

ARMS 2025 – Conference Reflection

Dr Madonna Devaney and Dr Annette Shewan

This report reflects on insights gained from attendance at the ARMS 2025 Conference in Melbourne. Multiple representatives of the UQ Major Initiatives team attended the conference with Drs Devaney and Shewan being awarded travel awards.

Devaney and Shewan’s participation included presentation of two thematically aligned talks on “Building collaborative, transdisciplinary research programs” and “Powering Community Priorities”, a methodological poster on research collaboration, chairing a fascinating session, attending sessions and keynotes, including participating in a focused session on the “*third profession*” — research management staff working at the interface of research, strategy, and delivery.

Our key takeaway, across the various sessions: Research management was positioned as a core institutional asset rather than a transactional function. Keynotes highlighted the value of strategic judgement, systems thinking, and integration across the research lifecycle. This reinforces the need to embed research management expertise within institutional planning and priority-setting.

Further, the keynotes underscored the increasing complexity of the research system. Fragmented, project-by-project approaches were identified as limiting institutional scale and impact. Expectations around interdisciplinarity, partnerships, integrity, and impact continue to rise. Funding environments increasingly favour coordinated, programmatic responses supported by clear operating models and alignment.

The session focused on the third profession reinforced these messages from a workforce perspective. These discussions highlighted the expanding scope and influence of research management roles, alongside risks associated with role ambiguity, inconsistent recognition, and limited leadership pathways. Deliberate investment in capability development, role clarity, and progression frameworks was identified as critical to sustaining this workforce as a strategic capability.

Overall, ARMS 2025 reinforced the importance of system-level investment in research management capability to support institutional strategy, resilience, long-term research performance, and realising research impact.