

Public Engagement with Research at the University of Lincoln

Strategy

1. Introduction

Public engagement shares university research with wider society, aiming to **benefit wider society** by informing, inspiring, involving and enriching people and places, and to **benefit universities** by making their activity more relevant, innovative, transparent and accountable. Public engagement encompasses **myriad forms of multi-directional interaction**, can be undertaken by **any staff and students**, and may **take place anywhere**, in university campuses or elsewhere: indoors, outdoors, on site, on air or online.

The University of Lincoln is a dynamic, outward-looking institution conducting purposeful research at scales from local to global. Committed to service and proud of our status as a signatory of the **UKRI Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research** and the **NCCPE manifesto for Public Engagement**, we see sharing discovery and learning with wider society as central to our mission. As an institution established by our regional community through public subscription and a signatory of the **Civic University Agreement**, we recognise our particular responsibility to our local and regional communities.

This strategy is underpinned by a **Strategic Framework** which sustainably embeds effective public engagement in the university's core business, building on the experience and outcomes of two years of **RCUK/UKRI** funding for strategic enhancement of public engagement at the University of Lincoln.

2. Our guiding principles

We believe that our research should engage with wider publics because this **benefits society** in diverse ways, including through capacity building, place making and enhancing wellbeing, while also advancing the **university's core aims** of delivering a great student experience, graduate success, impactful research, strong partnerships and dynamic engaged people. Our public engagement strategy commitments are underpinned by the principles that our public engagement with research must:

2.1. **Be beneficial:**

The university should benefit wider society through generating opportunities to engage effectively with the aims, processes and outcomes of research in ways which inform, involve, enrich, upskill and inspire.

2.2 **Be known:**

The university should ensure that its public engagement, and its commitment to public engagement, is known, understood and appreciated internally and externally across its locality, region and beyond.

2.3 **Be ambitious:**

The university should continuously strive to build its capacity for devising, diversifying and delivering public engagement that is both effective and innovative, in the present and for the future.

2.4 **Be supportive:**

The University should provide resources and systems that support public engagement activities and recognise appropriately the achievements of staff and students involved in public engagement.

2.5 **Be reflective:**

The University should know its publics and its locale, and understand the impact of its public engagement, monitoring and evaluating its outcomes and sharing this learning.

3 Our aims

Our public engagement aims to benefit wider society, researchers, research and the university.

3.1 To benefit wider society

We recognise that society benefits in many ways from public engagement with research, and so aim to maximise the range and scope of our engagement and its reach to our civic audiences in our city and region as well as others beyond; supporting communities, education, economic development, culture, heritage, health, wellbeing and citizenship. Beneficiaries will include individuals, communities, community groups, local societies, special interest groups, support groups, charities and other third sector organisations, schools and colleges, businesses, institutions and many more. We aim to engage wider society with our research in ways which:

- 3.1.1 Exchange knowledge – sharing knowledge, ideas and understanding of research processes and outcomes; democratising the research experience through co-design, co-production and participation.
- 3.1.2 Enhance well-being – offering new life experiences; changing perspectives; influencing behaviour.
- 3.1.3 Build social capital – extending networks; creating new networks; heightening appetite for learning.
- 3.1.4 Build personal resilience / social justice – boosting self-esteem; extending network; diversifying life experience; widening horizons; achieving personal goals.
- 3.1.5 Build economic capacity / resilience – instilling new skills; raising aspirations; boosting confidence; offering volunteering opportunities.
- 3.1.6 Support local place-making – increasing availability of informal learning opportunities; diversifying leisure opportunities; changing perceptions of place; building better places.
- 3.1.7 Underpin civil society – developing discussion skills; extending debating experience; enabling informed decision-making and democratic participation.

3.2 To benefit researchers (including students as researchers) and research

We recognise that people within the university who are able to offer and/or benefit from delivering or supporting public engagement with research include staff and students, at all stages of their careers, and in all disciplines, as well as staff providing teaching and professional services, across the university. We aim for our public engagement to benefit research and researchers by:

- 3.2.1 Improving quality and range of research impact, increasing number and quality of REF impact case studies.
- 3.2.2 Increasing public awareness of research processes and outcomes and public support for research activity.
- 3.2.3 Engaging new research partners, including participants and collaborators beyond the university.
- 3.2.4 Diversifying academic perspectives - through exploring their work with different audiences, understanding its impact, understanding their audiences.
- 3.2.5 Developing transferable skills in researchers - such as communication, project management, partnerships.
- 3.2.6 Building self-esteem as researchers' work is more widely recognised and appreciated.
- 3.2.7 Boosting life/work satisfaction from fulfilling moral obligations to share research with wider publics.

3.3 To benefit the university

We recognise that engaging wider society effectively with the aims, processes and outcomes of research benefits universities in many ways. We aim for our public engagement to benefit the university by:

- 3.3.1 Increasing the actual and perceived relevance and benefit of our purposeful research to wider society.
- 3.3.2 Extending research networks and attracting and engaging new partners.
- 3.3.3 Enriching and diversifying student learning, skills development and work/volunteering experience.
- 3.3.4 Increasing the number and diversity of people connected to the university.
- 3.3.5 Helping fulfill the university's moral duty as a civic institution to support its region.
- 3.3.6 Increasing transparency and accountability by increasing public understanding of university business.
- 3.3.7 Enhancing our reputation as a university innovatively effective in engaging beneficially with wider society.

Our Strategic Framework for Public Engagement with Research

Principles: what we want from our public engagement	Activity: what we do	Outputs: what we achieve/monitor
<p>Be beneficial: The university benefits wider society through opportunities to engage effectively with the aims, processes and outcomes of research in ways which inform, involve, enrich, upskill and inspire.</p>	1. Provide a wide range of opportunities for wider publics to engage with research and knowledge from the University of Lincoln.	1. PER activities range in scale and scope including talks, demos, debates, participation. 2. Staff and students from all university schools deliver PER across arts, sciences and social sciences. 3. PER activity is growing year-on-year.
	2. Ensure information about public engagement opportunities reaches wider publics across and beyond target audiences.	4. UoL website advertises and reports PER activity. 5. PER-specific online presence advertises, reports and archives PER across all colleges. 6. UoL staff profile pages include PER information.
	3. Maximise the diversity and accessibility of public engagement from the University of Lincoln.	7. Diverse audiences include general publics, specialist societies, community groups, schools, charities etc. 8. Activities in different places, on and off campus including public venues, commercial sites, museums, schools and festivals. 9. Activities provide opportunities for dialogue in person and online. 10. People can contribute by participating or advising.
	4. Disseminate news and reports about our research to advertise its purpose/excellence & increase engagement.	11. Research of interest to publics is reported on university website. 12. Publicly engaged research is showcased in Annual Report.
<p>Be known: The university's commitment to public engagement is known, understood and appreciated internally and externally, across and beyond its city and region.</p>	5. Commit to public engagement in the University's Strategic Plans	13. PER is embedded in the University's Strategic Plan 2016-21 for impactful research and engaged people and in its 2019 Civic University Strategy.
	6. Maintain a robust strategic plan for public engagement underpinned by a strong business case	14. The University has a Public Engagement with Research Strategy formally endorsed by the Vice-Chancellor. 15. A dedicated PEARL public engagement unit supports PER activity across the university.
	7. Maintain a shared understanding amongst staff and students of the aims of PER at UoL	16. The Public Engagement with Research Strategy is available to all University staff / students. 17. An Annual Conference shares and promotes aims of Public Engagement at the University.
	8. Communicate externally the university's commitment to public engagement online and offline	18. The Public Engagement with Research Strategy is publicly available online. 19. The University's PER activities can be followed online and offline.
<p>Be ambitious: The university continuously extends and builds its capacity for devising, diversifying and delivering public engagement which</p>	9. Provide training in PER for staff and students to maximise the benefit accrued to wider publics, staff, students, research and the university.	20. CPD modules develop knowledge, skills and confidence in PER amongst staff and students. 21. Support for staff writing impact strategies into research proposals improves quality of bids
	10. Enable students to be involved in PER in ways that instil transferrable skills, extend experience and build confidence.	22. Students' Union facilitates student involvement. 23. Students assist with staff PER activities. 24. Training, advice and small grants given for students to develop and run their own PER activities 25. Student PER contributes to their Lincoln Award.
	11. Connect publicly engaged people across UoL to strengthen support networks, peer-to-peer learning, contact sharing and to stimulate innovation.	26. Monthly email updates raise awareness of PER people and activities within UoL. 27. Annual staff PER conference facilitates networking and provides opportunities for discussion.

<p>is both effective and innovative, in the present and for the future.</p>	<p>12. Extend and diversify purposeful public research networks beyond academia to increase impact and identify new opportunities.</p>	<p>28. PER involves a wide range of schools and colleges regionally, nationally and internationally. 29. A diverse range of businesses / institutions are engaged with university research. 30. A diverse range of special interest / community groups are connected with the university. 31. Research capacity in wider society is increased through participatory 'citizen' research.</p>
<p>Be supportive: The university maintains systems and processes supporting and recognising the work of staff and students involved in public engagement.</p>	<p>13. Fund staff time for PER</p>	<p>32. Each UoL staff member has the option to commit two working days per year to PER.</p>
	<p>14. Grants to support PER activity.</p>	<p>33. Annual cycle of PER grants for staff & PhD students. 34. Workshops on writing PER into research grant applications.</p>
	<p>15. Maintain systems to coordinate and connect PER activity to nurture peer-to-peer support networks.</p>	<p>35. Mailing lists of internal and external contacts. 36. Online calendar records/archives activities. 37. Tabs on staff profile pages record PER activity.</p>
	<p>16. Recognise and reward PER in recruitment, promotion and appraisal.</p>	<p>38. PER is included in staff appraisal systems which include exemplars in objectives libraries. 39. VC's Awards for PER made annually. 40. PER included in Lincoln Award for students.</p>
<p>Be reflective: The university is committed to knowing its publics and its locale, understanding the impact of its public engagement, and sharing this learning.</p>	<p>17. Evaluate PER activity at UoL in order to understand impact, improve quality and develop strengths.</p>	<p>41. Robust methods (qual and quant) are used to evaluate PER activities 42. CPD training includes evaluation methods 43. Data is available on the impact of PER activities.</p>
	<p>18. Know & understand audience impact, aspirations and motivations for engaging, so as to meet them better</p>	<p>44. Researchers explore why audiences engage or not. 45. A proactive approach is taken to developing new approaches to evaluating PER.</p>
	<p>19. Share best practice internally within the university to propagate participation and innovation.</p>	<p>46. Annual university PER conference showcases recent activity and presents new ideas. 47. Excellent PER published in Annual Report</p>
	<p>20. Champion and disseminate PER excellence outside the university, across the wider HEI sector and beyond.</p>	<p>48. Participation in external conferences, committees and consultations promotes best practice at UoL 49. UoL PER (aims, case studies, national / international comparisons, ethics, evaluation etc) are published in peer-reviewed journals. 50. Strong PE Impact Case Studies submitted to REF.</p>

4 Feasibility and accountability

Our **Public Engagement Framework** is ambitious but realistic, drawing on considerable experience across and beyond the university and the outcomes of a two-year pilot funded by RCUK/UKRI (2017-19). This aimed to join up much existing public engagement activity across the university and enhance the range, scope, effectiveness, visibility and accountability of this by introducing specific new structures.

Support for PER is now provided by a dedicated **PEARL** team, who advise individual initiatives, administer PER grants and awards, disseminate news and coordinate major national initiatives and well as Lincoln's highlight annual public engagement festival, *Lights*. PEARL sits administratively within the College of Arts but works across all university colleges, institutes and departments.

A **Steering Group** of members from across and beyond the university meets 3 times per annum to monitor PEARL and ensure the university's strategy for public engagement remains current and effective.