



## **SULSA's Forging Futures Scheme** *Flowing Between Academy & Industry*

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Academic scientists are experts in building strong collaborations with other peers. But when establishing connections with industry, there is sometimes a sense of being lost in the middle of nowhere. For PhD students and postdocs, effectively collaborating and connecting with industry can be a game-changer in our career path.

Here, the Forging Futures Scheme from SULSA comes to play an eye-opener role within the ECR Scottish community. The first funded cohort included 27 participants, with PhD students and postdocs across Scottish Universities. The fund aimed to the participants to understand and identify the opportunities for collaboration between academia and industry. Not only that, it looked for a reflection on our future career goals.

On the skills side, we launched the Scheme with a training course with Skillfluence a company specialized in training and skills development of researchers that want to work effectively in, or with, industry. Throughout this 6-week course, we navigated the business and industry world. It provided us with tools for identifying routes to establish collaborations with the industry, for understanding how the industry thinks and acts, and for learning how to speak the language of business. Most importantly, it provided us with a space to reflect and comprehend our values, skills, and interests. These will be essential for the next step in our careers. With triggering questions like 'what do you believe?', 'what do you do?', 'who are you?', 'what do you want to do?'. The course urged us to keep a positive reframing and take actions to move in the right direction. With this mindset, Interface mediated a series of conversations with different businesses in Scotland, providing us with an inside perspective on collaborating and working with industry.

On the personal development side, we delved into our personality profile with Tony Bradshaw and MyFuturePlan in a series of group and individual coaching sessions. We explored our personality features and identified our strengths and weaknesses. These helped us clear the umbrella of opportunities in our career paths. With this information, we reflected on what kind of job we would be looking for in the future, which work environment would make us thrive, which are our career goals and which steps are necessary to make them a reality.

With all this in our minds, our motivation is boosted. Not only to further develop our transferrable skills, practice our communication skills, enhance our credibility and start building a strong network with the industry but also to start planning our next steps and take action.