

Paper identifier	Meeting	Date	Protective Marking
Paper C	Sections	October 2024	None



# Sections

October 2024

Early Career Researcher Network: Paper C

<b>This paper is for information</b>
<b>Purpose:</b>
<i>This paper gives an update on the Early Career Researcher Network.</i>
<b>Recommendation(s):</b>
<i>Sections are invited to note the paper, and to note where Fellows can get involved.</i>
<b>Author</b>
<i>Charlotte Scott, ECR Network Membership Officer; Peris Thuo, Deputy Head of ECR Network</i>
<b>Financial or resource implications, and/or risks to consider</b>
<i>None at this stage</i>

## Introduction and Context

The [Early Career Researcher Network](#) (ECRN) is an inclusive, researcher-led membership body accessible to UK-based early career researchers (ECRs) working in the humanities, social sciences and the wider SHAPE disciplines – regardless of their funding source or background. The British Academy launched the Network in Autumn **2021**, in partnership with the Wolfson Foundation who agreed to support the initial pilot phase over two years. With additional funding from DSIT, the Network will now continue for the next three years to Autumn **2027** with the overall ambition for the Network to be a permanent and long-lasting programme.

Since its launch in **2021**, the Network has grown to include over **4,200** members from the Midlands and Mid Wales, the South West and South Wales, Scotland, London, and British Academy and Leverhulme Trust funded ECRs. Notably, **92%** of the Network’s members are not funded by the British Academy. Currently, we have **58%** of members actively

Paper identifier	Meeting	Date	Protective Marking
Paper C	Sections	October 2024	None

participating in various aspects of the Network, whether through attending in-person or online events or engaging with our online community platform. One of the most frequent requests we receive from early career researchers is for support from more experienced academics to discuss a range of topics relating to their professional careers and development.

By March **2026**, the Network will have expanded its national reach, with active operations in additional regions including the South East, East of England, and Yorkshire and the Humber. Membership is projected to grow to **10,000**.

Over the past three years, the Network has hosted more than **250** training events and workshops, organised by the British Academy ECRN team, Cluster partners, ECRs, and other external stakeholders. These events are designed to equip ECRs with essential personal, professional, and research development skills that they currently do not have access to.

In addition to these events, the Network runs a Seed Funding program, offering ECRs the opportunity to apply for up to **£5,000** to support their research endeavours. This funding is intended to enhance their research skills and position them to secure further funding, either from the British Academy or other sources. Additionally, ECRs can apply for up to **£200** to cover costs associated with professional opportunities outside the Network, such as membership fees for professional associations or conference expenses. The Network also covers travel and accommodation costs for ECRs attending Network events, ensuring that financial barriers do not impede their development and training.

### **Encourage and Engage Programme**

Since the inception of the Network, ECRs have expressed a strong interest in being mentored by Fellows. In response, we launched the Encourage and Engage Programme in **2023** and piloted an initiative that paired **5** Fellows of the British Academy with **10** Network members in the field of Law. Over three months, they met virtually to discuss various subject matters, the pilot was a great success. More details about what we asked of Fellows can be found in Appendix 1.

Before rolling this out across the entire Network, we plan to conduct two additional pilots with other subject areas, to ensure the programme's effectiveness. If these sessions also prove to be successful, we aim to establish this as a permanent offering within the Network.

The ECR Network team will be reaching out to Section Chairs and their respective Sections to identify FBAs interested in participating in the programme. The goal is to complete the remaining pilot sessions by the end of **2025**.

For Fellows who are interested in engaging with researchers across the Network but may not wish to join the Encourage and Engage Programme, there are always opportunities to chair or speak at events, both online and in person.

Paper identifier	Meeting	Date	Protective Marking
Paper C	Sections	October 2024	None

Please do get in touch with us at [ecr\\_network@thebritishacademy.ac.uk](mailto:ecr_network@thebritishacademy.ac.uk) to express your interest in the Encourage and Engage Programme across 2025 and/or chairing or speaking at any of our events.

## Summary of findings from the Law Encourage and Engage Programme feedback

- Between ECRs and FBAs, **50%** of participants found the programme exceeded their expectations and **42.9%** found it met or somewhat met their expectations.
- FBAs shared that they liked talking to the next generation and felt ‘useful’ with ECRs sharing they had never had something like this in their career so far and liked being matched up with esteemed academics in their discipline.
- All aspects of the programme were rated **4** or above (out of **5**) by both Fellows and ECRs. The lowest score (**4**) was around the length of the sessions, with both ECRs and Fellows sharing that the 1-to-1 sessions could be extended to allow for further discussions.
- **85.7%** of all participants felt the programme should be run again, with the remaining **14.3%** sharing they were unsure.
- Fellows on the programme shared what they thought of the programme:

“I agreed to participate more from a sense of duty than anything else. In the event I was surprised how much I enjoyed each session and by what I learned from [the ECRs].”

“[I enjoyed] the links to individuals in their early stages – their enthusiasm and their ability to raise new questions of research which are stimulating.”

- ECRs on the programme shared what they thought of the programme:

“I have been very fortunate to have such a high-level academic as my mentor, who was also willing to offer practical advice to a younger academic. I have never had this before in my academic career.”

“I was paired with a scholarly giant in my field so I couldn’t ask for more!”

## Academic Writing Accelerator Two Day Workshop

ECRs continue to express a strong eagerness to enhance their academic writing skills, learn best practices, and discover opportunities to engage with the broader academic community. In response to this demand, we have developed a series of writing workshops, including grant writing retreats, specialised writing workshops, and an academic book publishing conference.

The next event in this series is a two-day, in-person workshop aimed at empowering ECRs to explore and refine their academic writing skills. This workshop fosters a hands-on, collaborative atmosphere where ECRs engage directly with senior academics in intimate

<b>Paper identifier</b>	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Protective Marking</b>
<b>Paper C</b>	<b>Sections</b>	<b>October 2024</b>	<b>None</b>

seminar groups of five. Prior to the workshop, participants will exchange and review each other's writing samples, providing an opportunity for a deep dive into the fundamentals of effective academic writing.

In addition to the seminars, ECRs can further hone their craft through drop-in writing workshops and themed panel discussions. These panels will explore topics such as "Celebrating Academic Failures" and "Demystifying Academic Publishing," offering valuable insights into both the writing process and the journey to publication.

The event is scheduled for April or May 2025 at the Academy, the event will run from 9:30 to 17:00 each day, accommodating 25 in-person ECRs. The panel discussions will also be available in a hybrid format, enabling unlimited online participation.

We are looking for five Fellows from various disciplines to join this initiative. The responsibilities will include reviewing up to 5,000 words of writing from five ECRs and leading a two-hour seminar dedicated to enhancing their writing. If this is of interest, please email us at [ecr\\_network@thebritishacademy.ac.uk](mailto:ecr_network@thebritishacademy.ac.uk).