



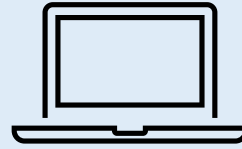
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PGR Digital Infrastructure: A case study in delivering and evaluating institutional change

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UKCGE Annual Conference | July 2025

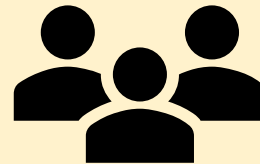


This is about IT
systems



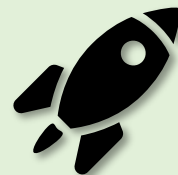
I promise that is more
dynamic than it sounds

It is about researcher
development systems



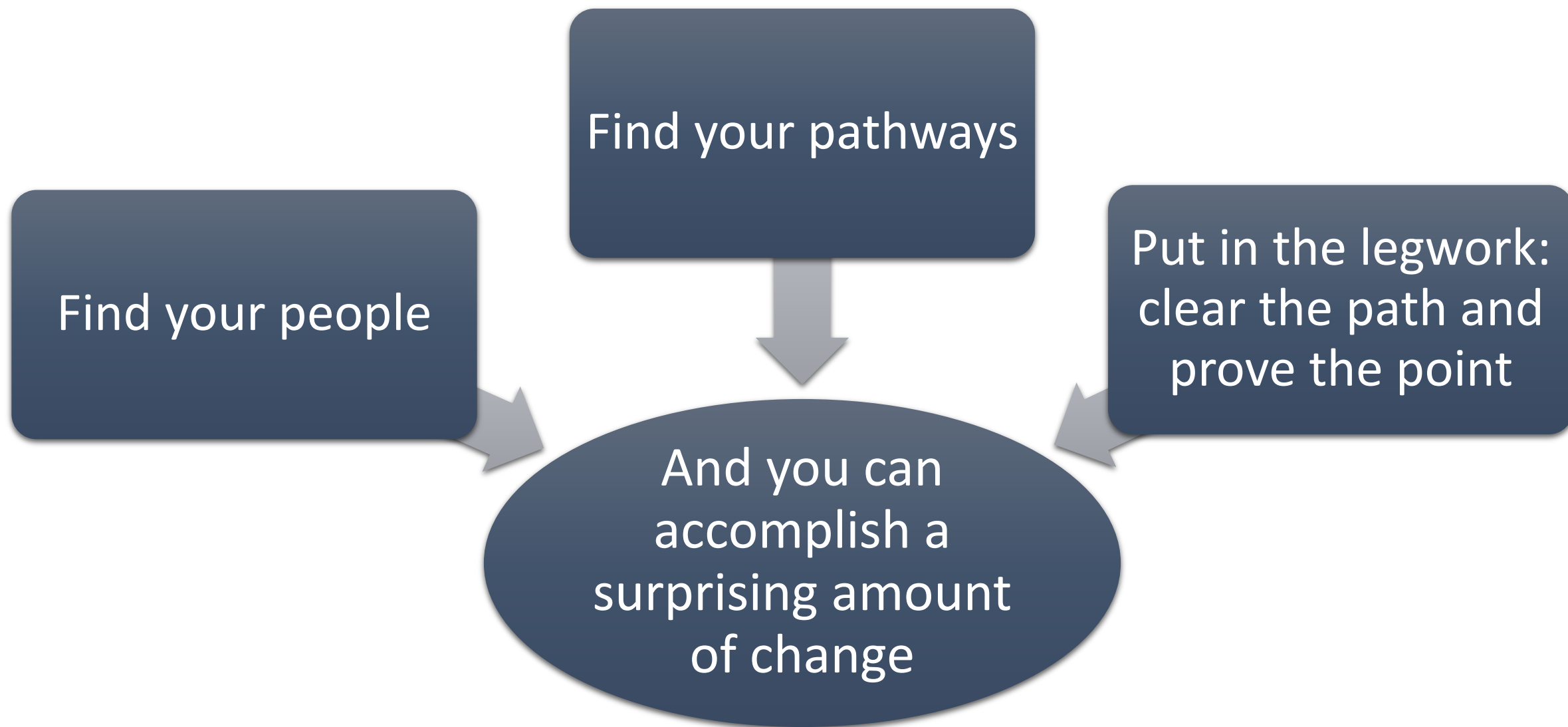
But the ideas can be applied
to any PGR lifecycle IT.

The vibe will go down
before it goes up.



The positive take-away is that
you can create **systemic change**
without being 'at the top'

The TL:DR Overall Takeaway





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Setting the Scene



How this started...

Joanna was cross and frazzled...



Unflattering photo of Joanna
looking cross and frazzled.

Do you love your PGR lifecycle IT systems?

I hate them with
the power of a
thousand suns



Why?



They are rainbows
and ice cream
sprinkles of joy



...could our event management be different?
...What are other people doing?

What are other
UofG teams using?

Are researchers happy?

Are administrators happy?

What are other HEIs using?

Are they happy?

Spoiler: No

A timeline:

2020-2022	Joanna is frazzled
Summer 2022	Institutional and sector scoping
Autumn 2022	Influencing work towards a product pilot
Spring 2023	Secured pilot funding
Autumn 2023	Inkpath pilot launched for PGR and Staff development
Summer 2024	Pilot evaluated
Autumn 24- Spring 2025	Influencing work to secure additional investment
Summer 2025	Procuring expanded Inkpath provision for UofG
Autumn 2025	Expand provision and governance to Info Services



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Looking around for
solutions...



So we started asking other
UofG teams about their
event management systems.
This is what we found:

This looks bonkers.
Can this be NORMAL?!
Foreshadowing: Yes!

Team	Systems Used
RIS Researcher Development Team	MyCampus (Many PGR courses) Eventbrite (PGR Induction & multi-part events) Bookitbee (for shared PGR/Staff or inter-university events) MS Forms (For courses with selective applications) Moodle (For PGR competitions and mandatory courses) Research Surveys (For collecting feedback)
College Graduate Schools	MyCampus (Many PGR courses, CoSS Methods, APR) Eventbrite (COSS and one-off events like conferences) Moodle (some events) Bespoke system (recording MVLS credits) Paper copy (Training needs assessment, some APR)
Organisational Development	COREHR (Most workshops) HR Automatic Enrolment (ECDP)
Careers Service	TargetConnect (all services)
Mental Health and Wellbeing	Eventbrite (CAPS Masterclasses) Frontdoor.spa (Peer Wellbeing Support) CoreNet (CAPS referrals / appointments)
College-based Research and Business Devt Teams	Moodle (self-paced training) CoreHR (Staff workshops, Arts Lab,) T4/Padlet/Email (PE Forum) Email (Appointments, applications devt)
Academic and Digital Development / Student Learning Development	Eventbrite (RET) MyCampus (UoGApply – PGCAP) Moodle (GTA ILTHE / AWSP / T2G) Online Surveys (DAT HE) Online PDF with zoom links (Training Upskilling)
Library	Frontdoor.spa (librarian appts) Ivanti (helpdesk) Email (Data management, copyright appts) Moodle / MyCampus / CoreHR (Data management)
IT Training	Ivanti training requests + trainer calendar MyCampus (for courses administrated by RIS RD) Moodle (Online awareness courses)
Student Enterprise	Email (appointments, competitions, workshops) MS Forms (events)

Then we did a consultation with our PGRs. A discouraging sample of their comments:

My Campus makes me cry every time I use it.

Why is it so complicated and why so many systems?

The system is awful. Fragmented, unclear and unreliable. Even this Padlet is just another horrible digital dimension to try and navigate.

It is genuinely difficult to book a session. This is my main issue with the whole thing.

I think that the system is deeply broken.

It's very hard to find the courses and the sign-up process is still long and confusing -- there's lots of ways that a new PGR could *think* they've signed up to a course when in fact they haven't confirmed

The Registration system is awkward and clumsy to search and navigate.

I find My Campus uniquely dreadful. I will skip a course I'm lukewarm on to avoid wrestling with My Campus. IF there is no way to make it go away, there needs to be tutorials for all operating systems to do this so that everyone can find things.

I navigate the hellscape of Moodle to try and find a list, or I follow up on random, sporadic emails I seem to get.

We found....

Researchers struggle to find and access opportunities

Researchers disengage because of click-intensive, poor UX interfaces

Supervisors struggle to identify opportunities to recommend to their researchers

Researchers lack systems to track, reflect on, and communicate their development

Fragmentary and unbalanced evidence of development goes on researchers' records

Institution lacks systems to track researcher engagement, and provision impact

Fragmentation and effort duplication from providers across the institution

Current systems are staff-intensive with significant inefficient manual processing

Currently systems preclude shared opportunities across PGRs and research staff

Range and scale of training curtailed by administrative rather than trainer capacity

We did some Sector Benchmarking:

- ❑ 25 institutions replied, wide range of sizes

120 PGRs
150 Research Staff



6000 PGRs
7000 Research Staff

- ❑ Example respondent job titles

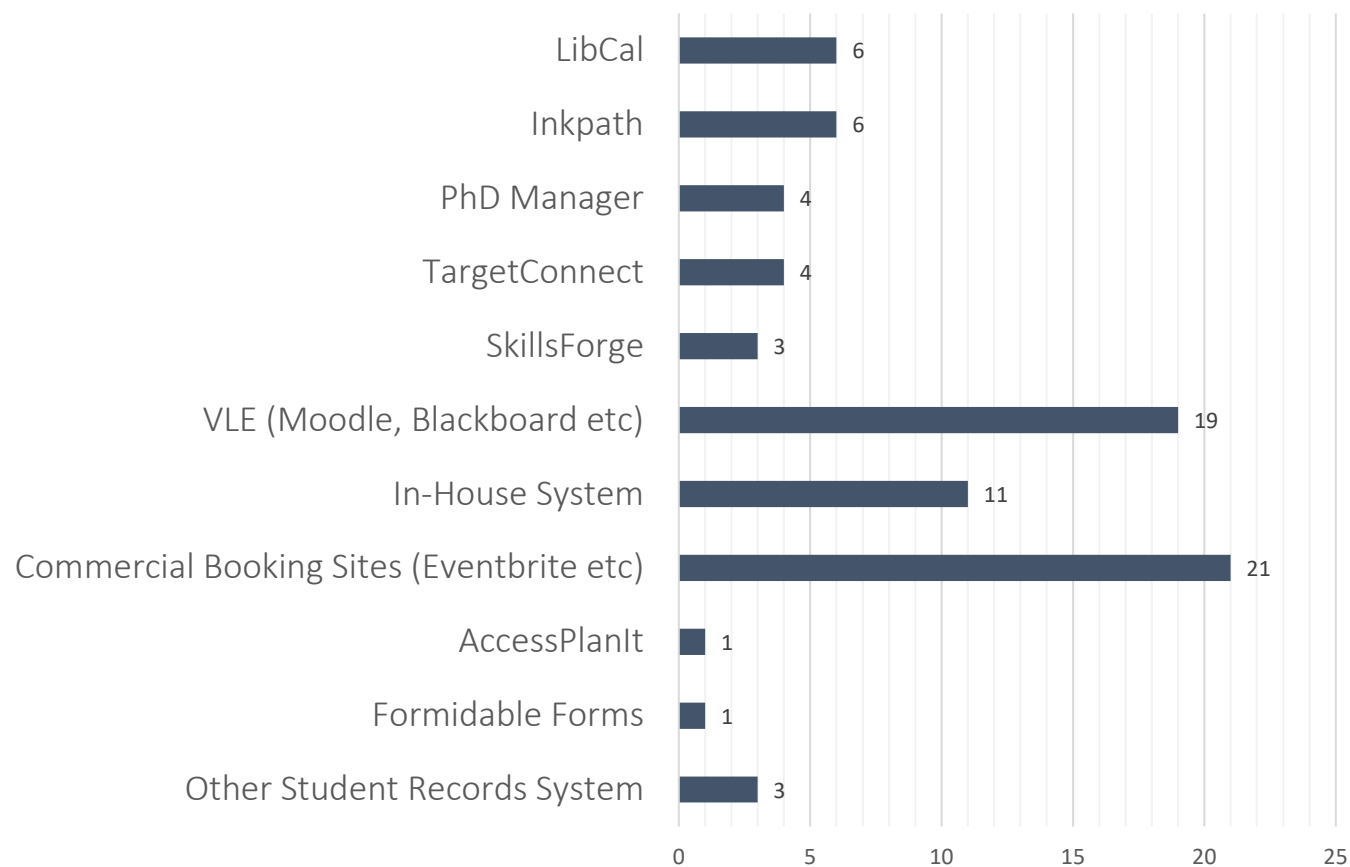
Researcher Development Officer / Manager / Lead / Head
Doctoral Academy Manager / Head / Lead
eLearning Coordinator
Research and Knowledge Exchange Officer
Programme Director Researcher Development Pathways
Head of Postgraduate Studies
Graduate School Coordinator / Manager
Organisational and Professional Development Partner

Systems are rarely institution-wide. Nor is satisfaction with them:

Few institutions use a **single** end-to-end event management system across their RD ecology. Those that do use Eventbrite, Inkpath, AccessPlanit

At one HEI 4 different RD professionals rated their satisfaction as:

- Largely Satisfied
- Neutral
- Neutral
- Largely Unsatisfied



Maybe there IS no one ‘best’ solution in the market...because, as the Tickell report notes:

“There is a ***symbiotic relationship*** between improving digital platforms and enhancing bureaucratic processes. Technological advances can be a catalyst for administrative innovation, while an understanding of bureaucratic requirements is vital to the design and operation of new digital systems. Users' experience of digital interfaces has a profound impact on their attitude to the bureaucracy that the platform serves.”

Tickell Report (July 2022:43) Review of Research Bureaucracy

MORE useful was finding out what systems FEATURES people liked

All training across Uni
in one place. 1 stop
shop.

Integrated with other
record keeping systems

Lots of automation
with limited manual
processes / admin
burden

Easy to use and
attractive interface

Flexibility /
customisability

Easy to populate with
new opportunities

Same system available
to all stakeholders -
PGRs, PGT, staff etc.

Nice to manage some
of the processes
manually, as it
contributes to rapport

Allows Supervisors to
see researchers
development

Sends calendar
invitations.

Widely recognised:
familiarity from
continuity with the
system

Gives access to a
diverse range of
opportunities.

Empowers individual
researchers to choose
what is most useful to
them.

Uniform booking
system regardless of
provider

Easy to see, export and
adjust training
bookings

Easy data extraction,
and different levels of
reporting access for
stakeholders.

Automated and
nuanced handling of
waiting lists and
demand identification

Pre- session
information easy to
send out

Free and allow shared
team accounts

Incorporates grading
and tracking of course
completions

The MoSCoW method of prioritisation

BiteSize Learning



Must have

Absolutely essential elements that must be included at any cost.



Should have

Important elements that should only be omitted with careful consideration.



Could have

Desirable elements that would ideally be included if resources allow.

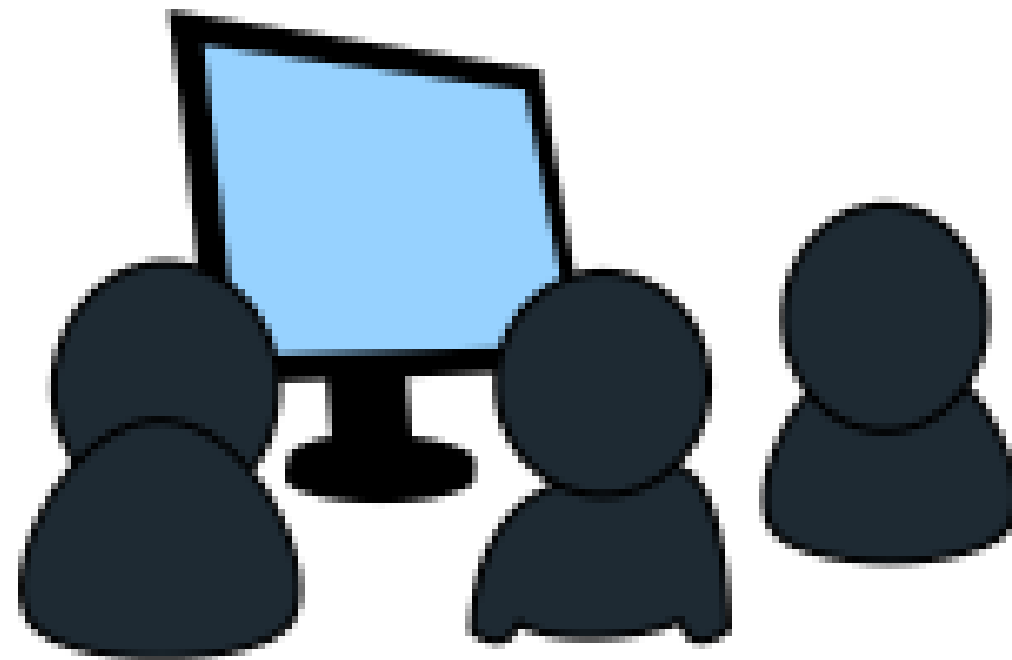


Won't have

Elements that are out-of-scope, unfeasible or actively counterproductive.



Chatham house rules
conversations with
colleagues at other Unis.



Demos from potential
product companies



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Finding the Money



We could have bought a (slightly) better system for our team, from our budget, but it would not address the one-stop-shop need, AND we would still have had to do all the committee work to get approval for change, so..



It is a fact universally
acknowledged that a
University committee
with oversight of a
budget, loves a report

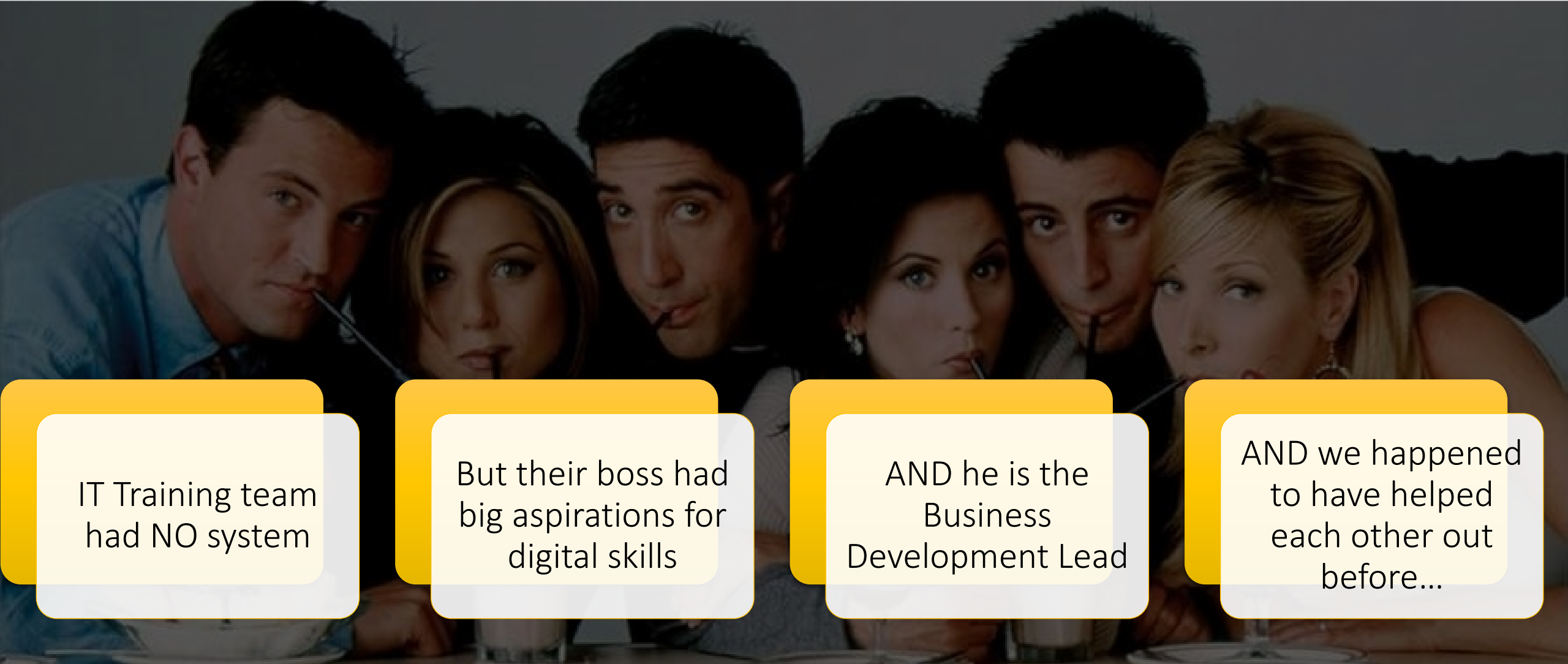


Serendipity or the power of your networks?



Turns out I was not the only frazzled person...

... And another frazzled person had a budget for pilot projects that didn't require a full business case



IT Training team
had NO system

But their boss had
big aspirations for
digital skills

AND he is the
Business
Development Lead

AND we happened
to have helped
each other out
before...

Some General Tips:

Make it simple for the pocketbook holder: build the evidence case

Pick and present evidence in the pocketbook holder finds persuasive or can use to persuade others

Be prepared for it to be time consuming. You'll have to chase.

You will likely also have to be the person who connects the jigsaw pieces (governance, DP etc)

(In financially kinder times) if possible, second someone to run the first 6 months of transition

Not everyone will like your ion. You may (will?) need to draw on senior management support to navigate the politics



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Making Long Term Change: Evaluating the Pilot





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PILOT:

Investment: £50K for 3 years
Teams: RC&RD; IT Training;
College Graduate Schools

Governance: RC&RD led
Other teams: RC&RD

administered events onto Inkpath
Working with Inkpath: RC&RD

AMBITION

Investment: More! Longer!
Teams: Uni-wide so that
RC&RD are not administering

other people's events
Governance: Info Services

Making the case for further investment:

What can we measure?

What measurements matter?

Evaluate directly against
the criteria / case you
originally laid out for
embarking on the pilot



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Speak to what the
pocketbook holder
cares about



Improved visibility & opportunities

Improve engagement

Improved researcher agency

Improved data

Strategic alignment

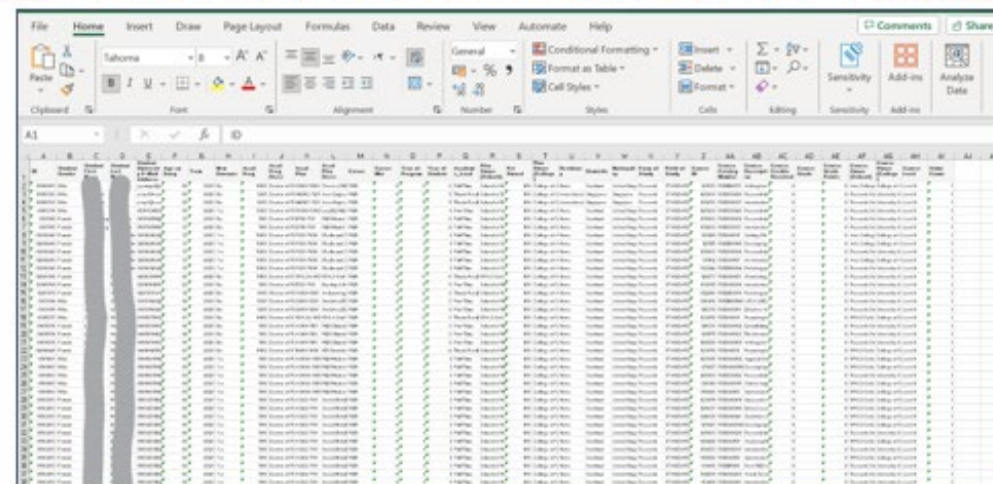
Resource saving

Positive supplier relationships

Illustrate your points

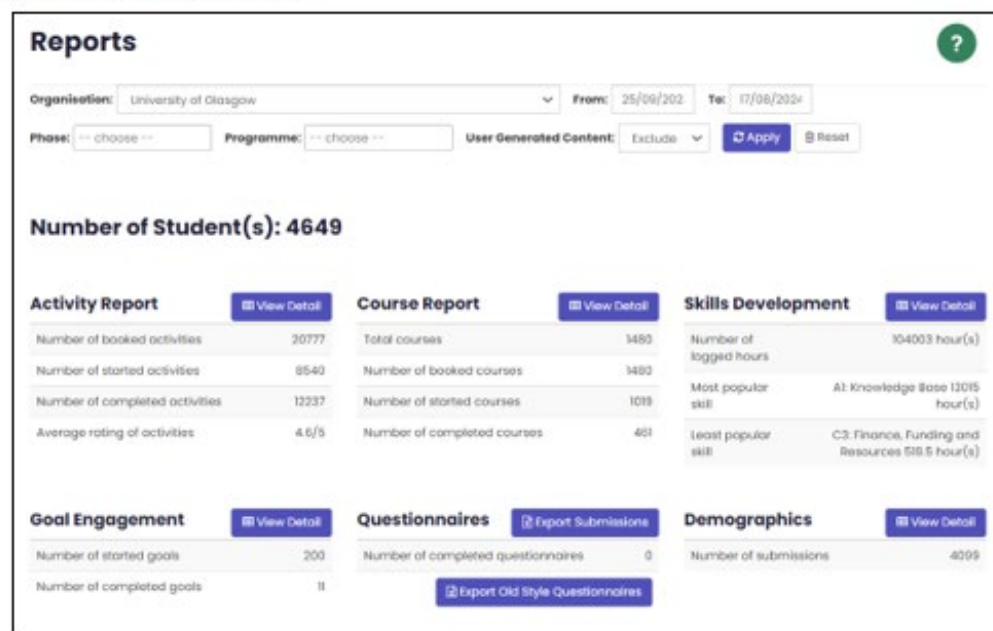
Workflow diagrams can enable decision makers to quickly see and relate to a benefit that you are describing

Fig 7: Qlikview: Example attendance data for PGR training (pulled through from MyCampus)



The screenshot shows the Qlikview interface with a large data table. The table has columns for various attributes including student ID, name, course, and attendance status. The data is organized into a grid with multiple rows and columns, typical of a data warehouse or analytics tool.

Fig 8: Inkpath: Reports Dashboard



User groups quote are useful

Inkpath is MUCH better. Annoying because not every department uses it. Overall - significantly better, please keep it. (PGR user)

“Inkpath helped to increase engagement and sign-ups from across the University for our Innovation 101 training series. A number of researchers commented that they didn’t have visibility of the IP & Commercialisation website and associated training sign-up links, so Inkpath has been very useful in that regard” (IEED colleague using RC&RD Inkpath admin)



“I signed up to one of those Inkpath thingies: it was quite good actually” (PGR supervisor, engaging for the first time in workshops)

Inkpath is good and is miles better than booking through the awful XXX system. I’ve found it easy to find training that’s been advertised elsewhere. It’s helpful to have a place that tracks everything you’ve done. (Research Staff user)

But so is data. Especially if you have a “shiny” number to illustrate

Administrators report that Inkpath has reduced individual event management time **from 4 hours to 1 hour** per workshop. During the **9-month** pilot **681** events were managed through Inkpath, making a **time saving of 2043 work hours**, equivalent to **58 weeks of work**, or **£48,300** total staff costs.

Point out that the investment was £50K over 12 months: so Inkpath paid for itself

Fig 11a: RC&RD Half Day Event Process pre-Inkpath with Event Management highlighted

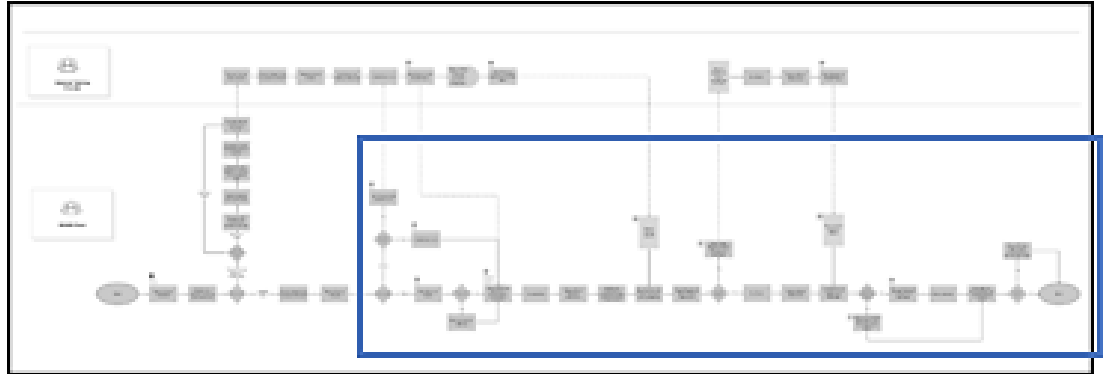
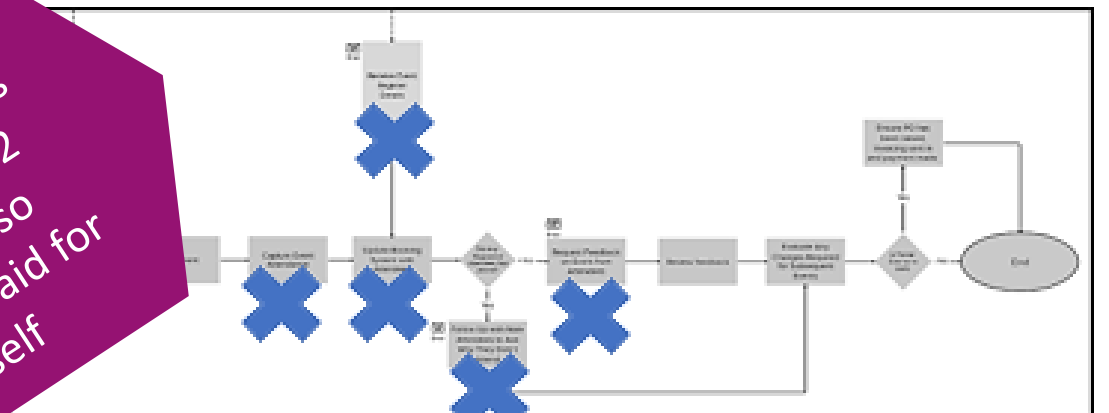
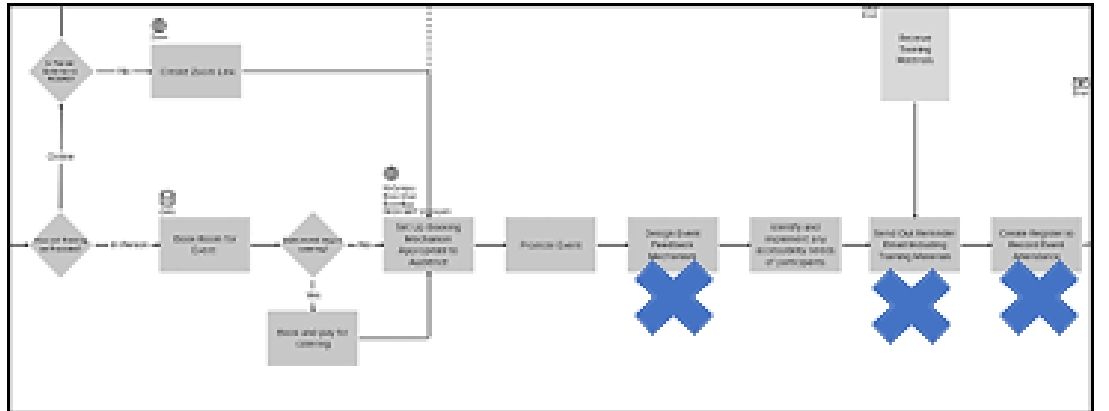


Fig 11b: Event management processes automated by Inkipath



Engagement data will always be required, but user personas can have more impact for illustrating strategic alignment

Fig 5: Comparing evidence of development in 2023-24 (Inkpath) to 2022-23 (MyCampus/BookWhen)

		2023-24: Inkpath	2022-23: MyCampus
	Number of PGRs ^[1]	Current: 3219 Year 1: 1086 Thesis Pending: 1340	Current: 3057 Year 1: 1050 Thesis Pending: 1287
All Current PGRs	Visible engaged with platform	<i>Enrolled on Inkpath</i> 2744 (85%)	<i>Records a course completed</i> 2667 (87%)
	Enrolled on at least one non-mandatory training or development	1870 (58% of current PGRs)	MyCampus can't track enrolled separately from completed training
	Completed at least one non-mandatory training or development	1689 (52% of current PGRs)	1235 (40% of current PGRs)
Year 1 PGRs	Visible: engaged with platform	<i>Enrolled on Inkpath</i> 1040 (96%)	<i>Records a course completed</i> 1974 (64%)
	Enrolled on at least one non-mandatory training or development	836 (78% of year 1 PGRs)	MyCampus can't track enrolled separately from completed training
	Completed at least one non-mandatory training or development	461 (42% of year 1 PGRs)	463 (44% of year 1 PGRs)
		2023-24: Inkpath	2022-23: BookWhen
Research and Academic Staff	Visible: engaged with platform	<i>Enrolled on Inkpath</i> 1847	<i>Enrolled on BookWhen</i> 245
	Enrolled on at least one non-mandatory training or development	712 (38% of visible staff)	226 (92% of visible staff)
	Completed at least one non-mandatory training or development	461 (16% of visible staff)	152 (62% of visible staff)

^[1] PGR numbers fluctuate across the academic year. The data here is an indicative snapshot of PGR numbers on 11 June in 2023 and 2024.



Khalid is a PGR doing his funded doctorate through SGSSS. There is lots of training and professional development available to Khalid across the spaces he works within, and navigating this complex ecosystem of support can leave him feeling overwhelmed. He wants to make decisions about his development that meet his current needs and will benefit his longer-term career plans, but he doesn't know where to start.



Rosa is a postdoctoral member of research staff on a 3-year fixed term contract at UofG. She wants to take up the right development opportunities to further her career, but finds it difficult to make time in her busy work schedule, and this sometimes leaves her feeling anxious about what her future holds.



Adebayo is a development team administrator. He is responsible for the end-to-end management of a diverse programme of around 350 events per year, including organisation and booking, advertising and taking bookings, liaising with facilitators, event coordination on the day, and post-event processes such as recording attendance, soliciting feedback and evaluation, remuneration of external speakers, and reporting on event engagement data.



Cally is a director of research in the School of Education. They lead a busy team, with responsibility for the management of a number of colleagues in academic roles, and other in professional services roles. Cally is aware of their Concordat obligations as a manager, and additionally of the benefits to their team of supporting colleagues to achieve their potential. However, keeping track of the needs, goals and development preferences of a large and diverse team can be complicated,

Case studies can combine both....



*Inkpath has been particularly transformative for visibility and engagement the IT Training team. In 2018 the UofG in-house booking system was identified as a security threat and closed. IT Training turned to CoreHR (for some staff), and developed a partnership with RC&RD (for PGRs), but advertising, booking and tracking participation became very difficult. Commercial booking platforms with pay-by-user models were prohibitively expensive, and ad-hoc methods such as MSForms were difficult to track. A lack of ownership of the booking process, and the absence of a cross-cohort mechanism to reach all potential users were significant barriers to both accomplishing engagement, and tracking impact. **Within 9-months Inkpath has enabled the team to offer 116 individual workshops on 24 topics, reaching 1756 cross-institutional users.** The team noted some challenges around users not completing in-platform attendance (an issue identified across the pilot), so actual reach is likely higher. Inkpath has also allowed them to collect statistically representative satisfaction data for the first time (average 4.7/5). **From a very limited (and impossible to quantify) reach in 2018-2022, the team are now able to expand their offer back towards pre-2018 levels.***



The University of Glasgow is committed to providing opportunities for everyone to engage in personal, professional and career development, fostering engaging, fun, and collegial cultures in which colleagues help each other to succeed.

The events offered by research culture and researcher development actively support everyone who is involved in research and scholarship across the University. This includes postgraduate researchers, research staff, research and teaching staff, learning teaching and scholarship staff, clinical staff, technicians, research professional staff and more. Associate and visiting researchers are welcome at our events. Some events are targeted towards a particular group or career stage. If you are not sure if an event is for you, please contact us and ask.

University development events and workshops are available free of charge to staff and postgraduate researchers from the University of Glasgow. They are not, however, free to deliver. Short (half-day) events or workshops can cost £15 to £30 per participant, and long programmes £200 - £2500 per participant. Booking is prioritised as your agreement to attend that workshop, course, event, or programme in its entirety unless exceptional circumstances prevent your attendance.

Less 'tangible'
evidence of how you
work with the
platform supplier is
also worth capturing



Dear PGR,

We are very sad you
missed our workshop.
Are you okay?

Lots of love

The RD Team

Of course the evidence isn't the only thing you need..... There are months of governance, logistics and diplomatic work with teams across the institution....



....But for Glasgow this has resulted in an expanded 5-year investment from Autumn 2025, with enough capacity for most development providers to have platform access. It will reach some unexpected new user groups, such as Estates. And governance will move from RC&RD to a more suitable home



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Making Change: Takeaways




Like your takeaways in podcast format?

<https://researchadjacent.com/influencing-others-with-orla-kelly-and-joanna-royle-episode-65/>



**Influencing Others with
Orla Kelly and Joanna
Royle (Episode 65)**

Making Change Happen: Some closing thoughts

- 
- Find your allies: There will be people who share your frustrations
 - Find your pathways: Who needs to agree? What committees need to be involved?
 - Evidence need: student satisfaction & keeping up / leading the sector are most persuasive
 - Evidence strategic alignment: Institutional priorities and national drivers
 - Work out what 'else' will be impacted. Circumvent or change these
 - Bring solutions: demonstrate due diligence but have an answer
 - Know your funding options: Where is the money? Build personal connections