

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AT CAMBRIDGE

OUR VISION

The mission of the University of Cambridge is to contribute to society through the pursuit of education, learning and research.

Public engagement in its broadest sense fulfils the University's mission by creating bridges between the academic community and the public, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. The University defines public engagement as the many ways in which we share expertise, knowledge gained, resources and collections to both inform and inspire those we interact with while soliciting public input and participation in our work. The University of Cambridge as an institution values public engagement as an important aspect of academic endeavour.

CONTACT US

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OUR APPROACH

The Public Engagement Team follows the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement definition of public engagement in our work with two-way, mutually beneficial engagement at its centre:

"Public engagement describes the myriad of ways in which the activity and benefits of higher education and research can be shared with the public. Engagement is by definition a two-way process, involving interaction and listening, with the goal of generating mutual benefit."

We acknowledge the diversity of engagement channels, which are as diverse as our research, target audiences and stakeholders. We embrace and support a range of engagement types from dialogue to dissemination. We believe what matters the most is to find the most appropriate format to engage effectively and collaboratively.

Our focus is to support the public engagement priorities of the University of Cambridge, our academic and professional services staff by facilitating collaboration both internally and externally. We align our work with those of our funders and the organisations we partner with.

We provide advice and an extensive training portfolio to build researcher skills and confidence, funding schemes to facilitate projects and opportunities and platforms, including the Cambridge Festival, for researchers and members of the public to engage, interact and learn from each other.

We provide bespoke advice and support to enable researchers and public engagement professionals to lead their own public engagement projects and to help embed a culture of engagement across the University. We believe that this engaged research practice improves research outcomes, broadens researcher perspectives and enhances the University's impact on, and contribution to, society.

By conducting annual assessment of our progress and horizon scanning both internally and externally, we expect our approach to develop and evolve over time. This is critical to ensure that we continue to reflect the needs of the University, our researchers and the requirements of funders, stakeholders and our communities.

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. **ACCOUNTABILITY:** We are accountable to the University and to our academic and professional colleagues.
2. **RECOGNITION:** We recognise, reward and celebrate excellence in public engagement.
3. **SUPPORT:** We support researchers and professional staff to engage effectively.
4. **COLLABORATION:** We develop, strengthen and maintain collaborative relationships with our communities.
5. **INSPIRATION:** We share expertise, resources and collections with our communities.

1. WE ARE ACCOUNTABLE TO THE UNIVERSITY AND TO OUR ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL COLLEAGUES

Aim: we support the public engagement priorities of the University of Cambridge

HOW WE DO THIS

1.1 The Public Engagement Advisory Group¹ provides high-level guidance with the aim of embedding a culture supportive of public engagement, aligned to the impact agenda

Chaired by the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research, membership comprises senior academics and post-doctoral representatives from each School and the Heads of Public Engagement, Impact Acceleration and the University of Cambridge Museums. Members act as effective liaisons between their School/Institution and the central University.

1.2 Our work is informed and improved by academic research, by the Public Engagement Advisory Group, our Patrons Group and by feedback and evaluation from community representatives, researchers, stakeholders and independent evaluators

Membership of our Patrons Group includes academics and members of the public, journalists, teachers, professional communicators and members of voluntary and professional organisations. We evaluate our programmes at development, delivery and dissemination stages and report to the University, funders, statutory bodies and our stakeholders². Evaluation is conducted by members of the public, researchers, professional services staff and independent evaluators.

1.3 We are pro-active and inclusive in our approach to equality and diversity

Our focus on equality, inclusion and diversity enriches the quality of public engagement, diversifying perspectives and improving research. We take advice, undertake equality and diversity training and monitor our activity to ensure our public engagement activity and actions support an inclusive culture that encourages all groups to engage.

1.4 We organise an annual public engagement conference to provide a space for learning and skills sharing and to create a supportive community of practice

We invite leaders from within the public engagement community both internally and externally to contribute.

1.5 We support Schools and Departments to develop their own public engagement strategy that links to this central PE strategy

We provide bespoke advice on how to develop School based PE strategies that support a common purpose for PE across the University.

1.5 We contribute to the debate on public engagement, sharing our expertise in partnership across the University and the sector

We fully engage with the work with the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement to inform, share and promote research and practice in public engagement. We actively respond to public engagement consultations from Funders and work collaboratively with other Higher Education Institutes and sector organisations to develop good practice. We present and discuss our work with our peers at National and International Conferences.

Internally, the central public engagement team is recognised as the central broker for information and support for the public engagement community at Cambridge³.

2. WE RECOGNISE, REWARD AND CELEBRATE EXCELLENCE IN PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Aim: We raise the profile, value and importance of public engagement at the University

HOW DO WE DO THIS?

2.1 Public engagement is embedded in the culture of the University as a core competency and included in promotion and performance evaluation

Public engagement is a criteria for promotion in the new Academic Career Pathways scheme for established Academic Officers. Public Engagement Advisory Group members champion public engagement at the senior Committee level of the University.

2.2 Our annual Vice Chancellor's Awards for research impact and engagement demonstrate how knowledge generated at Cambridge has a major impact on society

The annual Vice Chancellor's Awards recognise outstanding impact and engagement activity undertaken across the University. Presented in partnership with the Research Strategy Office, the awards include categories for Early Career Researchers, Established Researchers, Professional Staff and Collaborative work with external partners.

3. WE SUPPORT RESEARCHERS AND PROFESSIONAL STAFF TO ENGAGE EFFECTIVELY

Aim: Through training and funding, we increase confidence, skills and resource to enable researchers and professional staff develop effective public engagement activity

HOW DO WE DO THIS?

3.1 Our Engaged Researcher training portfolio provides research and professional staff with public engagement skills, knowledge and resources

Engaged Researcher Training is available to all researchers and professional staff who wish to learn and/or support others in their public engagement journey. Training is organised and delivered by the Public Engagement team with additional expertise from the wider University and professional trainers⁴. Courses are evaluated by participants and the schemes are evaluated by external evaluators to improve and develop the programmes.

Training is provided for multi-disciplinary groups, Doctoral training cohorts, The PostDoc Academy, Personal and Professional Development and Departments and Institutes. Advanced training, including skills sharing, is offered for professional staff through the PE Exchange Network. Festival-specific training is provided and researchers are encouraged to participate in the festival and use it as platform to develop engagement skills.

The differentiated programme includes introductory level courses and masterclasses targeted to specific researcher requirements including audiences and engagement formats. This flexibility and personalisation ensures training is relevant, providing a suite of opportunities to support researchers at all career stages in their individual PE journey. This increases the number and diversity of researchers undertaking public engagement. Researchers are able to work towards a certificate of Public Engagement, combining introductory courses with those targeted to their own engaged research practice.

Cambridge Creative Encounters programme links researchers with creative professionals - filmmakers, animators, theatre makers, poets and photographer, and sixth form media students to produce innovative films and animations.

We run **Intensive training academies**. **Rising Stars** is our internal programme, where we unpack the definition of public engagement and work out what successful PE means to us. We also run intensive **international training academies** in collaboration with Berlin School of Public Engagement and Open Science and Wellcome Connecting Science where we bring together researchers from across the world.

PGCert and Level 7 Apprenticeship in Research and Innovation Leadership

This training supports postdoctoral researchers who have aspiration and potential to achieve leadership positions. We have developed, and will deliver, **Module 4: Leading engagement and impact in academia and beyond**.

One-to-one advice sessions are offered for senior academics and for researchers developing activities and including PE in grants and fellowship applications.

3.2 Our Public Engagement Starter Fund supports novel projects based on contemporary research

We fund, mentor and train researchers through our starter fund so that they can engage effectively with a specific target audience, develop a partnership with a community of interest or create an innovative activity for the Cambridge Festival.

3.3 Our Public Engagement Exchange Network for professional staff is centrally organised but community owned

Our PE Exchange network meets monthly bringing together PE professionals across the University, building contacts and expertise and a shared sense of purpose. Members are encouraged to propose themes, lead discussions and share ideas, experience and best practice.

Linked to the network, our monthly **Public Engagement Bulletin** provides an online channel for professional staff and researchers where activity, funding and training opportunities are highlighted and success stories, questions, challenges and resources shared. We have a PE email list and a PE Teams channel to support communication between public engagement professionals across the University.

4. WE DEVELOP, STRENGTHEN AND MAINTAIN COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH OUR COMMUNITIES; LOCAL, REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND GLOBAL

Aim: we build strong respectful lasting relationships with our communities through listening, consultation and collaboration

HOW DO WE DO THIS?

4.1 We actively encourage and support the sharing of expertise between researchers and communities and the co-production of knowledge and content.

We work with professional services staff and researchers across the University to help them reach diverse global audiences and engage them with the research of the University⁶.

4.2 We work collaboratively with our communities, listening and engaging with them to deliver wider community and societal benefit and to improve our research

Through research, consultations and conversations with community members, leaders and schools, we develop our understanding of our audiences. We use this knowledge to reach diverse audiences in a way that is inclusive, relevant, mutually beneficial, respectful and honest⁷.

We provide public engagement support to the Vice Chancellor's priority projects. These projects ensure Cambridge contributes to society in extraordinary and globally recognised ways.

5. WE SHARE EXPERTISE, RESOURCES AND COLLECTIONS WITH OUR COMMUNITIES

Aim: We support, develop and deliver public engagement activity to inspire and inform and through collaboration and co-production

HOW DO WE DO THIS?

4.1 We support excellence in researcher-led public engagement with research activity

We work with researchers to design impact driven, relevant, collaborative, consultative and co-produced public engagement with a defined audience that informs research. The range of projects undertaken is international, extensive and diverse with evaluation integral to success. The most impactful projects are recognised through the Vice Chancellor's Awards for Research Impact and Engagement.

4.2 We organise and deliver large scale public and community engagement activity

Through partnerships with members of the University and City Institutions, charities and community groups, industry and research institutions we discuss our research with our community, both local, national and international⁸.

Our **interdisciplinary research-led Cambridge Festival** provides opportunities for researchers and members of the public to explore, discuss, and debate issues of interest and concern. Through the Festival we promote research conducted within the University of Cambridge and our partners⁹. We develop activities for specific audiences, special interest and patient groups, and those to diversify our engagements⁹.

Open Cambridge, linked to the national Heritage Open Day Scheme, opens up places not normally accessible to the public through collaborations with Colleges, City and

County Council, community groups, public institutions and religious leaders. **FunLab** at the City Council run Big Weekend allows us to engage with local audiences who do not generally attend festivals and University events.

4.3 We support large scale public engagement activity across the University

Including events from the University of Cambridge Museums, and University Departments and Institutions.

We contribute to national and international public events and support and provide advice to researchers contributing to Festivals across the world.