PeerLadder

A national peer-mentoring initiative supporting underrepresented dRTP aspiring leaders

Saskia Lawson-Tovey [1], **Xenia Perez-Sitja** [2], **Sara Villa** [3], **Carole Goble** [1]

[1]University of Manchester · [2]Earlham Institute · [3]OLS

inspired by elixir ELEAD

ELIXIR Leadership programme – the team behind PeerLadder are ELEAD alumni, current participants and co-leads.

PeerLadder is a new peer-mentoring initiative in the UK.

- ↑ Supporting leadership development
- ↑ Empowering underrepresented digital Research Technical Professionals (dRTPs)
- ↑ Building confidence, community, and inclusive leadership

THE TEAM



Saskia Lawson-Tovey
University of Manchester
PI · ELEAD cohort 2



Xenia Perez-Sitja
Earlham Institute
ELEAD cohort 1 · co-lead cohort 2



Sara Villa
OLS
Co-lead · facilitator



Carole Goble
University of Manchester
Mentor · ELEAD cohorts 1 & 2

Why it matters

80%

of senior leadership roles in research-adjacent fields are held by white men. Women hold just 15% of managing-director roles globally.

MCKINSEY & COMPANY (2023)

+121%

more patent citations from engineering teams with higher diversity, and +19% more revenue – evidence that diverse teams drive research-technical innovation.

ROYAL ACADEMY OF ENGINEERING (2024) · BSA / APPG ON DIVERSITY & INCLUSION IN STEM (2025)

THE MECHANISM: PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Diverse teams outperform – but only when people feel safe to speak up.

In the chart, teams with high psychological safety (yellow) climb as diversity rises. Without it (lavender), they stall.

PLOT ADAPTED FROM EDMONDSON, A. (HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW, 2022)



The three rungs

01

Structured peer-mentoring

Regular small-group sessions with clear agendas, action commitments and accountability.

02

Open Leadership training from OLS

Skills development through practice in facilitation, ally skills and navigating privilege.

03

Psychological safety & guidance

Supportive materials and a facilitated space where it's safe to speak about real obstacles.

The cohort

15 dRTPs from 12 UK institutions. Yellow dots on the map = institutions with a current mentee.

Who is in the cohort?

60% women	**47%** minority ethnic background	**27%** neurodivergent
1/3 lower socioeconomic background	**20%** main carers	**13%** LGBTQIA+

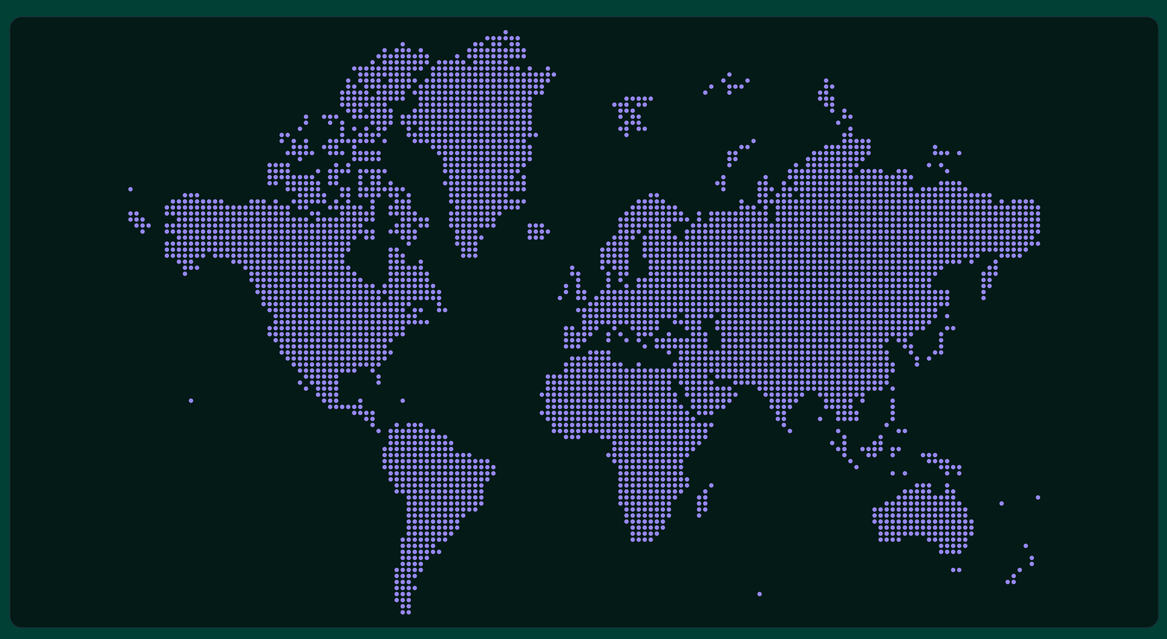


dRTP roles in the cohort

- (Senior) Research Software Engineer
- Bioinformatics Technical Specialist
- Ecological Statistician
- dRTP community coordinator
- Research Computing Systems Engineer
- Senior Research IT Business Partner
- Research Data Technical Specialist
- Assistant Professor

Where would you run it if you could?

Stick a dot on the location where you'd want to host a PeerLadder-style scheme.



What was *your* leadership barrier?

Imposter syndrome? No mentor? No time? Bias? Something else? Write it on a post-it and pin it here.

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