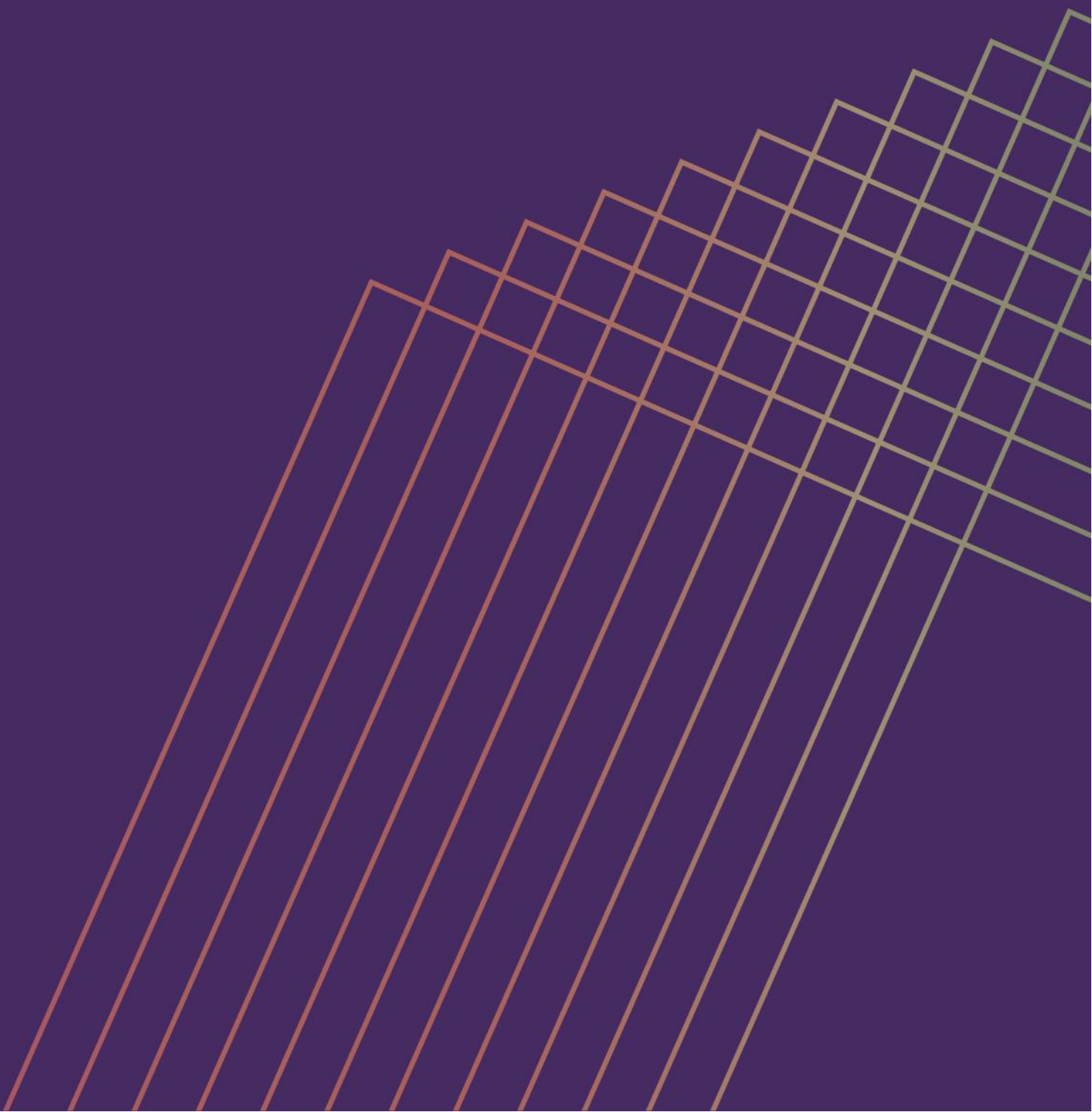


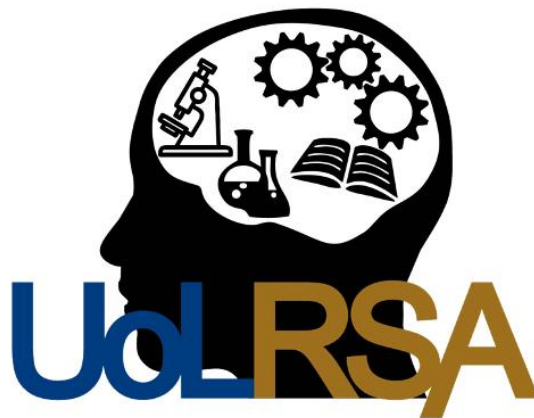
THE ACADEMY

Developing Liverpool

ENHANCING RESEARCH



**University of Liverpool
Research Staff Association
Annual Evaluation Report
2021**



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1. Summary

The [University of Liverpool Research Staff Association \(UoL RSA\)](#) is a research community-owned and led initiative. Started in 2018, the UoL RSA intends to provide a resource for all research staff at the University and be a link between the **880 Early Career Researchers (including Postdocs and Fellows) and 550 Research Managers**. Membership to the RSA is automatic upon commencement of a research contract. In partnership with [the Academy](#), the goals of the RSA are:

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 the schools, 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.

The RSA has continued to play a key role in offering **support and career development opportunities for researchers in a digital environment** due to the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have continued to adapt the ways that we work, as all our RSA events for 2021 have taken place online. We've harnessed **innovative virtual platforms** like Kumospace and Mural to canvass views and to build communities for postdocs at the institutional and national level. We believe that this work has been essential to help tackle the continued impact on mental health and wellbeing during a period of transition from home- to hybrid-working practices. Though many of our research community returned to working on campus in 2021, most work from home regularly or even fulltime. As a result of the pandemic, researchers have generally had less opportunities for making social connections and building cohorts within UoL or within their research field, as conferences and meetings went digital.

To address these issues, the UoL RSA has offered several activities throughout this year to ensure that researchers still feel connected and that their voice is heard. We have continued to offer events and activities on online platforms, in partnership with the Academy represented by **Dr Saneeya Qureshi** and **Dr Angela Midgley**, and with additional support from **Luke Simpson** and **Lara Jones**. Our thanks to the fantastic efforts of the 2020 outgoing Chairs and Deputy co-Chairs, **Dr Krishanthi Subramaniam**, **Dr Blanca Perez-Sepulveda**, **Dr Frances Sherratt**, as well as to the deputy Co-chairs who stepped down in 2021, **Dr Katalin Ujhelyi Gomez** (Feb 2020-Feb 2021), **Dr Gabriella Melis** (January 2021 - June 2021) and **Dr Pearse Buchanan** (January 2021 - May 2021) and **Dr Michael Robinson** (June 2020-September 2021).

To ensure that the UoL 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 Michael Robinson**, **Dr Katherine Roscoe** and **Dr Sophie Jones**), and Faculty of Science and Engineering (**Dr Alex James** and **Dr Bengt Tegner**). The Deputy Co-Chairs are from the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences (**Dr Malaka De Silva**, **Dr Janette Greenalgh** and **Dr Revathy**

Krishnamurthi). We also have a dynamic [Liaison Committee](#) with representatives from across the entire University who feedback good practice and disseminate RSA activities to their local networks via our dedicated MS Teams channel.

This year the UoL RSA has moved from being an active member, to a leader, in the national postdoc platforms. As well as having representation on the steering groups of the National Postdoc Appreciation Week (NPAW) and UKRSA, the UoL RSA and members of the Academy made up the **organising committee of the [National Postdoc Conference 2021 \(NPDC21\)](#)**. The conference was hosted in partnership with the **N8 Research Partnership**, and was the first time the biannual, flagship event was hosted by an institution in the north of England. **This online event had over 2000 participants from over 100 institutions across all four devolved nations, and from 25 countries.** This positioned the University of Liverpool as a leader of postdocs' professional development, a group of up to 75,000 researchers in the UK alone, who are being increasingly being recognised as integral to our dynamic research and innovation landscape. The day featured a keynote by **Prof. Dame Ottoline Leyster**, Chief Executive of the UKRI, a panel on collaborative research practices that featured top-level representatives from **Universities UK, UKRI, the N8 and IBM**. In total, we had over **150 speakers and more than 45 events taking place across the Conference.**

There were **30 parallel sessions** on offer, that took the form of panel discussions, workshops, seminars and informal 'fireside chats' which challenged postdocs to reframe their thinking and practice as they emerge from the pandemic and to encourage them to take opportunities to re-imagine and strive for best practice within the research and innovation system. The sessions were **chaired by pairs of postdocs**, one from UoL and one from an institution elsewhere in the UK. The speakers were **leaders in industry, funding bodies, career and professional development, and postdocs**. NPDC21 was made possible thanks to the generous sponsorship of the **N8 Research Partnership, UKRI, IBM, Codeswitch Consultancy** (at the platinum level), **C-DICE** (at the gold level), **Inkpath and Facebook Reality Labs** (at the bronze level).

In addition, the UoL 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 Induction policies** and liaised with the Research Support Office to improve signposting and communication of these resources to researchers.

We also ran **five [Lunch & Learn seminars](#)** that encompassed a variety of themes including professional and personal development, research leadership, aligning research with the UN's sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and using new procurement system Agresso. These are all available online as an ongoing resource for UoL staff. We continued to host monthly **virtual coffees** to maintain a sense of community and collegiality while many colleagues continued to work from home. We transitioned these to a new interactive platform, Kumospace, but elected to return to Zoom as familiarity with the platform boosted greater engagement. We also **raised the profile of postdoctoral researchers** generally, and the RSA specifically, by appearing on [Researcher Hub](#) (as [researcher case studies](#), showcased in [Celebrating Success](#), and writing [Researcher Hub blogposts](#)), recording podcasts and videos about the National Postdoc Conference, and maintaining an active RSA Twitter presence.

The UoL RSA is fully committed to **advocating, galvanising and improving the culture and environment for all our researchers**. Through NPDC21 and our Lunch & Learn seminars we have embodied a commitment to being a positive and proactive force in the national and institutional postdoc community, offering postdocs and researchers tools to thrive in the future. We also played a key role in creating a sense of community for researchers who reported feelings of isolation in RISE phase 1 through monthly virtual coffees for UoL staff, and for postdocs nationally through NPDC21 networking sessions. **The national and institutional events we have run this year reflect our ethos to create a 'borderless community' where all researchers can grow and flourish**. We expect to continue working during 2022 with the support of the Academy, UoL RSA Liaison Representatives and formation of a new core team that remains to ensure University-wide representation.

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 and policies to promote research excellence across all the faculties and disciplines. The committee oversees the enhancement of the University research environment which includes research staff development and consideration of the overall experience of researchers. Chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Impact, **Prof. Anthony Hollander**, the committee contains UoL RSA representation (**Dr Katherine Roscoe**) to ensure that the voice of researchers is heard in development of policies that will influence the research environment. Additionally, participation of the RSA in RIC meetings demonstrate an institutional commitment to support researchers and synergise University policies with researcher activities.

There were 3 RIC meetings in 2021 and an RSA representative was present at two. The first RIC meeting on 11 March 2021 focussed on the University of Liverpool's completed **REF 2021** in advance of submission of the report, highlighting **the important contribution ECRs made to UoL's submission**, both as a proportion of total publications and in environment statements. The draft of the **Responsible Metrics Policy** and associated **Equality Impact Assessment** was shared, and RSA spotlighted the University's Researcher KnowHow sessions on responsible metrics in its weekly e-bulletin. The findings from **Research in Inclusive Sustainable Environment (RISE)** phase 1 were also reported back in this meeting, and the sectoral shift it represents towards team-led, rather than PI-led research practices was reflected in the National Postdoc Conference 2021 (NPDC21) programming. The third meeting on 21 October 2021, Katherine Roscoe was not able to attend. One of the topics covered was the start of RISE phase 2 which members of the RSA committee participated in (see Section 2.4)

The next RIC meetings are scheduled for 19 January 2022, 10 March 2022 and 15 June 2022, and will continue to be represented by **Dr Katherine Roscoe**.

2.2. Concordat Steering Committee (CSG)

The [Concordat](#) Steering Group, 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 Action Plan. During the 2021 period, the CSG met on 7 occasions: 26 January, 5 March, 5 May, 25 June, 14 September, 12 October and 2 December. The UoL RSA was represented by **Dr Michael Robinson, Dr Katherine Roscoe, Dr Claire Wilson, Dr Alex James** and **Dr Sophie Jones**.

The CSG reports to the RIC in terms of alignment to other R&I activities, and in turn, reports to Senate and Council, and to the Planning and Resources Committee in relation to planning and resource allocation matters. The CSG Purpose within its Terms of Reference include:

- Oversee the implementation and review of the Concordat with appropriate sector representation, including key stakeholder groups

- Ensure that the Concordat, and strategies for communication and implementation, remains relevant to the wider research system
- Publish and regularly update activities in relation to an implementation plan for the Concordat
- Provide a platform to share practice and promote this for the benefit of the research community at the University of Liverpool and its beneficiaries.

At the first meeting of the year, there was a **showcase of positive examples of the impact of Concordat-related initiatives** have had on people's professional practice, which featured several former or current members of the RSA. Those speakers' names, Faculty, topic and their role within the RSA listed below:

Name	Faculty/Institute	Topic	(Former/Current) Role in RSA
Dr Frances Sherratt	HLS: Institute for Population Health	Flexible working practices following parental leave	RSA Deputy co-chair
Dr Katy Roscoe	HSS: School of Law and Social Justice	How mentorship enabled progression and retention of talent	RSA Co-chair
Dr Ramya Maitreyee	HLS: Institute for Population Health	PDR experience and impact on career development	RSA Liaison member
Dr. Helen Cauldbeck	S&E: School of Physical Sciences	The SoPS Postdoctoral Development Award and recent wellbeing committee actions	Former RSA co-chair
Dr Janette Greenhalgh	HLS: Institute for Population Health	Creation of a dedicated committee for research staff	RSA Deputy Co-Chair
Dr Michael Robinson	HSS: School of Histories, Languages and Cultures	Leadership of the RSA and contribution of the PDRA voice to overall research culture	RSA Co-Chair
Dr Kris Subramaniam	HLS: Institute for Infection, Veterinary and Ecological Sciences	TFF Scheme, impact on career progression (link to Athena Swan) and representation on University policy-making committee(s)	RSA co-chair

The University of Liverpool became **signatory to the Concordat** in July 2021 and published an annual action plan to systematically gather and act upon the view of researchers to inform policies and practices. During the year, CSG meetings were focussed on reporting actions completed in 2020 and creating an updated action plan to meet the Concordat principles. This meant RSA members acted as **ECR representatives who worked within their respective faculty working groups** for each principle – namely, Environment and Culture (5 May), Professional and Career Development (25 June) and Employment (1 September) – to report back and suggest new actions aimed specifically at postdocs and early career research fellows as part of a **renewal of the Concordat Terms of Reference**. As part of their role in CSG, RSA co-chairs also offered **feedback on two online modules about the Concordat and the Professional Development Review** in the development phase, and sent a dedicated email to research staff to encourage completion of the **Culture Employment and**

Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS) (which ultimately received a 31% response rate) to enable national and longitudinal benchmarking regarding research culture and career development in HE. The dates for future meetings will be confirmed and the UoL RSA will continue to be represented by 2022 Co-Chairs **Dr Sophie Jones** and **Dr Bengt Tegner**.

2.3. 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 two occasions during 2021 (15 July 2021 and 11 October 2021). The UoL RSA was represented by **Dr Claire Wilson** at both meetings. The themes discussed include:

- Athena Swan action plan 2022-2027
- How to approach Faculty Athena Swan updates and developing a proforma document to streamline how schools and institutes provide updates
- PULSE survey which was launched 28th September 2021 and included the Advance HE core Athena Swan questions
- Athena Swan Steering Group met with the RISE project team (28th October 2021) to contribute to their consultation activity
- Student maternity policy, support and guidance
- EDI training for staff
- Lack of male representation on EDI committees
- Tariffs for EDI work within work allocation models
- EDI characteristics of redundancies proposed via Project SHAPE: confirmed that an equality impact assessment was undertaken and discussed at length with Trade Unions as part of a process of ongoing consultation

The dates for future meetings are 15 February 2021 and 17 May 2021 and the UoL RSA will continue to be represented at these meetings by **Dr Claire Wilson**.

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

The [RISE project](#) was created in Autumn 2020 as one of the responses being undertaken by 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.

The UoL RSA was represented by former RSA Co-Chairs **Dr Kris Subramaniam** and **Dr Blanca Perez-Sepulveda** (until October 2021) and the former will continue in post in 2022.

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 2021 the UKRSA met on three occasions: 15 January, 13 July and 20 October. During this period the University of Liverpool was represented by **Dr Saneeya Qureshi** (The Academy), **Dr Angela Midgley** (The Academy), **Dr Claire Wilson** (UoL RSA Co-Chair), and **Dr Blanca Perez-Sepulveda** (former UoL RSA Co-Chair; now UKRSA Recruitment & Engagement Officer).

The themes discussed were:

- Vitae Connections Week
- Concordat action plan including Concordat Cafés
- COVID-19 operations and implications at various universities
- UK Reproducibility Network (UKRRN)
- UKRI ECR forum
- National Postdoc Conference 2021 which UoL hosted (see Section 8)

Relevant opportunities were promoted to UoL researchers through the RSA weekly e-bulletins, and relevant RSA NPDC21 activities and best practice were fed back nationally via UKRSA committee members local networks. The UoL RSA will continue to be represented at the UKRSA by 2021 Co-Chair **Dr Claire Wilson**.

2.6. Race and Equality Charter (REC)

The UoL has embarked on a bid for Advance HE's Race Equality Charter (REC), who met on 8 June and 18 October. Dr **Katherine Roscoe** acted the ECR representative on the UoL's Self-Assessment Team Steering Group for the REC. 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' analysis, communication on relevant issues and promotion of the work towards REC to colleagues at the university and relevant external partners.

In the first meeting was a briefing in which we discussed the **terms of reference** for REC. Katherine was unfortunately not able to attend the second meeting on 18 October, though she did attend, on 1 November 2021, an external presentation by colleagues from Kingston University about their successful REC application. It is early in the charter bid to have substantively contributed to issues relating to early career researchers but **Katherine Roscoe** will continue to act as RSA representative in 2022.

2.7. Meetings with Prof Anthony Hollander

During the past year the RSA co-chairs (**Dr Michael Robinson, Dr Claire Wilson, Dr Katherine Roscoe and Dr Alex James**) have been engaging in regular meetings with Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Impact, **Professor Anthony Hollander**, to provide feedback from the researcher community. The RSA co-chairs canvassed the RSA liaison representatives, via the MS Teams channel, for any concerns, questions or cases of best practice at their local level to bring to the notice of Prof Hollander, and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). Meetings took place on 1 February 2021, 10 March 2021, 15 April 2021, 24 May 2021, 25 June 2021, 5 July 2021. Future meetings are scheduled for 2 December 2021 and 17 February 2021.

Initially these meetings were biweekly, reflecting the rapidly changing environment of the initial months of the pandemic. These informal meetings offer an **invaluable channel of communication directly between postdoc researchers and SLT**, and are opportunities to draw on Prof Hollander's wide-ranging insights about the institutional and national research landscape. As situation surrounding COVID-19 became less changeable in 2021, these meetings were **reduced to monthly, and then tri-monthly (from June 2021), occurrences**. Depending on what was raised, Prof Hollander would feed issues faced by researchers up the chain, or RSA would feedback information to liaison members to be cascaded locally. Other times, Prof Hollander helped RSA co-chairs make contact with other offices (e.g. Research Support Office, HR) within UoL to dialogue about ECRs' specific needs.

Some issues raised and actions taken included: communications to researcher community about returning to **work on campus during phased exit from national lockdown** from March 2021; clarifications on process for postdocs if their **line-manager was made redundant as part of Project SHAPE**; postdocs facing issues with the **procurement process** led to a dedicated RSA Lunch and Learn about Agresso in November 2021; the possibility of **extending fellowship grants seriously impacted by COVID-19** through local match funding; a request by postdocs for **more support costing large grants** led RSA signpost the central Research Support Office (RSO)'s existing online resources and offer liaison members the chance to feedback on RSO's grant calculator tool.

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 learning about how to best use new platforms ('Untangling Agresso') or manage university procedures ('Making the most of the PDR'), how to align your research with the University's [Strategy 2026](#) ('Positioning Research within Sustainable Development Goals') to more personal development topics ('The good, the bad and the ugly about getting a Tenure-Track Fellowship). This year they have all taken place online and are available as digital recordings on [Researcher Hub](#). We have promoted these resources through #ThrowbackThursday on our UoL RSA Twitter, and through our weekly RSA e-bulletin.

3.1. Positioning Research within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – 9th February 2021

The **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs) have been described as a framework that 'contains the blueprint of the common vision of society towards which the world is trying to move'. UoL has made a commitment to put the SDGs at the heart of all our activities and given the devastating impact of the Covid-19 pandemic this has never been more important. Research is a critical part of achieving the SDGs and it is widely recognised that the world will not be able to fulfil the transformational potential of the goals unless researchers critically engage with them. This session explored some **simple steps that researchers can take to position their research within the context of the SDGs** and help to increase understanding about their interconnectivity, and the possibilities and challenges they present to researchers.

The session was led by **Fiona Brannigan**, a chartered environmentalist that has worked in sustainability for almost 20 years. This session can be [watched online](#).

3.1.1. Attendance

This event was attended by 28 people.

3.1.2. Feedback

The session was very well-received by all attendees with the following feedback: 89% of the attendees rated the event highly on the interesting scale (between 4-5, with 5 being 'definitely'). Some comments include:

'...really valued being able to come along to the session...As professional services [staff]...insights such as this can be invaluable'

Other positive phrases included: '*lots of useful info*' and '*...interesting*'.

3.2. The Good, the Bad and the Ugly about Getting a Tenure Track Fellowship - 24th March 2021

Many early career researchers are on the challenging path to forming their own research group, but are there any lessons or things that should be thought about in advance? We organised this Lunch and Learn event where **junior Health and Life Sciences Principal Investigators at UoL shared experiences and lessons learnt from their path to forming their own research group**. The panel discussion featured **Dr Kate Baker** (Wellcome Trust Clinical Research Career Development Fellow, Clinical Infection, Microbiology & Immunology), **Dr Jamie Hall** (Tenure Track Fellow, Evolution, Ecology & Behaviour), and **Dr Siobhan O'Brien** (Tenure Track Fellow, Evolution, Ecology & Behaviour). Panellists presented their personal experiences followed by a Q&A session where attendees were provided opportunity to ask questions. This session can be [watched online](#).

3.2.1. Attendance

This event was attended by 58 people.

3.2.2. Feedback

The session was very well-received by all attendees with the following feedback:

'The presentations were very interesting. I especially appreciated that presenters were honest about the difficulties and challenges they faced in their respective career paths'

'Really interesting to hear about different career trajectories and the pros and cons of tenure track fellowships'

'I know it's a small thing, but the consistency of presentations/slides across speakers made it feel coherent and thoughtfully prepared'

'One hour over lunch was good in terms of being able to attend, but it felt like we needed an extra half hour to cover all the questions'

'I really appreciated the presenters speaking so candidly about their experiences, and discussing the challenges and trade-offs in terms of personal life, relationships, family, etc. I feel like so often this is not addressed, yet it can be a hugely important factor'

'It felt that the content of the session was 'hard sciences' heavy – would have been nice to have more humanities tenure track fellow's represented'

3.3. Researchers Take Charge: Your Culture, Your Development, Your Future - 6th May 2021

In this session, led by **Rachel Cox, Engagement and Policy project manager at Vitae**, researchers had the opportunity to reflect on **how they can make an impact on research culture and their own career**. The Researcher Development Concordat sets out expectations for institutions, funders, managers and researchers under three leading Principles of Environment and Culture; Employment; and Professional and Career Development. The session was focussed on **what researchers can do to realise these expectations**.

In this interactive workshop, discussion was related to the expectations, challenges and opportunities for developing careers. Focusing on environment, culture and professional development, participants were asked to consider what actions would help them 'take charge' of their career and contribute to a positive research environment.

Outcomes from the **discussions of this event will feed into future developments for supporting researchers** across the sector, therefore participants were encouraged to share (as far as they feel comfortable). This session can be [watched online](#).

3.3.1. Attendance

This event was attended by 25 people.

3.3.2. Feedback

The session was well received with the following feedback:

'Online format and use of breakout rooms was excellent. Great to meet people from other universities'

'...was good to be more interactive'

3.4. It's all about you: Making your PDR fit with your personal and professional goals – 20th July 2021

This session led by **Tracy Ellis**, Organisational Developer in **The Academy**, provided some very **practical tips to help researchers feel empowered to ensure that their Professional Development Review (PDR) experience worked for them** and helped them meet a mutually beneficial outcome with their reviewer. It gave advice on how to best prepare and feel comfortable in the meeting, and how to ensure the outcome could help researchers meet both their personal and professional goals. This talk can be [watched online](#).

3.4.1. Attendance

This event was attended by 21 people, including participants from the University of Edinburgh and University of York.

3.4.2. Feedback

The session was very well-received by all attendees with the following feedback:

'Very useful content, presented well, good to have opportunity to interact with questions via the chat. One hour was good time. The online format...made it more accessible. Overall great!'

'I learned a lot from this session. I thought the 1-hour slot was perfect and I appreciated that there was opportunity but no requirement for interaction via the chat... [which] was especially useful as it meant I could tune in while eating my lunch!'

3.5. Agresso Web Untangled – 15th November 2021

This session was led by three members of the **university procurement team**: Norman Long, Chris Silker and Donna Robinson. It aimed to **familiarise people with the Agresso web purchasing system** used by staff, and answer any questions people may have about the process of raising an order on the system. It included a step-by-step 'walk through' of the ordering process using the Agresso web system, answers to questions raised by a call for feedback in the month leading up to the event in our RSA e-bulletin, and things the procurement team had seen done incorrectly in the past. This talk can be [watched online](#).

3.5.1. Attendance

The event was attended by 13 people. It was only open to UoL staff who could use Agresso web to order items.

3.5.2. Feedback

Unfortunately, no one contributed formal feedback on this event, though there were positive comments from the audience using Zoom's chat function.

4. Awareness and access to UoL HR policies

4.1. Summary

In accordance with the **Concordat to support the Career Development of Researchers**, that UoL is a signatory to (Concordat Actions 2.2.5, 3.6.2, and 3.8.1), the UoL RSA consulted with the research staff community on 6 May 2021 about **their experiences of, and possible improvements to, the induction process**. This was identified as an area for improvement after the RSA hosted a survey and focus group in November 2020 on general awareness and barriers to accessing Human Resources policies. See Appendix 12.1 for the full report.

4.2. Participation

The focus group to discuss results from the survey was organised by RSA deputy co-chairs **Dr Sandeep Amberkar** and **Dr Malaka De Silva**. It was attended by 6 individuals, plus facilitators **Dr Saneeya Qureshi** and **Dr Angela Midgley**. The discussion was facilitated using visual whiteboard software [Mural](#) which had prompts and questions (see Appendix 12.2). Though number of participants was small, the group had a good range of experiences. There was a spread of those who had attended induction in person (pre COVID-19) and entirely remotely (at height of pandemic).

Notable findings included that **only half of participants had visited the New Starters Webpage**, so the RSA updated their Welcome email for New Starters (see Section 10.3) to signpost a range of pages from HR, The Academy and Prosper webpages badged as 'Resources for New Starters'. Though this information already sent out to new starters via HR, participants suggested that due to the 'information overwhelm' of moving institutions, cities and even countries, ECRs particularly would benefit from staggered and repeated signposting of information relating to induction.

Again, the group was fairly evenly split on whether they attended a local induction, in addition to central induction. **Local induction was identified as playing a key role** both in terms of gathering **institute or department-specific knowledge and contacts**, and in terms of **making social-connections**. It is unclear to us if this disparity is a result of varying levels of provision of uptake across UoL, or whether it results from varied local approaches to onboarding new starters during the COVID-19 pandemic. Reflecting UoL's transition to hybrid working, the focus group also preferred a mix of virtual and in person inductions being offered.

5. Making an Impact 2021

5.1. Summary

Making an Impact (MAI) was run by the Academy over five weeks between 10 May and 11 June and covered a range of topics **to support and sustain researchers from all disciplines on how to make an impact**. For more details a full report can be found [here](#). **Dr Kris Subramaniam** and **Dr Blanca Perez- Sepulveda**, then Co-Chairs of the RSA, were on the steering group for 2021 MAI. RSA Co-Chairs are also represented on the MAI 2022 steering group (**Dr Claire Wilson, Dr Alex James, Dr Michael Robinson** and **Dr Katherine Roscoe**), who have put forward suggestions for events that would benefit researchers, especially postdocs and ECRs.

6. Researcher Wellbeing Week - 5th-9th July 2021

6.1. Summary

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the UoL RSA and Academy delivered this series of events entirely online. Researcher Wellbeing Week took place during July 2021, with **10 sessions taking place over 5 days** (two sessions per day: one in the morning and one in the afternoon). Each session was introduced and chaired by an RSA committee member. In total, 89 people participated over the course of the week.

We also engaged on [social media](#) using the UoL RSA Twitter channel to advertise the programme of events, and to post links to the sign-up pages.

Sessions

When?	What?
5 July 09:00-09:30	Desk Yoga Desk Yoga is accessible for all levels and abilities and during the session, you will learn tools that you can use at your desk throughout the day to energise, stretch and refocus the mind, instantly change mood and boost overall wellbeing.
5 July 13:00-14:30	Positively Manage Worry 97% of what individuals worry about never even happens. Learn new strategies to managing worrying thoughts in an empowering manner, along with controlling self-talk. This session will also offer simple techniques to manage worry and fear in a more constructive and helpful manner.
6 July 10:00-11:00	Seven and a Half Easy Steps to Happiness Happiness plays a vital role in our lives. Join this action-packed webinar full of useful tips and strategies to increase your happiness and wellbeing whilst lowering your stress and anxiety.
6 July 13:00-14:00	Preparing for Re-Entry! The last 12 months has been a rollercoaster of highs, lows and anywhere in-between. Many of us are left feeling a little anxious with what lies ahead. This session will provide some practical tips and tools to help with 're-entry' and adjusting to a brighter future! If you are feeling a little wobbly about 'getting back to normal' this session has been designed for you!
7 July 10:00-11:00	How to Achieve a Calmer Life & Cope with Challenges Explore what hinders us from feeling calm and why, and gain an insight into the 4 C's of mental wealth – Chaos, Control, Choice and Calm. In just one hour learn to deal with stressful situations with clarity, spot the warning signs of when healthy pressure becomes unhealthy stress.

<p>7 July 13:00-13:30</p>	<p>Meditation for Relaxation</p> <p>Meditation for Relaxation allows the body to release tension and quiet the mind. By the end of this session, participants will have learnt: Breathing exercises to directly affect the mind and body and experience a guided meditation to relax the body and let go of unwanted stress and tension.</p>
<p>8 July 10:00-11:30</p>	<p>Create Your Perfect Vision Board to Manifest Your Goals & Dreams!</p> <p>Do you want to start creating new life adventures & start dreaming again? A vision board helps you focus using images & words This is a Workshop to have some creative fun! It will involve making a Vision Board that best represents what it is you want to be, have & do moving forwards in your life coming out of lockdown!</p>
<p>8 July 14:00-14:30</p>	<p>Help When You Need It - 24/7 (Validium session)</p> <p>Learn about University of Liverpool employees' access to free, independent, & confidential support for any personal or work-related concerns</p>
<p>9 July 10:00-11:30</p>	<p>Energise, Reset and Restore</p> <p>During times of change, it can be hard to stay calm, react wisely and protect our wellbeing. This interactive workshop will take you through tried and tested strategies - that will help you protect and promote good mental health and see you flourish and thrive in uncertain times.</p>
<p>9 July 13:00-14:00</p>	<p>Know Your Value!</p> <p>Worn out by well-being and not sure just how much more self care advice you can take anymore? Exhausted by simply thinking about it. This refreshing session will help you leave the past behind and focus on the future. When values get compromised the results can leave us feeling stuck. The session will help you explore your own values so you can make better choices that lead to a healthier and more fulfilling life.</p>

6.2. Attendance

- Desk Yoga: 19 participants
- Positively Manage Worry: 17 participants
- Seven and a Half Easy Steps to Happiness: 4 participants
- Preparing for Re-entry!: 8 participants
- How to Achieve a Calmer Life & Cope with Challenges: 9 participants
- Meditation for Relaxation: 9 participants
- Create Your Perfect Vision Board to Manifest Your Goals & Dreams!: 3 participants
- Help When You Need it: 7 participants
- Energise, Reset and Restore: 4 participants
- Know Your Value!: 9 participants

6.3. Feedback

'Fantastic practical session. Simple exercises to stretch and reset you can do at your desk. Fab session by Sian.'

'I loved the Desk Yoga! I already practice yoga and Pilates outside of work, it was really useful to see some floor-based exercises adapted to a chair that I can quickly do at my desk to keep moving and energised.'

'I really enjoyed the practical techniques to deal with worry, and to think about physically crossing worries off. I look forward to trying this.'

'As a 45 minute session, I think it was okay for a quick overview, but I would have liked some more time to go a bit deeper into the content (as a guided session, rather than to take away as a handout - even though that is also really useful).'

'Online worked well. Better than in person I think. As there was no travel time and so minimal impact on other plans for the day.'

'This session provided plenty of food for thought.'

7. National Postdoc Appreciation Week (NPAW)

7.1. 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 2021, NPAW was held from 20-24 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 UoL representatives on the Future Postdocs group, who organise the entire NPAW programme were: **Dr Saneeya Qureshi** (The Academy), **Dr Angela Midgley** (The Academy) and **Dr Katherine Roscoe** (RSA Co-Chair)

NPAW's opening event was a panel discussion on '**Celebrating Success: Exploring diverse careers in the Postdoc Afterlife**', featuring Dr Andy Chapman (Carbometrics), Dr Alison Garden (UKRI Future Leaders Fellow), Dr Nik Ogrysko (UKRI Talent Programme), Dr Christopher Phang (Codethink) and Dr Kirsty Ross (University of Strathclyde and University St Andrews).

The Academy and RSA also hosted two events during NPAW, which are discussed elsewhere in this report: the pre-National Postdoc Conference **Speed Networking** event (see section 9.6.8) which followed on from the 'Celebrating Success' panel on Monday 20 September, and the day-long **National Postdoc Conference 2021** closed out the week on 24 September (see section 9).

8. Virtual Coffee with the RSA

8.1. Summary of the event

Since access to campus continued to be restricted due to Covid-19, the RSA continued to have **virtual coffee meetings every third Thursday of the month**. They act as **informal opportunities to meet other researcher** from across UoL. It is an invaluable part of community-building, especially during hybrid working and for new-starters. The monthly coffees are advertised via our weekly e-bulletin and monthly email to new starters. From March - July 2021 these were hosted on [Kumospace](#), a platform which enables users to move avatars through a virtual space and have small-group conversations within a limited audio range. We hoped this would enable more dynamic, informal conversations than Zoom. However, we noticed a **drop off in attendance** due to unfamiliarity with the platform, and **barriers to participation** from those who attempted to join with a phone or tablet. For this reason, we decided from August 2021 to return to Zoom to ensure that the largest possible cohort could make the most of the opportunity to meet other researchers every month. In December, we will be hosting a festive virtual coffee, with Christmas jumpers, a game and a £10 voucher up for grabs!

8.2. Attendance

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

9. National Postdoc Conference 2021 (NPDC21)

9.1. Summary of the event

The University of Liverpool hosted the UK **National Postdoc Conference 2021** (NPDC21) on 24 September, to coincide with National Postdoc Appreciation Week. Led by **Dr Saneeya Qureshi**, Head of Researcher Development and Culture, and the team at the Academy (**Dr Angela Midgley, Luke Simpson, Jean Kearsley, and Lara Jones**), the **UoL RSA made up the rest of the organising committee for the conference**. This national flagship event gave the opportunity for postdoctoral researchers to engage with industry stakeholders, funding agencies, policy influencers, research developers and career development professionals.

The one-day online event had over 2000 participants from 100 institutions across all four devolved nations, and from 25 countries. The day featured a keynote by **Professor Dame Ottoline Leyster (Chief Executive of the UKRI)**, a **panel on collaborative research practices** that featured top-level representatives from **Universities UK, UKRI, the N8 and IBM**, and **30 parallel sessions** on topics ranging from 'Allyship in Academia' to 'Publishing in Nature'. All sessions were focused on providing postdoctoral researchers with the tools and opportunities to build a more innovative and inclusive research and innovation landscape, which was encapsulated in the conference theme **'New Realities, Stronger Connections, Successful Futures'**.

The keynote, panel and all parallel sessions are available to view on the [Conference website](#) in the form of video recordings, downloadable powerpoint presentations, a pocketbook of top tips, and a visual summary of the conference as a whole: forming a **comprehensive digital toolkit** (see Appendix 12.11 for an exemplar). Despite taking place online, the event included many **opportunities for synchronous and asynchronous networking** to help postdocs build 'Stronger Connections' with their peers across the UK and beyond. This included 8 pre-conference networking events between July -September 2021, a virtual poster competition on Twitter in 48 hours leading up to the conference, five networking rooms on Kumospace and a 'meet the sponsors' room (see Appendix 12,7), a Connections Board on Padlet and a custom conference Bingo (see appendix 12.4).

The conference was hosted in partnership with the **N8 Research Partnership** and we thank our generous sponsors **UKRI, IBM, Singular Talent, Code-switch, C-DICE, Inkpath and Facebook Reality Labs**.

More details on the different facets of the Conference are detailed below and in the appendix.

9.1.1. Feedback

Participants were encouraged to feedback the NPDC21 anonymously on a customised MURAL board with different sections for panel, keynote and parallel sessions (See appendix 12.15). Some posted comments generally about the day which are included here. **Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with many** emphasising about the range of events on offer, good organisation, opportunities for networking and accessibility. The only recurring complaint was about a large volume of emails generated since registration was required for each individual session, something that was unavoidable when offering such a large number of online parallel sessions.

Thank you to all involved for all your hard work in making sure that #NPDC21 was such a wonderfully organised, engaging and motivational day.

Wonderful day. Huge thanks to the organisers for a terrific programme that was inclusive and diverse. Bite-sized wellbeing sessions were great

So much to choose from, a rich variety of sessions.

The sessions were very professionally run. It was very smooth throughout the day

It is really excellent that this is open to researchers from all over the UK, and being digital makes it easy to attend from far-flung places (like Strathclyde)!

Not related to any particular session but I just want to say how great it has been to be able to dip in and out of the various activities.

'I really enjoyed connecting with everyone at this event and to explore the various facets of a digital conference'

'All in all a great event. I made two new connections on LinkedIn thanks to networking at the conference'

'We are encouraged to be more "open" about our research... I found this event to be a useful catalyst to begin to refer to my work in a non-academic domain'

9.2. Keynote - Prof. Dame Ottoline Leyser

The conference was opened by UoL's Vice Chancellor, **Professor Dame Janet Beer**, who handed over to **Dr Katherine Roscoe** (RSA co-Chair) who spoke about the central role played by postdocs in organising the conference and introduced our keynote speaker. The keynote speech at NPDC21 was given by **Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser**, Chief Executive of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and Regius Professor of Botany at the University of Cambridge, and was entitled '**By everyone, for everyone: supporting people across the research and innovation system**'.

Prof. Dame Lesyer's keynote speech focused on how UKRI is working to build a thriving and inclusive research and innovation system, including through the UK Government's recently published **R&D People and Culture Strategy, and what this means for early career and postdoctoral researchers**. In summary, Prof. Dame Leyser proposed that we must build and invest in a research and innovation system through which people and ideas move more freely, with each part benefitting from and supporting the others. Our ambition should be for a system in which everybody can participate and from which everybody benefits. The keynote speech can be viewed [here](#). **Professor Chris Day** (Vice Chancellor and President of Newcastle University) chaired the Q&A. The entire session had a BSL interpreter and was live-transcribed to promote accessibility.

9.2.1. Attendance

The keynote speech had a total of 211 registrations (57 UoL participants and 154 non-UoL participants).

9.2.2. Feedback

We received really strong feedback about the keynote, including:

'Really excellent overview on the big picture, thought provoking'

'Great talk with some very good points. Nice to see the view from the top'

'Great talk, very relatable and not as discouraging previous presentations of senior UKRI members I've heard. Curious to see if we will see changes in practice'

'Great start to the day, really interesting discussion'

'Really liked the focus on the wider research 'eco-system' those postdocs operate in, and recognition that big sweeping change is necessary to how we think about research as well as how we operate'

'It was very interesting and offered an eye opening to how research paths might change in the future.'

'Absolutely loved the Keynote and am looking forward to see some of the discussed actions brought to life'

9.3. Panel discussion: Collaborative Research Practices

The final session of NPDC21 was a **panel discussion focused on collaborative research practices**. The panel was an action-oriented and solutions-focused discussion about team-based approaches to research and development with representatives from the **four key stakeholder groups of the Concordat**: funders, institutions, researchers and managers of researchers. We're delighted to have brought together such a prestigious panel, **with high-level representatives from the UKRI, University UK, IBM**, as well as a researcher 'on the ground' level.

The panel was chaired by **Professor Dame Janet Beer**, Vice Chancellor, University of Liverpool. The members of the panel were:

Professor Julia Buckingham, President of Universities UK, FMedSci, DSc, FRSB.

Professor Annette Bramley, Director, N8 Research Partnership

Dr Karen Salt, Deputy Director, Culture and Environment in UKRI Strategy Directorate

Dr Edward Pyzer Knapp, Global Research Lead, IBM

Dr Joshua Kaggie, PhD, Senior Research Associate, former-president of the Postdoctoral Society of Cambridge.

The panel session can be viewed [here](#). The session was BSL-interpreted, live captioned and live-scribed in a visual summary of the conference enhancing accessibility, It was also live-tweeted on Twitter.

9.3.1. Attendance

The keynote speech had a total of 135 registrations. 24 from the University of Liverpool and 111 from other institutions.

9.3.2. Feedback

'I felt that this was a well-put-together panel -- and despite it being quite large all of its speakers were able to bring something different to the discussion. Some of the advice was very all-encompassing, but there were some quite practical and specific nuggets in there too'

'The live captioning was actually very useful as someone who did not need this facility to access the session -- it was great to scroll back check what had just been said, and so it improved my experience too'

'Great panel and really interesting discussions. Great end of the conference'

'Felt positive to have a session that was action oriented'

'A thought-provoking discussion to finish off the day'

'Really interesting panel who brought a range of perspectives. Liked that opening comments were short but 'big picture' and that there was still time for questions'

9.4. Parallel Sessions

Following the keynote, the bulk of the programme consisted of **30 bite-sized sessions** running over three parallel strands, labelled A, B and C. Each session was **45 minutes long** and was chaired by member of the UoL organising committee and a member of the steering group.

To maximise the benefits of the sessions having taken place online we have archived the sessions online and offered further information so they can function as a **set of online resources for professional and career development of postdocs internationally** (no password is required to access them).

On our conference webpage there is details of the session (what it's about, who it's for, its' objectives and details about who facilitated it), a video recording of the session (with closed captioning available), a downloadable PowerPoint presentation, links to further recordings and a copy of the session leader's five 'top tips' (available for download in PDF and word format; see Appendix 12.10). These can be accessed for each session at the following webpages: [Parallel Sessions A](#), [Parallel Sessions B](#), and [Parallel Sessions C](#). Twelve of our speakers also wrote blog posts about their NPDC21 parallel sessions in the build up to the Conference, which are available as a resource [here](#).

Strand A	Strand B	Strand C

A1: Careers in Industry: How to make the Switch	B1: Careers in Industry: How to make the Switch	C1: Researching the world, leaving no-one behind
A2: Self-assessment tools: Knowing me, knowing what to do	B2: Code-switching between academia and research consultancy	C2: Self-assessment tools: Knowing me, knowing what to do
A3: The Talented Dr Postdoc: A skills celebration		C3: The Talented Dr Postdoc: A skills celebration
A4: Research Survival: How to manage your health and wellbeing on your research journey	B4: Bouncing Back after a Disappointment – How to handle rejection like a professional!	C4: How to manage a tricky conversation with your manager
A5: The Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)	B5: Octopus: changing the way we publish - and do – science	C5: What can researchers do? STEM skills outside the academy
A6: Fast track your research impact	B6: Inner Realities: Stronger connections and successful futures	C6: How to get published in Nature – an ex-editor’s perspective
A7: The what, why and how of team science	B7: More than ‘Just About Managing’ - Stepping up to project leadership	C7: Releasing Potential - The power of coaching and mentoring
A8: Allyship in Academia: Creating a community where we all belong	B8: UKRI and Researcher Development: Changing culture across research careers	C8: UKRI and Researcher Development: Changing culture across research careers
A9: Preparing for a successful future	B9: Tackling Isolation: Community-building for postdocs	C9: Discovering your path to effective public engagement
A10: Raising your research profile by writing for The Conversation	B10: Blue Sky Research in Industry – not everything is measured by the quarter!	C10: Supporting the career development of researchers – how can we implement a supportive research environment?

9.4.1. Attendance

We did not record attendance for each session, but registration ranged from 10 to 80 with a mix of UoL and non-UoL participants.

9.4.2. Feedback

We received really positive feedback about the parallel sessions. Many mentioned phrases such as 'engaging', 'interesting' and 'informative'. Several people noted the practical focus, using terms like 'good tips', 'useful advice' and 'toolkit'

On the programme generally:

'So much to choose from, a rich variety of sessions'

'The sessions were very professionally run. It was very smooth throughout'

'It is really excellent that this is open to researchers from all over the UK and being digital makes it easy to attend from far-flung places!'

We also received feedback on specific sessions, which we've anonymised here, including:

'Really engaging and informative. A great panel'

'The seminar...was simply outstanding'

'Session was very informative and inspiring... Also, good discussions on dealing with and communicating uncertainty and what we can learn from COVID-19'.

'Great as an example of a session relevant to both HSS and STEM'

'Some very useful advice on transferrable skills...exactly what postdocs need'

9.5. Wellbeing Oasis

Since NPDC21 was a virtual event, we recognised that it was important to encourage participants to take screen-free breaks. Therefore, as part of NPDC21 we offered a specially curated collection of activities related to wellbeing available before, during and after the conference. From the RSA committee, **Dr Janette Greenhalgh** and **Dr Gabriella Melis** took the lead organising this.

Through our website, we provided **multiple self-directed wellbeing activities** and resources which were available prior to NPDC21 and continue to be available as an online resource. These include ambience music, connecting with nature, exercise, jigsaws and colouring, mindfulness and meditation, music, singing and yoga.

During the day of NPDC21 on 24 September 2021 the following **Active Wellbeing (AW) activities** took place:

- AW1 – Begin with the End in Mind
- AW2 – 7/11 Breathing
- AW3 – Out of your head – Into your body
- AW4 – W4 - Visualising Your Future

The AW sessions were facilitated by **Denise Chilton**, a Leadership Development Coach and Facilitator. The sessions were 10 minutes long and spread throughout the day with the aim to allow participants to learn about a technique to practice that can help you stay focused, relaxed, and think more clearly. The sessions can be viewed [here](#).

9.5.1. Registration

The AW sessions had a total of 175 registrations.

- AW1 – Begin with the End in Mind: 62 registrations (8 UoL participants; 54 non-UoL participants)
- AW2 – 7/11 Breathing: 41 registrations (7 UoL participants; 34 non-UoL participants)
- AW3 – Out of your head – Into your body: 32 registrations (4 UoL participants; 28 non-UoL participants)
- AW4 – W4 - Visualising Your Future: 40 registrations (5 UoL participants; 35 non-UoL participants).

Feedback

'Loved them being short snapshots!'

'Good for mind and soul. Helpful to be talked through a few mindful exercises'

'Wonderful short sessions that I could engage with throughout the day. Brilliant presenter'

'Having to register for one session at the time was not very practical'

'Great session with quick tips that can be implemented immediately'

'I really enjoyed them. There were some basic tools to use in the future. I think they were a little breather in the day'

9.6. Networking

Enabling networking between postdocs is one of the greatest challenges for an online conference. We felt it was crucial to ensure **postdocs could build connections** as feedback from previous NPDC events had cited meeting other postdocs as their highlight of the conference, and as isolation was keenly felt by many as a result of the pandemic. One of the themes of the conference was '**Stronger Connections**' and we put this at the heart of the conference organising.

We hosted a series of **eight networking events**, which took place weekly in the 2 months leading up to the conference, and which showcased a variety of activities - from more **traditional conversation-based networking to online games, and utilised a range of online platforms** (Zoom, Kumospace, Mural). In the 48 hours leading up to the conference we also hosted a **poster competition on Twitter**, where we encouraged dialogue between the creators and the judging panel, who came from industry and universities across the UK.

On the day of the conference, we offered a **mix of synchronous and asynchronous networking opportunities**: people could meet the sponsors or join our virtual happy hour in **custom networking rooms on Kumospace**, or they could add their details to the **Connections Board** (Padlet) and make contact that way. We recognised that some people would feel daunted about using new platforms or playing unfamiliar online games, so we created a [guide to using Kumospace](#), [Guide to Codenames](#) and to [Guide to Gartic Telephone \(Online Pictionary\)](#) which were available to download from our website.

To ensure the pre-networking events were **inclusive and accessible** for all we included a [dedicated webpage about the accessibility](#) of different platforms and external websites used across the 8 pre-conference networking sessions. We also ensured that the session that took place during the school holidays were scheduled for afternoons and involved family-friendly activities (i.e., crafting or games) or offered adjacent activities for children to perform concurrently (i.e. downloadable scavenger hunt for our Kumospace room, and colouring sheets from our [NPDC21 Virtual Delegate Pack](#)).

Overall, we had 131 people register across the 8 online networking sessions, 46 from the University of Liverpool and 177 from other institutions. **Dr Katherine Roscoe** and **Dr Alex James** led the organisation of these pre-conference networking sessions. The events were all facilitated on the day by both a UoL member of the NPDC21 organising committee and non-UoL members from the NPDC21 steering group. Participants gave feedback via a dedicated MURAL board (see Appendix 12.6)

An overview of the pre-conference networking events are listed below:

Event	Date and time	Platform
Virtual Coffee	5 th August 2021, 3-4 PM	Kumospace
Sustainable Art Show	11 th August 2021, 1-2 PM	Zoom
Online Pictionary	17 th August 3-4 PM	Zoom
Supermarket Sweep: Household Edition	23 rd August, 2-3 PM	Zoom
Virtual Movie Night	3 rd September 7-8 PM	Zoom
Pub Quiz	8 th September 6-7 PM	Kumospace
Codenames Game	17 th September 5-6 PM	Kumospace
Speed Networking	20 th September 1- 2PM	Zoom

9.6.1. Virtual Coffee - 5th August

This virtual coffee session was an opportunity for attendees of the NPDC21 and members of the organisers committee **to meet and get to know each other in advance of the conference**. It was hosted on Kumospace where we created a custom, virtual NPDC21 'café'. Participants could move their webcam avatars around a

customised, virtual environment, chat in small groups and even have virtual drinks. It enabled more organic conversations and better **replicated a real-life coffee break at a conference**. To help bridge the disconnect between virtual and real coffees, and encourage participation, we offered **two £10 vouchers as prizes** for the best mugs. Since we were cognisant these events were taking place over the summer holidays, we created a **scavenger hunt** worksheet for participants' children to complete with clues to 'items' they could find in the Kumospace room,

Attendance

We had 24 registrations, 9 from UoL and 15 from other institutions.

Feedback

We received very positive feedback for this event, including:

'Great chatting with people from different disciplines...more things like this!'

'Nice and inclusive communication...More events like this would be great!'

9.6.2. Sustainable Art Show - 11th August

During the pandemic, many people turned to art as a way to express themselves and be creative at home, so we organised a **craft-along** to celebrate this. Hosted on Zoom, we gave participants 30 minutes to **create a piece of art using things they'd usually throw away** or recycle and any art supplies they had to hand. This both reduced barriers to joining in from home or the office, and reduced waste, embodying the University's [pledge](#) for **sustainability**. People were very creative with what they had to hand (with art supplies ranging from toilet-paper rolls to old tennis balls) and crafting **helped the conversation to flow** in a way that is rare online. **Prizes were awarded** for the crafts voted as 'favourite' by the rest of the group and an image of the crafters and their creation shared on Twitter with permission.

Attendance

We had 7 registrations for this event, 3 from UoL and 4 from other institutions.

Feedback

Though it was a small group we received positive feedback, including:

'Really enjoyed this relaxing crafting session. Great chat and lots of sticky tape!'

'Really well run event, got to make some fun art and had a great time chatting to others'

9.6.3. Online Pictionary - 17th August

We invited postdocs to play an **online party-game called 'Gartic Telephone'**, which is a mix of Pictionary and the Telephone game. Participants joined us on Zoom and playing online on the Gartic Telephone [website](#). Play switched between guessing and drawing, leading to hilarious misunderstandings and a 'slideshow' demonstrated at the end what everyone had drawn and guessed. It was a great icebreaker event, and people got to get to know each other in a **fun, relaxed way**. To enhance accessibility, we provided a [guide](#) to playing the game on our website, and an [accessibility guide](#) to the platform as well. We gave two £10 vouchers as **prizes** to the drawings voted the most humorous by the rest of the group.

Attendance

We had 13 registrations, 5 from UoL and 8 from other institutions.

Feedback

The session was very well-received, with word 'fun' recurring. Other comments we received included:

'Creative and fun! Shows the importance of communication ☺ Props to the organisers!'

'A lot of laughter and a nice way to introduce some of the steering committee'

'Great activity, really good fun and informal. Nice to meet new people too'

9.6.4. Supermarket Sweep: Household Edition - 23rd August

We based this activity on the classic British television show. In the past year, a **weekly trip to the supermarket had become the highlight of our week**, so we wanted to acknowledge that reality and encourage people to get out from behind their desks in **the 'household' edition of Supermarket Sweep**. There were three mini games in this session. First, we gave clues to household items and the quickest to get them and show them over webcam won points. Second, we gave fictional 'shopping lists' of celebrities to guess who they are. Third, a quiz showing real and fictional logos that they had to identify. The two top scorers received **prizes of £10 retail vouchers**.

Attendance

There was limited uptake of this session with 8 total registrations, 3 from UoL and 5 from other institutions.

Feedback

Despite the small group size, we received positive feedback about the event, including *'fun session'* and *'Fun format!'*.

9.6.5. Virtual Movie Night - 3rd September

In this event, we wanted to spark conversation about a **communal experience** - in this case watching a movie - while also giving **a sense of Liverpool** as the place which was hosting, albeit virtually, the NPDC. We chose the **John Lennon biopic 'Nowhere Boy'** (2009), which was available to view for free via the University-subscription

service *Box of Broadcasts* and on the popular paid-subscription service, *Amazon Prime*. We enabled both asynchronous and synchronous viewing, but tried to replicate a sense of the communal viewing experience by encouraging people to press play with us at 5PM on the 3 September, with the RSA account live-tweeting the film using the #NPDC21movie hashtag and participants joining in with their comments and observations.

We then had the 'live' portion of the event at 7 PM with people joining on Zoom to hear leading historian of the Beatles and author of *The Beatles and Sixties Britain*, **Dr Marcus Collins** (Loughborough University), gave a talk called 'Imagining the Beatles'. Following a Q&A session, we had a short trivia quiz about the Beatles with ten questions, and £10 prizes were awarded to the winners.

Attendance

There were 22 registrations, 10 from UoL and 12 from other institutions.

Feedback

'Really interesting talk and fun quiz'

'Enjoyed all the tweeting during the film! Marcus Collins' observations about the cultural context of the Beatles was fascinating'

'Marcus talk was so interesting and engaging and the Q&A complimented it very well. The live tweeting of the film was really fun and the quiz after was great'

9.6.6. Pub Quiz - 8th September

We hosted a **pub quiz** in our customised Kumospace, which meant groups could chat in small groups (due to its limited audio range feature) and participants could even get up and get a **virtual drink from the bar**. We had 3 rounds of 10 questions covering a range of topic. We designed the quiz to include general knowledge topics that was not UK-specific to make the event **inclusive for international postdocs**. One of the rounds encouraged participants to 'guess' which of two options was the larger/greater, which successfully **sparked discussion** within teams and friendly rivalry between them. As well as broadcasting questions (and later answers) verbally to the room, these were copy and pasted into the chat box as text to ensure the event was accessible to all, and especially non-native English speakers. Members of winning team were awarded **£10 retail vouchers as prizes**.

Attendance

We had 15 registrations for this event, 5 from UoL and 10 from other institutions.

Feedback

We got extremely positive feedback from this event. Several mentioned that it was 'really fun'.

Other comments included:

'Absolutely loved the quiz, absolutely brilliant and very good fun. Great way to socialise and...lovely meeting with all the other team members too!'

'Fantastic way to meet people - great questions too! Lots of fun!'

'Really good fun, a nice relaxed way to meet others'

9.6.7. Codenames Game - 17th September

This online game of Codenames **challenged postdocs as master communicators** in their specific fields to broaden their terms of reference. It was hosted in Kumospace. In this **describing game**, two teams are pitted together to describe a set of unrelated words using just a single word of their own. We created a [guide](#) to playing the game for download on the NPDC website and the game was also explained by the facilitator at the start. Like charades, the party game encouraged good-natured rivalry and **got people talking** in an informal setting.

Attendance

There were 8 registrations for this event, 4 from UoL and 4 from other institutions.

Feedback

Despite low turnout we got very positive feedback about this event, especially considering many had never played the game.

Several comments mentioned it was *'Great fun'*

Other feedback mentioned it was a *'nice way to the end the week'* and a good opportunity to *'chat to other postdocs in a more informal setting'*

9.6.8. Speed Networking- 20th September

This speed networking event took place after the first event of National Postdoc Appreciation Week. It was an **opportunity for postdocs to meet other delegates and the organising committee** in advance of Friday's National Postdoc Conference. The session began with a number of **interactive 'ice-breaker' activities** which took place on the visual collaboration platform, Mural (see Appendix 12.5). This gave us and the participants an idea of which Universities and fields people were joining us from. We also offered participants a chance to win two £10 voucher prizes for the **best 'gif' to describe the postdoc experience**. The Mural board recorded **people's responses to some of the key issues in research and funding landscape** which the Conference would address (structured around its three themes, 'Stronger Connections, New Realities, Successful Futures'. We then broke off into smaller breakout rooms to **chat in small groups**, which participants were encouraged to 'jump' between should they wish.

Attendance

We had 46 registrations for this event, 7 from UoL and 39 from other institutions.

Feedback

We had excellent feedback on this event, including:

'Nice chatting to other postdocs about what boundaries and what success looks like'

'Great to meet other postdocs from different disciplines and institutions and to find out how much we had in common'.

9.6.9. Kumospace Rooms

We had **8 different, virtual networking rooms** on Kumospace open for networking on the day of the Conference. **Dr Angela Midgely** customised these rooms with NPDC21 branding, and users could move virtual avatars around the space and interact with objects (including drinking coffee or watching videos on TV screens). Delegates could **drop into these spaces at any point** during the day, and could access a [Kumospace guide](#) and [code of conduct](#) on the conference website. There were two rooms to meet platinum sponsors and gold sponsors respectively. Each sponsor had an assigned area, with their logo and web-links so that even people who did not visit when the sponsors were there could access further information. These rooms were open all day, but we ran a **'Meet the Sponsors' session** in the lunch break between 1-2PM.

We had **five social spaces** for active networking with other attendees, which allowed for participants to chat informally in pairs or small groups, thanks to the limited audio range on the platform. At the close of the conference, we hosted a **'Virtual Happy Hour'** in one of these social spaces. To be as inclusive of possible of different needs, we also at **two quiet conversation spaces** which were set out with areas further apart from each other to enable quieter small group conversations in a relaxed environment. We also hosted half of our pre-conference networking events on Kumospace platform (virtual coffee, pub quiz, virtual movie night and codenames) as the limited audio range and movable avatars facilitated dynamic conversation and competitive team-based games.

Attendance

We did not record participation but between a dozen and 40 people dropped into these virtual spaces at different times. **Angela Midgley** and **Luke Simpson** (the Academy) [reported](#) that they *'received feedback about people making friends [in Kumospace]...recreating that friendly chat in virtual space worked massively [well]'*. See Appendix 12.7 to see the design of the rooms.

9.6.10. Connections Board

To encourage participants to make new connections with other delegates at the conference we designed a Padlet board where NPDC21 participants could add their name, role and contact details. A total of 45 participants entered their details to the connections board. The board is now closed for privacy reasons.

9.7. Poster Competition

As part of the NPDC21 conference **Dr Alex James** and **Dr Katherine Roscoe** took the lead in organising an online poster competition on Twitter.

Submissions were open for postdocs and ECRs based at institutions anywhere in the UK. Posters could be about the postdocs research, or a response to the conference theme 'New Realities, Stronger Connections, Successful Futures'. We also allowed postdocs to **submit new posters or recycle posters** they had previously exhibited since that the NPDC21 competition brought their work to a brand-new audience and to reduce the workload of postdocs over summer and with the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Postdocs were asked to create a poster, upload it to Twitter 48 hours before the event, and engage with other researchers who were encouraged to ask them questions. To ensure posters were easily discoverable on Twitter we asked all entrants to use the hashtag #NPDC21. The competition acted as both an **online networking opportunity and a showcase** of the amazing research postdocs up and down the country are engaged with. It was a unique event as a poster competition that was both **national and non-discipline specific**. To encourage participation of those from disciplines where research posters are unusual, our webpage included 5 top tips on creating a good Twitter poster and links to further resources with advice.

We opened registration for the competition via MS Forms on 1 June 2021, three months before the conference, to allow people time to make or update a poster and get the relevant permissions. By using a registration form we ensured that the organising committee had the name and contact details of those who applied, which was important to contact them directly about receiving the prizes on offer.

9.7.1. Judging panel

The posters were judged by a committee made up of postdocs, senior academics, and research developer staff from the academy and industry. The judging panel was chaired by UoL's Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Impact, **Professor Anthony Hollander**, and was comprised of the following people:

Name	Organization	Role
Prof. Anthony Hollander (Chair)	University of Liverpool	PVC for Research and Impact
Tom Froggatt	Singular Talent (sponsor)	CEO
Dr. Alex James	University of Liverpool	Postdoc
Dr. Alice Dubois	Queens University Belfast	Postdoc
Dr. Alice Rees	University of Edinburgh	Postdoc
Dr. Angela Midgley	University of Liverpool	Research Staff Developer
Dr. James Howard	University of Liverpool	Head of The Academy

Dr. Katherine (Katy) Roscoe	University of Liverpool	Early career fellow
Dr. Philippa Rickard	University of Newcastle	Postdoc
Dr. Saneeya Qureshi	University of Liverpool	Head of Researcher Development and Culture
Dr. Shaojun Xu	University of Cardiff	Postdoc
Dr. Sophie Jones	University of Liverpool	Postdoc

9.7.2. Judging criteria

The judging criteria, which was listed on the NPDC21 website and communicated to the judges, was as follows:

- How clear and easy is the poster to read?
- How well is the work communicated to a lay audience outside of the creator's field/specialism?
- How well has the presenter responded to questions asked to them on Twitter?

The criteria were used to award our top 3 prizes of £50, £30 and £20 retail vouchers. We also offered 4 highly commended prizes of £10 retail vouchers for the posters which were most 'liked' on Twitter, reflecting public interest in their poster and how well they used the competition to network online.

9.7.3. Participation

In total we received 25 registrations for the event representing 14 different academic institutions from all devolved nations. Seven prizes awarded, and the winners were announced by Prof. Hollander at the close of the conference.

The prize-winning entries are listed below, and on our conference [webpage](#).

Name	Institution	Title of Poster	Awarded
Dr Laura Gray	University of Sheffield	BMI, Muscle Loss and Biomarkers in Older Adults	1 st place (£50 prize)
Dr Shona Moore	University of Liverpool	Outbreak at bluest festival	2 nd place (£30 prize)
Dr. Mapa Prabhath	Queen's University Belfast	A feasibility study to develop integrated diabetic retinopathy screening programme in the western province of Sri Lanka	3 rd place (£20 prize)
Dr Frances Sherratt	University of Liverpool	Making clinical research more accessible to patients from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds	Highly commended (£10 prize)
Dr Debabrata Dutta	University of York	Transcriptomics of cultivated and wild sesame	Highly commended (£10 prize)
Dr Sadaf Ashaf	University of Aberdeen	Osteoarthritis, Stomal-Stem Cells and Joint Pain	Highly commended (£10 prize)

Dr Tracy Mitchell	University of Liverpool	Life at home with medical technology: a photo elicitation interview study	Highly commended (£10 prize)
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9.8. Core Organising Group

Our core organising group at UoL included members of the Academy, all committee members of the Liverpool RSA Committee and several former RSA members. Collectively, they represented all faculties of the university and were at different career stages.

Name	Institute/Centre	Role
Dr Saneeya Qureshi	The Academy	Head of Researcher Development and Culture
Dr Angela Midgley	The Academy	Research Staff Developer
Mr Luke Simpson	The Academy	Administrator
Ms Lara Jones	The Academy	Apprentice
Dr Sandeep Amberkar	Institute of Systems, Molecular and Integrative Biology	Postdoctoral Research Associate
Dr Pearse Buchanan	Department of Earth, Ocean and Ecological Sciences (Jan - May 2021)	Postdoctoral Research Associate
Dr Malaka De Silva	Institute of Infection, Veterinary and Ecological Sciences	Postdoctoral Research Associate
Dr Janette Greenhalgh	Institute of Population Health	Senior Research Fellow
Dr Alex James	Department of Chemistry	Postdoctoral Research Associate
Dr Sophie Jones	Department of History	Postdoctoral Research Associate
Dr Revathy Krishnamurthi	Institute of Infection, Veterinary and Ecological Sciences	Postdoctoral Research Associate
Dr Gabriella Melis	Institute of Population Health (Jan - June 2021)	Postdoctoral Research Associate
Ms Mary Jane Monaghan	School of Electrical Engineering and Electronics and Computer Science	Honorary Research Assistant
Dr Michael Robinson	Department of History	Leverhulme Early Career Fellow
Dr Katherine (Katy) Roscoe	Sociology, Social Policy and Criminology	Leverhulme Early Career Fellow
Dr Krishanthi (Kris) Subramaniam	Institute of Infection, Veterinary and Ecological Sciences	Tenure Track Fellow
Dr Claire Wilson	Institute of Systems, Molecular and Integrative Biology	Postdoctoral Research Associate

9.9. Steering group

Our Steering Group included 12 **representatives from institutions across all four devolved nations of the UK**, consisting of postdocs, early career fellows and researcher developers. They attended 7 meetings with the UoL core organising group on 4 February, 9 March, 8 April, 6 May, 22 June, 15 July and 28 September 2021. Our **steering group were invaluable**: making suggestions about conference theme and speakers, offering feedback on our plans and sharing best practice, featuring in promotional ‘soundbite videos’ and sharing communications about the NPDC21 with their networks. They also acted as **facilitators** for our pre-conference networking events and for all three strands of parallel sessions on the day of NPDC itself.

The members of our NPDC21 steering group are listed below and is also available online [here](#).

Name	University/Organisation	Faculty/Institute	Role
Dr Sadaf Ashraf	University of Aberdeen	Institute of Medical Sciences	Postdoctoral Research Associate
Dr Joan Chang	University of Manchester	Wellcome Centre for Cell-Matrix Research	Postdoctoral Research Associate
Ms Rachel Cox	Careers Research and Advisory Centre	Vitae	Engagement and Policy Project Manager
Dr Alice Dubois	Queen’s University Belfast	Faculty of Medicine, Health and Life Sciences	Head of the Postdoctoral Development Centre
Dr Arya Gupta	University of Kent	School of Biosciences, Division of Natural Sciences	Postdoctoral Research Associate
Dr Aslam Jarwar	University of Manchester	School of Social Science	Postdoctoral Research Associate
Dr Alice Rees	University of Edinburgh	Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences	Leverhulme Early Career Fellow
Dr Phillipa Rickard	University of Newcastle	School of Natural and Environmental Sciences	Postdoctoral Research Associate
Dr Anjali Shah	University of Oxford	Oxford Nuffield Department of Orthopaedics, Rheumatology and Musculoskeletal Sciences/ UK Research Staff Association	Postdoc, Epidemiologist
Dr Bernali Waugh	University of Exeter	Institute of Biomedical and Clinical Science Research	Postdoctoral Research Associate
Dr Shaojun Xu	Cardiff University	School of Chemistry	Postdoctoral Research Associate

9.10. Accessibility and Inclusivity

We tried to put **accessibility at the heart of every aspect of the conference**. We catered for the needs of visually impaired participants by commissioning **BSL interpreters** and having **professional transcriptions** (including hard of sight options) for our Keynote and Panel. In our parallel sessions, we requested our chairs and speakers **describe their visual appearance** and speak slowly with pauses, and we enabled **closed captioning** for the recording of these sessions. On our website, we offered text-only word documents for download that are **screen-reader friendly** and used alt-text descriptions on all images. We also made it clear on our webpages and in all communications that if individuals required any other formats to aid accessibility, they could request it via

direct contact. We also included a dedicated webpage about [accessibility](#) for all platforms or external sites used for our pre-conference networking events.

In our detailed checklist and pre-conference briefing sessions we asked speakers and facilitators to **share their preferred pronouns** at the start of the session. Working closely with our steering group from institutions across the four devolved nations of the UK, and regular contact with UoL's BAME network, Disability Network, LGBTQ network and Female ECR network, helped us ensure a **breadth and diversity of the 150+ speakers and presenters** were available across our NPDC21 programme. We also differentiated these offerings for our participants by signposting who each would be most relevant for: Early Career Researchers (including Postdocs); Mid-Career Researchers, Managers of Researchers; Research-related Professional services staff; and others (funders, policy influencers, editors etc).

Recognising the time pressures faced by attendees, we ensured the recordings of NPDC21 events, wellbeing activities and other NPDC21 resources (blogposts, podcasts, videos, reflection logs, sponsors materials) were available for **asynchronous engagement**. These were also presented in **diverse formats - audio, textual, video and visual** - to suit different learning styles. On our conference website, we offered additional support for delegates suffering from **'zoom fatigue'** or other stressors via our dedicated 'wellbeing oasis' (see section 8.5) and quiet rooms on Kumospace.

To create a sense of belonging and inclusivity for all, we undertook a number of measures. In our communications post-registration and at the start of all sessions, including our pre-networking events, we asked people to adhere to [The Academy's Inclusivity and Code of Conduct](#) and our custom Kumospace [NPDC Code of Conduct](#) for the virtual social space. We also created an [NPDC21 Glossary of Terms of Acronyms](#) to ensure our diverse audiences coming from different sectors and countries could communicate well together. We also organised family-friendly networking activities over the summer holidays and communicated to participants that they were welcome to bring children along. We also offered [family-friendly activities](#) (colouring sheets, Kumospace scavenger hunt) for download on our website.

9.11. Assistance and Contingency Planning

We created a comprehensive **FAQ section** on the website which were themed for ease of reference. We also produced a thorough **contingency planning document** with back up plans in event of issues linked to technology, wellbeing, communication and unwanted attention. Members of the Academy manned the inbox and a helpdesk on Teams offering assistance to delegates in the lead up to and during the Conference.

9.12. Creating a sense of place for NPDC21

Despite taking place online we wanted to **showcase Liverpool as the host city** and give the event as 'sense of place' wherever possible. In our digital marketing we spotlighted the city; including incorporating its iconic skyline into our **visual branding**, such as our custom zoom backgrounds which participants could download from our website (see Appendix 12.8). We also included **'Did you know?'** sections with facts about the Liverpool at the bottom of every NPDC webpage.

Our pre-conference 'movie night' networking event showed the film *Nowhere Boy*, a John Lennon biopic filmed and set in Liverpool, accompanied by a talk on the history of the Beatles by historian **Dr. Marcus Collins** (Loughborough University). We were honoured to have UoL Vice-Chancellor, **Professor Dame Janet Beer** and Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Impact, **Professor Anthony Hollander**, open and close the event, signalling the **high regard the UoL SMT holds for the postdoc community**. At the start of the keynote and panel **local Liverpool students performed holding music**, and we also had a UoL postdoc charring every parallel session.

9.13. NPDC21 Sponsorship

We contacted numerous possible sponsors for NPDC21 including **industry employers, research funding bodies and companies focused on supporting research**. The sponsorship would go towards speakers' and facilitators' fees as well as prizes for networking events, and towards the BSL interpreters and transcribers.

We offered **four levels of sponsorship – Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum** (see Appendix 12.3) – with each level offering increased exposure at NPDC21. For Platinum sponsors we included their logo on all conference communications including the NPDC21 website, virtual delegate pack and on social media, offered them the opportunity to be involved in networking events and be part of the judging panel for the poster competition, and the opportunity to present in one of the parallel sessions. Our platinum sponsors were the N8 Research Partnership, UKRI, IBM, Codeswitch Consultancy, and Singular Talent. We also had one gold sponsor - C-Dice (Centre for Postdoctoral Development in Infrastructure and Cities) - and two bronze sponsors – Facebook Reality Labs and Inkpath.

9.14. NPDC21 Virtual Delegate Pack

We designed a **Virtual Delegate Pack** to enable participants to engage more fully with the conference. It was designed as a set of resource for participants to engage with in advance, on the day or and after the conference. We put together a range of offerings to **create a shared experience online**. We believe the virtual delegate pack added more value to the conference experience than in-person 'goody bags' by bringing together resources to access **asynchronously in different media** (visual, textual, audio) which operates as an archive of the 'top line' topics covered on the day and encourages participants to take action going forward.

The pack can be accessed [here](#), and it contains links to many associated resources from the conference: our downloaded pocketbook of top tips, self-reflection logs, Connections board, NPDC21 bingo, a specially curated playlist, family-friendly activates, zoom backgrounds, sponsor materials, podcast episodes, sound-bites, blogs, and the NPDC21 visual summary. More detail about these different resources are listed below.

9.14.1. Branded material

This range of branded material was available in a range of **image formats** for people to promote the event to their networks via social media or email (see Appendix 12.8). We also offered customised NPDC21 **zoom backgrounds** for delegates use, offering a visual feel of an in-person conference (see Appendix 12.9). All chairs

and facilitators, from the organising and steering committee, were able to download their own 'organiser' NPDC21 zoom backgrounds to help participants identify their role in proceedings.

9.14.2. Pocketbook of Top Tips

This resource includes **5 top tips from** each of the 30 parallel sessions available as a downloadable PDF and word document. It offered delegates information upfront to help them select which sessions they wanted to attend, acts a resource to refer back to, and operates as a way of navigating which of the recordings of the sessions to view on the website. RSA committee members also penned 3 pages of 'top tips' that were non-session specific and aimed at **helping postdocs engage fully with the conference and networking opportunities**. These top tips were: '**Network your way to Success**' and '**Collaborating with Postdocs Outside of your Institution**' by **Dr Katherine Roscoe** and **Dr Alex James**, as well as '**How to Thrive as A Postdoc: Tips for Postdocs by Postdocs**' by **Dr Sophie Jones**. The entire pocketbook of top tips can be found [here](#), and the design of just one page can be viewed in Appendix 12.10.

9.14.3. Self-Reflection Logs

We designed self-reflection logs as a way for participants to reflect on the day and think of ways they can incorporate what they learnt in the conference into their day-to-day life. We encouraged participants to switch off emails and phones for 30 minutes and dedicate this time to reflect on things they learnt from the conference. Two reflection logs were developed – a conference self-reflection log and a wellbeing reflection log (focused on findings from the Wellbeing Oasis). The self-reflection logs can be accessed [here](#), or viewed in Appendices 12.12 and 12.13

9.14.4. Sponsors materials

Our platinum and gold sponsors (N8 Research Partnership, UKRI, IBM, Codeswitch Consultancy, Singular Talent and C-Dice) selected materials relevant to postdocs attending the conference, including webpage links, videos and reports which were available in the virtual delegate pack.

9.14.5. NPDC21 Bingo

The **customised NPDC21 Bingo** sheet showcased in a grid all the NPDC21 resources and activities, linking to the relevant webpages, rather than a grid of numbers. It was designed as a **visual guide to all the conference had to offer** and offered participants the chance to engage with other delegates by printing or screenshotting the grid and sharing their progress on Twitter (using the hashtag #NPDC21bingo). To view the design, see Appendix 12.4 or visit our [webpage](#).

9.14.6. Activities for children

We were aware many delegates would be joining NPDC21 from home and some may have **childcare responsibilities** (especially during the pre-conference networking events which took place during the summer

holidays). In this [pack](#), we had **downloadable colouring sheets and other activities for children**. We also offered a scavenger hunt worksheet which children could complete in the customised NPDC21 Kumospace room.

9.14.7. Blog

We posted a series of **blog posts in advance of NPDC21 by facilitators of the sessions** that would be on offer for researchers on the day. A total of 11 blog posts were developed on a wide range of topics including research environment, personal development, and future careers. A full list of the blogs can be accessed [here](#).

9.14.8. Podcasts and Sound-bites

We developed **three podcasts** surrounding the main themes of NPDC21. The NPDC21 podcasts were released on 6, 11, and 20 August on the Anchor platform. In the delegate pack we also included links to recommended podcasts from The Academy. The full list can be found [here](#).

The first podcast was titled '**Stronger connections**' and involved a discussion on how to build stronger connections. Here, we spoke to **Dr Annette Bramley, Dr Claire Wilson, Dr Alex James** and **Dr Joan Chang**. The podcast can be accessed [here](#).

The second podcast was titled '**New Realities**'. Here we chatted with **Dr Sadaf Ashraf, Dr Gael Morrow, Dr Clara Barker, Dr Anjali Shah** and **Dr Michael Robinson** on the new realities researchers face. The podcast can be accessed [here](#).

The third and final podcast was titled '**Successful Futures**'. We spoke to **Dr Kate Baker, Dr Shirin Ghodke, Dr Siobhan O'Brien** and **Dr Katherine Roscoe** on successful futures with the speakers sharing their personal experiences and advice. The podcast can be accessed [here](#).

In addition to the podcasts, we also recorded **3 short sound-bite videos** to provide an overview of what NPDC21 is all about. The first video was a '**Save the date**' clip which provided an overview of what NPDC21 would have to offer which was released in May 2021. The second video was released in June 2021 and featured members of the NPDC21 organizing committee and steering group talking about what they are expecting from NPDC21. The third and final soundbites was released in July 2021 featured Dr Anette Bramley (Director of the N8) and the four RSA co-chairs (**Dr Alex James, Dr Claire Wilson, Dr Michael Robinson, Dr Katherine Roscoe**) welcoming people to register for the event. The sound-bites can be viewed [here](#).

9.14.9. Visual Summary

After the conference we commissioned a **visual summary** of the day by Katrina Swanton. The visual representation of the event is provided in the form of **illustrations, quote, key points and take-aways** from the day. The visual summary can be viewed [here](#), where it can be downloaded as PDF or as an accessible description of the image on word, or viewed in Appendix 12.14.

9.15. Other NPDC21 Communications

As well as the virtual delegate pack, we developed a wide range of resources and communications to promote and engage researchers in NPDC21. This included a **mobile app** to help delegates navigate the programme, and an **active Twitter account**. RSA Co-Chair also contributed text for the [University news press releases](#) about the conference and were interviewed by the N8 team for coverage of their 20th anniversary.

9.15.1. NPDC21 Mobile App

The **NPDC21 app provided a range of features to enhance participant's experience**. Users of the app were able to view the conference programmed and filter the programme to create a personalised itinerary. Other features included enhanced session information including information on the speaker, sponsor information, link to the poster competition, the Wellbeing Oasis, FAQs and other useful information. The app was available on the Apple App Store and Google Play. Information about the app can be found [here](#).

In terms of app users, by 24 September there were **90 iOS users and 90 android users**, with the average engagement with the app 8m 48s. On the day of the conference there were **58 active users**, which was up from 16 users the day before. The average engagement with the app of the day was 5m 27s. In terms of geographical location, 49 users were in the UK, 2 were in South Africa and 1 each for China, Germany, Iran, Malta, Palau, Thailand and the United States.

9.15.2. Twitter

The RSA twitter account ([@uol_RSA](#)) was **extremely active in promoting the range of events** on offer, using the hashtag #NPDC21. This was facilitated by creating a 'tweet sheet' for our committee's reference and sharing suggested tweets for our steering group to share via their networks. In the lead up to the conference, we advertised the opening of registrations, different aspect of the programme, and thanked our sponsors. We featured our series of three promotional films and podcasts. We also advertised our 8 pre-conference networking event, sharing feedback from our mural board, screengrabs of our customised Kumospace rooms, and live-tweeting the film Nowhere Boy for our movie night (using the hashtag #NPDC21movie). In the 48 hours leading up to the conference, we featured a **virtual poster competition** on Twitter (see Section 8.7) and encouraged delegates to the ask questions of the presenters. On the day of the Conference, we **live-tweeted the keynote and panel discussion**, and tweeted pictures of the **NPDC21 bingo** to highlight the different activities (synchronous and asynchronous) on offer for delegates to engage with. We believe that this social media activity was crucial in order to **build not just engagement but a sense of community** on the day of the conference.

10. RSA promotion and communication

During 2021 we have continued to reach the wider research staff community via the following communication channels.

10.1. RSA weekly bulletin

The UoL 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 UoL RSA Deputy Co-Chairs via a rota system, the weekly bulletin is an important channel for communicating activities organised by the UoL RSA, general opportunities for research staff, but also information related to wellbeing and support.

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

- **Header:** 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 COVID-19, resources from the Academy and other relevant updates or resources.
- **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 UoL RSA and stay in touch (email and twitter handle)

The screenshot shows the weekly bulletin layout with the following sections identified by callouts:

- Header:** University of Liverpool Research Staff Association, Opportunities and Information for Research Staff.
- Weekly opportunities for research staff:** National Public Conference 2021 (NPC21) - Networking sessions now open for registration. Includes a list of events such as Virtual Coffee, Virtual Collab, and various seminars.
- Feedback:** A section for researchers to provide input, including a 'Feedback' form and a 'Please get in touch with us' link.
- Important updates:** Updates from the Progress Tracker Project Manager, COVID-19 updates from Research Pockets, and information about the Research Staff Association's role in supporting staff.
- About the RSA:** Information about the Research Staff Association, its purpose, and a list of Deputy Co-Chairs from various faculties.
- Top Tips:** A section titled 'Did you know?' providing tips and resources for research staff.
- Contact details:** Information on how to stay in touch with the RSA, including email and social media links.

10.2. Twitter

The Twitter account [@UoL_RSA](#) is monitored and managed by the Deputy Co-Chairs. For NPDC21, tweets were drafted in advance by Chairs and Officers and shared with the team and wider steering group. We continue to maintain regular engagement, particularly during UoL RSA organised events.

10.3. Welcome email

In addition to the weekly bulletin, the UoL 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 UoL 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 the upcoming Lunch and Learn session
- **About the UoL and the Academy:** up-to-date information about the UoL RSA and the Academy, including how to join the RSA
- **Other information:** dynamic section filled with the most up-to-date information, such as an annual professional development, Prosper, the mentoring network, English language clubs, and updates on development activities
- **Contact details:** how to reach the UoL RSA and stay in touch (email and twitter handle)

10.4. RSA Teams Channel

The main channel of communication for UoL RSA is using the Microsoft Teams platform. We have designated channels for Chairs and Officers, General Information, Emails Received, and Conference Organisation. In 2021, to

The image shows a screenshot of a welcome email from the University of Liverpool Research Staff Association (RSA). The email is titled 'Welcome to the University of Liverpool' and contains several sections. On the right side of the screenshot, there are five yellow callout boxes with orange brackets pointing to specific parts of the email:

- Header & Aims of UoL RSA:** Points to the top section of the email, including the header and the 'Aims of the RSA' section.
- RSA-Organised Events:** Points to the 'STOP PRESS - COME NEXT EVENT!' section, which includes details about the RSA Virtual Coffee and the upcoming Lunch and Learn session.
- About the UoL RSA & The Academy:** Points to the 'Current Chairs of the Research Staff Association' section, which lists the names and titles of the current chairs.
- Other Information:** Points to the 'The Academy' section, which provides information about the Academy's role and the annual professional development.
- Contact Details:** Points to the 'Resources for New Starters' section, which provides contact information for the RSA and the University.

reflect our update in terms of reference for our RSA Liaison Committee, we rebranded our Teams channel to 'RSA Opportunities and Activities'.

11. Other activities and future plans

11.1. Podcast, blog posts and bite-size videos

Members of the UoL RSA have been engaged with **raising the profile of the RSA** at the University of Liverpool. Members of the Research Staff Association committee, past and present, 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 Katherine Roscoe**, [Networking and Building ECR Communities Online](#)
- **Dr Michael Robinson**, [Unanticipated opportunities demonstrated the research impact of ECR fellowship](#)
- **Mary Jane Monaghan** (former RSA deputy co-chair), [The Working Environment: Honorary status for postdoctoral researchers and research assistants at the University of Liverpool](#)

Members of the UoL RSA have also been highlighted as part of the Academy's Research Hub in [Celebrating Success: Members of our Research Staff Association](#).

In addition, Dr Bengt Tegner has written a post for the **Researcher Blog** on [How to be a resilient researcher](#). Further, Dr Michael Robinson and Dr Katherine Roscoe have featured as '[Researchers in Focus](#)' for the **Humanities and Social Sciences Faculty blog**, reflecting on their involvement in the University's researcher community as RSA co-chairs.

11.2. Representation within the Faculty

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

- **Dr Michael Robinson** and **Dr Katherine Roscoe** sit on the School of Humanities and Social Sciences Research and Impact Committee, and on the HSS Early Career Researchers Network Forum.
- **Dr Claire Wilson** is part of the ISMIB Post Doc Society and sits on the ISMIB Concordat Committee.

11.3. Meeting with Research Support Office

In response to concerns raised about grant costing from our liaison member raised at our regular meeting, the RSA co-chairs held a meeting on 10 June 2021 with Sarah Farnsworth and John Ellis at **the Research Support Office**. This enabled us to better signpost for our members existing support on grant costing (i.e., the [Application Life Cycle](#) and the [Quick Costing Tool](#), both circulated via the RSA weekly e-bulletin in the 'Did you know?' section). We also gave our members the opportunity to **feedback on the new costing tool and IRIS developments** in development by the RSO.

11.4. Planned future activities

2022 promises to be another active year for the RSA. We will continue to take an active role in organising and participating in **National Postdoc Appreciation Week in September 2022**, led by Postdoc Futures, and on 1

December 2022 we will host the **Research Staff Conference** at UoL. The RSA will continue to be represented on University committees and initiatives, including the **renewal of the Concordat Charter, new phases of RISE and the UoL's bid for Race Equality Charter**.

With Covid-19 continuing to impact campus access, the RSA will also continue to host 'Lunch & Learn seminars' online and monthly virtual coffees for the time being. We hope that a **blend of in-person and virtual events will be possible in Semester 2**. We will continue to use our Microsoft Teams Channel to disseminate information through **Liaison Committee members** at the local and institute level. We will continue to update as needed our **weekly RSA e-bulletin** disseminating opportunities and information for all research staff, as well as our monthly new-starters email. As the effects of the pandemic continue, we will continue discuss issues faced by researchers in **meetings with PVC for Research and Impact**, Prof. Hollander, every 3 months.

11.4.1. Lunch & Learn Sessions

Lunch & Learn sessions planned for 2022 are:

- 8th February: **From PhD to PI: Applying for and doing ECR research fellowships in Humanities and Social Sciences** which will feature a panel of four HSS early career fellows from different departments who have all been awarded grants by major HSS funders:
 - **Dr Ruth Nugent** (UKRI Future Leaders Fellow, Archaeology, Classics and Egyptology),
 - **Dr Christian Cooijmans** (British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow, Languages, Culture and Film)
 - **Dr Michael Robinson** (Leverhulme Early Career Fellow, History)
 - **Dr Katherine Roscoe** (Leverhulme Early Career Fellow and former ESRC postdoctoral fellow, Sociology, Social Policy and Criminology).
- 24th March 2022, TBC.
- 3rd May 2022, TBC.

11.4.2. Wellbeing event

The RSA will reinstate our tradition of hosting a BBQ and wellbeing event aimed at postdocs and early career research fellows in July 2022.

11.4.3. Research Staff Conference 2022

Due to the significant amount of time and energy spent by the RSA committee and the Academy organising the flagship National Postdoc Conference which took place in September 2021, no Research Staff Conference is being held in 2021. One will take place as usual on 1 December 2022.

12. Appendices

12.1. Report of HR Policies and Induction Focus Group

Objectives

The UoL Research Staff Association conducted a focus group on the 6 May 2021 on the topic of 'HR policies and induction'. This had been identified as an area of priority after a previous focus group conducted on 'Awareness and access to University HR policies' in November 2020. The main objective of this new focus group was to gain an understanding of the collective research staff experiences of the current induction process and how to improve it.

Attendees

Dr. Nicola Beesley, Dr. Frances Sherratt, Dr Katherine Roscoe, Dr Katalin Ujhelyi Gomez, Dr. Malaka De Silva and Dr. Sandeep Amberkar

Facilitators

Dr. Saneeya Qureshi, Dr. Angela Midgley,

Session Notes

We asked the participants to summarise their induction experience with the following questions (the numbers indicate how many participant responses):

1. How long have you been a researcher at The University of Liverpool?

- a. Less than 6 months – 1
- b. 7-12 months – 0
- c. 13-24 months – 1
- d. 25-28 months – 3

2. Have you visited /engaged with the new starter's webpage?

- a. Yes – 3
- b. No – 3

3. Did you have a local induction?

- a. Yes – 3
- b. No – 3

4. How did it compare to your central induction?

- a. *'I didn't have a local induction'* x4

5. What did you find most helpful from your local induction process?

- a. *'Introduced to people face to face (professional services staff)'*
- b. *'Health and safety, building orientation/facilities'*
- c. *'It was pretty poor to be honest'*

6. How would you improve the induction process?

- a. *'Consistency of approach across supervisors/departments'*
- b. *'Strengthening communication between central and local HR, so managers are aware of induction related documentation'*
- c. *'Faculty wide induction for all PDR/ECRs that have joined in certain time period'*
- d. *'Link to Concordat – What is expectation of you as researcher and your manager'*
- e. *'Make sure that there isn't duplication between the local and central procedures'*
- f. *'Not a box ticking exercise, don't assume that just because you were a student you know things'*
- g. *'It is important to include simplified versions of setting up your VPN correctly, such as, setting up 2-factor authentication system'*
- h. *'It is important to have clear workflows for starters to remind them of mandatory tasks such as submitting their P45 in time'*
- i. *'It would be helpful to have a section on remote-working to cope with the changed working style'*
- j. *'After a week or two to have links to more soft support (i.e. which faculty level networks, postdoc networks etc) – time lag to avoid overwhelm'*
- k. *'A how to/ where to contact for various of the common issues e.g. car park, pension, payroll'*
- l. *'Have my contract sorted before my start date so it's less of a manic experience'*
- m. *'I find the A to Z on the HR the easiest to navigate, otherwise I can't find things'*
- n. *'Advice on how to use HR core and what expectations are (re. PDR/ expenses etc.)'*
- o. *'Local buddy – most useful info was from my office mate (another postdoc)'*
- p. *'Link to concordat – what is expectation of you as researcher and your manager'*
- q. *'If a staff member has been on redeployment and employed in different department – perhaps clarity around what their induction should entail – as comprehensive or what are the areas they would need?'*
- r. *'I think a master list of professional service at a school level (who to contact when you need different things) would be useful'*

7. What mode of induction would you prefer, virtual or face to face?

- a. Virtual - 2
- b. Face to Face - 3
- c. Both - 1

Conclusion

Postdocs would appreciate a mix of virtual and face-to-face induction processes on offer. Half of participants had accessed the University New Starter webpages, but some indicated that it was not always easy to find the information they needed online.

They also indicated that particularities of local (departmental or faculty-wide) induction were crucial alongside a broader wide induction for university-level processes. It seems that a blended approach – where personalised, face-to-face departmental/faculty wide induction is offered, followed by signposting of resources or digital induction/training in wider university processes (e.g., how use Core HR, workflow for mandatory tasks like submitting P45, points of contact for payroll issues) may be beneficial. These induction processes could be staggered to help avoid ‘information overwhelm’ when postdocs had just started new contracts, often moving department, city, or country. The question of which professional member staff to contact with queries was raised at school, faculty, and university level, as was a personal hands-on-approach that differentiated between local induction needs of new starters compared to needs to understand University-wide policies and procedures.

The consensus of the focus group was to make the induction process more personalised, and not to feel like a ‘box-ticking exercise’. One person suggested they would appreciate a ‘buddy’ system, another suggested signposting to researcher/ECR networks as a form of peer support. Others suggested that completing induction alongside a group of peers who started in the same period would enable cohort-building. The focus group indicated that they appreciated the practical aspects of the induction process which were institute specific, and that local inductions played an important role in this respect. For more information, they tended to refer instead to central intranet pages though these were not always easy to navigate.

12.2. HR Policies and Induction Focus Group MURAL

This is a copy of the MURAL whiteboard we used to lead discussions and collate information during the focus group on HR policies and induction groups.

1 How long have you been a researcher at the University?

Less than 6 months	7-12 months
13-24 months	25-48 months
More than 4 years	

2

liverpool.ac.uk/intranet/hr/new-starters/

Human Resources Intranet

University Home - Human Resources Intranet - New Starters

New Starters

This section will introduce you to working life at the University of Liverpool. It will prepare you for the induction process, help you to familiarise yourself with University policies and advise you on employee matters such as payroll, transport and facilities to ensure you easily settle in to your new role.

Welcome from our Vice-Chancellor
Vice-Chancellor Professor Dame Janet Beer wishes you a warm welcome to the University of Liverpool

Pre-arrival
Information to help you prepare for your new job, including information on relocating to Liverpool

On your first day
Find out what to expect on your first day, how to get a staff card and a computing account, how to get here and more

The first week
Policies, forms and guides, information about benefits for staff and trade

The first few months
Attend a welcome event and an IT induction, complete the Obligatory

Additional information
International staff, academic and research staff, clinical academic staff

Add a pink circle if you visited/engaged with this website?

Q. Did you have a local induction?

Q. How did it compare to your central induction?

I didn't have a central induction

me neither

I didn't access central induction

I didn't have a central induction - Sandeep

3 What did you find most helpful from your local induction process ?

Introduced to people face to face (professional services staff)

Health and safety, building orientation, facilities

It was pretty poor to be honest

How would you improve the induction process?

Consistency of approach across supervisors/depts

Facility-wide induction for all PDR/ECs that have joined in certain time period

Link to concordat what to expect of you as researcher and your manager

It is important to include simplified versions of setting up your system such as using VPN correctly such as setting up 2-factor authentication system

What mailing lists you should expect to be on

Have my contract sorted before my start date so it's a less manic experience

A how to / where to / how to contact for various of the common issues e.g. car park, pension, payroll

I find the A to Z list the HR the easiest to navigate, otherwise I can't find things

Advice on how I use HR Core and what expectations are (re. PDR/ expenses etc)

local buddy - most useful info was from my office mate (another postdoc)

Virtual induction or face to face? - add a star

A combination of both would be good I think - meeting people face-to-face would be very useful

both as someone who commutes in. Good to meet people f2-f but to refer to other resources online

I think f2f would be good for me but I know of staff who will continue to work remotely and live a sig distance from campus who would prefer virtual option

12.3. NPDC21 Sponsorship call

Sponsorship call appended to emails to potential sponsors of NPDC21, with 4 sponsorship levels.



National Postdoc Conference 2021 *New Realities, Stronger Connections, Successful Futures*

The University of Liverpool Research Staff Association are delighted to announce that we are hosting the 3rd biennial National Postdoc Conference (NPDC). The [CEO of UK Research and Innovation \(UKRI\), Professor Dame Ottoline Levser has kindly agreed to give the keynote address.](#)

Thanks to the financial backing of sponsors, previous conferences in [Cambridge](#) and [London](#) have galvanised the research staff on themes related to personal and career development and we aspire for this event to raise the bar even further. This is an opportunity for businesses to meet/recruit/network with innovative researchers and scientists in Higher Education.

Context: The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed many inequalities within academia and higher learning as the [results of a recent Nature survey show](#). The theme for the NPDC21 "New Realities, Stronger Connections, Successful Futures" reflects the complexities of the current higher education research environment within which postdocs operate. There is an increasing recognition of postdoctoral researchers' expectations regarding career development and the provision of healthy working environments that attract and develop a more diverse workforce. The resultant impact on individual and institutional performance, and enhanced staff engagement is further fostered through the empowerment of a community of postdoctoral researchers who are equipped and supported to be adaptable and flexible in an increasingly diverse global research environment and employment market.

Specific aims of the day-long conference include enabling:

- UK postdoctoral researchers to **hear about key initiatives** and the direction of travel across the national research agenda
- Postdoctoral researchers from all disciplines and research institutions in the UK the **opportunity to meet and network** with each other and with invited speakers
- a platform for **bite-sized researcher development activities** to foster conversations that augment and empower postdoctoral researchers to **harness their career prospects and opportunities**

The NPDC will take place on **24th September 2021**, to coincide with the last day of National Postdoc Appreciation Week 2021, which celebrates the significant contributions postdoctoral researchers make to delivering and progressing research excellence.

Aim and audience: The day-long conference will give UK postdoctoral researchers the opportunity to come together to hear about key initiatives and the future vision of the national research agenda in the post-pandemic setting. We will be hosting the conference as a virtual, interactive event which will open up the event to a national audience. The event will also include opportunities for sponsors to engage with a diverse audience through hosting a session, either short 5-minute presentations or longer workshops, and be a part of online networking and marketplace sessions held in dedicated virtual spaces. Key national stakeholders invited to the event include postdoctoral researchers from all disciplinary backgrounds, stakeholders from industry, funding agencies, policy influencers, editors, academics, researcher developers, and career development professionals. **We expect 2,500 individual attendees on the day.**

Track record: We have a successful record of working with multiple institutions and partners, and directly coordinating very large online events. Established in 2018, the University of Liverpool RSA is run by volunteer research staff for research staff. In 2020 alone, supported by the Academy at Liverpool, we organised and delivered flagship national events for over 1500 individuals across 73 institutions



across the UK and internationally. You can read reports of some of our activities from [2018](#), [2019](#) and [2020](#).

We are seeking sponsorship for the NPDC21 to cover speakers' and facilitators' fees, as well as prizes to foster participants' engagement before and during the event – even a small amount of money will go a long way.

Benefits of sponsorship: The NPDC21 is the largest national conference and networking event dedicated to the postdoctoral community. As a sponsor of the NPDC21, we provide you with an invaluable opportunity to interact with a national gathering of postdoctoral researchers, postdoctoral office administrators, national policy bodies, industry representatives and anyone with a vested interest in the country's future research leaders. Your organisation will have the opportunity to discuss policy, enhance career development, and effect meaningful change in local and/or national postdoctoral communities. Sponsoring our event is a great opportunity to reach and interact with this community to build long-lasting, collaborative relationships.

We offer four levels of sponsorship:

Bronze - £300

- We will include your logo on advertising [conference website](#), conference program (circulated to 15,000+ researchers and research-related individuals), promotional e-mails, the conference app, and place holder slides during the event

Silver - £500

Bronze benefits PLUS

- We will specifically acknowledge your sponsorship on social media via [@LyResearch](#) and [@UOL_RSA](#) including [#NPDC21](#)
- Be part of the [networking sessions](#) via a virtual space that has rich illustrations and interactive environments to help facilitate engagement that feels informal and close to what you would experience when sharing the same physical space

Gold - £750

Silver benefits PLUS

- An opportunity to present a [5-minute presentation](#) in a relevant 45-min sessions during the day
- Be part of the judging panel of an NPDC21 competition
- Include your marketing/promo materials on the NPDC21 website and in a virtual conference bag for all registrants

Platinum - £1000

Gold benefits PLUS

- The opportunity to have a [45-minute presentation](#) during the event on a topic that is related to the NPDC21 theme and fosters the career development of postdoctoral researchers

Please let us know by **29th March 2021** if you would be interested in sponsoring this event. If you would like to discuss further, please get in touch with us by e-mailing ResearchStaffAssociation@liverpool.ac.uk

Thank you

On behalf of the postdoctoral researchers organising committee

12.4. NPDC21 Bingo

This customised bingo was available to download from our Conference Virtual Delegate Pack to showcase all the different facets of the conference and the website. Delegates were encouraged to track their progress on Twitter using the #NPDC21bingo hashtag. Available to view online [here](#).













UNIVERSITY OF
LIVERPOOL

NPDC21
NATIONAL POSTDOC CONFERENCE 2021

BINGO

INSTRUCTIONS: We hope you enjoy our twist on the traditional game of bingo! As you engage with the networking and conference sessions, mark the space of all the things you achieve. **Screenshot your progress and post it on Twitter using #NPDC21Bingo to let us know how you get on!**

 Ask a question about an #NPDC21 poster on Twitter	 Take a break from your screen	 Attend the NPDC21 keynote	 Read the ' NPDC21 Pocketbook of Top Tips '
 Listen to an NPDC21 podcast	Attend a parallel session	 Listen to the NPDC21 Spotify playlist	Take a break in the Wellbeing Oasis and fill in a wellbeing reflection log
Read a fact about Liverpool NPDC21 web pages	 Network in Kumospace	 Attend a pre-conference networking session	 Tweet about the conference using #NPDC21
Go through some of the NPDC21 sponsors' materials from the virtual delegate pack	 Make a coffee/ tea	Submit to the NPDC21 Poster Competition	Make connections on the NPDC21 Padlet Board
Feed back on the NPDC21 Mural wall	 View an NPDC21 soundbite video	Fill in a self-reflection log from the virtual delegate pack	 Streeeeeetch!

For more information visit: liverpool.ac.uk/npdc21

12.5. NPDC21 Speed Networking MURAL

This is the interactive MURAL board populated during the NPDC21 pre-conference 'speed networking' event on 20 September.

1 Please refer to our code of conduct for events

1 Where are you based?
Write your name on a pin and add it to the map of the UK
*Double click the box to enter text



2 What do you work on?
Write your answer on a Post-It and place it near the "area" you identify most closely with



3 Choose a cat
Add your name to a sticky note and place it on the cat that best describes how you feel today.



4 Find the best GIF to sum up the postdoc experience
Tip: Search for and add images from the left toolbar. Type the word "gif" to include GIFs in the result.



5 Next small group conversations!
The organisers will allocate you into break out groups in Zoom
You can jump between different rooms or stay in one room if you prefer!
There are some conversation starters below. Add Post-It Notes with your thoughts on to the board to keep track of your group's discussions!



6 Follow up
Click "open link" box or double click on thumbnails

- Visit our virtual networking room on Kumospace kumospace.com/npdc21
- Join our NPDC21 Connections Board <https://padlet.com/foresearcher/npdc21>
- Browse Friday's Conference programme! <https://bit.ly/npdc21>
- Leave us feedback! <https://bit.ly/npdc21networking>



12.6. NPDC21 Pre-Conference Networking Feedback MURAL

Participants were invited to give feedback anonymously about the NPDC21 pre-conference networking events on our custom MURAL board. Available to view [here](#).

UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL

NPDC21
NATIONAL POSTDOC CONFERENCE 2021

Instructions:
Click on a post-it note around the outside and add to the board of the networking event(s) you have attended. **Please note**, you can use the zoom settings in the bottom right hand corner to make each area of the board larger.
Please let us know;
1) What you enjoyed?
2) What would you like to see in the future?

Note: Feedback posted here is anonymous but will also be viewable to other NPDC21 attendees, so must conform to The Academy's Code of Conduct for events.

Supermarket Sweep
Fun session! Thanks Katy and Alex
Fun format!

Speed networking
Nice chatting to other postdocs about boundaries and what success looks like.
cool
Another great event, had a really lovely chat with other postdocs.
Great to meet other postdocs from different disciplines & institutions and to find out how much we had in common in terms of shared anxieties/feelings about academia.

Virtual Coffee
1. Great chatting with people from different disciplines.
2. More things to try!
All was Tings!
3. How are you? 4. How are you? 5. How are you? 6. How are you? 7. How are you? 8. How are you? 9. How are you? 10. How are you?

Codenames Game
My favourite game so there's that! Great fun and a great way to end the end!
Fun, but tricky if not familiar with the US. Nice way to end the week.
Good fun - lots of discussion and chat while playing a game!
Great fun - lovely to chat to other postdocs in a more informal setting.

Online Pictionary
Creative and fun! Shows the importance of communication! Thanks to the organisers!
A lot of laughter and a nice way to introduce some of the steering committee.
What fun!
Great activity, really good fun and informal. Nice to meet new people too.
Really fun - great way to meet new people!

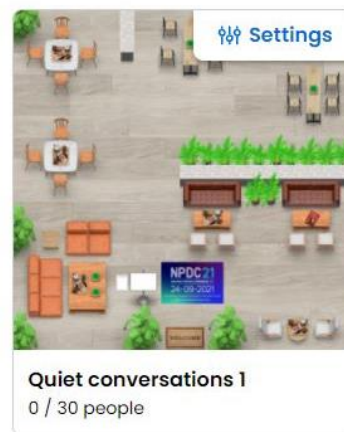
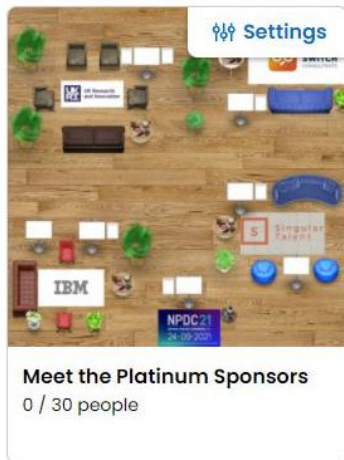
Sustainable Art Show
Really enjoyed this relaxing crafting session. Great chat and lots of sticky tape!
Really well run event, got to make some fun art and had a great time chatting to others at the event too!

Pub Quiz
Team 2 Hit 2 Hands!! Absolutely loved the quiz, absolutely brilliant and very good fun. Great way to socialise and lovely meeting with all the other team members too!
Really fun quiz with lots of varied questions, and really nice chat within the team. Enjoyed meeting the other team too. Lost Cambridge!
Fantastic way to meet people - great questions too! Lots of fun!
Really good fun, a nice relaxed way to meet others

Virtual Movie Night
Great event. Really interesting talk and fun quiz.
Enjoyed all the tweeting during the film! Marcus Collins' observations about the cultural context of the Beatles were fascinating and definitely struck some chords (as intended) with me. Thanks very much, everyone!
Marcus took me to...
Really enjoyed the quiz and the Q&A with the team. Very well run. The quiz was very fun and the Q&A was really interesting. Thanks very much!

12.7. NPDC21 Kumospace Networking Rooms

These Kumospace virtual networking rooms for NPDC21 were customised with different décor and layouts, as well as sponsor and conference branding.



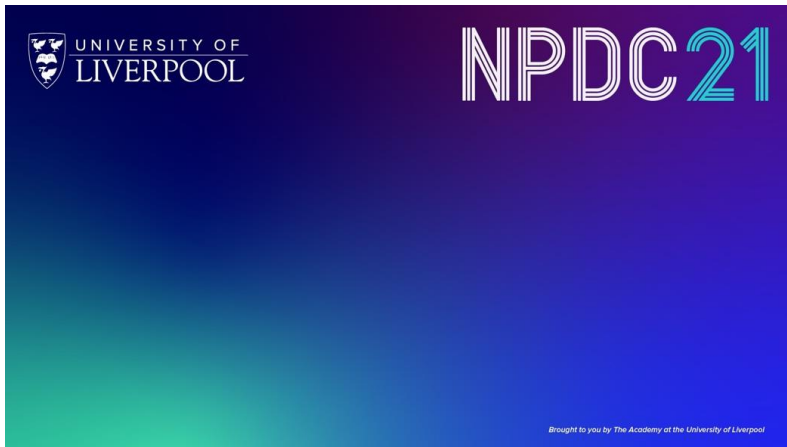
12.8. NPDC21 Branding

Here is a sample selection of the branded content - including email signatures, badges, banners and document covers - which are available to download on the NPDC21 press pack [here](#) and were used to promote the conference and give a cohesive look.



12.9. NPDC21 Zoom Backgrounds

Branded Zoom Backgrounds were downloadable for NPDC21 delegates from our [Virtual Delegate Pack](#). Organisers and speakers had separate zoom backgrounds to differentiate them.



12.10. NPDC21 Top Tips Example Page

An exemplar page from our pocketbook of top tips showcasing tips from 30 parallel sessions and several custom top tips about thriving as a postdoc and networking effectively.

TOP 5 TIPS

Network your way to success

ATTEND EVENTS
There are so many virtual events going on, so make the most of them, you may meet someone you never expected to.

BE BRAVE
If no one is speaking, be the one to step up and start the conversation. It can be nerve-wrecking but if you're respectful and interested, you can't go far wrong!

USE TWITTER
Follow people and use relevant #s to engage with a wider audience, and don't be afraid to @ people directly to connect!

FOLLOW UP
If you've met someone at a conference, follow up with an email thanking them for the talk. It'll give you a basis for future conversations!

ASK QUESTIONS
Ask questions in person or online (over email or social media). Most people will appreciate you showing an interest in their work.

NPDC21
NATIONAL POSTDOC
CONFERENCE 2021

Brought to you by the Academy
at the University of Liverpool
www.liverpool.ac.uk/npdc21

#NPDC21
@LivResearcher
@LivUniAcademy

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12.11. NPDC21 Parallel Session Example Webpage

Every parallel session during NPDC21 has a webpage with the following information available on Researcher Hub: [Parallel Sessions A](#), [Parallel Sessions B](#), and [Parallel Sessions C](#).

- Case Studies
- Prosper
- Celebrating Success
- Research Staff Association
- Research Staff Conferences
- Making an Impact
- Research Staff Resources
- Postdoc Appreciation Week
- UK National Postdoc Conference (NPDC21)**
- Programme
 - Equity, diversity and inclusive community
 - Networking and engagement opportunities
 - Wellbeing Oasis resources
 - Kumospace guide
 - Virtual Delegate Pack
 - FAQs
 - Press pack
- Postdoc Appreciation Week 2020
- Postdoc Appreciation Week 2019
- Thanks to Postdocs
- Researcher work/life balance
- Researcher Blog
- Part of The Leadership, Organisational, Professional & Academic Development Academy

PSC2 - Self-assessment tools: Knowing me, knowing what to do

Life is too short to try out every career you could possibly do or enjoy, so how to narrow it down? By using self-assessment tools!

About the session

Participants will learn what self-assessment tools are, what they are useful for and who actually uses them. Specific self-assessment tools will be highlighted, along with feedback from postdocs who've used them. Next steps and what to do with their findings will be discussed.

Quick links

[Back to programme](#)

Who is it for?

Early Career Researchers (including Postdocs)

Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Understand why self-assessment is important
- Try out some self-assessment tools
- Reflect on the findings from self-assessment tools
- Plan how to use the results to aid their career development journey.

Get to know your facilitators

Members of the Prosper team at the University of Liverpool, University of Manchester and Lancaster University

Co-hosts are Fiona McBride (she/her): fmcbride@liverpool.ac.uk and Andrew Holmes (he/him): A.Holmes4@liverpool.ac.uk

Prosper is a £3.6M Research England funded project which will run for 3.5 years finishing in March 2023. Prosper aims to co-create a model of postdoc development that will empower postdocs to realise their potential across multiple career pathways.

At its heart the project is all about unlocking the huge potential and talents of the postdoc community for the benefit of postdocs themselves, Principal Investigators, employers and the wider UK economy.

Session video and presentation



Download the presentation (PPT, 3.4MB)

Further resources

None of these are compulsory or necessary to engage with ahead of the session! They are provided for further information.

- [Read our blog about self-assessment tool](#)
- [Try out a free self-assessment tool or https://www.imaginephd.com/](https://www.imaginephd.com/)
- [Read this article from Your Unicorn Career](#)
- [Listen to Squiggly Careers blog](#)

All NPDC21 listed resources including presentation slides and top tips are freely available. Please ensure you acknowledge the author(s) and/or source when using them.

Top Tips

Quick links

Download a Word version of the session

[Top Tips \(Word\)](#)

Access the full NPDC21 Pocket Book of

[Top Tips](#)

Brief summary of the session

Who the intended audience is

Objectives for the session

Name and details of the facilitator(s) including contact

Video recording from Zoom (with closed captions) and downloadable powerpoint presentation

Links to further resources (external websites, blogs, videos etc.)

Download 5 top tips for this session (PDF) or link to download entire pocketbook of Top Tips (PDF or word document)


12.12. NPDC21 Self-Reflection Log

This self-reflection log is available for download from the NPDC21 virtual delegate pack [here](#). It encourages delegates to reflect on what they learnt during the conference and what actions they can take in the immediate- and short-term.

 UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL	NPDC21 NATIONAL POSTDOC CONFERENCE 2021
SELF REFLECTION	
What have you learned from the NPDC21?	Were any of your existing views changed or challenged? What key strengths did you uncover? What areas of development have you missed?
Please type here	
What are you going to change in the short term?	Is there anything you can do differently starting tomorrow? What specific actions will you take to apply or follow up your learning?
Please type here	
What do you hope to change in the next 3 months?	What do you hope to be doing differently in 3 months time? What steps will you take to achieve them? How can others help you reach those aims?
Please type here	


12.13. NPDC21 Wellbeing Reflection Log

This Wellbeing self-reflection log is available for download from the NPDC21 virtual delegate pack [here](#). It encourages delegates to reflect on their goals for wellbeing in the short-term and over the next 3 months.

 UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL	NPDC21 NATIONAL POSTDOC CONFERENCE 2021
WELLBEING: Making a commitment to yourself	
Please complete if you took part in any of the wellbeing activities available during NPDC21	
What are you going to do for your wellbeing in the short term?	How do you plan to integrate any of the wellbeing activities into your routine?
Please type here	
What do you hope to have improved about your wellbeing in the next 3 months?	How will you regularly practice any of the activities to contribute to your sense of wellbeing in 3 months' time?
Please type here	

12.15. NPDC21 Feedback

Participants were invited to give feedback anonymously about NPDC21 on our custom NPDC21 Mural board. Available to view [here](#)



UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL

Note: Feedback posted here is anonymous but will also be viewable to other NPDC21 attendees, so must conform to The Academy's Code of Conduct for events.

Instructions

Click on a post-it note around the outside of the board and add to a particular section on the board regarding a session you have attended OR anywhere outside of the boxes to feedback on the conference as a whole. **Please note** you can use the zoom settings at the bottom right to make any area on the board larger. Please let us know;

- 1) What did you like?
- 2) What would you want to see next time?
- 3) What one (or more) personal insight will you take away?

NPDC21

NATIONAL POSTDOC CONFERENCE 2021

Keynote

Really excellent overview on the big picture, thought provoking

Great talk with some very good points. Nice to see the view from the "top".

Great talk, very relatable and not as discouraging previous presentations of senior UKRI members I've heard. Curious to see what changes in practice.

Really liked the focus on the wider research "ecosystem" that postdocs operate in, and recognition that big sweeping change is necessary to how we think about research as well as how we operate.

Absolutely loved the keynote and am looking forward to see some of the discussed actions brought to life.

Amazing setup and congratulations to the team that put the whole thing together!

Through informal feedback and conversations, we were able to hear what was most appreciated and what was most needed. It was very interesting and offered an eye opening to how research paths might change as a whole. It was a shame that the questions were not public, and that there was no Q&A session through the actual presentation.

I was very impressed by the use of a BSL interpreter and live captioning.

Thank you to all involved for all your hard work in making sure that #NPDC21 was such a wonderfully organised, engaging and motivational day.

It felt that this was a well put together panel - and despite its being quite large, all of the speakers were able to bring something different to the discussion.

Some of the advice was very all-encompassing, but there were some quite practical and specific nuggets in there, too.

The live captioning was excellent. Any postdoc who is looking for a way to get their voice heard but just hasn't, and we are proud of you for doing so.

Panel discussion

A thought-provoking discussion to finish off the day.

Felt positive to have a session that was "action" oriented.

Great panel and really interesting discussions.

Great end to the conference.

Personally would have really liked to see all the questions that were being asked. As an audience member with some health issues that made it hard to engage and I felt that that the session was a bit more of a lecture than a discussion. I would have liked to see more questions and answers to the session with different audience members and contributions all responding to questions. I know it can be a bit difficult to manage!

Really interesting panel with through range of perspectives. Liked that signing comments were short but "big picture" and that there was all time for questions!

Wellbeing sessions

Good for mind and soul. Helpful to be talked through a few mindful exercises.

I really enjoyed them. There were some basic tools to use in the future. I think they were a little breather in the day.

Wonderful short sessions that I could engage with throughout the day. Brilliant presenter.

Great session with quick tips that can be implemented immediately.

Not related to any particular session but I just want to say how great it has been to be able to dip in and out of the various activities.

So much to choose from, a rich variety of sessions.

Parallel session A

Time 11:00-11:45

The Allyship session was really engaging and informative. A great panel.

Fast track to impact session was very engaging but too short to really get into the topic.

Learned a lot from Michael Parker's writing for the conversation session. Lots of practical tips on the process, what they're looking for and different ways to reframe your research to be relevant to general public.

Really useful "booklet" that I will be using to pitch to them.

the seminar "The what, why and how of team science" led by Sawsan Khalil was simply outstanding.

Some really good tips on how to make the switch to industry.

Parallel session B

Time 12:15-13:00

Community-building for postdocs - Really uplifting!

Loved the use of the interactive mind boards.

The Octopus session was very interesting and was very well handled as there was a hiccup. Nice to see people engaged and asking questions too. Also great that they are asking for feedback and seeing it open.

Excellent tips and advice on making the switch into industry.

B7: was very interesting and very engaging!

UKRI session was a real gem.

The Careers in Industry were to make the Switch session with great.

It is really excellent that this is open to researchers from all over the UK, and being digital makes it easy to attend from far-flung places (like Strathclyde).

It is a real pleasure to see the organisers and the parallel speakers around themselves in such a brave way as stating "My ethnicity race is [..], my partner is [..], I am wearing [..]. I can only understand this as someone affected to be inclusive for the visually impaired, but managing to do that in a relaxed and joyful way is a virtue signal in an unorthodox, unreserved way.

The sessions were very professionally run. It was very smooth throughout the day.

Parallel session C

Time 14:00-14:45

Steve Hutchings' session was really engaging and interesting!

Learned a lot from Steve Hutchings' session on Coaching/mentoring to release postdoc potential.

It gave me practical strategies on how to approach a professional development review, to ask for the kind of support that benefited me, after reflecting on what mentorship/support would help me succeed the best.

Got some nice tips on how to transfer my STEM skills outside the academy.

Shame the "Talented Dr. Postdoc" session was so short - some very useful advice on transferable skills - (badly) exactly what postdocs need.

The "Reassessing the world: being no-one better" session was very informative and inspiring. Great on how to use the "big picture" of the SDGs to create a world where no one is left behind. Also good discussions on dealing with uncertainty, uncertainty and what we can learn from COVID.

I really enjoyed connecting with everyone at this event and to explore the various facets of a digital conference.

All in all a great event. I made two new connections on LinkedIn thanks to networking at the conference.

We are encouraged to be more "open" about our research but I personally find it hard to cross that boundary. I found this event to be a useful catalyst to begin to refer to my work in a non-academic domain.

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