

Innovate, Inspire, Lead: Transforming research culture symposium

16th July 2024, Virtual

Session Abstracts:

Parallel Session 1, 11:25 - 12:05

Session 1.1a

Transforming research culture through research design

Ellen Pugh, Advance HE

Oral presentation (15 mins plus 5min Q&A)

This session will explore equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in research design and how it is being used by research funders to change research design and ultimately research culture. Indeed, encouraging research staff to consider EDI in the design of their research will not only help to ensure that their research is more relevant to our society, it can also help to engage them in initiatives to promote EDI.

Session 1.2a

Embracing embodied experiences: Advancing EDIA in research culture

Dr Pratibha Ram, Kings Business School, Kings College London

Oral presentation (15 mins plus 5min Q&A)

This session explores how conformity and compliance in research approaches hinder the contextualisation of embodied experiences in diverse cultures, highlighting the challenges that the political nature of research culture presents to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA). Conformity and compliance in research approaches are often equated with credible research within certain disciplines or institutions that establish and regulate specific research norms. This conformity poses a significant barrier to inclusion, especially for researchers from marginalised groups such as race, gender, ability, and neurodiversity. These researchers perceive such restrictions as oppressive, impeding their freedom to explore topics, utilise innovative methodologies, and authentically express findings. This perpetuates a cycle of exclusion that must be addressed to foster a truly inclusive research environment. The session aims to explore insights into effective initiatives and practices to promote EDIA in research cultures and create an inclusive environment where all researchers can thrive and contribute to impactful outcomes.

Session 1.2b

EDI in research: A manifesto

Dr Carol Azumah and Dr Alison Fox, The Open University

Oral presentation (15 mins plus 5min Q&A)

We consider the implication of manifesto as a legitimate academic genre with a view to exploring how ethical commitments to equity, diversity and inclusion might be fully embedded into the research process from developing questions to research dissemination. The aim is to ensure a range of voices and values are brought together in research through a call for action. Our working document includes a set of principles followed by questions

and provocative statements for each key stage of the research process. This presentation will develop and explore to further guidance of how to operationalise our principles.

Parallel Session 2, 12:10 - 13:10

Session 2.1

Whole-hearted impact leadership and its role in sustaining a positive and supportive research culture.

Professor Jo Richardson, Nottingham Trent University and Julie Bayley, University of Lincoln

Workshop (60 mins)

Strong leadership is vital in establishing the values, conditions and structures needed to co-create and embed an impactful research culture and environment. We argue that positive and inclusive leadership can be demonstrated by stepping out of the 'REF box' of thinking and into a more holistic recognition of the types of knowledge exchange and research impact activities that positively transform our communities. Such leadership can also help situate impact within a wider context of responsible, open and interdisciplinary research, and nurture a positive, inclusive research culture.

Parallel Session 2, 12:10 - 13:10

Session 2.2

How do we design a ethical research culture in the age of AI? An exploratory workshop

Dr Charles Knight, Advance HE

Workshop (60 mins)

In the rapidly evolving landscape of artificial intelligence, there are possible significant implications for research culture. This session explores the pivotal questions surrounding the integration [or not!] into organizational research practices. Participants will engage in dynamic discussions and activities focusing on how institutions can manage the ethical considerations, policy adaptations, and strategic shifts.

Parallel Session 3, 14:15-14:55

Session 3.1a

Thrive, together: Rethinking Research Leadership

Dr James Howard and Georgina Endfield, University of Liverpool

Oral presentation (30 mins plus 10min Q&A)

Thrive is a two-year project funded by Research England to develop and define a new model of team-based working that will encourage greater diversity and inclusivity in research teams. The project offers the opportunity to reshape and refocus the way in which research teams operate, enabling a diverse array of research leaders to make meaningful contributions within a team. Thrive is about breaking down silos and fostering a culture of cross-functional collaboration, trust, and open communication. Centred around a live funding-call by our project partners, the Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC), Thrive aims to pilot a fundamental shift in research leadership, which will enhance team performance and develop a more positive and rewarding research culture for all.

This interactive session will focus on how leadership is shaped and experienced within our research culture. Informed by principles developed during the Thrive project, we will

collaboratively discuss cultural and practice norms related to research leadership, with a specific focus on shared-accountability and 'territorialism'. Building on participants' reflections and shared experiences, we will move to consider how to address, adapt and reconceptualise these concepts within effective research leadership that challenges existing practices and – potentially – enhances outcomes and creates leadership opportunities for the wider research community.

Session 3.2a

Mobilising knowledge with our local population: Citizen-led health promotion on breast cancer with black and afro-caribbean people

Professor Martin Bollard, University of Wolverhampton and Jessie Allen, Bread4Life Charity/University of Wolverhampton

Oral presentation (15 mins plus 5min Q&A)

Mobilising knowledge on key societal issues alongside citizens and communities is an important function for any modern University. This session profiles how staff from the University of Wolverhampton are engaging with hundreds of Black and Afro-Caribbean women to gain 'first-hand' experiences explaining why black people delay accessing breast screening services #black breasts matter. One of the inspirational community leaders and Professor Martin Bollard will share work describing how research and knowledge exchange activities co-created products with impact. This regional work will demonstrate how beneficiaries are enabling themselves and others to promote changes in cancer screening behaviour amongst Black people.

Session 3.2b

Recognising research leadership outside the academic job family

Dr Susie Douglas, University of Bath and James McKay, University of Leeds

Oral presentation (15 mins plus 5min Q&A)

This session provides a case study of research leadership from the perspective of Professional Research Investment and Strategy Managers (PRISMs, <https://www.pris-managers.ac.uk/>). PRISMs are research enablers working in universities across the UK to deliver complex or large-scale research projects. PRISMs add significant experience and expertise to the project team, driving vision, strategy and operation.

In 2023, in recognition of the essential role of PRISMs in delivering Centres for Doctoral Training (CDTs), EPSRC and UKRI explicitly welcomed the PRISMs as co-Is onto these grant applications. We will discuss the experiences of PRISMs in the bid process and aspirations for the future.

Parallel Session 4, 15:10 - 16:10

Session 4.1

Decolonising academic writing

Dr Amita Nijhawan, University of the Arts London

Workshop (60 mins)

In this workshop we'll explore, analyse and practice techniques that writers and storytellers use to make their writing come alive. We will explore evocative and descriptive writing, space and character, and metaphor and tension in the context of creative, performative, autoethnographic and academic pieces of writing. We'll reflect on how these techniques can help us disrupt normative and hegemonic modes of academic writing that can homogenise and even silence some voices, especially minoritized ones, and how we can use them to

make our writing more engaging and writing tasks more joyful. Multilingual writers or those that wish to explore identity and autoethnography may also find this session useful. These techniques challenge normative ideas of who gets to write, what they get to write about and how they get to write about it. Amita has run this session with staff and students in various spaces across the UK and globally. Some of this work has been published in Decolonial Dialogues. Amita has been writer-in-residence with Spread the Word, Leverhulme, Literature Works, British Council, UCL, Plymouth University and others.

Session 4.2

PiES: Establishing a research group within a teaching focused post-92 university.

Dr Steven Cock and Dr Alan Johnston, York St John University

Workshop (60 mins)

There is a longstanding tension in post-92 universities between teaching and research. Increasing pressure to publish has been driven by external factors (e.g. REF) and internal policies and expectations (e.g. academic promotion). Such trends have seen post-92 institutions increasingly focus on attempts to develop research cultures. Such processes can prove challenging, given the emphasis placed on teaching and on metrics such as the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and National Student Survey (NSS). This case study examines the establishment of a research group in a Business School within a post-92 university and the emergence of a fledgling research culture.