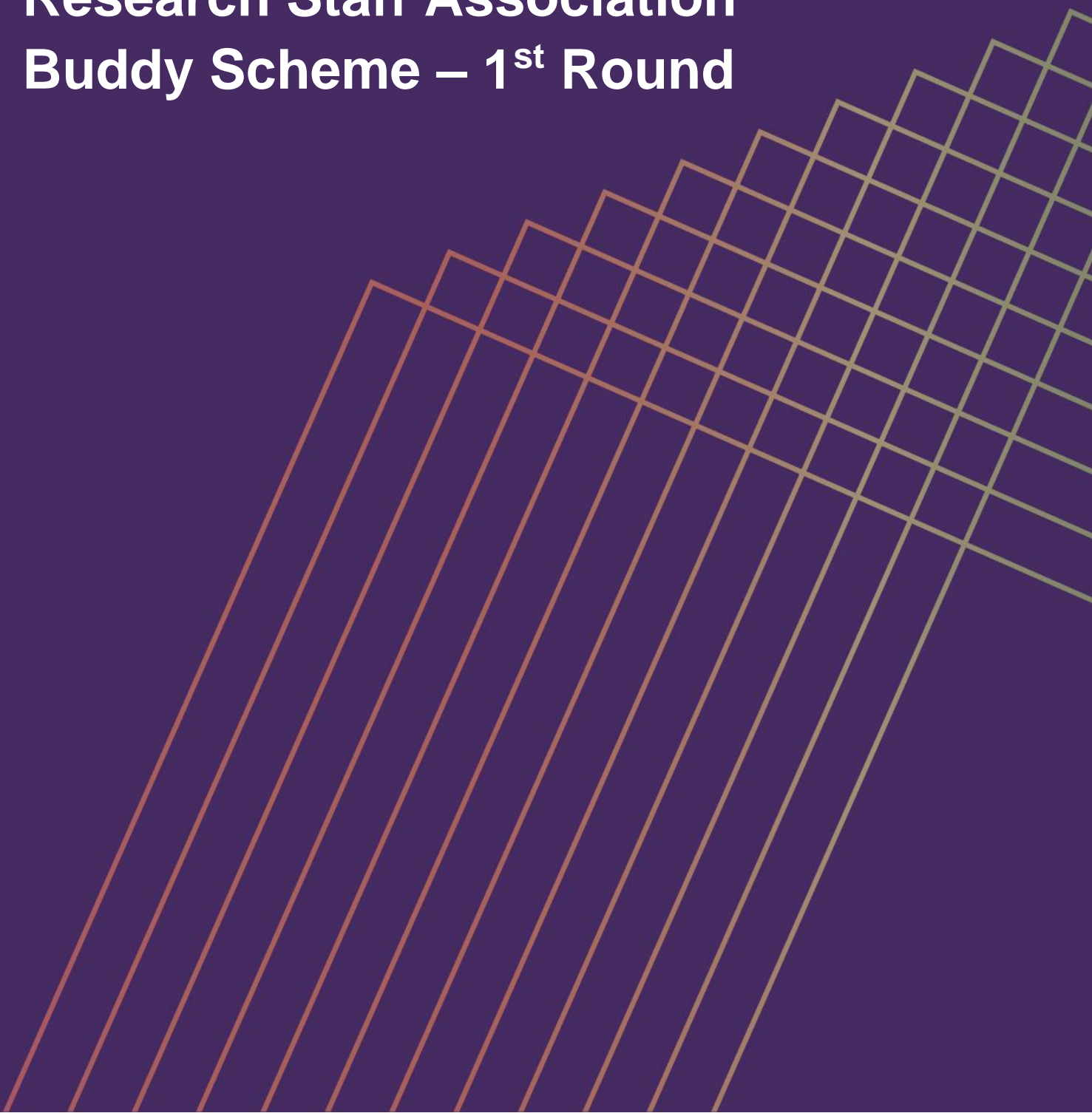


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Research Staff Association Buddy Scheme – 1st Round



Research Staff Association Buddy Scheme

– 1st Round.

Introduction

In Spring 2022 the Research Staff Association (RSA) ran a pilot of a new buddy scheme offering postdocs and early career researchers (i.e. staff on research-only contracts) the chance to meet new colleagues, expand their networks and enrich their experience of the University's research culture in an informal setting.

The Buddy Scheme was promoted as an opportunity for postdocs and early career fellows (ECR's) to meet peers at similar career stages across all faculties and to build connections outside of their research group and to enhance their professional, research and social frames of reference.

The process

The scheme was advertised via the RSA weekly e-bulletins and the University of Liverpool RSA twitter account. Further information was available via the RSA webpages (<https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/researcher/uol-rsa/buddy-scheme/>), which linked to a simple expression of interest form for research staff to complete. The questions on this form included; name, department, email address and why you want to participate in the buddy scheme.

31 colleagues signed up to take part, the spread across faculties was as follows;

- 16 Faculty of Health and Life Sciences
- 10 Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
- 5 Faculty of Science and Engineering

Research staff were given until Feb 25th 2022 to sign up to take part.

Each participant was matched with two to three other postdocs or ECR's which resulted in 9 groups of between 3-4 people in each group. All groups had a mix of faculties. Each buddy was emailed with the names and email addresses of the buddies in their group.

Groups were then given three weeks to arrange between themselves to meet, in this case before 21st March 2022. They were advised that the meetings could be face to face or online and to please respect the preference of all participants. A short meeting of around 30mins was recommended and that the tone of the meeting should be informal, supportive and respectful for all.

Evaluation

Following the scheme participants were asked to complete an evaluation survey. 52% of participants completed the survey. Of the participants who completed the survey 94% met their buddies within the 3-week window. The only reason given for not meeting was that a meeting was arranged between the group, but one person could

not make the time. Groups that met either met online or in a coffee shop with some buddies meeting more than once.

Over 75% of those that completed the survey found the meeting(s) to be a positive experience answering good or very good with 23.5% saying that the meeting was fair (see graph below).

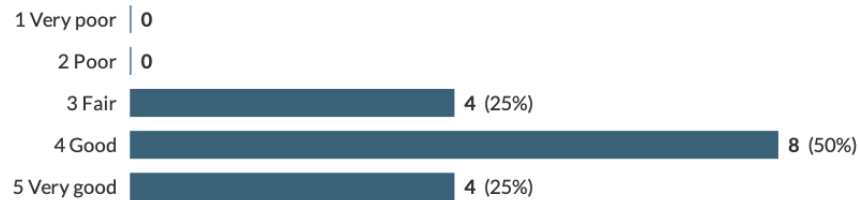


Figure 1 – Graph showing responses to question asking participants to rate the meeting(s). Participants rated the scheme on a scale between 1 and 5 (1 = Very poor, 5 = Very good)

Some of the common highlights of the scheme for the participants were meeting people from other parts of the University and finding that they have similar challenges/concerns and that their own experience is not unique. Participants found this reassuring. Other participants just enjoyed taking time out of their day to have a chat with someone new.

Participants were asked if there was anything that would improve the scheme. Interestingly while some of the highlights recorded were based around meeting people from other institutes and faculties, many of the suggested improvements were based on matching people more closely in terms of disciplines and research field. A lengthened time span to organise a meeting was a common suggestion as some groups found it difficult to arrange a meeting in time. Some of the participants suggested to meet in larger groups in order to meet more new people.

Overall the pilot scheme was a success and of great value to the participants. The next round will be advertised during National Postdoc Appreciation Week in Sept 2022 for sign up to be completed by the end of September so that buddies can be matched and meet in October 2022.

For more information contact:
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