchers can embed these principals in their teaching.

Eli Saetnan from The Academy introduced the University's Foundations in Learning & Teaching in Higher Education (FLTHE) programme (formerly the 'Teaching for Researchers' course) and gave an overview of its relevance to researchers who are involved in some aspect of teaching at the university. Eli also described how undertaking this course could provide researchers with an Associate Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy and the benefits the Fellowship brings.

Tracy Ellis, from the Academy introduced the University's mentoring scheme which is available to researchers at the university. She discussed what mentoring is, who benefits and how it benefits staff as well an introduction the university's mentoring portal.

Talks were followed by an update by Sarah Arrowsmith around local researcher events including MAI2019 and the RSA-led session (Section 4) and the launch of the Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS).

3.3. Lunch and Learn with the Research Partnerships and Innovation Team – 8th May

3.3.1. Agenda

13:00 – 13:05: Introduction from Sarah Arrowsmith

13:05 – 13:15: Talk from Charlotte Reif: Impact and Business Development Management

13:15 – 13:30: Talk from Lucinda Thompson on Early Career and Returners Fund

13:30 – 13:45: Talk from Nicola Pugh, Research Environment and Impact Officer

13:45 – 14:00: Talk from Tomasz Rygielski, Research Support Office

14:00 – 14:30: RSA Steering Committee Meeting

3.4. Summary of the event

The event began with an overview of the RSA and its remit, including roles around shaping policy and driving positive cultural change for researchers at the University of Liverpool.

Charlotte Reif introduced the Research Partnerships and Innovation Team, and explained that they are a group involved in promoting and nurturing external engagement between academia and industry. They are able to do this by hosting events, supporting and identifying funding opportunities and support bids such as innovate UK, EPSRC and Wellcome.

This was followed by specific talks from Lucinda Thompson on the early career and returners fund, Nicola Pugh on her role as a research environment and impact officer and Tomasz Rygielski on the role of the Research Support Office.

Sarah Arrowsmith also took the opportunity to updates researchers on the professional development opportunities available to researchers including wellbeing week, MAI2019 activities and the launch of FHLS Technology Directorate Career Development Award - a new pump priming scheme for postdocs planning a fellowship application.

3.5. Lunch and Learn on Ethics in Research – 13th June

Following discussion on how to measure the impact /reach of the sessions for RSA Lunch and Learn sessions, attendance information on department and feedback was captured from this session moving forward.

3.5.1. Agenda

- 13:00 – 13:05: Introduction from Sarah Arrowsmith
- 13:05 – 13:40: Talk from Mary Jane Monaghan
- 13:40 – 14:00: Update on the RSA from Sarah Arrowsmith
- 14:00 – 14:30: RSA Steering Committee Meeting

3.5.2. Attendance

13 attendees from a range of faculties, institutes and schools: Institute of Infection and Global Health (1), Institute of Integrative Biology (1), Institute of Translational Medicine (1), Institute of Ageing and Chronic Disease (1), School of Physical Sciences (4), Electrical Engineering and Electronics (2), Psychology (1), Geography (1). .

3.5.3. Summary of the event

Sarah Arrowsmith welcomed Nicola Beesley and Mary Jane Monaghan as new co-chair and deputy co-chair of the RSA, respectively.

Mary Jane Monaghan has a background in psychology and is currently working in the Department of Electrical Engineering and Electronics, based in Sensor City. She spoke about her research project on ethics within research. Her research is part of the @FIT4RRIEU initiative and she spoke about responsible research ethics and science education. Mary Jane discussed the ways in which you can implement ethics into your research and develop your understanding of responsible research and innovation, as well as the impact on society that research and ethics can have.

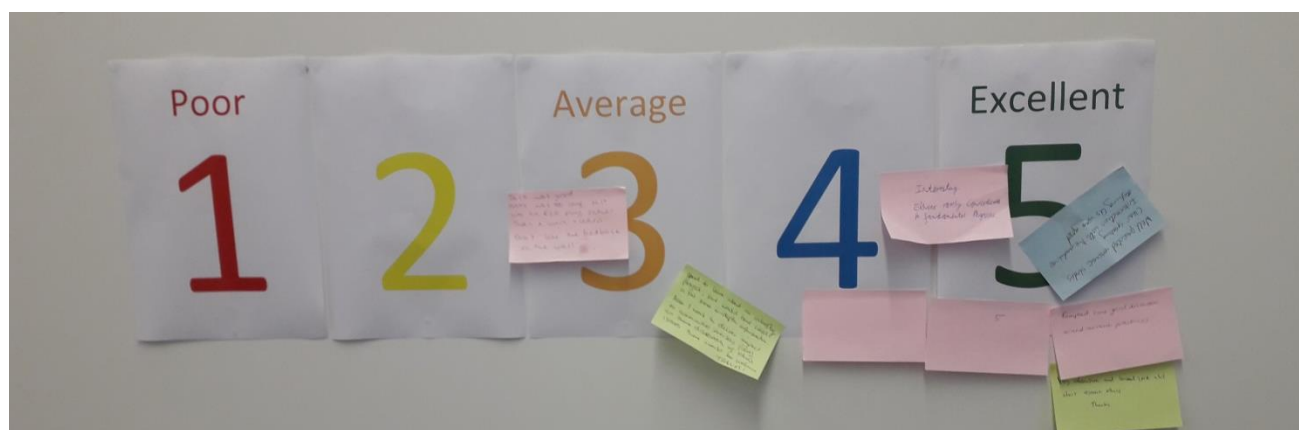
The seminar was followed by an update on development opportunities available including MAI2019 – highlighting the success of the RSA-led session on building career impact and networking, as well as highlighting the opening of the University Staff Awards competition.

3.5.4. Feedback

Feedback was clustered around the higher end of our 1 to 5 scale. The consensus from the comments was that the talk was good and prompted good discussion amongst the audience but more detail could have been given. Specific comments included:

- Interesting. Ethics is rarely considered in fundamental physics
- Good to learn about an interesting project, but would have liked a bit more in-depth information. I work to deliver impact to communities overseas (ODA) so some discussion of ethics issues there would be welcome.
- Well presented, concise slides, clear speaking. Interaction with the audience asking questions was good.
- Very informative and learned quite a bit about research ethics. Thanks.

This was a quick way to gather feedback but one person commented that they didn't like the use of this format. For future events we will let people know that it is optional.



3.6. Lunch and Learn: The Concordat – 1st October

3.6.1. Agenda

13:00 – 13:05: Introduction from Nicola Beesley

13:05 – 13:40: Talk from Katie Wheat, Head of Higher Education Engagement, Vitae

13:40 – 13:55: Q and A

13:55 – 14:00: Close and advertising of future events

3.6.2. Attendance

21 attendees from a range of institutes: Institute of Infection and Global Health (4), Institute of Translational Medicine (3), Institute of Ageing and Chronic Disease (1), School of Physical Sciences (1), Engineering (1), The Academy (3), Politics (1), Law (1), Institute of Population Health Sciences (2), University of Liverpool Medical School (1), Media (1), Earth Sciences (1) and History (1). Also pleased to see that we had a range of career levels at this seminar including Research Technicians (2), PDRAs (8) and Lecturers/Fellows (5).

3.6.3. Summary of the event

Katie Wheat is Head of Higher Education Engagement at Vitae. Before joining Vitae, Katie was a postdoctoral researcher in psychology and cognitive neuroscience at Maastricht University. Her responsibilities at Vitae include engaging with Vitae's community and audiences on policy and provision for researcher development. She is a passionate advocate for the importance of career development and this made her a great person to talk to us about The Concordat. Katie's talk covered the history of The Concordat and looking at the new Concordat she discussed the stakeholders (institutions, funders, managers of researchers and researchers themselves and what each stakeholder might be expected to do in relation to the three principles of The Concordat: (i) environment and culture, (ii) employment and (iii) professional and career development.

The slides and stream capture are available on the RSA intranet: <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/intranet/the-academy/researching/rsa/>

Dr Saneeya Qureshi, Research Staff Developer in the Academy also discussed the University's commitment to research staff through the Concordat Action Plan. A consultation was held with those present, and later cascaded through the RSA mailing list.

3.6.4. Feedback

It was good to see a range of researchers and their managers (e.g. lecturers) as well as professional service staff at the event. There was a lot of good discussion at the end of the talk so it was good to see engagement from attendees. There was some scepticism about whether Funders and Institutions would abide by the principles of The Concordat but Katie discussed what is in place to ensure that this happens. The Concordat should be seen as a living document that will be updated. Those that attended the lunch and learn seminar will be able to act as ambassadors to discuss The Concordat in their departments.

3.7. Lunch and Learn on Intellectual Property – 13th November

3.7.1. Agenda

13:00 – 13:05: Introduction from Nicola Beesley

13:05 – 13:50: Talk from Iain Armstrong, Patent Attorney at HGF (The global intellectual property rights specialists)

13:50 – 13:55: Talk from Laura David, IP Manager, Research Partnerships and Innovation

13:55 – 14:00: Close and advertising of future events with Sarah Arrowsmith

3.7.2. Attendance

13 attendees from a range of institutes: Institute of Infection and Global Health (3), Institute of Translational Medicine (1), Institute of Aging and Chronic Disease (2), Engineering (1), The Academy (2), Chemistry (1), Physics (2), Environment (1).

3.7.3. Summary of the event

The Research Partnerships and Innovation Team at the University were approached to give a seminar on intellectual property. They arranged for Iain Armstrong, a patent attorney from HGF to give a seminar on patents. Laura David, an IP Manager at the University then went on to describe how the University helps staff in relation to intellectual property.

This was followed by a brief talk from Gemma Matthews on the launch of the researcher staff survey and an update around the December Researcher conference (Section 7).

Sarah and Nicola used this opportunity to raise further awareness of the RSA and opened a call for researchers to get involved with the committee steering group.

4. Making an Impact 2019 – 21st May

The UoL RSA facilitated a *'Building career impact and networking'* event which took place during [Making an Impact 2019](#). Teams of early career researchers were tasked with putting together a successful interdisciplinary research proposal to turn their results into impact.

It was advertised through Eventbrite as:

'Come to this interactive session to gain hands-on experience in networking, build interdisciplinary collaborations and develop your innovative research ideas to create impact. A series of stations will take you through the activity in which you use your combined multidisciplinary and team work skills to be in with a chance to win prizes!'

We had 17 people sign up for the event however only 7 attended. Issues around the engagement of research staff moving forward are addressed in Section 8. The intention is to make a UoL RSA session an ongoing feature of all the Making an Impact series, depending on resourcing constraints.

The 2019 session was led by Dr Sarah Arrowsmith, co-chair of the RSA, together with deputy co-chair Dr Alison Savage, Mary-Jane Monaghan, Dr Kieran Cheetham, Ashkan Eliasy, Dr Ramya Maitreyee and Dr Helen Caulbeck (pictured on the following page).



Researchers were placed into interdisciplinary teams and tasked with identifying their members' unique skill set and putting together a research proposal which takes into account all team members' skills. The teams then had to pitch their idea to the rest of the participants who judged the proposals on the following attributes: quality and feasibility of the project, collaboration, teamwork, presentation, cost/value for money and impact.

Researchers therefore also had the opportunity to participate in the peer review process. This was to give insight into what reviewers 'look for' when assessing research proposals so and future applications can be tailored accordingly. The event was also aimed as a conversation starter to help build researcher networks across the University, as well as generate ideas for applications to the University's [Early Career Researcher and Returners Fund](#) which awards up to £5K for interdisciplinary applications.

Areas to improve included

- If more people attend, the session could be a lot more interesting.
- I thought we would be learning how to build career impact e.g., what is important for career impact. Instead we just developed an idea and discussed with team members, it was useful but not what I expected.

The event was followed up by a [Staff News article](#) to highlight the achievements as well as the ECR returners fund award. In addition to the researchers who led the event on the day, the planning and organisation was also helped by Dr Marco de Angelis and Dr Jyoti Gupta.

5. Summer Wellbeing Event and BBQ – 3rd July 2019

5.1. Agenda

10:00 – 10:05: Introduction from Sarah Arrowsmith

10:05 – 12:30: Wellbeing Workshop facilitated by Alys Kay

12:30 – 14:00: Summer BBQ

5.2. Attendance

25 researchers (16 females and 9 males) attended out of 43 who registered. The participants were from a variety of departments and institutes: ITM (7), IPHS (3) and Chemistry (3) were the most highly represented. The majority of attendees were PDRAs (21), but there were also 5 RAs and 1 Fellow. The majority of people had been working at the University for **less than 5 years or more than 10 years**: 0 – 1 year (5), 1 – 3 years (9), 3 – 5 years (5), 5 – 10 years (1) and 10 + years (5).

5.3. Summary of the event

The Wellbeing Workshop was run by Alys Kay, a positive psychology practitioner and coach, who delivers evidence-based interventions and exercises to build resilience and increase wellbeing. The workshop was organised because it is inevitable that at some point we will all need resilience skills to get through. This workshop focused on the scientific research of resilience from the field of positive psychology. The workshop provided explanation of simple and effective evidence-based tools that have been developed from the research findings. These exercises aimed to give a greater awareness of your own resilience and allow you to apply the techniques in your everyday life.

Participants learnt: resilient ways to adapt to difficult situations, healthy coping strategies for times of adversity, how to fostering perseverance and sustain motivation, and understanding the relationship between resilience and wellbeing.

The workshop was followed by a BBQ to allow networking after the event. 55 researchers registered for the BBQ of which approximately 30 researchers attended.

5.4. Feedback

Feedback was through a paper questionnaire completed at the end of the session and all participants completed the questionnaire. 92% of participants rated the workshop as very good or good.

The majority of people had chosen to attend for reasons related to **wanting more information** about wellbeing and **to learn coping techniques**. However, a number of people also highlighted that they currently felt like their wellbeing was suffering, or that they **were experiencing stress**, and **wanted help** with this. This highlights the importance of running these activities regularly.

Participants enjoyed that the workshop was **interactive** and allowed them to meet other people and hear their experiences. This also meant that people were able to see that **others have the same problems** as them and **allowed discussion** to talk through things with their peers in a **positive atmosphere**. Participants also enjoyed that the techniques taught were **relevant** and that there was **time to reflect** – a number of participants commented that they had learnt things about how they personally handle situations.

Improvements for future sessions were related to the **timing of the event**; however some people felt more time was required for discussion and other felt it was too long and that the session could have been split. Therefore overall the timing was probably adequate. The **technical difficulties** experienced at the start of the session (that were beyond our control) were also mentioned by a couple of participants.

This word cloud on the following page highlights how people felt after the workshop: we are pleased that all of these words have positive associations.

Empowered
Reassured Good
Enlightened
Optimistic Content Better
Informed Relaxed Supported
Positive
Contemplative Resourceful
Happy
Change **Calm**

Finally we asked participants what they would like from future events. A number of the suggested activities have already recently taken place e.g. fellowship writing, project management and having difficult conversations were all events that took place during Making an Impact 2019. Other suggestions included understanding REF (RSA has held lunchtime sessions on this previously), and mental health first aid (these are usually held regularly by the University). Overall these comments highlight that people are still not finding out about events, and one participant also commented that they wanted more events like this but found it hard to take time off due to work commitments. We still need to work on **culture change**: career development activities are work. The final comment related to senior PDRAs feeling forgotten compared to all the support that is available for PhD students and early PDRAs. This is reflected by the fact that nearly 20% of participants had worked at the University for more than 10 years.

6. National Postdoc Appreciation Week (NPAW) – 16th-20th September

6.1. Summary of activities

We asked our liaison committee representatives from across the University to host activities open to all research staff.

Friday 13 September	
Postdoc Appreciation Week Connect	Come along and meet up with your fellow researchers from the School of Physical Sciences in an early celebration of Postdoc Appreciation Week 2019 – pizza provided, bring your own bottle.
Tuesday 17 September	
IPHS and Psychology Posters, Coffee and Cake	All staff across institutes are invited to join IPHS and Psychology postdocs for their celebration event. IPHS and Psychology postdocs are presenting posters showcasing their work. Drop in for a chat and enjoy cake, tea and coffee. Cakes also available to buy - proceeds will go to a local charity. Feel free to bring along a cake donation for our stall! Poster prizes to be won!
IGH and IIB Infographics Session	Ben McGrae from the Centre for Innovation in Education will lead this interactive workshop, aimed at giving you the tools to make better PowerPoint presentations, posters and graphical abstracts / infographics. Ben will introduce you to some of the free software programs available to make infographics as well as discussing making content accessible to all.
Wednesday 18 September	
School of Physical Sciences Postdoc Seminar Series Launch	The School of Physical Sciences are hosting the first in a series of Postdoctoral seminars, aimed at giving postdocs the opportunity to give a seminar style talk about their work. Networking and refreshments to follow.
Friday 20 September	
ITM Coffee Morning	The Institute of Translational Medicine are hosting a coffee morning in honour of Postdoc Appreciation Week.
Tour of the Life Sciences Building	Ever wondered what goes on behind closed doors? On this tour you'll get to see the greenhouses on the roof of IIB, the insectaries and the genome facilities.

Thank you cards were also created for line managers to send electronically to their postdocs or for tweeting to give thanks. The UoL RSA also took part in the #NPAW2019 and #LovePostdocs twitter campaign, and ran a schedule of tweets to engage with research staff, reporting the week's events and establish relations with Research Staff Associations from other Universities.

Following from NPAW, we have made useful connections with other researchers at The University of Manchester. Whilst we were not able to co-host events this year due to time and technology constraints, this could be something to look into further for NPAW2020, increase the impact of the campaign (particularly through the N8 universities) and raise awareness of UoL RSA.

7. Research Staff Association Conference 2019: Magical Mystery Tour – 11th December

7.1. Summary of the event

The 2019 University of Liverpool Research Staff Association Conference was held on 11th December. The theme of the conference was a **“Magical Mystery Tour”**. We wanted to put research staff in the driving seat, give them the tools to **take control of their careers** and find their own **“Ticket to Ride”**. We combined short talks with panel discussions and had workshops over lunch on CVs and job hunting resources.

An overview of the programme is below:

Time	Session
10.00 – 10.30	“Ticket to Ride” Keynote Lecture from Anthony Hollander, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research & Impact: the current landscape of research staff development at the University of Liverpool
10.30 – 11.00	“How do you do it” Lib Golding, Careers and Employability: attributes that employers find valuable and identifying and articulating your transferable skills
11.15 – 12.30	“With a little help from my friends”: kindly sponsored by GiftPay Short talks from early career researchers within the University who have received internal or external funding. We’ll find out their top tips for applying

Time	Session
	<p>for funding and ask them to show us their CVs. This will be followed by a panel discussion which Ben Mollitt (Technology Directorate) and Laura McGarty (Early Career Researcher and Returners Fund).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Georgette Kluiters – BBSRC Future Leaders Fellow • Dr Anna Slater - Royal Society EPSRC Dorothy Hodgkin Research Fellow • Dr Patrícia Rossini – Derby Fellow, School of the Arts • Dr Hannah Davies – Recipient of the Early Career Researcher and Returners Fund • Dr Rachael Wright – Recipient of the Technology Directorate Career Development Award
12.30 13.30	<p>– “Help”</p> <p>Don’t forget to visit our sponsors and exhibitors in the common room over lunch.</p> <p>One-to-one CV clinics will take place in the lecture theatre; Career Coaching 1230pm session (structuring your CV) will take place in SR1. Career Coaching 1pm session (resources for job hunting) will take place in SR2. Talks with the library will take place in the common room.</p>
13.30 14.20	<p>– “Eight days a week”</p> <p>Want to know how much holiday you are actually entitled to? Do you know how much sick pay you will get?</p> <p>Lee Stewart, HR Business Partner at the University of Liverpool will give a talk on the Rights and Responsibilities of Postdocs.</p>
14.20 14.35	<p>– “Take Good Care of my Baby”</p> <p>The National Launch of UK Research Staff Association guidelines for researchers taking maternity, paternity, adoption or parental leave and advice for institutions and employers</p>
14.35 16.00	<p>– “A day in the life”</p> <p>Short talks from those that have chosen to explore careers outside academia, followed by a panel discussion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Georgina Crayford, Technical Manager (Pigs & Poultry), Red Tractor Assurance • Dr Amy Wedley will discuss PGCEs and teaching • Dr Helen Smith, Senior Research Advisor, Malaria Consortium • Dr James Mooney – Managing Director of Square a leading architectural visualisation studio • Dr Jane Rees will discuss her role as an editor at Nature
16.00	<p>– “Come together” for a networking reception kindly sponsored by IBM</p>

Professor Anthony Hollander, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Impact, gave the keynote lecture on the current landscape of research staff development at the University of Liverpool, including its commitment to researchers through the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. Professor Hollander's keynote attracted many questions, particularly around the £4.4m ['Prosper: Enhancing first-time postdoctoral career development and success'](#) Project, and postdoc opportunities for those beyond 3 years employment. This was also useful opportunity to remind researchers around the 'statement of expectations'. Prof Hollander was very clear around the expectation of researchers to be active in developing their own training needs and to participate in the minimum 10 days allowance for professional development opportunities.

This was followed by a session from the career and employability service on identifying and articulating transferable skills for job applications and interviews. This was complimented by one-to-one and small group sessions aimed at improving your CV which took place over lunch.

Short talks and a panel discussions from early career researchers within the University were given by researchers who have received internal or external funding. The idea being to showcase their application including background on their career to date and top tips for applying for funding. We featured two UoL initiatives – the ECR and returners fund and the Technology Directorate Career Development Award.

The afternoon session involved a talk from Lee Stewart, HR manager on the Rights and Responsibilities of Postdocs. Importantly this also highlighted the 'statement of expectations' for researchers. Dr Anna Slater also used the conference as an opportunity to launch The UK Research Staff Association guidelines for researchers taking maternity, paternity, adoption or parental leave and advice for institutions and employers.

We concluded the session with short talks and a panel discussion from five speakers who had chosen to explore careers outside academia and included abundant information on opportunities across a wide range of disciplines. The conference ended with a networking event during which researchers could also engage with our sponsors and other exhibitors including Research partnerships and innovation, PROSPER team, Strategic Change and The Library. Stream capture videos of some of the day's sessions can be viewed [here](#).

We managed to secure sponsorship for the event (Appendix 9.3) from four organisations:

- GiftPay – Gold Sponsorship - £200
- IBM – Gold Sponsorship - £200
- Merck – Silver Sponsorship - £100
- Thermofisher – Silver Sponsorship - £100

7.2. Attendance

101 people registered for the event with 72 people registering for lunchtime workshops with the careers team and 25 registering for one-to-one CV clinics. Attendance on the day was ~85 people.

7.3. Feedback

20 participants completed the RSA Conference evaluation feedback questionnaire on the day. They all rated the event as good or very good.

People wanted to attend to learn about career progression within academia and outside of academia. There was also interest in our talk from HR in terms of e.g. maternity leave, and on the mentoring opportunities available to researchers. Participants enjoyed the variety of speakers, the fact that the talks were short and specific, and that there was chance for networking and meeting other people. The use of sli.do to capture questions during the conference was also useful and encouraged people to ask questions they might not normally have wanted to ask.

All the postdoc attendees were given the opportunity by the Prosper Team to complete a snapshot survey to provide an insight into the current postdoc experience of career development. There were responses from all three faculties (HLS, HSS and S&E). From the issues raised in the survey responses, the Prosper Team went on to run a number of focus groups to explore the issues around career development for postdocs and separately for PIs around how they can best provide support for both groups. The Team will shortly be holding focus groups in our partner institutions (Manchester and Lancaster Universities) and will draw out common themes and issues and use these to focus the online content that will be created in relation to Prosper.

The word cloud on the following page indicates how people felt after the Conference; all are positive words.



In terms of improvements for the future:

- People want more of the same types of events with more varied careers.
- It was suggested that for the CV clinics it would have been useful to e-mail the CVs beforehand.
- The venue was not ideal – unfortunately it was the only venue available of the right size in the University due to teaching.
- Too much packed into the day – as always it is hard to balance family friendly hours whilst trying to fit in everything we wanted to.

The success of the day would not have been possible without the help from the Conference organising committee which consisted of the RSA co-chairs and deputy co-chairs and Dr Malaka De Silva, Susan Dobson, Dr Frances Sherratt, Dr Helen Caulbeck and Ashkan Eliasy.

8. Planned Future Activities

8.1. Lunch and Learn Sessions

For the upcoming 6 weekly lunch and learn meetings the timetable has been planned until May (see below). This has mainly been accomplished through a needs analysis of research staff and ideas from the steering committee that we, as researchers ourselves, feel that we would benefit from.

The upcoming meetings and confirmed dates are as follows:

Date	Time	Session
Thursday 6 February 2020	13:00-14:00	<p>RSA Lunch and Learn session: Leadership</p> <p>We are pleased that Nadia Soliman will join us for a seminar on academic leadership. Nadia will share her experiences and leadership development in the Army, from Sandhurst to operations in Afghanistan and the lessons that academia can learn to better prepare academics for the rigours and challenges of academic life.</p> <p>Bring your lunch, we'll provide the tea/coffee and cakes.</p> <p>Book your place for this event here.</p>
Tuesday 24 March 2020	13:00-14:00	<p>RSA Lunch and Learn seminar: What the FEC?</p> <p>Want to know what FEC is? Want to learn how the University recovers costs from grants? Need advice on how to cost your grant or how to budget? Then this is the lunch and learn seminar for you!</p> <p>John Ellis from the Research Support Office (RSO) will be joining us to answer these questions.</p> <p>The RSO provides academics and their school/institutes with support on costing and submitting grant applications. Once awarded the RSO ensures compliance with the funder's terms and conditions, providing support and advice on eligibility and completing and submitting financial claims to funders on behalf of the University.</p> <p>Bring your lunch, we'll provide the tea/coffee and cakes.</p> <p>Book your place for this event here.</p>
Monday 11 May 2020	13.00-14:00	<p>RSA Lunch and Learn seminar: Are you new to Office 365 apps? Have you heard of Microsoft Teams?</p> <p>The Research Staff Association steering committee have been using Microsoft Teams for the past few months. We've found that it has helped reduce e-mails and aid in organisation of events so now we want to share this with YOU!</p> <p>We've arranged for Monica Chavez, Educational Developer in The Academy to lead this lunch and learn session on Microsoft Teams.</p> <p>Join this session and learn how to use Microsoft Teams for research collaboration and communication. You will see a demonstration of Teams's functions plus time for questions.</p> <p>Take a look at how Dr Michael Johnson uses Microsoft Teams for research to get started: https://flipgrid.com/1f3a773a</p> <p>Bring your lunch, we'll provide the tea/coffee and cakes.</p> <p>Registration link TBC</p>
Thursday 8 October 2020	13.00-14:00	RSA Lunch and Learn session: TBC
Monday 16 November 2020	13.00-14:00	RSA Lunch and Learn session: TBC

Minor changes to the format include asking participants to bring their own lunch and the Academy will kindly sponsor tea, coffee, cake and fruit. This change was brought about due to the inconsistency in attendance. We felt funding for lunch would be better spent on larger events such as the summer wellbeing event and RSA annual conference, and to reduce the food wastage that we were experiencing from those who registered but did not attend.

8.2. Summer Wellbeing Day

We have confirmed dates for the summer wellbeing event- Wednesday 1st July, and have suggested it to focus on coaching to enable researchers to take stock of where they are now, where they want to go and how to plan effectively to get there. We have recommended a number of professional coaches to be approached for quotes for this and are liaising with The Academy to assist with its organisation. We plan to include a breakout BBQ for lunch in the university quadrangle, given this was well received this year.

8.3. Other Events

Other events the RSA are likely to host in 2020 include an event during Making an Impact (MAI2020) (details TBC) and participation in National Postdoc Appreciation Week (NPAW 21-25th September), building on the success of NPAW2019. We established good local contacts for NPAW2019, e.g. with University of Manchester and hope to involve more of the N8 universities to increase the traction of this event. Early planning and good communication of our intentions to host these events again is key. To foster greater networking across the University we will ask our liaison committee members to host events and thereby engage researchers from across the different institutes and schools at the University. With NPAW2019 we found that despite mentioning that we intended to host NPAW celebrations at the start of the year, a number of institutes had not heard about this until they were contacted directly by the Deputy Co-Chair. This year we will be relying on our Liaison Committee Members to pass on these messages as soon as possible to give ample time for the organisation of events/activities. Ideas from NPAW2019 included live streaming of events to be watched between the universities across the N8 including an address of thanks by the vice chancellor of Manchester University. Greater publication of thank you cards in advance of the week, a dedicated webpage for NPAW and promotion on twitter, ideally from the University's main account to give us more exposure.

8.4. Addressing Research Staff Engagement with Activities

A key issue highlighted by our events has been the reduced attendance compared to the number of researchers who register for them: ~50% turnout overall. Clearly researchers think the events would be useful to them (evidenced by the number of ticket sales/registration before the event). However, for some reason they are not able to or choose not to attend. One of the barriers to attendance is researchers feeling they don't have the time due to other role-related commitments or do not have the approval from their line managers. We hope this will improve with the launch of the New Concordat and dissemination and promotion of the 'Statement of Expectations. The RSA will continue to promote these via the Welcome e-mail, web links in our e-mail signature and reminders in our weekly bulletins. However, there also needs to be a top-down approach to this particularly to disseminate to PIs; one potential avenue is to ensure that PIs/line managers of research staff realise that the Concordat also applies to them and that they too are entitled to career development time.

8.5. Representation at Institutional Levels

Alongside these meetings the RSA will continue representation on the Research and Impact Committee, the Concordat Steering Group and other relevant University committees and groups. During these meetings the RSA provides an update on activities as well as an insight into current researchers' achievements and issues. As reported earlier, both co-chairs have also agreed to be part of the [Prosper Project](#) planning board and will provide feedback to the researcher community on progress where applicable.

8.6. Annual Conference

On 16th December 2020 the RSA will host the third annual RSA conference. Details are to be finalised but the format will incorporate lessons from previous years' successes, whilst introducing programme initiatives that meet the current ongoing needs of research staff. We have already secured sponsorship from companies that supported this year's conference. We plan to include a session around researcher engagement in career development: we will invite researchers to provide examples of how they have used their allowance of 10 days (pro rata) professional and career development training per year and what benefits the experience has brought. We hope this will facilitate greater researcher engagement with professional development opportunities and the RSA and encourage sharing of best practice to promote a healthier and happier attitude towards researcher development across the University.

9. Appendices

9.1. Welcome E-mail

The list of new starters is populated from a request made to HR for researchers recently (within the last month) enrolled on a research only contract (grade 6-8) at the university.

Welcome to the **University of Liverpool** and congratulations on your recent appointment. We'd like to introduce you to the **Research Staff Association** here at the University. This Association was set up in 2018 and is **run on a voluntary basis by researchers for researchers**.

Our aims are to:

- **Represent** – provide a collective voice for research staff on matters affecting researchers
- **Network** – provide a platform for communication and networking for research staff across the University
- **Develop** – provide training opportunities for research staff and coordinate central support for researcher development provided locally
- **Community** – create a borderless community so researchers can make the most of their time at Liverpool

The current chairs of the Research Staff Association are:



Co-Chairs: Sarah Arrowsmith and Nicola Beesley

Sarah works in the Institute of Translational Medicine (Faculty of Health and Life Sciences)

Nicola works in the Institute of Infection and Global Health (Faculty of Health and Life Sciences)

Deputy Co-Chairs: Alison Savage and Mary Jane Monaghan

Alison works in the School of Physical Sciences (Faculty of Science and Engineering)

Mary Jane works in the School of Electrical Engineering and Electronics (Faculty of Science and Engineering)

The Academy is responsible for research staff development at the University. Saneeya Qureshi provides invaluable support to ensure the smooth running of the Research Staff Association. Visit The Academy website <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/intranet/the-academy/> for other research staff development opportunities.

We also have representatives from across the other Institutes, Schools and Faculties at the University, please get in touch if you are interested in getting involved.

Keep in touch:

Our latest events will be advertised by e-mail and on the Research Staff Association website: <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/researcher/uol-rsa/>

Twitter: @UoL_RSA

Email: ResearchStaffAssociation@liverpool.ac.uk

If you are a postdoc, then the UoL has just started a 3 ½ year Research England-funded project called [Prosper](#), to develop postdocs for success in a variety of career paths. Prosper will soon be recruiting postdocs and PIs respectively for focus groups from early 2020 to help co-create materials, with a full suite of resources available and related activities happening from June 2020. Keep your eyes peeled for Prosper in the coming weeks and months, and feel free to email prosper.postdoc@liverpool.ac.uk with any questions!

9.2. Revised committee roles document



University of Liverpool Research Staff Association Roles

The UoL RSA continues to welcome colleagues to take on roles in the Steering Group. This is particularly crucial to ensure the sustainability of the RSA, and it would be ideal to have at least two representatives assigned to each role so that responsibilities can be shared. Below is a list of the different roles within the committee and what they entail. It is recognised that roles will change as the Association develops. All roles are designed to be undertaken with the support of fellow Steering Committee members, and the Academy representative. Current members of the Steering Committee can be seen at: <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/researcher/uol-rsa/steering-committee/>

Co-Chair – 2 individuals

- Oversees and brings together all aspects of the Association's activity
- Directs and organises regular RSA meetings, conferences and social events
- Holds this position for at least 1 year then helps as out-going chair for one year/ until end of contract
- Collaborates with co-chair to ensure all responsibilities including representation on University committees and groups are covered as required
- Has a direct responsibility to liaise with The Academy
- Sits on the Concordat Steering Group as RSA representative to inform action planning from a research staff perspective

Deputy co-chair – 2 individuals

- Takes minutes and helps organise meetings
- Contributes to developing the agenda
- Day-to-day management of the RSA mailing account
- Maintains organised/effective records
- Potential to becoming co-chair
- Updates/maintains social media accounts linked to UoL RSA
- Promotes UoL RSA and events which are potentially helpful to research staff on social media

Liaison committee members from each School/Institute – at least 2 representatives per School/Institute

- Holds the position for at least six months
- Attends regular RSA Steering Committee meetings (usually once every 6-weeks)
- Functions as the point of contact for staff within Schools/Institutes regarding issues/problems/sharing of effective practice and bring these to the RSA meetings
- Actively reports back/communicates to their school/institutes with outcomes from the RSA activities
- Actively participates in the organisation and promotion of RSA events

We welcome role sharing, as well as people who can only provide support for a limited time. If you are interested in discussing or taking on one of these roles or a more specialised role, such as social media management, please contact the co-chairs of the UoL RSA at researchstaffassociation@liverpool.ac.uk

9.3. Sponsorship request for conference



The Research Staff Association (RSA) at the University of Liverpool are organising a conference on 11th December for research staff. The event will be attended by approximately 100 research staff and will focus on transferable skills, CVs, taking the next step in your academic career and careers outside the University.

The RSA at Liverpool was only established in 2018, but it is run BY research staff FOR research staff. Our inaugural conference in 2018 was a great [success](#) and we want to build on this for our 2019 event.

The theme of the conference is a “Magical Mystery Tour”. We want to put research staff in the driving seat, give them the tools to take control of their careers and find their own “Ticket to Ride”.

We are seeking sponsorship for this event to cover travel expenses for speakers and for a networking reception after the event; even a small amount of money will go a long way.

We offer three levels of sponsorship:

Bronze (£50):

- We will use your logo on advertising e-mails and place holder slides at the event

Silver (£100):

- We will use your logo on advertising e-mails and place holder slides at the event
- You have the opportunity to have a stand at the event and meet with researchers from across the University over lunch

Gold (£200):

- We will use your logo on advertising e-mails and place holder slides at the event
- You have the opportunity to have a stand at the event and meet with researchers from across the University over lunch
- You can choose one of our main sessions to sponsor (subject to availability). We will specifically acknowledge your sponsorship at the beginning of the session and you can give a short five minute talk about your company.
 - “With a Little Help from our Friends”: we will be inviting recent recipients of different fellowship / funding schemes to speak to us about the application process and showcase how their CVs made them stand out.
 - “A Day in the Life”: we are inviting Alumni who have moved on to careers outside academia to tell us about their career paths and give us their tips for those who wish to undertake similar careers.
 - These two sessions will be supported by “Help”: one-to-one CV clinics over lunch
 - “Come together”: our event will conclude with a networking drinks reception

Please let us know by 11th October 2019 if you would be interested in sponsoring this event. We’re also happy to discuss further. You can get in touch with us by e-mailing ResearchStaffAssociation@liverpool.ac.uk

Thank you

Sarah Arrowsmith, Nicola Beesley, Alison Savage and Mary Jane Monaghan (Chairs of the RSA)

