



University of  
**Strathclyde**  
Glasgow



# COLLABORATIVE CULTURES PROGRAMME

Image: University of Strathclyde,  
'Heart of the Campus'



Mid-Project Report – May 2025



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researchenvironment/collaborativeresearchcultures/](https://www.strath.ac.uk/research/researchenvironment/collaborativeresearchcultures/)



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# INTRODUCTION



‘Cultures of Collaborative Research in a Socially Progressive Technological University’ (the “Collaborative Cultures Programme”) is a 2-year Wellcome Trust-funded initiative to enhance collaborative research culture across the University of Strathclyde. Focusing on aspects of access, reward, and recognition in collaborative research & innovation environments we are investigating pathways to more collaborative, connected, and sustainable communities.

The Collaborative Cultures Programme provides us with a unique opportunity to undertake research about our own collaborative culture at Strathclyde. By piloting approaches and undertaking qualitative research we will be able to understand how we can address challenges that have been identified through a range of initiatives by colleagues across the University over the years leading up to this project. Collaboration is key to career success for staff across Strathclyde and while I hope the learning and resources from this programme will lead to long-term impact for our staff, students and across the sector, for me it’s the personal stories of having new confidence to reach out to a collaborator and seeing new connections develop that are the most powerful stories we can strive towards.

This report provides an update on the programme at its halfway point, including highlights of funded projects, updates on our qualitative research and the development of indicators, insights into our community building work and plans for the year ahead that we hope you will join as the year goes along.

This is a project for the whole of Strathclyde’s research community, including all those that deliver, enable and lead research. Thus, as we reflect on the past year, we would like to thank the large numbers of staff and postgraduate researchers that have contributed so far - from those who are helping deliver parts of the project, to our Community of Practice, to you for taking the time to read this report.

*Dr Emma Compton-Daw  
(Collaborative Cultures Co-Investigator)*

# THE PROGRAMME

The Collaborative Cultures Programme (May 2024 - May 2026) aims to promote collaborative and inclusive research culture through activities which seek to address two key challenges relevant to the University of Strathclyde's unique context as a socially progressive institution with a strong focus on cross-sector collaboration:

1. How can we work with partners in industry and the public and third sector to co-produce inclusive research cultures?
2. How do we value and recognise the breadth and depth of everyday contributions which sustain thriving collaborative research cultures?

Drawing on experience and practice within our institution as well as across sectors, the programme delivers a series of activities, including internal seed funding calls, qualitative research and pilot interventions.

## Collaborative Cultures – Year 1 at a Glance



### Two Internal Seed Funding Calls

- Call 1 (£200k): 12 teams; 42 individuals
- Call 2 (£25k): 20 applicant teams – decisions announced in June 2025



### Diary Writing Project (Phase 1)

- 6 participants
- Rich, in-depth qualitative data on under-representation in cross-sector collaborations



### Self-Assessment Framework to Measure Collaborative Cultures

- Three overarching dimensions to collaborative work
- Draft framework developed, to be piloted in summer 2025



### Collaborative Cultures Community of Practice

- 87 members from 30+ university departments / units
- 9 engagement sessions



### Communication and Knowledge Exchange

- 480+ visitors on Sharepoint Page
- 10 internal events, workshops and drop-in sessions engaging 60+ individuals
- 15+ presentations given in internal and external settings

# FUNDING CALL 1 - INCLUSIVE & COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH CULTURES

In autumn 2024, we launched our first internal funding call, 'Inclusive and Collaborative Research Cultures', offering seed funding of up to £20,000 for collaborative projects addressing under-representation in cross-sector partnerships. The call supported two types of projects:

- enabling under-represented groups in Higher Education to take on leadership roles with external partners, and
- addressing wider equality barriers to cross-sector collaboration.



## FUNDING DECISIONS

After a double-blind review process, 12 projects were selected for funding, covering themes including disability, gender equality, inclusive education, race equality and more. The projects started in January 2025 and will run for up to 12 months.

## FUNDED PROJECTS

**Regional Socioeconomic Data to Support Policymaking: Using Systems Thinking to explore and Enhance Cross-Organisational Collaboration Across the UK's Four Nations and Statistical System**

**Sharada Davidson, Le Nguyen and Allison Catalano (Economics, Management Science)**

This project seeks to strengthen collaboration by contributing to enhanced data practices which support better decision-making and resource allocation among organisations producing and using regional economic and socioeconomic data.

*"The challenge isn't just about producing more or better data – it's about ensuring data is accessible and relevant to those who need it."*



## Strathclyde Women in KTP

**Elaine Wallace, Eileen Maltby and Andrew Kinnear  
(Research and Knowledge Exchange Services - RKES)**

This project aims to establish a network that encourages women in academia to engage in Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTP).

*“Our launch event took place [in February] and saw 35 staff register to take part in the programme.”*

Image: Andrew Kinnear presenting at the third Women in KTP workshop [Apr 2025].



## Working well with a chronic, unseen medical conditions (“invisible” illnesses)

**Lisa Neilson, Kevin Donovan, Jane Essex, Evelyn Tonner and Doug Ross (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Health & Safety, Education, Centre for Energy Policy)**

Aiming to collaborate with external partners like the Glasgow Disability Alliance and the National Association of Disabled Staff Networks, this project aims to improve the workplace experience for staff with invisible illnesses and encourage higher levels of disability declaration.

## Co-designing a future hospital (and care) system for unpaid carers: development of an informal carer insights hub for ideas exchange, engagement and priority setting

**Kieren Egan, John Connaghan and the Future Hospital Initiative Team (Computer and Information Sciences, Biomedical Engineering, Electronic & Electrical Engineering)**

This project aims to pioneer innovative methods to identify, engage, and connect the lived experiences of informal carers with university researchers and partners in a sustainable way. A network has been built, and site visits have begun to key partner organizations.

*“The key emphasis has been on identifying barriers and enablers to high quality engagement.”*



## Community building in Decolonising GLAMs (DeCoGLAM)

**Milena Dobрева, Catherine Chavula, Mahendra Mahey, Dustin Hosseini and Cassandra Kist (Computer and Information Sciences, Education)**

This project will create a Community of Practice (CoP) focused on decolonising GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives, Museums) institutions, in partnership with Glasgow Life. The project will support the University’s Race Equality Working Group and promote curriculum decolonisation.

Image: DeCoGLAM launch event in the Mitchell Library [7 May 2025].

**Identifying Intersectional Barriers to Enhance Representation in External Collaborations within the Faculty of Science**

**Elizabeth Dombi, William Bell, Lynn Dennany, Suzy Whoriskey, Susan Spesyvtseva and Annie McLaughlin (Mathematics and Statistics, Computer & Information Sciences, Pure & Applied Chemistry, Physics, Equality & Diversity)**

The project aims to identify and address barriers that prevent staff in the Faculty of Science from engaging in external collaborations.

*“We seek to inform institutional policies and establish long-term support mechanisms to create opportunities for collaborations.”*

**Making motherhood work: Supporting mothers in academia**

**Carolyn McMillan, Norin Arshed and Juliette Wilson (Hunter Centre for Entrepreneurship, Strategy & Innovation, Marketing)**

The project seeks to address equality barriers by examining the institutional challenges faced by academic mothers; identifying strategies to support professional development and co-develop evidence-based policy recommendations aimed at removing systemic barriers.

*“This project is also inspired by the lived experiences of its investigators, all of whom are mothers at different stages of motherhood and their academic careers.”*

**What It Means to Be Human: Navigating the Intersection of Invisible (Dis)abilities, Neurodiversity, and Gender Identity**

**Kimia Witte (Biomedical Engineering)**

This project explores the range of human sensory abilities, examining how they shape identity and experience. It considers invisible abilities and disabilities, the impact of environment, and the role of non-verbal expression in communicating these experiences, and how gender identity and self-perception interplay with physical and neurological diversity.

**Exploring and mitigating barriers for trans and non-binary researchers to engage in research collaborations and networks**

**Matson Lawrence and Stephanie McKendry (Access, Equality and Inclusion Service, Student Experience)**

This project will explore how to support trans and non-binary researchers, nurture collaborative activities, and develop resources to improve trans and non-binary inclusion and literacy within the research process.

*“We will also seek ways to support trans and non-binary researchers to engage in partnerships and networks both with each other, as a community, and with external partners.”*





## CULTURE-GAPS in STEM – Collaborative University Learning for Targeting Underrepresentation in Research and Education – Addressing Attainment GAPS in STEM

**Margaret Cunningham, Maheen Wahid, Kirsty Tinto and Susan Currie (Strathclyde Institute of Pharmacy & Biomedical Sciences - SIPBS)**

The project aims to directly benefit underrepresented and disadvantaged groups within the student body by addressing education inequities. Creative workshops will unite students, educators and partners to collaboratively design inclusive, equitable learning environments.

*“We already have participants from across all Strathclyde job families signed up for the June event with a healthy number of UG/PGT/PGR in the mix so we are really excited to see what those events hold!”*

## Deepening Engagement with the Third Sector: Creating a more collaborative and engaging research culture at Strathclyde

**Qawiyah Haroon-Tejumola, Manish Joshi, Jen Remnant, Darren McGuire (Work, Employment and Organisation Department, Innovation and Industry Engagement)**

This project aims to strengthen research capacity in voluntary organisations through workshops, online content, and partnership building. It also seeks to expand community engagement, develop a strategic research plan, support underrepresented groups in research, and build sustainable cross-sector collaboration.



Image: Jen Remnant, Qawiyah Haroon-Tejumola, Darren McGuire and Manish Joshi [left to right]

*“Our participatory approach ensures that voluntary sector partners actively shape the discussions and learning outcomes.”*

## Implementing and Evaluating a Gender-based Violence Intervention in Kenya

**Melanie McCarry, Medina Johnson and Shannon Onyango (Social Work and Social Policy)**

This project will implement a health-based intervention to tackle domestic abuse and other forms of gender-based violence in Kenya. A sustainability framework will be applied to train partners to deliver the intervention and evaluate its impact. A successful first round of fieldwork has taken place across four areas of Kenya, involving 106 participants.



*“These face to face events meant we developed relationships with key individuals, got to know the participants and allowed us to hear [about] important and pressing issues in each area regarding gender-based violence.”*

Image: Kevoh The Artist, painted on wall of the teenage mothers' unit in Real Hope Rescue Center, Nairobi, Kenya [taken February 2025].

# OTHER ACTIVITIES

## QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Collaborative Cultures embraces an experimental and creative approach to research, seeking to explore new and innovative ways to enhance understanding of the enablers and experiences of research culture issues. Interested in capturing research culture beyond conventional metrics, we seek to generate qualitative data to explore the lesser known socio-relational and emotional aspects of collaboration such as belonging, inclusion and wellbeing. Diary research and repeat interviews are two key methods that will be used for this strand of work.

### Diary Writing Project (Phase 1)

In February, team members of funded projects from our first funding call were invited to take part in a diary research project, an innovative qualitative method we are trialling to explore experiences of under-representation in cross-sector collaborations. A small group of individuals responded to our invitation and have been writing diary entries in response to monthly prompts. The project will continue until December.

## FUNDING CALL 2 - EQUITABLE & INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION TO ADDRESS GLOBAL CHALLENGES

A second internal funding call was launched as a joint initiative between the Collaborative Cultures Programme and the University of Strathclyde's Strategic Themes in March 2025. The call seeks to support teams of early- to mid-career and under-represented staff and postgraduate researchers as well as experienced Principal Investigators to connect with new external partners and develop large interdisciplinary research bids. The call goes beyond a traditional funding call by offering a bespoke development workshop programme, alongside successful teams' own seed-funded projects, to support them to build valuable skills and networks that enable equitable and meaningful partnerships within their teams and with external collaborators.

## INDICATORS OF COLLABORATIVE CULTURES FRAMEWORK

Collaboration is an essential part of Strathclyde's research & innovation strategy, yet it is not easy to measure how a research culture supports and enables collaboration effectively. This intervention has thus developed a self-assessment framework that departments, research groups or other units within an institution could use to better understand how they can measure 'good collaboration' in their context.

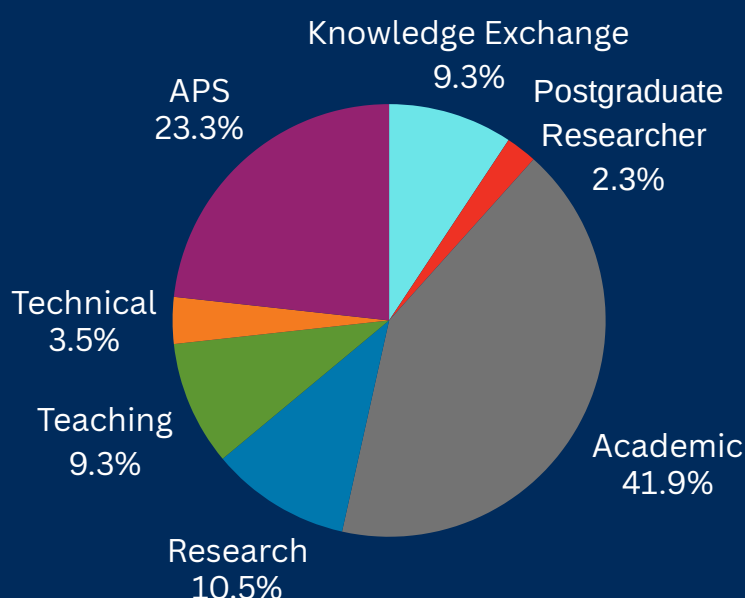
Drawing on three dimensions of collaboration - collegiality & belonging, collaborative working in project teams, and external collaborations - the framework is intended as a reflection and planning tool that can support units to understand their strengths and plan future activities strategically.

The next step in this intervention will be to pilot the framework with different types of units to test its scope and investigate how it can be embedded most usefully.

# OUR COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Our Community of Practice (CoP) brings together 80+ staff and postgraduate researchers across job families and disciplines to feed into the Collaborative Cultures Programme's various workstreams. Through themed online sessions, CoP members engage in open dialogue about various aspects of the programme: their input has been integral to every aspect of the programme's work and has therefore contributed to change-making across the research environment at the University.

## Community of Practice Members by Job Family



## Sessions and Topics Covered:

- August 2024: Funding Call 1 & qualitative research (44 participants)
- January 2025: Further funding calls (22 participants)
- January - February 2025: Smaller working groups on evaluation and qualitative research (6 participants)
- March 2025: Indicators framework & reward & recognition (23 participants)

The Community of Practice's feedback has helped us, among others, to

- Simplify our funding processes and clarify language and eligibility
- Offer more targeted communication and drop-in support
- Reduce non-essential activities to respect staff time within our funding calls
- Develop tools for recognising diverse contributions
- Link CoP insights to wider research culture engagement efforts

## Next steps

We are looking to engage with our CoP in more creative and targeted ways to help members spend their time with us more effectively. Another future priority will be providing networking and social opportunities within and outwith the CoP to develop a sense of community for those coming together to shape the programme.

# KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

## AT A GLANCE

We believe that a collaborative research culture is owned across the research and innovation community and so, from the outset, the Collaborative Cultures Programme was keen to exchange ideas, share project findings and create space for wider knowledge exchange and collaboration. Beyond our Community of Practice, this has involved:

### ◆ Strathclyde Events

- Launch event in September 2025 brought together 37 staff and postgraduate researchers to learn about Collaborative Cultures and discuss ideas on enhancing our research culture.
- Contributed to wider discussions on research culture at several events during Strathclyde's Research Integrity & Culture Week 2025.
- Internal links with Strathclyde committees and working groups, including the Gender Equality Steering Group, Faculty Research and Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committees and the Research Development & Culture Sub-Committee (RDCSC).

*We're excited to celebrate our first programme year with a Mid-Project Showcase Event, highlighting some of the fantastic work that is going on across the institution and inviting ideas on what's to come next for the programme.*

### ◆ Conferences and Sector Events

- Contributed to a range of sector-wide events, including most recently the Ignite+ Network Annual Event and All-Island Research Culture Network Conference 2025.
- Engaged with several sector meetings of the Wellcome Trust Institutional Research Culture Community (IRCC), bringing together Wellcome-funded research culture projects across the UK and Ireland.

*A range of upcoming presentations are planned at sector conferences, such as the Research Evaluation in Social Sciences and Humanities Conference, Advance HE Research Cultures Symposium, Warwick International Research Culture Conference and more.*

### ◆ Building Cross-Sector Partnerships

- The programme has been involved in a number of sector networks, including the Research Culture Enablers Network, the Wellcome Trust Institutional Research Culture Community and the Diary Method Online Community, to share good practice and build connections with other institutions.
- We have met with other university projects focused on research culture to build connections and potential collaborative activities, including for example University College Dublin and Queen's University Belfast.

*We are co-hosting a knowledge exchange day with other Wellcome-funded Scottish research culture projects in July to identify ways of sharing our learnings and working together.*





Collaborative Cultures Launch Event [18 Sep 2024].



I Lin Sin, Maria Weikum and McRhon Banderlipe (right to left) at the IRCC Edinburgh Regional Meeting [16 May 2025].



'DeCoGlam' project: Launch event at the Mitchell Library [7 May 2025].



'Women in KTP' project: Victoria Burns is presenting at Workshop 2 [Mar 2025].



Participants of the Collaborative Cultures Launch Event brainstormed what a positive collaborative culture looks like for them [18 Sep 2024].

# PLANNING FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

We're excited to move forward into our second year with more initiatives to support and promote collaborative and inclusive research culture across Strathclyde's research and innovation community and beyond. Our plans include:

## **Qualitative Research**

Using semi-structured interviews as well as further diary writing projects to develop in-depth insights into staff members' everyday collaborations, feelings and sense of belonging - creating data complementary to existing quantitative evidence to measure research culture at Strathclyde and across the sector.

## **Piloting the Indicators of Collaborative Cultures Framework**

Testing the framework with a range of stakeholders to evaluate its scope and investigate how it can be embedded to enhance collaborative cultures.

## **Reward and Recognition**

Investigating the role of reward and recognition across the research and innovation community to develop pilot interventions, including a credit framework for collaborative teams

## **Community of Practice (CoP)**

Building on our first year of activity to engage our CoP in creative and targeted ways, provide networking and social opportunities and develop a sense of community for those coming together to shape the programme.

## **Knowledge Exchange**

Continuing to seek opportunities to share knowledge, develop new networks and identify collaborative opportunities beyond Strathclyde.

## **Evaluation**

Developing a strategy to identify the programme's impact and learning for future research culture projects.

## **Further Internal Funding Opportunities**

### **Cross-Sector Co-Production**

Engaging with external partners to identify common cross-sector collaboration challenges and co-produce solutions.

### **Strathclyde Research and Innovation Culture Network**

Providing a dedicated open forum and funding for staff and PGRs to design and implement culture initiatives.



# MEET THE TEAM



Prof Churnjeet Mahn,  
Project Director



Dr Emma Compton-  
Daw, Co-Investigator



Dr Maria Weikum,  
Project Manager



Grace Murkett,  
Research Policy  
Officer



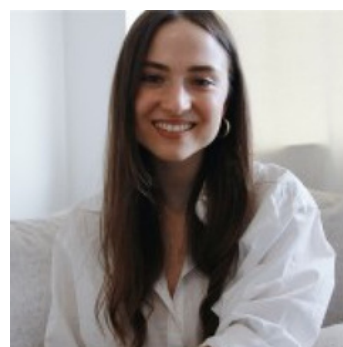
Angela Graham,  
Project Administrator



Dr Chris Wells-  
Holland, Knowledge  
Exchange Associate



Dr I Lin Sin, Research  
Associate



Katie Salamon, Project  
Administrator

## LEADERSHIP GROUP

The Collaborative Cultures Programme's Principal Investigator is Sir Jim McDonald (Principal). In addition, we have an excellent group of co-investigators and other colleagues providing strategic leadership within the initiative:

- Prof Tim Bedford – Associate Principal (Research & Knowledge Exchange)
- Prof Patricia Connolly – Deputy Associate Principal (Research & Knowledge Exchange), Department of Biomedical Engineering
- Prof Madeleine Grealy – Deputy Associate Principal (Research & Knowledge Exchange), Department of Psychology
- Mari-Louise Hemming – Assistant Director, Human Resources
- Prof Roma Maguire – Deputy Associate Principal (Research & Knowledge Exchange), Department of Computer & Information Sciences
- Dr Emer McDougall – Assistant Director, Innovation & Industry Engagement
- Prof Paul McKenna – Deputy Associate Principal (Research & Knowledge Exchange), Department of Physics
- Dr Tony Weir – Head of Strategic RKES, Research & Knowledge Exchange Services

## AN INSTITUTIONAL PROJECT

Much of this project has been enabled, informed and undertaken by colleagues across Strathclyde's wider research community - we thus want to explicitly acknowledge and thank everyone working with us over the past year, in particular:

- our Community of Practice
- the 12 project teams funded through our first internal funding call
- the Strathclyde Strategic Themes team
- Sarah Bernstein, Rodge Glass, Emmaleena Kakela, Andrew Meehan, Camila Mont'Alverne, Maria Sledmere and Jessica Widner working with us on our qualitative research activities (interviews and diary writing)
- the many, many other colleagues who have advised, shaped and contributed to Collaborative Cultures.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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