How do researchers navigate their professional role and relationships?

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Before you agree to take part in this study, please review the information below which explains why the study is being carried out and what it will involve. If you are unsure whether you wish to take part, select ‘No’ for the question ‘I agree to take part in the study’ on the Participant Consent Form.

Broader study
The dynamic between early career researchers/academics (ECR/ECA) and their principal investigators (PIs)/managers is formative in shaping academic careers. As highlighted by Kaps et al. (2018), this relationship can significantly influence researchers' motivation and the collaborative atmosphere in knowledge construction.

In the context of the University of Cambridge, the Action Research for Research Culture team are exploring how early career researchers and research supervisors think about their respective roles and professional relationships. Using a selection of methods, we seek to capture how these relationships develop and how they are influenced by the broader research climate.

Research culture celebration
This participation information sheet concerns nominations to the ‘Research Culture Celebration’ (RCC). According to the Royal Society, ‘research culture describes the environment in which research happens, and includes the norms in behaviours, expectations, attitudes and values of our research communities’. Similar sentiments are expressed around the sector, with the assumption being that research culture describes not only the outcomes of knowledge advancement efforts but also the nature of the work environments in which such efforts take place.

In nominating your research supervisor or research group to the RCC, you are recognising them for their contribution to positive research culture. As well as being an opportunity to highlight good practice, the nominations have a methodological function, and we are using the information/examples you provide to explore the things which make for a positive perception of one’s research experience and role.

Asking for nominations around broader experience of research work allows us to observe how and, indeed, if, expectations play out in affirmative experiences. To gauge this, in questions separate to the submission, we will ask about your professional expectations and how these play out in the relationship with your research supervisor.
Am I eligible to take part?
All postdocs at the University of Cambridge are eligible to nominate their Principal Investigator or research group.

How do I take part?
To nominate a Principal Investigator or research group to the RCC, participants will need to

- Complete the survey:
  - The form will ask for your name and contact details, as well as information relating to your demographics and broader research experience.
  - The form also asks for the name and contact details of your research supervisor (including for research group nominations), and for evidence/examples of the good practice that they, or the research group, are being nominated for. We ask that examples are provided in two themes, as shown below.
- You must indicate whether you are willing to be contacted for a follow-up research interview, which may take place in-person or online via Teams. During the interview, we will ask about the content of your submission and the nature of research experience and working relationships.

All nominations must be justified on at least two themes. These themes were described by the Russell Group in their Research Cultures and Environment Toolkit. For PI nominations the themes are:

- Leadership
- Concern for professional development
- Recognition and Reward
- Wellbeing management and support
- Inclusive practice

For research group nominations, the themes are:

- Wellbeing management and support
- Recognition and reward
- Inclusive practice
- Collegiality

Please note that principal investigators cannot nominate their own research group.

What happens to my data?
Members of the project’s research and engagement teams will:

- Collect questionnaire data on yourself, some characteristics about your role, and your previous work experience.
- Inform your principal investigator that they or the research group have been nominated. The PI will not be told who nominated them.
Ascertain whether your principal investigator is happy to be named and have the nomination displayed as part of our research culture celebration. They will be named for engagement purposes only.

Analyze all nominations, responses to survey questions and interview data. When undertaking analysis of this data, we will remove all identifiable data, including names and places, and report on findings only in anonymised terms.

In some cases, anonymous extracts from submissions may be included in publications and policy documents.

Where interviewees are happy to be recorded, we will use a program called Descript to transcribe those interview recordings. According to Descript’s data security policy the data they hold is encrypted at rest and in transit and cannot be decrypted by Descript (https://www.descript.com/security). Data analysis will be supported by the online tool ATLAS.ti, for which the GDPR guidelines can be found here: https://atlasti.com/legal/atlas-ti-web-white-paper-gdpr.

All personally identifiable information will be pseudonymized, and all other personally identifiable data, such as your email address, will be held on network drives operated by the University of Cambridge with access restricted to members of the research team. Researchers’ computers accessing and storing personally identifiable data are password protected and have up to date operating systems and fully encrypted storage. While personally identifiable data (names, emails) will be kept separated from any sensitive information (background characteristics) and any research data (responses to the prompts) on the network drives, this information will be linked in the REDCap Safe Haven, to which only the researchers’ will have access.

All identifiable personal data and interview recordings will be destroyed 24 months after the end of the research project. Anonymous data will be kept, and uploaded to a public data repository, to allow other researchers to build on this work. We will anonymise by removing names and making personal characteristics more generic (such as ethnicity, discipline, career stage, locations etc) if there are less than three participants with these characteristics in our sample – e.g. school affiliation will be given rather than department.

General information about how the University uses personal data can be found here https://www.information-compliance.admin.cam.ac.uk/data-protection/research-participant-data

Are there possible disadvantages and/or risks to taking part?

You will be nominating your PI/research group to a celebration. Your researcher supervisor will not be told who made the nomination, though the nomination information may be shared both to them and to others through the research culture celebration.

Everything that you tell our researchers beyond the nomination survey and interviews will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law; unless we judge that your personal safety is at risk in which case, we would alert Andrea Hudson (University Director of HR) or Head of House for Junior Research Fellows to suggest an appropriate course of action. When undertaking research analysis of this data, we will remove all identifiable data, including names and places, and report on findings.
only in anonymised terms. In publications and policy documents, we will refer to you and your PI as researchers in a broad discipline rather than narrowing down your research focus.

You can withdraw the information provided alongside your nomination at any time up to 3 months after the end of the data collection when we expect to start disseminating our findings. You can withdraw both the information and your nomination any time up until the PI is informed of their nomination.

Are there possible benefits to taking part?

We hope there will be a wider benefit to researchers. As we will work to use the findings to improve research culture via interventions that strive to reduce misalignment of professional expectations between PIs and postdocs.

What will happen to the results of the research project?

We will work to ensure that the results of this study influence the University of Cambridge’s guidelines and policies around the professional relationship between researchers and their managers.

Study findings will also be written up and published as academic papers and/or presented at conferences.

Nominees will be shared publicly in internal comms, the ARRC website and social media as well as at a celebratory reception.

Who is organising the study?

The study is being organised by the Action Research for Research Culture project at the University of Cambridge. The project is funded by Research England, the Wellcome Trust and the University of Cambridge.

Who was responsible for the ethical review of the study?

The project has been reviewed by the University of Cambridge Psychology Research Ethics Committee.

Who should I contact for further information?

If you would like further information on the research project, please contact the research team by emailing arrcproject@admin.cam.ac.uk.

What do I do now?

If you are happy to participate in the study, please tick yes to the relevant questions on the online form.

Whatever you decide, we thank you for considering taking part and wish you the best of luck with your professional development at the University of Cambridge.

Resources to support you

We hope your engagement with the project has been interesting and thought-provoking; however, if it has reminded you of unacceptable behaviour by members of the University or you feel upset by anything that has been discussed you may find these resources helpful:

Dignity @ Work Policy https://www.hr.admin.cam.ac.uk/policies-procedures/dignity-work-policy
Grievance and disciplinary matters [https://www.hr.admin.cam.ac.uk/hr-staff/information-staff/staff-guide/terms-employment/grievances](https://www.hr.admin.cam.ac.uk/hr-staff/information-staff/staff-guide/terms-employment/grievances)

Counselling for students: [https://www.counselling.cam.ac.uk](https://www.counselling.cam.ac.uk)

Counselling for staff: [https://staff.counselling.cam.ac.uk](https://staff.counselling.cam.ac.uk)

For more information on the University’s data protection policy see: [https://www.information-compliance.admin.cam.ac.uk/data-protection/research-participant-data](https://www.information-compliance.admin.cam.ac.uk/data-protection/research-participant-data)

References

Wellcome Trust. (2020). *What researchers think about the culture they work in.* [https://wellcome.org/reports/what-researchers-think-about-research-culture](https://wellcome.org/reports/what-researchers-think-about-research-culture)