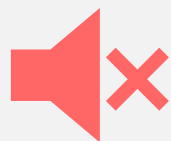# How to write a good conference abstract

Please stay muted

Use the chat to ask questions or raise your virtual hand

Camera on or off

Researcher Education &
Development Scholarship
CONFERENCE

Welcome

Please tell us about yourself

- Who you are
- Your relationship to REDS

Why This Workshop Matters

REDS 2026 Theme: *Getting creative: shaping culture of development*

Support for first-timers

Ensure accessibility and inclusion

Have you submitted a conference abstract before?

What we cover today

- Understanding REDS and its community

- The anatomy of a good abstract

- REDs 2026 specific requirements

- Practical writing framework

- Common pitfalls to avoid

- Your action plan

Understanding the REDS community

What Makes REDS Special?

- **Free, online, inclusive** - removes barriers
- **Broadest view** of who counts as a 'researcher'
- **Scholarly community** focused on researcher development
- **Multiple formats**: 15-min papers, 5-min WIP, blog posts

REDS Community

- Researcher developers & careers advisors
- Supervisors & PGR directors
- Research staff & early career researchers
- HR colleagues & culture specialists
- **You don't need to be an expert - you need to have something to share**

REDS 2026

- **Getting creative: shaping a culture of development"**

- Focus on **creativity, innovation, culture change**

REDS Community

- Researcher developers & careers advisors
- Supervisors & PGR directors
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- **You don't need to be an expert - you need to have something to share**

REDS 2026: Submission

- **Getting creative: shaping a culture of development"**

- **Scholarly paper:** 15min + 5min Q&A

- **Work in progress (WIP):** 5min with 2 slides

- **Blog post:** 1000 words (if you can't present live)

Timeline
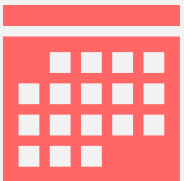
- Abstract deadline: 27th October 2025

- Abstract decision: end of November 2025

- Conference: 21st and 22nd January 2026

What REDS reviewers are looking for

- Relevance to researcher development

- Alignment to one or more themes

- Clear contribution to the field

- Practical insights or theoretical advancement

- **Inclusive perspective** - all voices valued

250-word abstract that summarises the scholarly work you want to share at REDS 2026

The anatomy of a good abstract

Researcher Education &
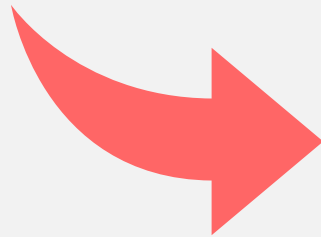Development Scholarship
CONFERENCE

Conference abstract formula

Topic + Title + Motivation + Problem Statement + Approach + Results + Conclusions

= Conference abstract

5 key sentences to plan your abstract

Tips for writing an effective conference abstract

5 key sentences to plan your abstract

1. **Context sentence:** What is the background/setting

2. **Problem sentence:** What gap/challenge are you addressing

3. **Approach sentence:** How did you tackle it

4. **Results sentence:** What did you discover/achieve

5. **Implication sentence:** Why does this matter for our field

REDS specific abstracts

- **Connection to researcher development:** How does your work advance the field

- **Cultural relevance:** How does it relate to research culture

- **Practical application:** What can others learn/apply

- **Creative element:** How does this demonstrate innovation

✓ Clear title that signals your contribution
✓ Opening that sets the researcher development context
✓ Problem/opportunity clearly articulated
✓ Your approach/methodology explained
✓ Key findings/outcomes highlighted
✓ Implications for practice/theory stated
✓ Connects to REDs 2026 theme
✓ max 250 words

What makes REDS abstracts stand out

- **Authentic voice** - share your real experience

- **Practical focus** - what can others apply?

- **Cultural lens** - how does it shape research environment?

- **Inclusive perspective** - considers diverse researcher needs

Common abstract pitfalls

❌ Too academic/theoretical for the audience

❌ Doesn't clearly connect to researcher development

❌ Vague outcomes or implications

❌ Missing the cultural/creative angle

❌ Written for journal submission, not conference presentation

Quick poll: Which of these pitfalls concerns you most?

Some past REDS examples

1. **Context sentence:** What is the background/setting

2. **Problem sentence:** What gap/challenge are you addressing

3. **Approach sentence:** How did you tackle it

4. **Results sentence:** What did you discover/achieve

5. **Implication sentence:** Why does this matter for our field

Researcher Education &
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REDS 2023 'Career Transitions for Researchers

Early career fellowships: Supporting the transition from researcher to research leader

Taryn Bell, University of York

The ECR years are a key yet precarious phase in research careers (Roberts 2002), often characterised as the "survival of the fittest" (Browning, Thompson and Dawson 2017). Fellowships offer a means for ECRs to establish research independence, providing prestige, protected time for research, and professional development. However, they are highly competitive, privilege individual success over collaboration, and demand significant investment from applicants and research institutions.

While there has been a significant improvement in career development for researchers as a whole (Hodge et al. 2019; The Concordat Strategy Group 2019), there is a lack of scholarship and research into fellowship support. Universities must thus think creatively about how to empower and bolster ECRs as they navigate the fellowship process. In doing so, we can build research capability, improve research culture, and invest in the research leaders of the future.

With this in mind, the University of York formed the York Fellowship Programme (YFP) in 2019. YFP provides bespoke support to both current and prospective fellows, opening up development opportunities to a wider range of ECRs and sharing good practice. Supporting early career fellowships has enabled the University to demonstrate its commitment to supporting and celebrating early career researchers, ultimately fostering a positive research culture. This presentation will provide honest insights into the process of designing and managing the YFP, considering both its promises and pitfalls.

Context sentence

Problem sentence

Approach sentence

Results sentence

Implication sentence

REDS 2023 'Career Transitions for Researchers

From eternal postdoc to lecturer in learning & teaching enhancement: sharing my experience

Ingeborg van Knippenberg, Department of Learning and Teaching Enhancement, Edinburgh Napier University

Until September 2019 I was working in a lab as a postdoc in Virology, in October 2019 I started my new career as Lecturer in Learning and Teaching Enhancement working in academic development. Much has been written about supporting the development of academic developers (e.g. Kensington-Miller et al, 2012), but literature about 'what came before', how people came into academic development, is harder to find and most sources focus on the development needs once in position (e.g. Fyffe, 2018). A degree in Chemistry, a PhD in Plant Sciences, and a couple of postdoc positions - that's as far as I had ever looked ahead, always successfully evading the 'where next?' question. After I stepped in for some lectures and tutorials and expressed my interest in teaching I had the opportunity to do the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PgCAP). This opened my eyes to 'the whole world of learning and teaching' (Noben et al, 2021) and I decided I wanted to develop my career in that direction. From starting the PgCAP to the new position as lecturer in L&T took a little over 3.5 years. I am currently finishing the continuation of the PgCAP into a full Masters and have recently become the Programme Leader for our own PgCert in Teaching and Supporting Learning, completing my transition and closing the circle.

In this autoethnographic narrative presentation I will relate how I managed this transition and analyse what the drivers and barriers have been in making this career shift.

Context sentence

Problem sentence

Approach sentence

Results sentence

Implication sentence

Your Turn - Idea Generation

Individual reflection (3 minutes)

- What researcher development challenge have you encountered?

- What creative solution have you tried/seen?

- What aspect of research culture interests you?

- What would you want to learn from others at REDs?

Breakout Room Activity

Groups of 3-4 people (8 minutes total):

- **Round 1 (4 min)**: Each person shares their idea (1 min each)

- **Round 2 (4 min)**: Group helps each person identify:

  - The "problem statement" in their idea

  - The potential contribution to researcher development

  - Connection to creativity/culture theme
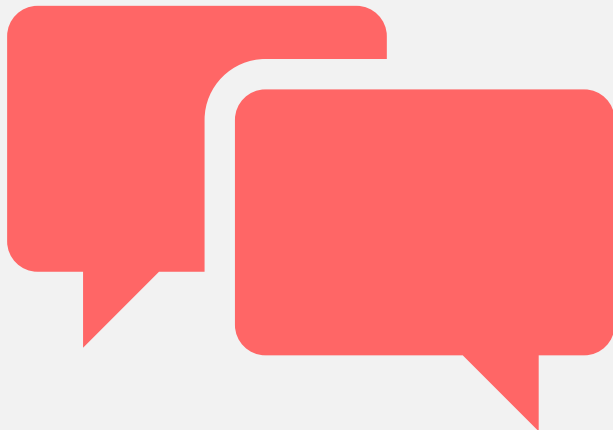
For each idea, discuss:
1. What's the researcher development angle?
2. How does it connect to creativity/culture?
3. What would REDS participants learn?
4. What format would work best? (15min/5min/blog)

Report Back

- One interesting idea from your group

- How you connected it to REDS themes

- Any insights about abstract writing process

Writing Your Abstract

Individual exercise (5 minutes): Based on your idea, draft these sentences:

1. **Context**: "In researcher development contexts..."

2. **Problem**: "However, a key challenge is..."

3. **Approach**: "To address this, I/we..."

4. **Results**: "This revealed/achieved..."

5. **Implications**: "These insights suggest..."

If you are really stuck start here

Background: _____ [researcher development context] has become increasingly important due to _____ [sector challenges/cultural shifts].

Problem: However, little attention has been paid to _____ [specific aspect of researcher development], particularly regarding _____ [creative approaches/cultural elements].

Objective: This work aimed to _____ [develop/explore/evaluate] by _____ [specific creative approach/intervention].

Methodology: Using _____ [method: action research/case study/evaluation/innovation], we _____ [implemented/analysed/developed] _____ [specific intervention/programme/approach] to _____ [intended outcome].

Results: Our findings reveal that _____ [key insight about culture/development], _____ [impact on participants/community], and surprisingly, _____ [unexpected learning/outcome].

Significance: These results contribute to _____ [researcher development practice/theory] by _____ [main contribution] and suggest that _____ [implications for creating developmental cultures].

Keywords: [Researcher development], [Creative approaches], [Research culture], [Specific method/context]

REDS-Specific Refinements

Check your draft:

- Does it mention "researcher development" or "research culture"?

- Is the creative/innovative element clear?

- Would someone know what they'd learn from your presentation?

- Does it fit the REDs 2026 theme?

Title Crafting for REDS

Effective REDs titles often:
- Include key concepts: culture, development, creative, community
- Signal practical value: "Building", "Fostering", "Supporting"
- Indicate innovation: "Novel approach", "Creative methods"

Example formats:
- "Creative [Method] for [Outcome] in [Context]"
- "Building [Outcome] Through [Approach]"
- "[Innovation]: [Impact] in Researcher Development"

Abstract Length & Style for REDS

- **Aim for 200-250 words** (accessible length)
- **Conversational but scholarly** tone
- **Active voice** where possible
- **Specific examples** over abstract concepts
- **Clear paragraph structure** (often 2-3 paragraphs)

Final Abstract Checklist
Before submitting, ensure:
✓ Relevant to researcher development field
✓ Connects to REDS 2026 creativity/culture theme
✓ Clear what participants will learn
✓ Appropriate format chosen (15min/5min/blog)
✓ Proofread and within word limit
✓ Title reflects content and attracts audience

Overcoming Common Concerns

But I Don't Have Research to Share

REDS welcomes:

- Innovative practice examples
- Reflections on challenges faced
- Creative solutions you've tried
- Observations about research culture
- Work in progress and pilot projects

My Work Isn't Creative Enough

Creative can mean:

- New ways of delivering existing programmes
- Adapting approaches for different audiences
- Collaborative or interdisciplinary methods
- Using technology innovatively
- Changing institutional practices

I'm Not an Expert

REDs values:

- Fresh perspectives from newcomers
- Honest reflections on learning
- Questions that challenge assumptions
- Diverse voices and experiences

Remember: You know more than you think

Choosing Your Format

15-minute paper: Established practice, full evaluation, clear findings

5-minute WIP: Early stage work, seeking feedback, quick insight

Blog post: Can't attend live, prefer writing, detailed reflection

Decision factors: Stage of work, comfort with presenting, time availability

Building Confidence

- REDs community is **supportive and encouraging**

- First-time presenters are **welcomed and supported**

- **Peer review process** is developmental, not gatekeeping

- **Multiple formats** allow you to find the right fit

Your Abstract Action Plan

Week 1 (2-9 Oct): Finalise your idea and draft 5 key sentences

Week 2 (9-16 Oct): Write full abstract draft

Week 3 (16-23 Oct): Get feedback from colleague

Week 4 (23-27 Oct): Revise and submit (deadline 27th Oct 5pm)

Getting feedback

Who to ask:

- Colleague in researcher development
- Someone who's presented at conferences
- Critical friend outside your immediate field
- Writing support service at your institution

What to ask for:

- Is the contribution clear?
- Does it fit REDS theme?
- Is it engaging and accessible?

Resources to Support You

- **REDs abstract guidance**

- **Past proceedings**: Examples from REDs 2024

- **Your institution's writing support**

- **REDS Code of Practice**

Key Takeaways

✓ **Your perspective matters** - REDS welcomes diverse voices

✓ **Start with experience** - your work likely has innovative elements

✓ **Use the 5-sentence framework** - clear structure for success

✓ **Connect to creativity/culture** - but broadly interpreted

✓ **Choose appropriate format** - match your comfort and content

Any remaining questions about REDs or abstract writing?

Clarifications on process or requirements?