

Imperial College London



Research
England



Empowerment Workshop Series

Delivered by Dr Magdalena Bak-Maier (Make Time Count)



POSTDOC AND FELLOWS DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

Tailored support and development for postdocs, fellows and clinicians



Empowerment Workshop Series For Imperial College London Postdocs and Research Fellows

Dr. Magdalena Bak-Maier - series designer and facilitator
<http://www.maketimecount.com>

SUMMARY

We delivered a series of time-efficient and highly relevant empowerment workshops to three different cohorts of postdoctoral and research fellows funded by [UKRI Research England](#) via the Imperial Postdoc and Fellows Development Centre. The offering focused on practical skills in three areas:

- organization and time management with emphasis on well-being using our powerful [Grid framework](#) academics and researchers call a “lifesaver”
- career management tools to support effective ownership of one’s career and empower decision making
- tools for managing a positive mindset and confidence.

The data gathered ahead of the events formed an important baseline and the feedback collected afterward allowed us to assess the value of the offering.

The initial data collected ahead of the offering painted a picture of researchers experiencing high stress and big career uncertainty that the pandemic amplified. Postdocs need help and are interested in getting support as long as what is offered is relevant and useful. However, the tension between making time for development outside of the lab is real.

Evaluation and participant feedback from the offering shows that a good match between their needs and the developmental stands to make a big difference to their experience, helps relieve stress, supports a positive mindset change and behavior change, and leaves them with tools they are happy to use going forward.

On this basis, the offering merits being extended to more early career researchers.

OVERVIEW

This project delivered a series of empowerment sessions to three different cohorts of researchers in 3 different formats that suited their cultural preferences and pandemic conditions.



- I. *A Mini Development Programme* for the Faculty of Medicine MDR Department.
Format: 3 Half day online masterclasses with follow-up support plus in-person final gathering
Timescale: 3 months May-July 2022
Number of participants: 11
Emphasis: Individual empowerment and cohort building with a peer-buddy mentoring/coach system, creation of local champions and role models, helping the department understand how to effectively support people in this career phase. The work was supported by the involvement of Dr. Veronique Azuara as academic champion.

- II. A group coaching approach to postdocs in the Faculty of Natural Sciences
Format: 3 Half day in-person masterclasses with online follow-up support
Timescale: 2 months May-June 2022
Number of participants: 3
Emphasis: Individual empowerment with opportunity for high degree of personalized experiential learning using delegates' experience and in-class coaching.

- III. A workshop series to postdocs in the Faculty of Engineering
Formats: 3 Half day in-person and online masterclass series with follow-up support
Timescale: 2 months May-June 2022
Number of participants: 29
Emphasis: Individual empowerment, and confidence building with topical discussions of everyday experience at work and mini experiments to support putting new skills into daily practice.

EACH OFFERING IN DETAIL AND PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Below is our learning from each offering by faculty which is broken down by:

- a. Initial survey results
- b. The offering
- c. Evaluation
- d. Recommendation for the future

I. MDR

a. Initial survey results

To better understand our cohort and design a highly tailored mini development programme we created a short survey. Below are some of the key findings.

1. We first inquired into career aspirations of the cohort inviting free text responses. *Can you briefly share your career aspirations? (1) In the perfect world what would you like to do for work? (2) What about this is most appealing to you? (3) If you could do something else, what could that be and why? (4) What is motivating or driving you forward at the moment? (5) What is your key worry or concern when it comes to your career path?*



The answers tell us that the key research/academic career attractors are impact (4+ responses), intellectual stimulation, and freedom. The key positive motivators are success, passion and sense of progress. A key concern is job security, work-life balance and available funding. Most people can imagine an alternative career option supporting the notion that research skills are highly transferable.

The perfect career	Attraction factor	A different career	Motivation factor	Key concerns
a secure (current) career	freedom to research	moving from academia to industry	wanting to persevere, succeed	always being 'generally unhappy'
teaching	positive impact on society	pharma research	passion for the subject	career will have no impact on self or society
collaboration with hospitals for research purposes	satisfaction of seeing students progress	laboratory management	personal goals	work-life balance
biomedical research	intellectual stimulation	think tanks	career progression, building CV	job security
independent research	the career path is meaningful	full time clinical surgery	upcoming contract end	lack of funds
liaising between fields with different expertise	personal nature fits industry needs	data scientist for tech/pharma	fear of failure	constantly gaining skills to be up to date
academic consultancy	upgrading professional skills	book restoration	financially supporting loved ones	lack of progress
clinical research	sharing knowledge with others	health activism	finding personal fulfilment	lack of clarity on how to pursue goals
own lab manager			developing skills and expertise	lack of personal direction
leader of research group			curiosity	imposter syndrome
				finding future opportunities
				political aspects of recruitment
				managing time efficiently

2. We asked whether delegates attended personal and professional development workshops, for example, those offered by the PDFC or other sources. If so, what types of workshops did you attend and how did they help you? If not, how come?



The vast majority, 91.6% (N=11) have engaged in personal and professional development before. Only 1 person saying they did not. Such interventions helped delegates feel empowered and confident, develop a career perspective, identify skills, develop goals, as well as gain tools to use in career building. When workshops were less helpful they were short and vague, the topics were well known already, or they seemed to be aimed at those just starting their career.

3. We probed into general aspiration for this series. *What are the top 3 things you would like to achieve as part of this leadership development journey over the next (1) 3-6 months and (2) 12-18 months?*

The answers highlight a wide spread of needs and aspirations that major on stress reduction, greater effectiveness and growth in confidence.

3 - 6 month goals	12 - 18 month goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be disciplined • become proactive and decisive • have an effective system of managing stress • self confidence • manage workload • develop and execute a career action plan • reduce stress, sleep better • feel in control • resilience and efficiency at work • better prioritise tasks and responsibilities • improve time management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • confidently transition and adapt • achieve a good life/work balance • develop leadership and organizational skills • self confidence, empowered mindset • identify own strengths and weaknesses • understand how to succeed • have initiative in taking on bigger projects • [have a] system of managing mental and emotional burnout

4. We also asked about current stress levels which show that everyone is under moderate to high stress. We resurveyed this parameter at the end of the programme.

5. We asked respondents to indicate the relationship between results and well-being. Currently, for **75% results come at a cost**: 42% report getting results but at a cost and 33% report seldom getting results which bears a high personal cost, including anxiety and worry. We repeated this question at the end of the programme to gauge what changed (see below).

6. We then asked a series of skill-based questions in relation to areas we know from experience are key to research success. The data shows that 42% self-report they find



it easy to build healthy relationships and motivating themselves to take action. However on the whole, the data suggests more time and opportunity needs to be made to practice and support skills development.

Skill set	Natural Talent	Easy to do	Need more practice	Difficult	Very difficult
Managing competing priorities, work volume and deadlines		25.00%	41.67%	16.67%	16.67%
Developing healthy and mutually respectful relationships	25.00%	41.67%		25.00%	8.33%
Practicing healthy boundaries, including being able to say No!		8.33%	66.67%		25.00%
Motivating myself to take action		50.00%	33.33%		16.67%
Feeling included and being able to participate fully	8.33%	25.00%	50.00%	8.33%	8.33%
Being able to ask for what I need		16.67%	41.67%	33.33%	
Feeling empowered to create the future career I want for myself		8.33%	58.33%	25.00%	8.33%

- We checked into general sense of empowerment and support as this is key to success in our experience for early career researchers. The responses here reveal a fairly positive picture when it comes to how people are supported but the support appears to be inconsistent, and in some cases rare.

Broad Picture of Self of Empowerment & Support	Consistently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
I am clear about the value of my work	50.00%	33.33%	16.67%	
I feel well supported to deliver good work	33.33%	50.00%	8.33%	8.33%
I feel well supported in managing my career	16.67%	41.67%	33.33%	8.33%
I feel appreciated by my research team	66.67%	16.67%	16.67%	
I feel appreciated by my boss for the work I do	58.33%	33.33%	8.33%	
I fit well into my team	58.33%	25.00%	8.33%	8.33%
I feel empowered in my role	25.00%	58.33%	16.67%	

- We then asked delegates to rate their own confidence level in areas that in our experience closely link to doing well in research.

Area	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Not satisfied	Needing help here
My confidence as a leader	8.33%	33.33%	50.00%	8.33%
Feeling able to take action		58.33%	16.67%	25.00%
My ability to advance forward		58.33%	25.00%	16.67%
My ability to deliver results	8.33%	75.00%	8.33%	8.33%



Clarity of future vision	8.33%	25.00%	41.67%	25.00%
How I manage my career		25.00%	16.67%	58.33%
Self-esteem and confidence		41.67%	33.33%	25.00%
Being able to manage setbacks		54.55%	27.27%	18.18%
My ability to locate the support I need	8.33%	41.67%	33.33%	16.67%
My work-life balance	8.33%	50.00%	16.67%	25.00%

9. Finally, we asked delegates to give us a baseline of career-related practical measures they have in place right now as a way to raise their awareness of their importance, and also provide a highly practical goal they could focus on during and after the series.

Action items	Yes	No	Needs updating	N/A
I have at least 1 mentor	41.67%	50.00%	8.33%	
I have at least 1 role-model for my career	36.36%	45.45%	18.18%	
I have an up-to-date CV	66.67%		33.33%	
I use my CV to help guide my development choices and career management	25.00%	66.67%		8.33%
I am clear about my top 3 strengths	33.33%	41.67%	25.00%	
I have a written draft of a cover letter to help me put myself forward for developmental opportunities	8.33%	75.00%	16.67%	
I have clear goals for my work, self-care, life and career	16.67%	33.33%	50.00%	



10. Inquiry into the impact of Covid revealed three main categories of impact. For some the pandemic proved a true obstacle, while others found it helpful.

Negative	Neutral	Positive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complacency • Decline in productivity • Decline in wellbeing • Decline in work efficiency • Put academic career on hold • Decline in motivation • Negative effect on social life • Decline in networking opportunities • Difficulty in drawing lines between work and personal life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neutral impact, needing to adapt • Minimal impact • No impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More time for self care and personal life • New life habits • Offered new work opportunities after lockdown • Increase in productivity • Flexibility due to remote work • Reflecting on career choices

11. Our last question invited delegates to score their **current personal agency** - my ability to come up with and direct my actions in a way that moves me closer to what I want - on a scale from 0 (I feel I have none) to 10 (It's the best I ever had), my current score is...which we resurveyed at the end of the initiative. Starting levels average was 5.4.

b. The MDR offering

Three half-day experiential leadership development gatherings were held online supported by a digital administrator to allow effective use of breakout rooms, online interactive boards and group activities. The sessions contain a mix of guided activities providing space for reflection, practical work, mini-experiments designed to teach specific skills, and action plan recommendations. The group was also divided into pairs to provide extra in-between session peer coaching support. Everyone was invited to a social gathering although only 50% of the delegates attended due to Covid scare and last-minute clinical work pressures.

Session 1 (April 2022) - Introduction to the project and the GridTM method.

The GridTM method (<https://www.maketimecount.com/grid-productivity-tool/>) developed by Dr Magdalena Bak-Maier has been called “an ingenious goal-tracking system with a strong visual element” by Psychologies Magazine UK, a “complete life-saver” by academics and researchers, and a “very useful system to keep me sane” by PhD students during Covid. This first session will introduce the method and provide postdocs with an opportunity to (1) reflect on the impact that Covid may have had on their personal development and wellbeing and to (2) help them understand and formulate their specific needs pre, during and post pandemic for greater wellbeing and empowerment.

Session 2 (May 2022) - Practical Career Management – Make Your Plans a Reality.



One of the biggest challenges when it comes to career management in science often comes down to the lack of clear career paths. However, even when such frameworks exist, the challenge of needing to forge our unique path in the system is considerable. This situation can easily create anxiety, fear, and a sense of feeling stuck! This session will invite participants to sharpen their personal leadership skills to manage their career. In the session we will use (Planned) Happenstance Career Theory developed by Prof. John Krumboltz to explore the 5 key skills that help us navigate and create careerpaths, go through the 10 specific steps that form the backbone of an effective mini careermanagement action plan, provide tangible ways of developing transferable leadership skills useful in academia and other jobs, and help participants concretize action so they can plan ahead.

Session 3 (June 2022) - Overcome Busy – Holistic Productivity for Better Work-Life Balance.

Being busy and being productive are not the same. In fact, research shows that having too much to do creates stress and pressure that erodes healthy agency, creativity, and wise action. And yet, when it comes to science, which is often based on doing what we love, work-life balance can be hard to delineate and maintain. In this context it is easy to become busy and open ourselves to one of two beliefs: (1) I can not/will not succeed and/or (2) to succeed I must work more! The first often leads to talented individuals leaving science, many of them women. The second belief fuels ways of working that are not sustainable and can cause great harm to the individual and their system. And yet with a little bit of insight, structure, and appropriate support, we can organize for genuine effectiveness, order, and meaningful results. This session will invite participants to explore a concept of holistic productivity. We will workshop what this means and how we can create it in science. This will be done through a series of practical steps that leave participants being clear about what they want to achieve and how, along with specific insights into 3 key habits that support healthy balance. This workshop will also debunk some of the top faulty beliefs that give rise to poor work-life balance practices, what drives them and workshop ideas on how to protect against them.

c. Delegate feedback

100% of the delegates would recommend this initiative as an offering to other researchers. Below are some of the key findings from the pilot.

1. Can you tell us in your own words the impact this programme has had on you to date and how you think it may help you going forward?

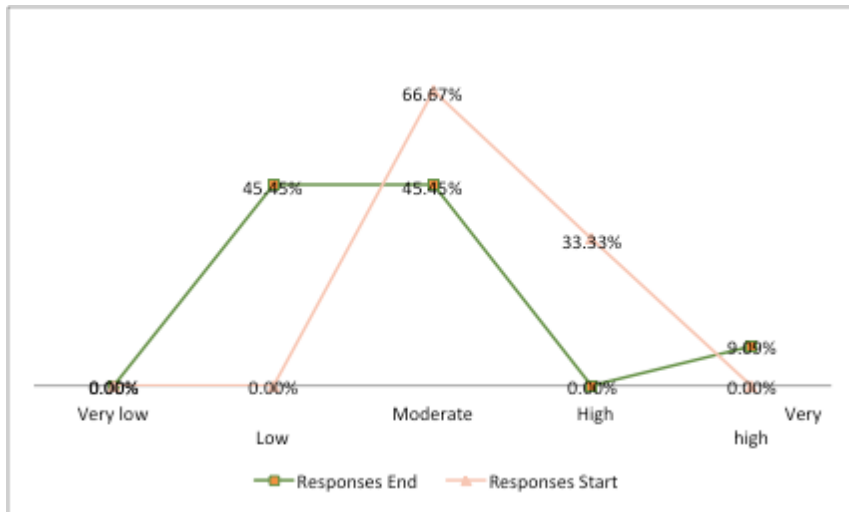
- Help to identify “potential barriers to productivity”
- Help to “structure a career map” and “manage and prioritize career goals”
- Openness to “asking for help and advising”
- Management of work-life balance
- Organisational skills and task prioritisation
- Boost of confidence, empowerment to pursue goals
- Help to identify where effort is going vs. goals
- “Help to optimise working time”
- Help in decision-making



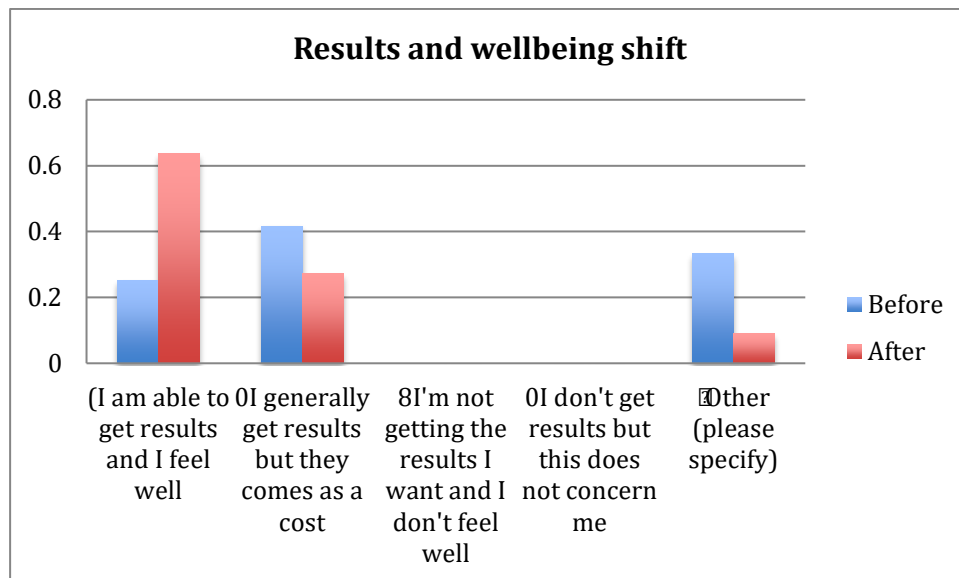
- Understanding of work vs. career

2. If you look back over the last few days, what's been your average stress level?

Here we see a **significant downward shift in stress levels** from moderate and high to very low and low. One person reported very high stress levels in connection with a paper they were having to complete but we understand this to be a short term "crunch" situation.



3. There is a **positive shift between results and well-being**. More people are able to create results without cost to their wellbeing.



4. **Personal agency scores show positive shift in self-perception** at the end of the empowerment series. The average has shifted upwards by 28%.

	Minimum	Maximum	Median	Average	SD
before	20	80	62.5	57.42	15.6



after	52	90	75	73	11.7
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5. There were **clear positive shifts when it comes to communication and interpersonal skills** including: increased self-awareness, growth in confidence to take action and ability to maintain healthy relationships.

Skill Set	Natural Talent	Easy to do	Need more practice	Difficult	Very difficult
Managing competing priorities, work volume and deadlines		45.45%	54.55%		
Developing healthy and mutually respectful relationships	27.27%	45.45%	27.27%		
Practicing healthy boundaries, including being able to say No!		9.09%	81.82%	9.09%	
Motivating myself to take action		72.73%	27.27%		
Feeling included and being able to participate fully	9.09%	63.64%	27.27%		
Being able to ask for what I need		45.45%	45.45%	9.09%	
Feeling empowered to create the future career I want for myself		63.64%	36.36%		

6. There were also **notable shifts in how delegates felt in relation to their teams and supervisor and overall sense of empowerment.**

Broad Picture of Self of Empowerment & Support	Consistently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
I am clear about the value of my work	54.55%	45.45%		
I feel well supported to deliver good work	36.36%	54.55%	9.09%	
I feel well supported in managing my career	45.45%	45.45%	9.09%	
I feel appreciated by my research team	72.73%	27.27%		
I feel appreciated by my boss for the work I do	72.73%	27.27%		



I fit well into my team	63.64%	36.36%		
I feel empowered in my role	63.64%	36.36%		

7. We also noted **major positive shifts in satisfaction levels** on a number of spectrums linked with researcher effectiveness and career satisfaction.

Area	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Not satisfied	Needing help here
My confidence as a leader	27.27%	72.73%		
Feeling able to take action	18.18%	63.64%		9.09%
My ability to advance forward	27.27%	54.55%		18.18%
My ability to deliver results	27.27%	54.55%		9.09%
Clarity of future vision	18.18%	54.55%		27.27%
How I manage my career	9.09%	81.82%	9.09%	
Self-esteem and confidence	18.18%	63.64%		18.18%
Being able to manage setbacks	18.18%	63.64%		18.18%
My ability to locate the support I need	36.36%	27.27%	9.09%	18.18%
My work-life balance	18.18%	72.73%		9.09%

8. When it comes to practical aspects of career management, the short programme has had an **incredibly positive impact on helping delegates take action** in a number of areas.

Action items	Yes	No	It needs updating/renewing
I have at least 1 mentor	63.64%	27.27%	9.09%
I have at least 1 role-model for my career	54.55%	36.36%	9.09%
I have an up-to-date CV	72.73%	9.09%	18.18%
I use my CV to help guide my development choices and career management	63.64%	27.27%	9.09%
I am clear about my top 3 strengths	63.64%	18.18%	18.18%
I have a written draft of a cover letter to help me put myself forward for developmental opportunities	27.27%	54.55%	18.18%
I have clear goals for my work, self-care, life and career	72.73%	9.09%	18.18%

What participants said?



"I have taken multiple courses along the lines, and this has been the best so far. I would also hope that you are able to secure future funding because this program should be reaching as many people as it possibly can."

"It was great to develop and explore tools to use for time management and career management. This was extremely helpful to me personally as I was going through a period where I had some hard decisions to make. One of the things that was extremely helpful for this was the good and bad life grid we drew".

"I have learnt how important and different "work" and "career" are. For professional development, working hard is not always enough as careful planning and a clear vision for the next steps are also critical. I am now more confident in the steps I need to take for strategically planning my career development as well. I learned how to become more confident and avoid being a perfectionist."

"This program has helped me compartmentalize my life into domains (quadrants) that require balance with each other. The encouraging environment gave me space to reflect on my values and reassess my goals. As a new postdoc, I feel more empowered to pursue career-oriented actions as a result of being connected to the postdocs in the department with more experience."

"It was a terrific program, which encompassed innovative ways of organization and prioritisation in an individual context. I quite appreciated the focus of the program on promoting the overall individual well-being rather than segregating our lives into professional vs. personal. Key ideas and concepts that I have learnt via this program (GRID and thinking of yourself as a hero of your life) will continue to shape my thinking as I strive to lead a more balanced life and curate a more rewarding career. "

"It helped me realising it is worth fighting for Research Associate level of jobs outside the traditional postdoc route but within academia. Separating career and job on the every day Grid is the best tool I learnt on the course. It was always clear to me that without being able to define what I want it is hard to deliver results, this course pushed me to the direction of asking for help why is this and how to overcome it. While I am confident in my ability to deliver good results in my every day job and organise myself and people under me to achieve good short term goals I really struggle to figure where it leads me in the longer term and where I want to be in 1 year time. The course enabled me to define this problem properly and express it and do not ignore it."

"This programme has changed my mindset about how the work I do affects my career. Previously, I used to take work and career as a single inter-related entity, but have now realised that the actions for each are different and leads to different (but maybe related) goals at the end. This awareness helps me to better prioritise my time and how I manage my work and life."



d. Recommendation going forward

While delegates did not suggest any specific changes to the offer apart from it being retained, we recommend the following improvements.

1. Offering this intervention to all early career researchers.
2. Extending the offering to early stage academics (lecturers and clinical lecturers) as their status is often not guaranteed at this stage and can be incredibly stressful. The skills we're teaching are foundational for effective self-management and career management.
3. Offering a short workshop for PIs that builds on these findings and gives them easy tools and means of supporting their researchers better.

II. Faculty of Natural Science

a. Initial survey results

See below for FoE results as we used the same survey for all participants. This being a small group, we were able to sense check these findings in our sessions and they paint the picture where:

- Postdocs feel a high degree of overwhelm when it comes to juggling work, life, self-care and career pressure
- Their experience and support is linked with the quality of their relationship with the current PI and PhD advisor
- They can be so busy that they lack time to get the critical help they need.

b. The offering

Due to a very small cohort and in-person delivery option, we opted for a more bespoke approach offering in essence high degree of personalization and coaching alongside the masterclass-level workshops covering:

- Importance of healthy balance between work, life, career and self-care and how to use this framework practically to counter daily overwhelm, set larger goals and track progress.
- Importance of building one's network and proactively managing one's career by starting to reflect on what one wants, needs, values and how one navigates their precise career journey. This included practical skills to seek mentors and address CV gaps.
- Health mindset management focusing on how to deal with procrastination tendencies, perfectionism psychology and the inner critic for good mental health.

This approach worked well and engaged them intensely. Using a combination of chalkboard demos and slides as well as experiential activities, we covered a very rich territory while keeping the work embedded in their daily realities.

c. Delegate feedback

Due to the small group size and the low participation numbers, we invited delegates to send us short narratives that tell, in their own words, what impact the series has had and what they would say to others about it which we believe may be crucial to boosting future engagement.



We are very thankful to all three delegates engaging with this process which in itself speaks volumes. The three narratives strongly concur on this series being high value and very relevant to early career researchers.

“I highly recommend the series to everyone, especially early career researchers.”

“As an early career researcher, I desperately need to make some good habits to be more effective in using my most important resource: time. So, I found that some of the titles this class provides could be helpful to learn, and I signed up for it. Apart from a very vibrant and engaging style, the series discussed some in-depth insight into human behaviour and psychology for completing a typical task that usually academics involve in their daily routines. Along with and parallel, some in-class mini-experiments helped us visualise ourselves in an everyday situation to map our personal experiences to what the theory tries to explain. In addition, the series material provided us with a simple but effective technique called the Grid method for planning and managing different tasks, including personal, job, or career-related ones. Right now, I am using the Grid method to plan on a two-weeks basis since I found that mid-term planning was one of the weakest links in my skillset. Specifically, my overall goal tracking started to diverge very slowly, and up to now, what I learned from this series and the Grid method has helped me to correct and prevent this problem.”

“I would describe it as a concentrated and curated “highlights tour” of what I’m sure could be a much longer course (or several courses) on career development, time management skills, and even some psychology.”

“I was coming to the end of my contract and was motivated to get some practical guidance to help figure out and take my next career step. Most helpful for me were the exercises thinking about my past “trajectory” — I discovered some connecting threads or stories that hadn’t thought about before; the section on values really being key and basically unchangeable; and also the singer method of making requests. I liked the principles of the grid method a lot and used it for a couple of weeks when I was feeling overwhelmed by the volume of stuff I had to do. I fell out of the habit but at least I now have it as a resource I can call upon in the future. Using SINGER, I made some requests about a contract extension and managed to set up some meetings with HR about my visa that had been very hard to get before. I was also writing my resume at the time and I think that benefited from the course as well. Yes, I would recommend [the offering] as I think you get a ton of material compressed into a relatively short amount of time. It might not be possible to absorb it all in one go but having those slides I think will be an excellent reference that I’ll go back to. I think we planned but didn’t end up having time to work with our individual CVs in our class. That might have been useful. One of the great things about the perfectionist section was just seeing how common certain issues are that people usually don’t talk about. I would generally recommend more of this in the other areas — somehow getting people to share more in order to turn certain problems or situations into “common knowledge”.

“A great series of sessions that covers time management, work-life balance, motivations, career and more. Very thought provoking and I left feeling a lot more confident about making work-related decisions.”



*“I had recently started a short-term research associate/post-doctoral role, and I was feeling uncertain about both managing my new job and what I wanted to do in terms of my career. I was hoping to gain some tools to help manage my time effectively in my new role. With the session related to career I was hoping to gain some insight into how to make better decisions about future work. I found the series very helpful with both my goals, and more generally with having more awareness around how I approach work. The GRID method was very useful for helping split my time between both doing my job but also setting myself up for a future career and keeping these work-related activities from stopping me having a personal life. I also found that by looking at things that I consistently didn’t do (or didn’t want to do) was really useful for future planning of work. I found the discussions around motivation and matching your energy to the task at hand to have a positive impact on managing my time. The work around looking at what motivates you and how to use this to make career decisions even more useful. I would find it quite easy to talk myself round in circles about what should aim to do next and having the tools to help me understand what would suit me best was very helpful. I was writing an application whilst doing the course, and this increased awareness was **incredibly** useful in rewriting the sections related to why I was wanted the funding and why I was the right person to be doing my research. I would definitely recommend this series. I feel it had a positive impact that far outweighed the time spent and I think everyone would get something out of it. I left feeling more motivated and in control of my work and career.*

d. Recommendation going forward

There is clearly a very powerful impact when an intervention can be very personalized. Given the results we obtained in the other faculties, we recommend that future offerings in the Faculty of Natural Science engage more PIs with directly communicating the benefits of this offer to their postdocs. All three delegates were recommended the series personally by their respective supervisors.

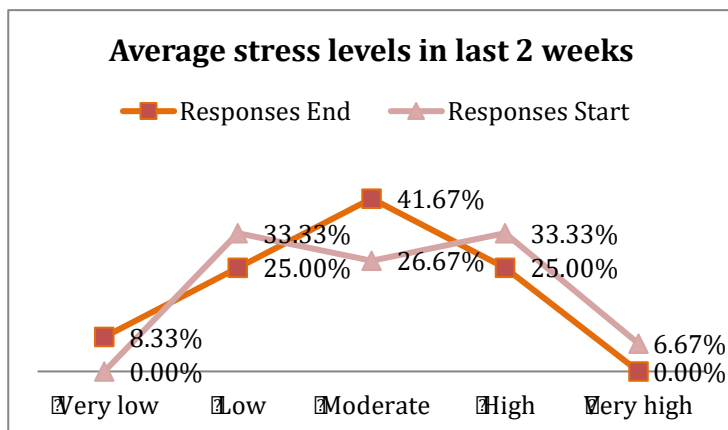
III. Facult of Engeering

a. Initial survey results and impact of the offering

To explore impact, we surveyed the group before commencing with the workshops and at the end. Here are some of the highlights.

1. The overall stress levels shifted from high to low. We asked participants to reflect on their stress levels across the last two weeks and rate it using the following scale: very low, low, moderate, high or very high.

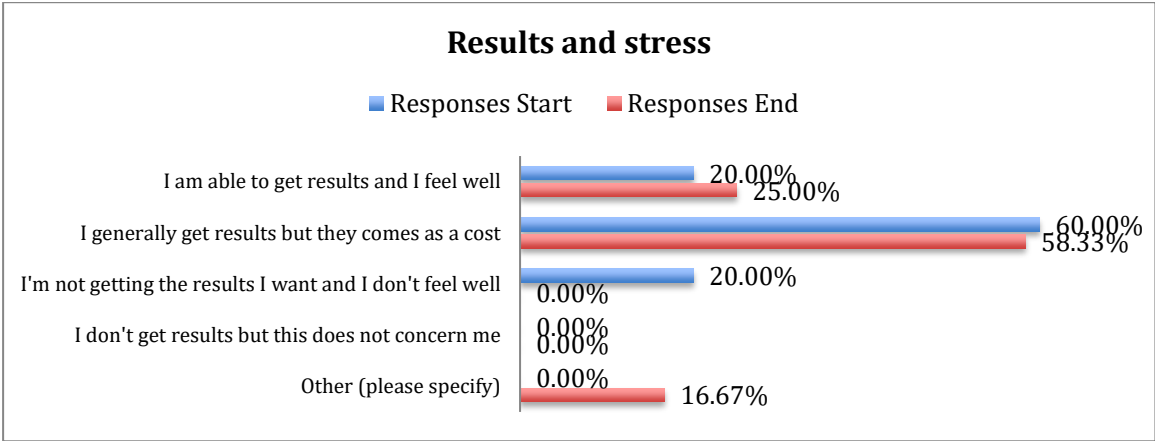
Before the offering, **40% of delegates reported high or very high stress**, 27% moderate stress and 33% low stress with 0% indicating they had low level stress. The series helped reverse this worrying trend. 8.3%



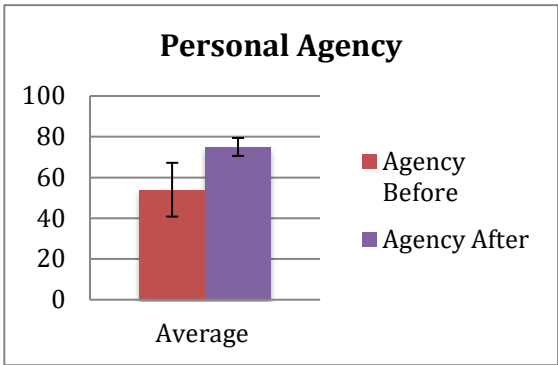


reported very low stress, 25% low stress, 42% moderate stress and just 25% high stress with no one reporting high-level stress.

2. The relationship between results and well-being was also positively impacted. More people after the workshop series said they were able to get results without them coming at a cost to personal well-being. Also, the entire fraction of people who previously said they were ‘not getting results and not feeling well’ was effectively eliminated. The fraction for “other” represents delegates who indicated that they were expecting good results soon but did not have them in hand to be able to select the first two options.

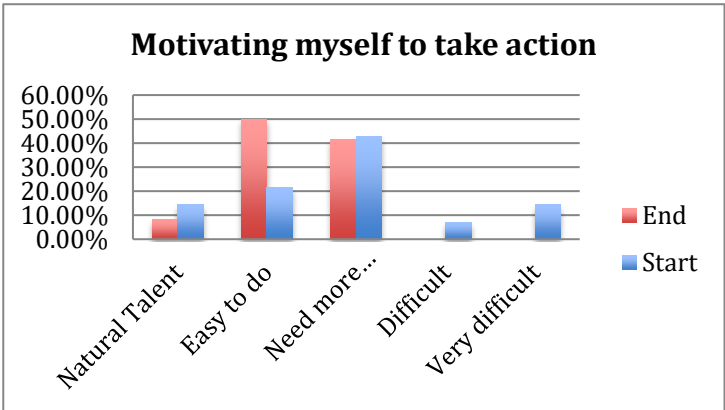


3. The series created a positive shift in personal agency. Personal agency or “the sense that one is able to affect outcomes through action” is key to personal empowerment. People with a sense of personal agency perceive themselves as capable of influencing their circumstances. We see a 38% increase in self-reported agency.



4. Other key positive shifts include **notable upwards shifts** in:

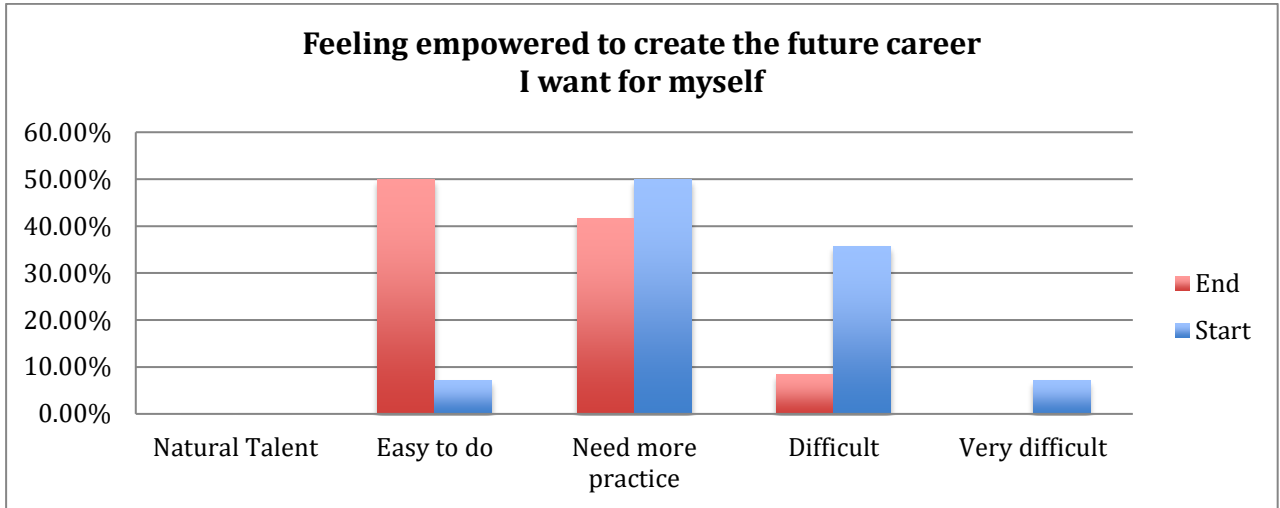
- Motivation to take action,
- confidence to manage one’s career,
- satisfaction with results,
- ability to get the help needed,
- work-life balance,
- using evidence such as Grids and CVs to manage future results.



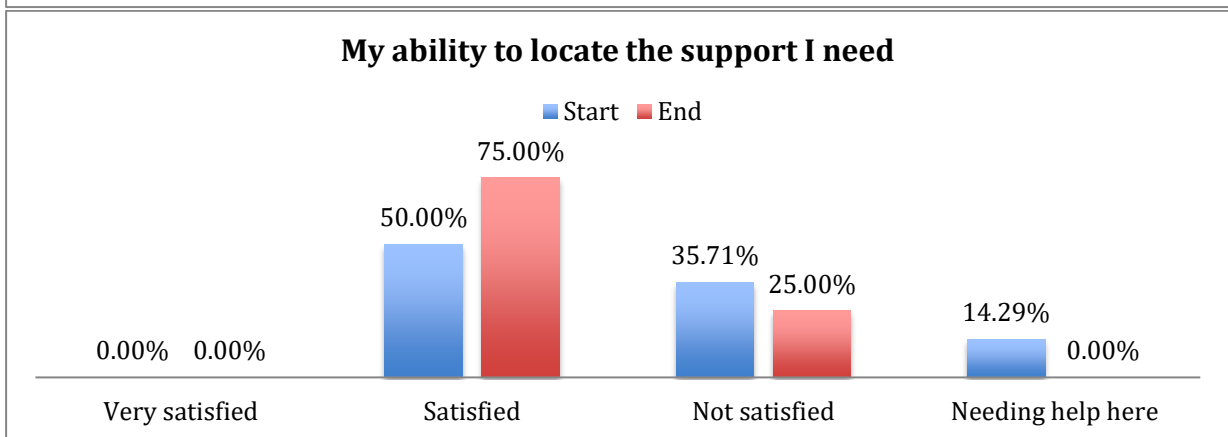
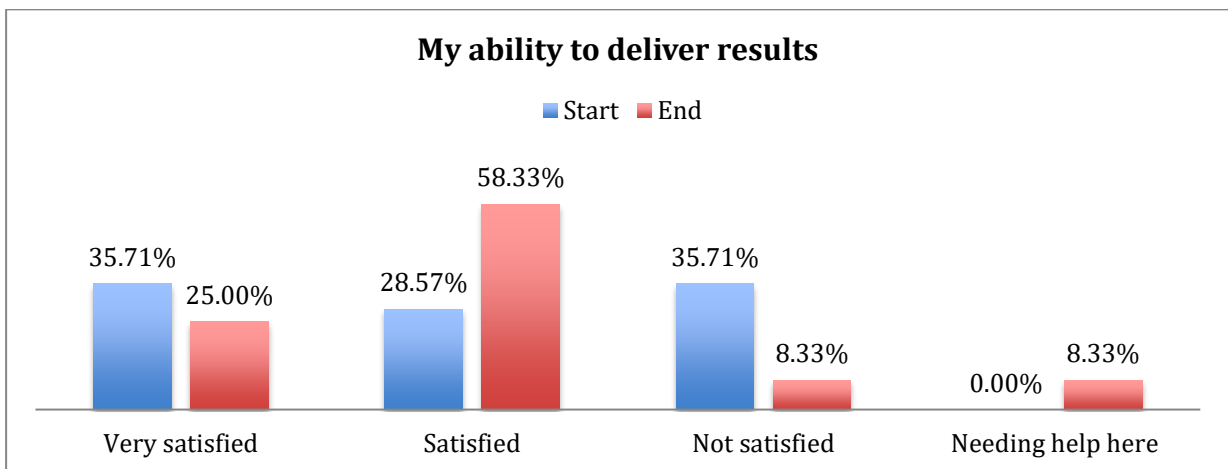
While some things we expected not to be impacted stayed the same. This is encouraging as it tells us the results we see are real.



As we have devoted significant time to career management, it was good to see a positive shift in how empowered the group was to create their future career. The shift here towards easy is very notable and not surprising given the tools and skills delegates gained.

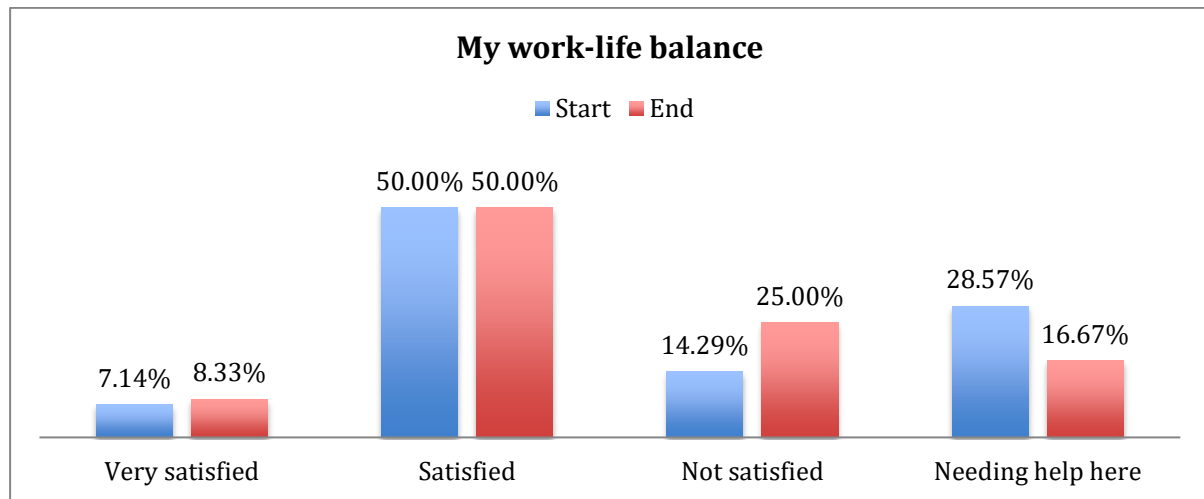


Given the time we spend on developing skills for building one's network and asking for help, the positive shift in personal agency to locate the support that is needed is also indicative of positive mindset change.





Evaluation of work-life balance suggests that following the series there is a greater level of personal awareness about the need for better work-life balance and the cost of imbalance. At the same time the reduction in need for help is in line with delegates putting into practice our Grid tool to address this.



When it came to practical aspects of career management, the series of workshops helped achieve a **positive shift** in terms of the degree to which delegates use their CVs to guide their development. Before the series only 24% did this while the vast majority (76%) did not. After the series, the first fraction grew slightly and a quarter of the delegates reported they were **actively updating** their CV.

Equally, the series got people interested and actively investigated their top 3 strengths and setting goals for their work, life, self-care and career. Here we succeeded in shifting **45% of the respondents** from doing nothing to being proactive in goal-setting.

c. Delegate feedback

100% of respondents would recommend the programme to other researchers.

Key actions taken as a result of the series: We asked this group about what specific actions they took or had planned to apply their learning from this series in the next 3-6 months. Here's what the delegates told us.

- I am planning to find a mentor and update my CV.
- I'd like to achieve balance and manage my time allocations better -I'm trying to implement the grid in my day to day activities. I am also trying to find a coach to help me organise my ideas to become more effective.
- I will take time out for networking and building career opportunities by using LinkedIn more effectively and planning out my career path.
- Decide if I want to transition into industry and take action towards getting the dream job. Or a transition job, that will make me closer to the dream job :)
- Review the notes, follow up the links, keep planning and doing grids. Analyse what I want and how to achieve this.

- I have written a career narrative to help me sort job opportunities, and prep interviews.
- Using the grid technique and choices to decide what to do next. Using the visualisation exercises to also work out what that should be.
- Having workshopped around my career goals and needs, I feel more motivated to write the fellowship applications I need to in the next few months. I feel I have improved slightly at working out which areas I need to prioritise using the grid method, and hope to stick to it to make sure that I meet the deadlines I need in a timely way.
- 1. use SINGER to make powerful asks 2. use the decision matrix to help me choose two career options and finish my career transition 3. use grid to balance my life, self-care, work and career
- I will pursue additional qualifications and work experience to better set me up for the career path that I am most interested. I have spoken to my supervisor about this and we have agreed on some potential pathways. I will also attempt to better manage my productivity in my current work by seeking support earlier and reducing my procrastination by setting clearer, more manageable short term goals

What participants said?

"I found the workshop very impactful in the short term. Up to this point I have always found dealing with issues around my career planning quite overwhelming, and therefore difficult to address. The tools provided by this workshop have helped me to identify certain career goals and spurred me into pursuing new opportunities that will help me reach these goals. It was a shock to me how much easier it was to think about certain existential questions such as what I wanted from a career and what I would like to achieve in it without feeling anxious when in a room with many people facing the same issues and the reassuring approach of Magdalena. I have also picked up a number of useful tools to aid my productivity which, up to now, was quite effective in breaking down tasks but ineffective in balancing the different quadrants of the Grid."

"It was great to meet other postdocs in a similar professional stage than mine, having the opportunity of being open about our feelings and having professional advice in such a small cohort. It has had a great impact just having the opportunity of expressing openly about how we feel, which is normally not something we do at a professional level, and get guidance about how to project ourselves in the next stage of our career."

"It has helped me with achieving a better work-life balance and moving forward, I think the concepts taught with help me feel more productive in all aspects of my life."

"I think participating in this program allowed me to be aware of my motivations for my career. I was able to analyze what I have achieved so far and what I want from my career. I applied to several positions and currently interviewing for them (anonymous please). Even if I don't get them, the tools Magdalena gave us will allow to go forward mindfully and in a focused way. "

"I have looked again at how I organise my time and what I spend it on. This allows me to focus on what I think is important."



“It gave me tools to move my career forward and organise my work better to achieve my goals.”

“The simple and easy tool Grid help me nowadays to have a global idea of what has to be done during the week without forgetting the personal life. Some precious advices were said to help me manage work stress as a perfectionist.”

“I have become aware of my strengths and weaknesses. Also started thinking more on how to find a good work-life balance.”

“I feel like the message and tools were professional, while conveyed in a human way, which made me receive it as a powerful tool. It helped me clarify my vision as well as my definition and expectation of career.”

“This course came up just as I was considering fellowship applications, I have found the thought processes inside very beneficial for organising my life. I know I will be using the techniques within to help with choices and time management in the future.”

“For me, the third session was the most useful in terms of workshopping around ideas we are unsure about (e.g. career). I have also found the grid method to be helpful, even if I don't stick to it rigidly, it has still helped me to compartmentalise the tasks I need to do in the day, and think about what to prioritise at any given time. As an indirect benefit of attending the programme, I found it very nice to be with others in my peer group from across the university - it gave me a sense that the challenges/uncertainties I face are common ones amongst us.”

“This programme has helped me to adjust my mindset, to not always try to be a perfectionist, and burn out myself. It also helped me to be strong in all different circumstances. With the skills I learnt in this programme, I managed to make a career change, and find a better work-life balance. Therefore, I would like to thank Magdalena very much for her genuine help and support.”

d. Recommendation going forward

When asked what they would like to change in this offering, participants mostly said they would like the offering to be offered to more fellow postdocs. Two practical improvements they suggested were:

- 1:1 coaching time - “If we could have a one-to-one session, even if very short, would be incredible! “
- Making the sessions longer - “Maybe a bit more interaction time (around 1.5-2 times more than it was), where the participants can share more about their experiences and get involved in the conversation.”, “Towards the end of the sessions I was tiring - perhaps a longer break, or slightly less material.”

Both are easy to implement but would require additional cost. On this basis, we recommend that if funding can be secured, the series is offered to more people.



SUMMARY

Thanks to the [UKRI Research England](#) funding and the Imperial Postdoc and Fellows Development Centre, early career researchers across three different faculties received:

- Practical up-skilling / to support their agency. Participants reported putting the tools to use and finding them so helpful they were freely telling others about them evidencing true behaviour change.
- A genuine sense of being cared for and supported well. The gratitude expressed was indicative of the meaningfulness of these initiatives for those involved.
- Development of local champions for the initiative who firmly want this offering to continue as evidenced by *ad hoc feedback* from PIs who heard about it from them.
- Participants leaving the intervention stronger, clearer about their next steps, and more able to progress with confidence.
- For some delegates tangible career progression in terms of finding their next job, holding successful interviews and other key mindset shifts after contemplating their research career.
- The offering provides practical means to connect the academic sponsor in each faculty with the cohort in a way that can strengthen future initiatives.
- A means of connecting delegates with each other which they found highly valuable.
- Positive culture domino effect as many of the delegates are sharing the tools, especially the Grid with others evidencing its value as a powerful aid.

About Dr. Magdalena Bak-Maier and Make Time Count Ltd

Dr. Magdalena Bak-Maier holds a PhD in neuroscience from Caltech USA and a Senior Fellowship in Higher Education UK (SFHEA). She is an established educator and the go-to coach for academics worldwide. Before setting up Make Time Count (MTC) Ltd, Magdalena was the Director of the Academic Development Center and the Senior Organizational Leadership Development Programme at Imperial College London. She is author of three self-help books and in 2022 Dr. Bak-Maier has been invited faculty for Oxford University Press training module on effective research cultures. She regularly designs and facilitates research leadership development interventions to develop top level researchers at all career stages.

Make Time Count uses person-centered approaches and methods developed by Dr. Magdalena Bak-Maier to deliver coaching, consultancy, and training to academic departments across the UK, EU, and the USA. The Grid™ productivity and wellbeing method Dr. Bak-Maier created is described as a “complete life-saver” by academics and students worldwide. Grid has been selected for inclusion in the 2021 Columbia University Coaching Conference as a practical systemic approach to work and health management, and shared with the public in an invited Guardian Masterclass in January 2022. The Get Productive Grid book received the Finalist Wishing Shelf Book Award in 2021 and Grid has now attracted over 25 Grid Ambassadors from UK, EU and the US to help take the method to more people.

Magdalena's current work explores how Grid supports human flourishing, effective habit change, mental health and burnout prevention with particular focus on HE a topic she speaks about in invited lectures and keynotes. Twitter [@maketimecountuk](#)



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