



White Rose
University Consortium

The Squeezed Middle: Supporting Established Researchers Through the White Rose Hub

Presenters:

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Project team:

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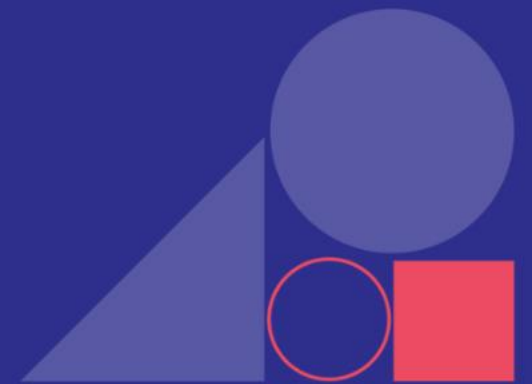
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Defining the established researcher

"An established researcher is an academic who has achieved functional independence and institutional recognition in their research capacity, whilst continuing to develop their professional identity and navigate complex career transitions."

Sheffield: Established Researcher Forum



Left to right:

Dr Candice Majewski,
Dr Anna Weighall,
Dr Maddy Callaghan
and Professor
Chantelle Wood

- 300+ members across all faculties
- Researcher-led and informed
- Research support, visibility and influence, peer support/mentoring, career development

Empowering Established Researchers

Project conducted by: Monica Busse-Morris, Steve Joy and Tracey Stead.

Findings:

- Unclear promotion pathways
- Workload inequity
- Lack of protected development time
- Inconsistent institutional processes

Implications both for equity and career sustainability but also health of the UK research ecosystem: retention, research quality, pipeline stability

What does this feel like, day to day?

- No cookie cutter!



Ways of being an Established Researcher



The Juggler: the shared
experience of established
researchers



The Juggler

"I am holding more than one role, expectation, and identity at once."

Main worries

Constant time pressure
Unclear promotion signals
Difficulty protecting thinking time

Development & support needs

Clarity
Prioritisation and decision tools
Peer support and validation

Ways of being an Established Researcher

Four research leadership models or 'personas' were identified that capture the different ways researchers organise and express their leadership practice.



The Juggler: the shared experience of established researchers



The Lab builder: Research group leadership



The Independent Scholar: Individual intellectual leadership



The Project Architect: Project-Based Collaboration



The Boundary Spanner: Stakeholder centred Research Leadership



The Lab Builder:

“My research lives in my team, my lab, and the systems that keep everything running.”

Main worries

Sustaining that system without burnout

Making leadership labour visible

Development & support needs

Support to articulate and legitimise the scale of their leadership

Recognition frameworks that reflect that complexity



The Independent Scholar:

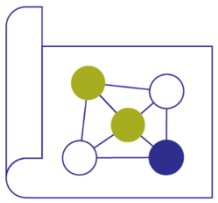
“My impact comes from sustained thinking and writing, but the system fragments my time.”

Main worries

Eroded writing momentum
Undervaluation of intellectual leadership

Development & support needs

Space for deep work
Clearer recognition of intellectual influence



The Project Architect:

"I assemble people, disciplines, and timelines, knowing each success is temporary."

Main worries

Career fragmentation across successive projects

Success that doesn't translate into progression

Development & support needs

Ways to build coherence across projects

Stronger narratives around their leadership



The Boundary Spanner:

“Engagement is not an add-on. It is the centre of my research career.”

Main worries

Competing stakeholder expectations

High external impact, but often low internal recognition

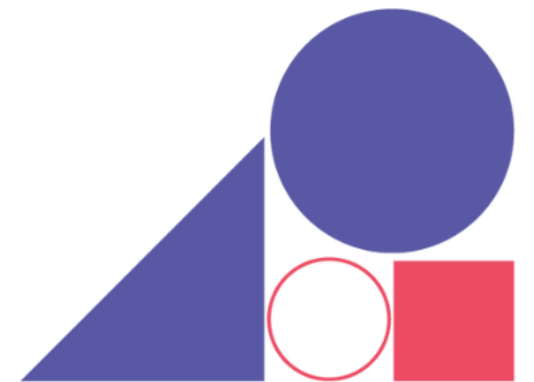
Relational work going unseen

Development & support needs

Frameworks that recognise engagement as core work

Institutional support and sponsorship

The White Rose Established Researchers Hub





Established Researchers Hub

[Home](#) > [What we do](#) > [Resources](#) > [Established Researchers Hub](#)

This hub brings together curated resources to support established and mid career researchers navigating the evolving responsibilities and expectations that emerge beyond early career stages.

Resources are organised around established researcher personas and informed by researchers' career experiences, helping you engage with content that reflects how you work and lead. Peer discussion guides support shared reflection and learning with colleagues and career stories offer honest, grounded reflections from established researchers on their own pathways.



Personas

Our research-informed personas offer a distinctive way to explore the hub. They group resources around different experiences of research careers, helping you recognise your situation, reflect on priorities, and focus on support that fits how you work and lead.

Peer discussion guides

Our light-touch peer discussion guides help established researchers reflect with colleagues, share experiences, and develop practical next steps. Designed for small groups and flexible use.

Career stories

Learn from the career experiences of established and senior researchers. These honest reflections share real decisions, challenges, and turning points – offering practical insight and perspective on navigating mid-career academic life.

Exploring the Hub

4 breakout rooms – each with a different persona and brief case study (20 minutes in total)

In your rooms answer and capture:

- What is the core developmental risk for this researcher?
- Which existing Hub resource, or prompt would you draw on?
- How would you, as a researcher developer, *use or adapt* this in practice?

Stay in touch

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