

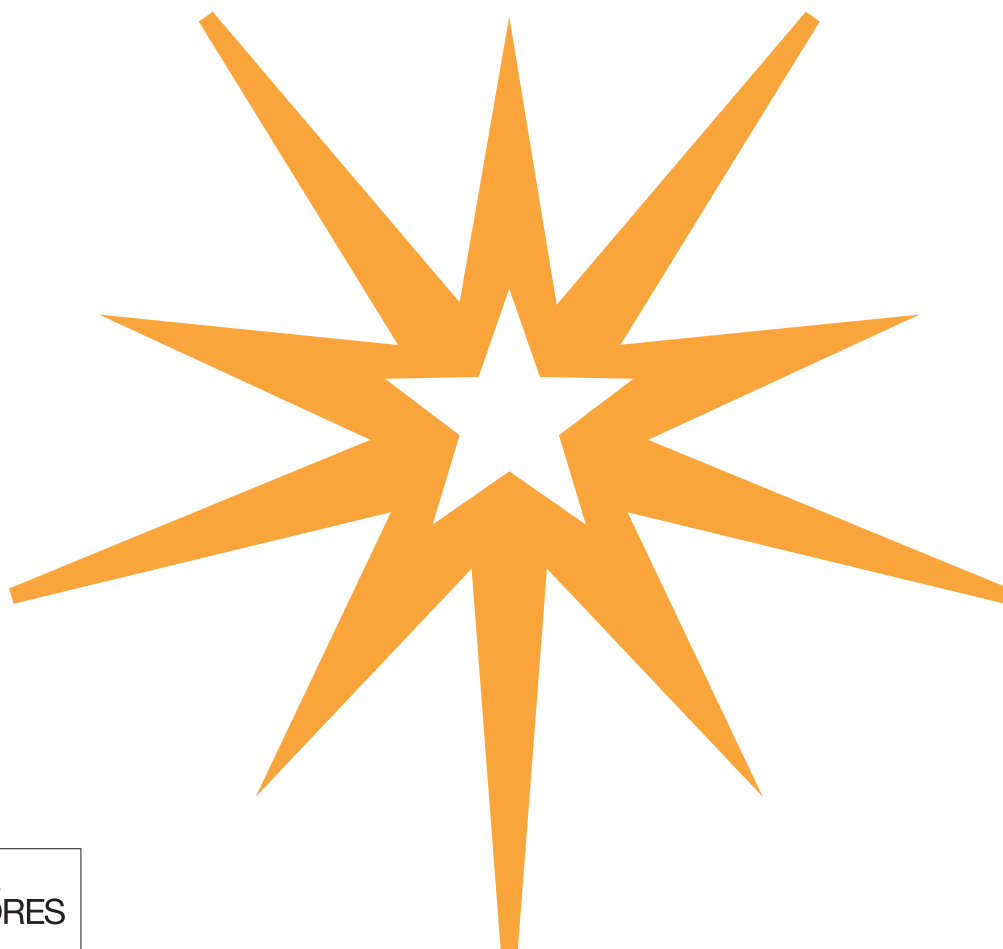
**The research journey can be thrilling, challenging, inspiring, frustrating and, let's face it, sometimes lonely but there are a range of colleagues within Research and Innovation Services (RIS) who are available to advise, guide and support you.**

v.2 October 2018

# ACTIVATOR

## Attitude & Capability Toolkit

impact, value & assets of researchers



# Become an ACTivator...



**Investing** in your development as a researcher is a key priority for LJMU. Our aspiration to be a university engaged in world-class research and scholarship is principally advanced by you, our academics. Your research helps to ensure that our academic community is collectively 'alive to' and pushes the frontiers of knowledge and understanding. It helps to create an exciting and inspirational learning culture for our students. It also enables us to fulfil our ambition and obligation to deliver tangible benefits to society.

On an individual level, we want to support you to be confident, ambitious and fulfilled in your researcher role. To do that, professional development opportunities need to be relevant, impactful and encouraging.

The ACTivator programme is designed to be just that and more. What makes ACTivator distinct is that it recognises the value of your experience, insights and reflections, irrespective of whether you are just starting out on your research journey or are an established researcher. Workshops draw on the collective intelligence of participants and provide the time, space and structure to share and compare knowledge and understanding.

And because we know time is precious, ACTivator workshops will move you on in your thinking and planning, not just by providing you with information and know-how but by guiding you through practical activities which means that you leave each workshop with tangible and

meaningful outputs. With a focused but informal and engaging style, you'll almost certainly enjoy your ACTivator experience too!

ACTivator is constantly evolving to remain relevant to your needs and strategically aligned. While the programme may change what remains constant is our commitment to offer a high-quality experience and our assurance that your participation will pay dividends for your research career.

## Enjoy ACTivator

**Professor Robin Leatherbarrow**  
*Pro-VC (Scholarship, Research and Knowledge Transfer)*

**ACTivator** is a programme of researcher development opportunities. It consists of a series of half-day workshops focusing on key features of the researcher journey which, successfully navigated, will support you to fulfil your research potential and ambitions.

The full programme covers the key issues that you will need to address to get the best from yourself and your research. The workshops are designed to stand alone so that you can choose those that best meet your needs and attend them in an order that suits your priorities. As you explore each topic you will see how the issues and skills interrelate and build to form a complete package of support.

The workshops are facilitated by specialists within Research and Innovation Services. They are interactive, lively events which encourage contributions from you and your colleagues.

Your role is just as important as the facilitator's, making you a co-creator of your development experience.

As part of each workshop, you are asked to do some solo thinking, reflecting and planning and to share your experiences and ideas. Learning from colleagues, including those from contrasting disciplines and at different stages of their careers, is a key element of the ACTivator programme.

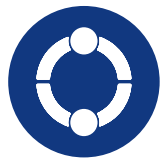
ACTivator does not seek to provide all the answers but rather pose and explore invaluable questions designed to stimulate thought and provoke positive action. It also offers a range of useful information, prompts and tools to help ensure that you start off on the right track or get back on track if you've wandered slightly off course.

# The golden threads...

While the focus of each workshop is different, ACTivator has key themes running through it, connecting messages which tie all the learning together. **These are LJMU's 'golden threads' of research and they are:**

- ✓ Be compelling
- ✓ Look up and out
- ✓ Strive for excellence

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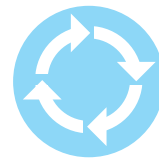
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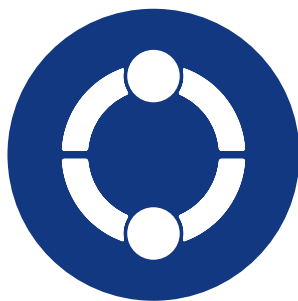
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# Researcher Support Introduction



**The** research journey can be thrilling, challenging, inspiring, frustrating - and let's face it, sometimes lonely – but there are a range of colleagues who are available to advise, guide and support you.

This workshop provides an opportunity for you to meet colleagues from RIS, the Doctoral Academy and Library Services and find out more about the support they can offer throughout your time at LJMU. It also offers us the chance to meet you and understand more about your research.

Informal but full of useful information, attending one of these sessions is highly recommended for Early Career Researchers and more experienced academics, new starters to LJMU and those who have been here some time but need to foster new connections.

Come along and chat to colleagues from:

- Research and Innovation Services (with specialist teams around funding, research impact, REF, knowledge exchange and commercialisation, research ethics and governance)
- Library Services
- Doctoral Academy

## This session is for you if:

- You want to undertake impactful and high quality research
- You need to increase your chances of success in terms of funding, networking and stakeholder engagement
- You want to make best use of LJMU tools, support and opportunities

## Key features of the session:

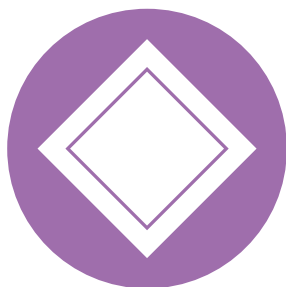
- Focused time to talk to support teams
- Introduction to key tools and resources to advance your research
- Opportunity to share your needs and identify appropriate support staff

## Related Learning...

Topics touched on here are explored further in these workshops



# The **Building** Blocks of **Impact**



**Impact** is a hot topic for researchers, being a key priority for funders, a significant indicator of the value of research and an important part of the Research Excellence Framework.

In this workshop you will reflect on the impact potential of your research and on how well prepared you are to create and capture it. You will look at the important role played by stakeholders and the need to get your research 'out there' through effective communication.

As part of the session you will make a start on creating an impact plan for your research.

## **This session is for you if:**

- You need to refresh your understanding of the essentials of impact
- You need to stimulate your thinking about the potential impact of your research
- You want to start/improve your plan for generating and capturing impact

## **Key features of the session:**

- Identify what impact is (and isn't), the different types of impact and the potential reach and significance of your research
- Explore the role of stakeholders in helping to generate and capture impact
- Make a start on your Impact Map



## **Related Learning...**

Topics touched on here are explored further in these workshops



# Surveying **Your** Funding Landscape



**When** you are relying on funding in order to fulfil your research ambitions, you need to know as much as possible about who is 'out there' funding work like yours, what they prioritise and how your research could 'fit'.

How do you ensure you are up-to-date with what funding opportunities are 'out there'? Are you giving yourself the best chance of securing funding by being sufficiently familiar with the range of funding sources available? You will pick up some ideas around how best to keep your ear to the ground and look at some of the resources available to help you quickly and easily

identify appropriate sources of funding. You will review examples of funders' priorities with a view to assessing whether an application is worth a try, as well as start considering ways to fulfil funders' requirements more fully, such as through collaboration.

## **This session is for you if:**

- You want to develop a better understanding of your funding landscape
- You want to widen your funding options
- You want to explore the potential for collaboration as a means of achieving funding success

## **Key features of the session:**

- Share insights and experiences with other researchers
- Reflect on your approach to finding funds and how you might develop more helpful habits
- Learn how to search for funding and check funders' remits using Research Professional and Grantfinder

## **Related Learning...**

Topics touched on here are explored further in these workshops



# Funding Applications: **getting a yes**



**Securing** funding for your research involves a big investment in time and energy. As a highly competitive process it is more important than ever that your funding applications stand out for all the right reasons.

This workshop is an opportunity for you to review and maybe rethink your approach to writing applications. What parts of the application do you give more attention to than others? What aspects feel like a struggle and why? You will analyse how writing for applications differs from writing for journals and learn some techniques for ensuring both content and structure

are appropriate. Explore the ways in which you can make your applications compelling – including developing a strong start – and ways in which you can elevate your applications from good to great.

## **This session is for you if:**

- You want to learn techniques for writing clearly, concisely and in a funder-friendly way
- You want to understand the difference between writing for a journal and writing for a funding application
- You want to understand what makes applications 'great'

## **Key features of the session:**

- Understand how to change your writing style to increase your chances of funding success
- Create a strong and engaging start for your funding applications
- Learn some core techniques that will ensure your applications are compelling



## **Related Learning...**

Topics touched on here are explored further in these workshops

# Maximise Your REF-readiness



**Research** quality assessment is a prominent feature of the UK research landscape; it influences many activities within universities and can play a significant part in individual academic career choices. Whilst a Research Excellence Framework (REF) assessment might only occur every six or seven years, the individual components it assesses reflect inherent facets of everyday life as a University academic.

This session will consider what excellence looks like for each of the main pillars of

the REF. Come prepared to evaluate your research presence, and to leave empowered to maximise your readiness for the next REF.

## This session is for you if:

- You want to understand key features of the REF and what it assesses
- You want to evaluate your potential to contribute to a future REF submission
- You want to understand the quality expectations for the REF (what do top rated research outputs and impact case studies look like?)

## Key features of the session:

- Consider what it means for research outputs to show 'originality, significance and rigour'
- Evaluate your potential to contribute to a future REF submission
- Consider the importance of career planning in relation to REF



## Related Learning...

Topics touched on here are explored further in these workshops

# Pitch Perfect: **Compelling Research** Congress



**There** is a tool that can help you write more successful funding applications, engage more effectively with stakeholders, achieve greater benefit from networking, improve your sense of confidence/value in what you do and ensure that you stay focused on the potential impact of your research. That tool is the pitch.

A pitch is a clear, concise and compelling summary of your research. This workshop will provide an opportunity for you to fine tune your pitch over two 'rounds' using the constructive feedback of a panel of experienced LJMU academic and support staff. You will also have the chance to listen to the pitches and critiques of others.

This is a rare opportunity to practice this vital skill in a supportive, encouraging and informal environment.

## **This session is for you if:**

- You want to be able to communicate the need, approach and potential value of your research in a concise and compelling manner
- You want to develop your skills in giving and receiving feedback
- You want to improve your funding applications, networking experiences and confidence

## **Key features of the session:**

- Improve your pitch using a Stanford Research Institute-inspired model
- Have your pitch critiqued by colleagues from different disciplines
- Develop the skills to listen to and critique the pitches of others



## **Related Learning...**

Topics touched on here are explored further in these workshops

# Attending to **You**



**This** workshop will encourage you to reflect on the personal qualities, feelings and attitudes that are an integral part of being an effective and impactful researcher.

How confident are you in what you and your research have to offer? Do you view networking as an agony to be endured or a priceless opportunity? When did you last take stock of your competencies and achievements? How good are you at asking for what you need? Do you ever get the feeling you are an imposter in the research world? Are you paying attention to YOU as well as your research?

This workshop provides an opportunity to explore these questions. You will be encouraged to reflect on your strengths and your attributes and also identify areas in which you need to develop and improve. Through guided activities and small group discussions you will be supported to challenge self-limiting beliefs, share tools and techniques for improvement and set yourself developmental tasks and goals.

## **This session is for you if:**

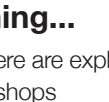
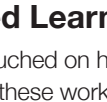
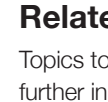
- You want to explore your perception of yourself, including self-limiting beliefs
- You want to improve your confidence and credibility when communicating what you do
- You want to challenge yourself in areas that are holding you back

## **Key features of the session:**

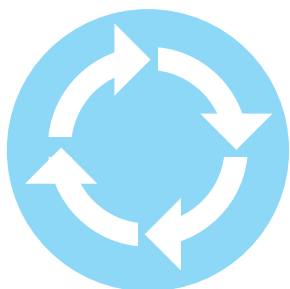
- Explore strengths and weaknesses with peers in an encouraging environment
- Set yourself tasks and goals to develop as a researcher
- Create a vision of you and your short, medium and long-term research career

## **Related Learning...**

Topics touched on here are explored further in these workshops



# Income, Innovation and Impact: how Knowledge Exchange can optimise your research



**Knowledge** Exchange (KE) refers to the exchange of ideas, research results, technology and skills between higher education institutions and other organisations, agencies, businesses and the wider community.

There is a misconception that KE is relevant to only a small proportion of researchers and research projects, but this is far from the case. KE has the potential to contribute positively to a broad range of research with multiple benefits.

Have you, for example, considered KE as a source of funding? As a key route to generating and capturing impact? As a way

of informing your research ideas or your approach? Of improving the quality and validity of your research?

In this workshop you will be encouraged to explore what KE could mean for you and your research and be guided through a process of identifying your assets and your stakeholders so that you can capitalise on KE opportunities.

## This session is for you if:

- You want to explore the potential for mutually beneficial KE activity
- You need to capitalise on existing and/or new relationships with external agencies
- You want to re-think how and why you engage with external partners

## Key features of the session:

- Understand how knowledge exchange activity can benefit your research
- Reflect on what is meant by research assets and identify your own
- Identify your key stakeholders and opportunities for knowledge exchange



## Related Learning...

Topics touched on here are explored further in these workshops

# Public Engagement Matters



**Public** Engagement describes the myriad of ways in which the activity and benefits of research can be shared with the public for mutual benefit. For researchers at all levels, public engagement can prove to be an inspirational, rewarding and career enhancing experience but, too often, it is seen purely as a way of disseminating research findings rather than the consultative and collaborative process it can and should be.

In this workshop you will explore how to get started with public engagement, the different forms it can take and how to do it well. Examples and case studies from a range of subject disciplines will be used to illustrate best practice and how to evidence the outcomes arising from engagement.

There will be input from highly experienced LJMU researchers with a strong track record in engaging with their 'publics'. This session will be valuable to staff interested in improving how they interact with non-academic communities or organisations at various stages of the research life-cycle.

## This session is for you if:

- You want to engage with your public/s but don't know where to start
- You want to understand the benefits/potential impact of public engagement
- You need to understand best practice around public engagement

## Key features of the session:

- Opportunity to hear from experienced publically-engaged LJMU researchers
- Share insights and experiences with other researchers
- Assess how public engagement might benefit you and your research

## Related Learning...

Topics touched on here are explored further in these workshops



# Inside the **Research Ethics Committee**



**Research** ethics ensures the safety, dignity and rights of research participants whilst providing assurance that research is being conducted within an ethical framework. LJMU requires that all projects undertaken by staff and students using human subjects as participants receive approval from the University Research Ethics Committee (or a NHS REC).

Too often though, the ethical approval process is seen as at best a barrier to be overcome, at worst a hindrance to research progress. In fact, not only does it protect you, your subjects and the reputation of the University, it can also significantly improve your research, leading

to more rigorous work and impactful outcomes.

This session gives you the opportunity to act as a research ethics committee. In small groups, you will discuss and debate the ethical considerations relating to research projects and determine what, if any recommendations you would make to the researchers leading the projects. .

## **This session is for you if:**

- You want to understand how ethical review can improve research
- You would like an insight into the ethical approval process
- You have submitted/are going to submit a project for ethical approval

## **Key features of the session:**

- Review real research projects in relation to ethical considerations
- Discuss and debate views and rationale with colleagues
- See how your views compare with the findings of the University Research Ethics Committee



## **Related Learning...**

Topics touched on here are explored further in these workshops



# Exploring **Stakeholder** Engagement



**Who** are the individuals, bodies or agencies that are in a position to enable/further your research or block/hinder it? Stakeholders are the potential beneficiaries or risk bearers of your research. They have a stake in what you do and you need to be strategic in how you involve them.

In this workshop you will reflect critically on your stakeholder network - who's in it, who's missing from it - with a view to capturing all the key players. You will reflect on what makes for effective stakeholder engagement and why it matters. You will explore why your stakeholder network needs to be regularly reviewed and be

introduced to tools to help you prioritise those stakeholders in which you should invest most of your time and energy.

Are you engaging for maximum benefit and if not, what can you do about it?

## **This session is for you if:**

- You want to look afresh at who your stakeholders are and why they are vested
- You want to refresh your thinking about how to get the most from your stakeholder network
- You want to better manage your relationship with stakeholders

## **Key features of the session:**

- Critique your stakeholder network – is it complete?
- Explore how best to prioritise stakeholders
- Consider what makes for effective engagement including the importance of timing and the use of appropriate engagement channels



## **Related Learning...**

Topics touched on here are explored further in these workshops

# Influencing Government Policy with Research: doing it, demonstrating it



**Being** able to demonstrate that your research has had an impact on government policy is akin to the holy grail of research... much sought after but difficult to achieve.

In this workshop you will have the opportunity to reflect on what it takes to influence policy, including the elements that you can control and those that you cannot and the channels that are available to help. You will explore the 'must haves' for policy impact, including the big one... intention!

Consider who your key players are, how you should channel your energies for best results and the ways you can capture your influential engagement activity.

## This session is for you if:

- You have recently embarked/are soon to embark upon a research project which you feel has the potential to impact on policy
- You want to refresh/check-in on your thinking around policy impact and how best to make it happen

## Key features of the session:

- Evaluate the context in which you are operating and whether this could help or hinder your policy ambitions
- Consider the prerequisites for policy impact
- Explore ways of keeping up-to-date with policy developments and routes into the policy arena



## Related Learning...

Topics touched on here are explored further in these workshops

# Understanding Your Assets



**Your** assets including your intellectual assets are valuable commodities which you should utilise for funding applications, writing papers, discussions with partners and collaborators, capturing impact, and developing your research strategy. As well as updating your CV! But many researchers do not think about the assets their research gives rise to – to their cost!

This workshop will explore the range of assets you take into a project and the novel intellectual assets that you generate as you pursue your research question.

Who could be interested in your intellectual assets and why? How could you make them available to others? How can they best work for you?

Find out how to create an intellectual asset inventory for your research and start utilising your assets as you move through your research journey.

## This session is for you if:

- You want to make use of ALL aspects of your research, not just the end product/conclusion
- You want to reflect on your assets going into and gathered during your research journey
- You want to explore your intellectual assets with the support of colleagues

## Key features of the session:

- Understand and value the various types of assets that you take into a research project
- Start identifying your intellectual assets and organising them under key categories
- Explore how you can utilise your intellectual assets for maximum benefit

## Related Learning...

Topics touched on here are explored further in these workshops



# ACTivATOR *Sides*

In addition to ACTivator workshops, ACTivator Sides are periodically offered. These are development sessions which are focused on specific skills, information or opportunities.

Typically these sessions run for two hours and are led by LJMU or external colleagues with a particular specialism or area of expertise.

Look out for those that are relevant to you.



## Keep up to date...

For a full calendar of ACTivator workshops and to find out more about support available from Research and Innovation Services, visit the Research and Innovation pages of the staff website.

Also, look out for 'Entrepreneurial Researcher' email alerts which will notify you of development opportunities, funding calls and useful events.