

## PER at UoB

Successful public engagement with research is vital to communicating the value of research, especially during challenging times where the public increasingly hold funders and universities to account. Part of our strategy is to ensure that engagement is beneficial for all: *for individual citizens, for society, for researchers and for the institution*; improving and demonstrating the quality, impact, social relevance and societal value of university research; attracting interest in and investment for future research; raising aspirations amongst young people and promoting careers in research

Our PER strategy is closely aligned with the University's 2015-2020 Strategic Framework. It was approved in 2016 by University Research Committee, chaired by Professor Tim Softley, Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research & Knowledge Transfer and also complements and integrates with other engagement agendas at the University, including Business, Culture, Community and Policy Engagement. Our aims were co-developed with input from researchers and Professional Services across our five Colleges and our thinking was also shaped by the guiding principles of public engagement set out by the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) and major research funders, in particular, Research Councils UK and Wellcome Trust.

We hope this document provides a useful guide for UoB Schools and Colleges to frame their own public engagement planning and prioritization, taking into consideration their own local context and resources. Importantly, rather than a 'top down' strategy guiding institutional action, the PER strategy has been developed to support 'bottom up' actions that empower individual researchers.

## Get Engaged

Find out more through our website or by contacting us directly:

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# Public Engagement with Research Strategy



## UoB Public Engagement Team

April 2018 Update

# Strategy

“Public engagement with research involves intentional, meaningful interactions which facilitate mutual learning between academics and members of the public. The ‘public’ may be the ‘general public’ or a discrete stakeholder group outside the University. Mutual learning may include the acquisition of specific knowledge as well as the development of familiarity with different perspectives and world-views.” – *UoB Definition*.

Our strategy is divided into three major objectives:

**1) To inspire researchers to explore and demonstrate the social relevance of their research**

**2) To provide researchers with resources to support high quality public engagement**

**3) To encourage researchers to develop interdisciplinary links with internal and external partners**

Against these key aims we have set a number of key deliverables:

**1) To inspire researchers by:**

- a. Supporting researchers to define and articulate the value and relevance of their research to society, helping to drive a responsive research agenda
- b. Improving capture, evaluation and communication of PER activity, developing quality indicators to help positively reward good practice, providing recognition and inspiring further activity
- c. Encouraging more staff to do PER and emboldening those already undertaking it to be more thoughtful, ambitious and creative
- d. Creating potential for more innovative, larger-scale and/or coordinated PER activities
- e. Continually promoting the University’s research and researchers
- f. Sharing experience, best practice and resources with partners, collaborators and more widely
- g. Helping to identify and support PER activities which will feed into impact case studies
- h. Enhancing patient & public involvement (PPI) provision through our close links with the PPI committee group

- h. Make significant contributions to the planning and delivery of high profile PER projects such as the redevelopment of 3 Centenary Square and the Green Heart
- i. Increase the quality of PER at UoB and therefore its perceived value through better training, visibility, monitoring and recognition of activity
- j. Work with the Impact agenda to get PER activity included in workload allocation models
- k. Increase support available for PER evaluation (including through the Engaged Researcher Training Programme), drawing on the expertise of two new Impact Evaluation posts (commencing Summer 2018)
- l. Inventory and consolidate resources with Cultural Engagement to maximize what is available, to whom and avoid overlap
- m. Increase PER admin capacity with addition of 0.6FTE support role
- n. PERC will continue to review and refresh its membership to ensure adequate representation across different engagements and relevant groups and different career stages, including external voices

**3) Encourage researchers to develop more partnerships:**

- a. Increase our visibility across the institution and to the public through better and more integrated use of communications and online resources
- b. Contribute to the research web working group and seek to embed PER in research pages
- c. Further integrate PER with other engagements e.g. in policy or business engagement when complex research ideas must be conveyed simply and quickly
- d. Strategically use PER activity to increase the attractiveness of studying, working and partnering with our researchers
- e. Inspire children and young people to study or interact with scholarly research
- f. Support a wide range of activity funded by different organisations to maximize our appeal to different groups and publics
- g. Build our audiences for the future through a programme of audience development work
- h. Increase opportunities for co-production and co-delivery of innovative and mutually beneficial PER projects with a range of partners
- i. Support externally-led partnership schemes such as NCCPE Communities and Universities Partnership Initiative (CUPI)
- j. Contribute to future RCUK and NCCPE [Pathways to Culture Change](#) public report(s)
- k. Identify opportunities to submit university-level responses to relevant Parliamentary evidence calls and inquiries
- l. Grow our standing, influence, researcher advocacy and representation of PER at UoB by contributing to relevant national schemes and conversations

# Goals

We are committed to further support, sustain and enhance PER at UoB and have therefore set ambitious new 3-year goals against our objectives for 2018-2021.

## 1) Further inspire researchers:

- a. Find new ways to involve researchers who are new to PER through training, visibility, but also via local events such as ECR/PGR groups
- b. Continue and expand the proactive consultation of and advocacy for our research community through an increase in PER Team capacity
- c. Develop ways to effectively monitor and record PER activity using PURE, ResearchFish or other data capture methods
- d. Expand our online material and contributions from others i.e. increasing Twitter takeovers
- e. Increase the number of researchers aware of and taking part in PER assessed through monitoring of biennial public engagement surveys
- f. Ask future recipients of internal PER funds to submit case studies to feature on our blog and social media channels
- g. Continue to inspire and share best practice through PER Days and grow our attendance and benefits for attendees
- h. Lobby for the creation of one or more high-profile PER awards
- i. Continue to support the PER Impact agenda through contributions to researcher guidance and toolkits. E.g. in Pathways to Impact and Ethics of Impact
- j. Continue to work with PPI teams to develop and enhance researchers skills in this area

## 2) Provide researchers with increased resources:

- a. Develop a PER Grant Writing Toolkit and improve signposting to guidance
- b. Support the development PER grants and relevant sections of research grants on applications worth in excess of £20,000,000 per annum
- c. Contribute a PER perspective to grant clinics or run standalone grant clinics
- d. Provide at least £45,000 of internal pump-priming to support exciting PE projects and seek match funding externally wherever possible
- e. Develop an integrated Engaged Researcher Training Programme, covering everything from basics to bespoke, in collaboration with colleagues across professional services
- f. Develop innovative, new training opportunities in response to our researchers' needs
- g. Recruit and train a new *Leading to Engage* cohort to deliver ambitious and interdisciplinary PER projects and become PER mentor

## 2) To provide researchers with resources by:

- a. Working with researchers and research support teams to strengthen research grant applications through more well-defined PER statements, providing direct support for PER-specific grants and highlighting coordinated calls for relevant activity
- b. Continuing to seek external PER funding to support strategic activities and providing direct seed funding to allow researchers to get started or carry out pilot projects
- c. Delivering PER training for researchers, including postgraduates, enhancing staff and student satisfaction and enhancing the attractiveness of Birmingham to study and work
- d. Running the *Leading to Engage* programme; building a community of engaged research leaders to champion public engagement at a senior level
- e. Sharing best practice internally and encouraging collaboration
- f. Bringing examples of good practice to the attention of peers and senior management to ensure that such efforts are recognized and rewarded as credible, research-relevant activity
- g. Assisting researchers to develop evaluation of public engagement, providing a basis for reflective practice and improvement
- h. Helping to provide equipment and administrative support for public engagement
- i. Periodically reviewing the membership of PERC to ensure effective coordination, development and delivery of its objectives

## 3) To encourage researchers to develop partnerships by:

- a. Contributing to the development of a community of engaged practice across the five Colleges, working with Business Engagement, Policy Engagement, Cultural Engagement, Outreach, and Marketing and Communications; thereby supporting the wider *Engagement for Influence* agenda and maximizing opportunities to grow external engagement, particularly within our local region
- b. Proactively liaising with research funders to help support their objectives in PER, to leverage their communication channels/networks, and enhance our institutional relationships
- c. Evaluating the success of public engagement with research within the University by coordinating with internal academic and Professional Services groups, other universities, Research Councils, charities and other national bodies committed to furthering the PER agenda
- d. Representing the University in relevant wider national activities and discussions. This will include response to requests for commentary and evidence from the University in this area

# Achievements

There has been significant progress against each of our objectives since the creation of PERC in 2012. Specifically since the creation of the PER Team in 2015 we have:

## 1) Inspired researchers:

- a. Ensured that the University of Birmingham was an early signatory of the NCCPE's Manifesto for Public Engagement
- b. Participated in the Engage Watermark assessment
- c. Actively listened and responded to our research community through surveys, focus groups, 1:1s, event feedback and informal 'Breakfast Brainstorm' drop-ins
- d. Maintained a website and blog (thinkpe.wordpress.com) which has a mailing list of over 600 and a Twitter account (@uobengage) with over 2,000 followers
- e. Compiled profiles of PE-active researchers
- f. Created a PER film to raise awareness and understanding of PER at UoB
- g. Delivered a PE module for the Postgraduate Advanced Research Methods (PGCARMS) course
- h. Raised the profile of PER at Birmingham through delivery of talks to staff and students at all levels from PGRs to Heads of College (e.g. The Bigger Picture)
- i. Held annual UoB Public Engagement with Research Days to connect and inspire researchers, foster collaboration, share best practice and develop skills
- j. Run competitions and awarded prizes for excellence in public engagement which have been presented by Professor Alice Roberts at annual PER Days
- k. Promoted the University's research and researchers through innovative collaborative projects such as Think Corner and Arts & Science Festival
- l. Provided support for the development of PER Impact Case Studies for REF
- m. Participated in PPI Working Group

## 2) Provided researchers with resources:

- a. Advised on and assisted in the writing of PER grants and research grants including the sector-changing ENCOMPASS project (worth over £80,000)
- b. Contributed to a successful bid for a prestigious Wellcome Trust ISSF award, which helps to support PER infrastructure worth around £500,000
- c. Provided seed funding for researchers to get started in PER worth over £20,000
- d. Given financial support worth over £15,000 to projects such as Pint of Science, TEDxBrum, Arts & Science Festival, Future Possibilities Lab, Trowelblazers etc
- e. Run a range of training and support programmes using both internal and external expertise developed in response to researcher requests and needs
- f. Devised and ran the Leading to Engage Training Programme for 16 mid-career researchers. Many of the cohort have gone on to become PER mentors

- g. Developed and run innovative schemes with Cultural Engagement (e.g. Worlds Collide) for artists and researchers to co-deliver activity
- h. Evidenced the need for and therefore successfully leveraged further operational posts to increase support and resource for PER
- i. Begun work facilitated by the NCCPE on defining good quality PER at UoB especially in relation to recognition and reward
- j. Lobbied for PER to be included in workload allocation models
- k. Provided introductory evaluation training for PER
- l. Procured a range of resources that are available for loan
- m. Provided admin support for PER-based activity
- n. Continually reviewed and refreshed PERC membership to include representation from external voices, teaching staff and outreach

## 3) Encouraged researchers to develop partnerships:

- a. Contributed to a number of Institution-wide projects and cross-College events e.g. STEM MarComms, Research Conference and PERCAT Symposiums
- b. Begun developing PER for policy engagement
- c. Supported engaged teaching in University of Birmingham School by leveraging £10,000 of internal funding for a schools research project
- d. Hosted funders as speakers at events including our annual PER Day including Wellcome Trust, Arts Council England, RCUK and Cancer Research UK
- e. Built close working relationships with key partners such as Birmingham Open Media (BOM) and theatre company, Curious Directive
- f. Supported new partnership schemes such as NCCPE Museums and Universities Partnership Initiative (MUPI)
- g. Delivered the STFC physical sciences engagement symposium, INTERACT 2017, in collaboration with STFC and other key funders
- h. Taken part in and presented at key engagement conferences and meetings such as ENGAGE and The BIG Event
- i. Contributed to the RCUK and NCCPE Pathways to Culture Change public report, the STFC Interact 2017 report and the Pop Up Science: A Practical Guide (led by Imperial College)
- j. Provided PER information for the RCUK Funding Assurance visit, HEBCIS and other activity
- k. Professor Alice Roberts personally contributed to the Parliamentary Select Committee for Science and Technology's inquiry into Science Communication (reported in March 2017)
- l. Consulted on PER hot topics such as the Genome Editing Public Engagement Synergy
- m. Professor Alice Roberts hosted the BSA Huxley Summit on Trust in 2016 and was invited to follow-up meeting convened by Lord David Willetts at the House of Lords
- n. Participated in national meetings and consultations on REF and public