

Principles for High-Performing, Inclusive Research Communities

Our Principles for High Performing, Inclusive Research Communities



To foster thriving, innovative, and resilient research communities, we need environments where people feel safe, valued, and empowered to contribute. These principles are designed to support high performance through inclusive and empowering leadership and community-building across our research ecosystem.

These principles underpinning high-performing research communities are informed by a review of current thinking and evidence from across the sector, including sources such as UKRI and CIPD. Further details can be found via the links at the end.

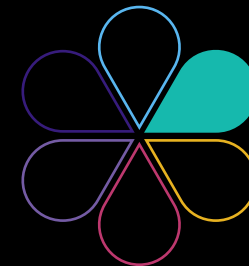


1. ♥ Psychological Safety

Psychological Safety is ‘a shared belief held by members of a team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking’ (Edmondson et al. 2025). **Creating a culture where people feel safe to speak up, ask questions, admit mistakes, and challenge ideas respectfully is foundational to high performance. When team members feel psychologically safe, they are comfortable asking for help, admitting mistakes, raising concerns, offering ideas, and constructively challenging existing practices. This openness fosters innovation, reduces risk, and enables teams to act on new ideas effectively. It also ensures that everyone feels heard, valued and included.**

Examples:

- **Encouraging open discussion in team meetings, including dissenting views.**
- **Responding constructively to feedback or mistakes.**



2. ♥ Inclusive Engagement in Research Culture

A respectful, inclusive environment supports diverse talent and perspectives, recognising the value of all roles and contributions. We foster an inclusive research culture where PGRs, ECRs, and technical staff who are interested in research are actively encouraged to participate in research conversations and communities. Creating space for diverse voices in research discussions strengthens collaboration, innovation, and a sense of belonging across all career stages and roles.

Examples:

- **Actively addressing barriers to participation where research events are designed to be inclusive of all career stages and roles.**
- **ECRs and PGRs are invited to attend and contribute to research strategy meetings.**

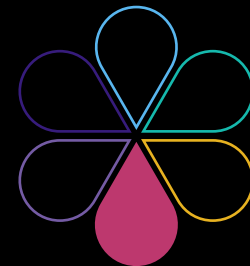


3. ♥ Collaborative Leadership

Effective leaders empower others, model inclusive behaviours, and help shape a positive research culture.

Examples:

- **Co-developing group values or codes of conduct.**
- **Sharing leadership roles with those earlier in their research career or rotating responsibilities to ensure we are nurturing our future discipline leaders.**

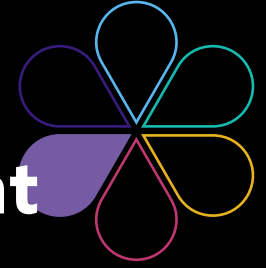


4. ♥ Engaged Collaboration

Strong research communities build partnerships across disciplines and with external stakeholders, including the public.

Examples:

- **Co-creating research questions with community partners.**
- **Facilitating interdisciplinary workshops or sandpits.**

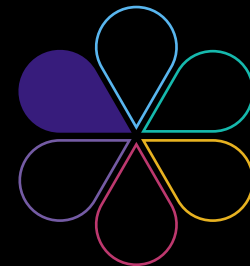


5. ♥ Championing Researcher Career Development

All leaders should actively advocate for and support career development opportunities for researchers, in alignment with our Researcher Development Concordat commitment of 10 days (pro rata) per year of professional development all researchers, including Postgraduate Researchers (PGRs), Early Career Researchers (ECRs), and technical staff involved in research. This includes encouraging participation in training, mentoring, and development activities that enhance research skills and career progression.

Examples:

- Encouraging team members to attend external training courses, conferences, or writing retreats as part of their development.
- ECRs and PGRs are invited to attend and contribute to research strategy meetings.



6. ♥ Adaptability and Improvement

High-performing communities are reflective and responsive, using feedback and evaluation to continuously improve.

Examples:

- **Regularly reflect on group practices and culture, actively seeking and valuing feedback from all members to promote an inclusive and responsive environment.**
- **Adapting strategies based on feedback or changing priorities.**



Evidence gathering:

- **How Research England supports research excellence**
/ How to achieve high-performing research
- **Analysis by the Policy Institute at King's College London and RAND Europe**
found some common characteristics in submissions to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014 that received high scores for research and impact.
- CIPD – Trust and Psychological Safety – an evidence review:
<https://www.ukri.org/who-we-are/research-england/research-excellence/how-to-achieve-high-performing-research-2/>
- Google – Project Aristotle, and Dr Tim Clark, The Four Stages of Psychological Safety
<https://www.leaderfactor.com/build-psychological-safety>
- Edmondson, Amy C., and Michaela J. Kerrissey.
"What People Get Wrong About Psychological Safety."
Harvard Business Review 103, no. 3 (May–June 2025): 52–59.