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## **Engaging early career researchers: report from the Breakout groups**

### **Breakout Tutorial Group 1 on engaging early career researchers**

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This session focused on the topic of engaging early career researchers. Participants in the session were from a range of institutions and countries. There was a strong representation by those working in libraries or other Research Data Management (RDM) roles but also publishers, researchers and other university staff.

The session began by introducing some of the approaches that had been taken at UCL to engage early career researchers. Following this the session broke into three groups who were asked to consider the following potential topics:

- Policy and Leadership
- Advocacy
- Open Data
- Research Data Infrastructure
- Roles, Responsibilities and Skills

These topics were drawn out of the [LEARN Toolkit](#) and [LERU Roadmap for Research Data](#). The groups were asked to decide on one or two themes to focus on. These were then discussed with the whole group and discussed further.

#### **Why engage early career researchers?**

Before discussing the main topics workshop participants were asked to consider the overarching question of why it was important to engage early career researchers with best practices in RDM. This elicited a number of responses:

Early career researchers may be more 'idealistic' than more senior colleagues so may be more receptive to the ideals motivating open science

Some challenges to engaging early career researchers were also highlighted:

- early career researchers are less integrated into academic decision making processes in universities
- early career researchers often move institutions more frequently, training them might therefore be seen as a 'poor investment' by some university managers

## Who are early career researchers?

The potential difference in approach to defining early career researchers did not receive much attention suggesting that this was not a day-to-day concern for most participants; participants covered both research students (at a Master's and PhD level) and early career research staff (including postdoctoral researcher). It was pointed out that early career researchers might have different academic roles depending on their discipline but this wouldn't directly change the approach taken to advocating to these researchers.

## Themes

The groups tended to not focus only on one or two areas but moved between the different themes during their discussions. When reporting back to the group the following topics were given prominence.

## Advocacy

Advocacy was a major theme discussed during the session. A range of main points were made:

- Advocacy for RDM needs to be 'bottom up'. Early career researchers can help contribute to this advocacy effort.
- Often initial contact with a group or project involves early career researchers.
- Advocacy should include the promotion of the ideals behind data sharing.
- Advocacy should include potential benefits to a researcher's career, for example by highlighting citation advantages to sharing research data.
- Advocacy might be possible during other interactions libraries have with early career researchers.
- Generating word of mouth discussion about RDM is important

## Roles, Responsibilities & Skills

This theme was discussed broadly and understood not only as relating to the roles, responsibilities and skills required for supporting RDM at an institutional level but also potentially for early career researchers:

- Skills and advocacy often overlapped in the discussion. Groups fed back that effective advocacy involved providing early career researchers with practical skills. Similarly it was felt that RDM support would be of more interest to early career researchers when it had a practical 'hands on' focus.
- It was suggested that it wouldn't be useful to have roles focused on early career researchers specifically but there was a perceived benefit to having an increasing number of discipline-specific roles.
- Skills were particularly important for early career researchers because they might be given responsibilities for data management across a team or research group.
- It was suggested that roles and skills would change throughout a researcher's career and this is something that should be reflected in the services offered.

## Policy and Leadership

There was less discussion of policy than some of the other areas, however some of the discussion of other themes did overlap with this area. It was suggested that early career researchers might benefit from different types of Data Management Plans. A range of comments were made on leadership and early career researchers:

- Early career researchers might be effective leaders amongst their peers

- Early career researchers who develop an understanding of the benefits of RDM and data sharing may go on to have a greater role as their careers develop

### Open Data

The Open Data theme received relatively little discussion. This was partly because this theme was discussed alongside other themes. It may also reflect an underlying assumption about advocacy focusing not only on 'day-to-day' issues but also with broader ideas about openness and sharing.