

Valuing practitioner-led research

Dr Emma Bolger
Bill Law Memorial Award 2026

**A warm
welcome to all
who are
interested in
robust careers
research**

You may:

- have submitted work for the Bill Law Award this year
- have completed research this year but maybe felt this wasn't the space for your research to shine
- be a budding practitioner-researcher looking to this event for inspiration
- be generally interested in what is happening on the frontline of careers practice and research
- be thinking about "what next" for your current or next project

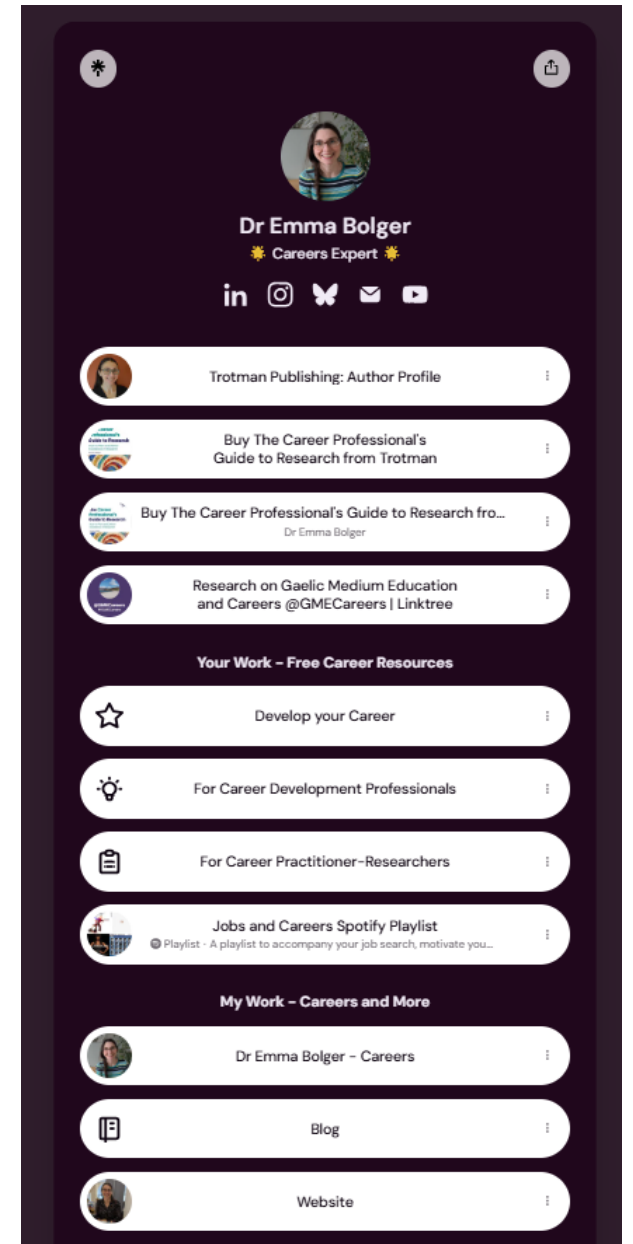
About your speaker

Interdisciplinary academic,
researcher, and practitioner
based in Scotland

Over 20 years of experience in
education and careers

Author of *The Career
Professional's Guide to
Research* (Trotman, 2025)

<https://linktr.ee/emmabolger>



Engaging with and prioritising practitioner-led research

- Career professionals are in a unique position to conduct research
- Knowledge and experience developed from working in frontline practice adds immense value
- Practitioner-led research is a vital part of the research landscape
- Perspective is highly beneficial to a wide range of stakeholders
- Practitioners may feel daunted but should not feel intimidated!

Bridging practice and research: Finding your next project

- Breadth, depth and scope will depend entirely on the topic and intended purpose
- An inquiry does not have to involve huge numbers of participants or take months of planning and investigation.
- Priority should be on how best to engage with the primary audience (who most needs to access the research?)

Quality of Service

Clients, Equality, group, decision, demographics, critique, ethics, techniques, information, Guidance, Labour, advice, market, models, Value, Local, national, trends, inclusion, evaluation, Theoretical, measures, diversity, Tools

Positioning your next project

Theoretically driven

New ideas developed from reviewing theory and policy

For example:

- A re-evaluation of models and theories
- Exploring and verifying new approaches
- Reviewing and re-evaluating models and methods
- Expanding on previous research, by extending it into new areas

Practice driven

A response to what is being seen in practice

For example:

- Examining new routes to best practice
- Producing evidence to back-up policy
- Addressing an issue or problem
- Measuring and exploring trends
- Investigating and explaining trends
- Addressing misconceptions

Your Unique Selling Point

Focus on why you are the best person to lead this project:

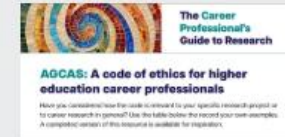
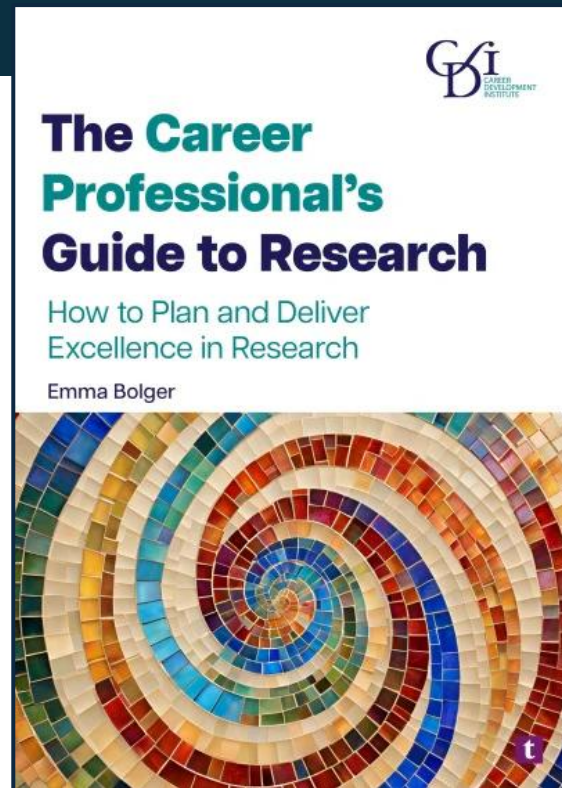
- Is there anyone else who could do this work?
- Has anyone else researched this topic? How well did they do it? What did they miss out?
- What do you bring?

Every project: what you need to know

- Aim(s), objective(s) and research question(s)
- Justification and purpose
- Methodology (including ethics)
- Indicative timeline
- Expected output
- Crisis avoidance!

Worksheets

<https://trotman.co.uk/pages/the-career-professionals-guide-to-research-resources>



AGCAS code of ethics example

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When samples go wrong example

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Your early project plan example

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THE CAREER PROFESSIONAL'S GUIDE TO RESEARCH

How to Plan and Deliver
Excellence in Research

By Emma Bolger



The Career Professional's Guide to Research

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