

Oxford Biomedical Research Centre
Training & Development Needs Survey 2026

Thank you to everyone who took part in the 2026 Oxford BRC Training and Development Needs survey. 77 members of the BRC community responded, sharing views on their priority training areas, the barriers that get in the way of attending training, and how well their substantive employer currently supports their development. This document summarises what you told us and sets out how the BRC Academic Career Development Team is responding.

Who told us

Substantive employer	Respondents
Substantive employer: University of Oxford (OU)	62 (81%)
Substantive employer: Oxford University Hospitals (OUH)	15 (19%)

Career stage	Respondents
Mid-career	44 (57%)
Early career	18 (23%)
Senior career	14 (18%)

Professional group	Respondents
Professional, technical and administrative support staff	30 (39%)
Researcher: non-clinical	22 (29%)
Researcher: clinical	21 (27%)
Nursing, midwifery and allied health professionals (NMAHPs)	3 (4%)
Other	4 (5%)

Top training priorities identified

Respondents could select as many training areas as applied to them. The top five were:

Training area	Respondents
Artificial Intelligence tools for researchers	37 (48%)
Leadership skills	32 (42%)
Financial management / budgeting	25 (32%)
Grant / fellowship writing	24 (31%)
Statistical analysis	23 (30%)

Bioinformatics (17), communication skills and public engagement / science communication (16 each), designing and conducting clinical trials (15), research inclusion / EDI (14), health economics (13) and academic writing (12) were also frequently selected.

Other things you told us

Is your substantive employer meeting your training needs?

Response	Respondents
Yes	55 (71%)
No	22 (29%)

While most respondents feel well supported, common reasons given by those who said "no" included limited funding or dedicated time for training, a lack of opportunities for non-clinical or non-PI roles, and mandatory/compliance training crowding out professional development.

Actions we will take

The table below groups your feedback into themes and sets out the BRC's response. Where an action is already under way it is marked "We did"; where it is planned for the coming year it is marked "We will". This is a live document and will be updated as actions progress.

Theme	You said	We did / we will
Competency in Artificial Intelligence tools for researchers	Requests ranged from practical AI use in academic writing and biology, to the ethics of using AI tools in research. Several respondents noted existing OU training is good but asked what the BRC can add.	• We will: engage OU AI Competency Centre to run a training session for OUH employed researchers supported by the BRC • We will: signpost existing university AI training more clearly via the BRC training pages and newsletter.
Leadership & management	Specific requests included leadership training for early-career researchers, project/team management, and Women in Leadership and coaching-style programmes.	• We did: in early 2026 we ran a leadership training course for 21 early- to mid-career researchers. We have also provided funding for the OU MSD Inclusive Leadership Programme. • We will: include funding for leadership training in the new BRC. • We will: signpost NIHR national leadership training schemes available elsewhere: – NIHR run a range of courses for academy members and research leaders Research leaders' courses and support – OU MSD Inclusive Leadership Programme – OU MPLS Leadership in Action – Training for OUH staff via NHS Elect
Grant writing skills, including financial management/budgeting training	Specific asks included mock review panels, feedback on draft applications, budget writing and tracking, and support for methodologists (not just PIs).	• We will: signpost existing finance training opportunities: – OUH Finance Training via My Learning Hub

Theme	You said	We did / we will
		– OU grant writing training: https://www.mpls.ox.ac.uk/training/courses/get-that-grant-michaelmas • We will: raise awareness of the NIHR Research Support Service, which offers free expert advice and support to applied health, public health and social care researchers on the design and delivery of research and the development of research funding applications
Statistics, bioinformatics & data skills	Feedback noted some computational courses are out of date and requested a structured, basics-to-advanced series (e.g. bioinformatics pipelines, multi-omics, sequencing data analysis).	• We did: The BRC Trial Design and Analysis Hub ran eight online training sessions. Recordings are available at Oxford BRC YouTube. They also ran a “Getting Started with R” webinar and will continue drop-in sessions throughout 2026.
Flexible and accessible delivery	Time and workload were the most cited barriers to attending training, alongside caring responsibilities and part-time working patterns. Many asked for online, hybrid or recorded sessions, and for sessions scheduled within school hours or outside a full clinical day. Some asked for more notice (4–6 weeks minimum) ahead of sessions.	• We will: offer hybrid/recorded options for BRC-run training wherever possible. • We will: publish a forward training calendar with a minimum 8 week notice period for NHS staff

Theme	You said	We did / we will
Awareness of what's on offer	Several respondents said they were not aware of what training is already available or found it hard to locate on the website.	• We will: improve the visibility of the BRC training offer through a single, easier-to-navigate training page and regular newsletter updates.
Reach beyond academic researchers	Professional, technical and administrative staff, and non-clinical/non-academic roles, told us development opportunities can feel focused on "young academics" or STEM/technician career paths, leaving other roles feeling overlooked. Requests included opening more sessions to professional services staff and broadening "clinical trials" framing to "clinical research" more generally.	• We will: refresh our website training page to provide clearer communication to confirm that BRC training and development opportunities are open to professional, technical and administrative staff as well as researchers. • We will: review session titles/scope (e.g. clinical trials → clinical research studies) to reflect the full BRC community.
Mentorship and networking	Multiple respondents, particularly early- and mid-career, asked for mentorship and sponsorship programmes and more networking opportunities for technical and professional roles.	• We did: established a BRC mentorship scheme programme designed for early and mid-career researchers, offering tailored guidance from experienced mentors (Joint BRC: Oxford & ARC: Oxford and Thames Valley Mentoring Scheme). • We will: promote existing mentoring opportunities.

Contact

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