

Strategic plan for Public Engagement with Research at the University of Leeds until 2020

Version 0.6

Vision

By 2020 all research projects at the University of Leeds will include an appropriate engagement activity.

Aims

We will create a culture for public engagement (PE) with research at the University

- that has institutional support for PE through a senior-level engagement champion
- that offers training and mentorship
- that values evaluation for continuous learning
- that celebrates outstanding performance in PE through awards
- that recognises quality PE within promotion criteria and workload models.

Objectives

To achieve these aims the PE team have three main objectives:

Support:

- Senior championship for engaged research is within the remit of the Deputy VC for Research & Innovation.
- Staff and students receive bespoke and general support by a dedicated PE team for planning, designing, marketing and costing PE activities including peer-review of research proposals containing PE activities.
- Develop costed models of PE for different kinds of research proposals, ranging from co-design at the proposal writing stage, through to PE with the outputs of research.
- The practitioner network pepnet is supported as a place to exchange and develop ideas for engagement, share best practice and distribute and embed knowledge in the institution.
- Develop a framework for effective evaluation of PE activities and embed this into practice across the University.
- Development of institutional engagement proposals.

People development:

- Development of PE-relevant training for Undergraduate, Postgraduate students and post-doctoral fellows and staff.
- Development of Engagement champions through coaching and mentoring, embedding knowledge and practice into the institution.
- Staff and students receive recognition for quality engagement with research by a dedicated award scheme and by including this activity into promotion criteria and workload models.

Communication:

- Organise high-profile events for the local and regional community, for example following on from Be Curious and continuing the Public Lecture Series.
- Maximise the promotion of public engagement events through effective communications.
- Promote the importance of PE through internal communication mechanisms (e.g. Reporter, Leadership Forum) and through embedding PE into our policies, procedures and practices.
- Improve the collection of PE activity data to establish an accurate picture of engagement activities across the institution, and to inform the HESA data return and REF impact.

Outcomes

- The quality and success rate of our proposals through earlier engagement with the public in the co-design of proposals is improved.
- The funding for public engagement within awarded research grants is increased by an average of 2% of the value of the grants, leading to an overall increase of £4m by 2020.
- The proportion of impact case studies submitted to the next REF that include impact through public engagement is raised to the sector average in REF2014 of 45% (Leeds was 38%);
- The profile of the University with the public is raised with through targeted activities that are integrated into our broader communications.
- Our relationship with local and regional communities is strengthened.

STAR framework for PE

PE at the University of Leeds is underpinned by the STAR framework providing the high-level aims for PE:

Social responsibility

We are open about the research that is taking place at our institution, we are embedded in societal evolution, we respond to and shape the external context in which we operate, we contribute to social mobility.

Trust

We strengthen the relationship between the University and wider community and secure trust in the research carried out at the University. We establish a reputation as an accessible and approachable institution, willing to listen to partner organisations and other audiences; this enhances partnerships and builds foundations for future relationships for engaged and impactful research.

Accountability

We are funded by public money and hence are accountable to the public. Working in partnership with other audiences in mutually benefitting ways makes sure the purpose and impact of our research are understood and valued by wider society.

Relevance

We ensure that research conducted is relevant to society's needs and has impact on society. Research outputs are easily accessible and widely used, innovation flourishes as new ideas and insights are exchanged and people see research careers as relevant and attractive.

What does public engagement with research mean at the University of Leeds?

Public engagement with research (PE) describes activities where members of staff engage with or involve audiences for the purpose of impactful research.

The engagement can happen at different stages of the research cycle: when developing research questions, when doing the research and when disseminating the research findings. We call this the engaged research cycle.

There are different forms of PE which are appropriate for different disciplines, different individuals and different audiences.

All forms are characterised by working with others in a respectful way generating mutual benefit, therefore adding value.

Who is the public?

By public we mean any group of individuals in the civic society of all ages, including local, national and international communities¹.

PE links to the University of Leeds strategic plan by:

- Contributing to more compelling research proposals, leading to an increase in success rates and research funding
- Raising the level of resource for public engagement requested in research proposals, leading to an increase in research funding
- Raising the quality and impact of our research, leading to improved performance in the next REF and in international league tables
- Raising the public profile of our research, leading to higher demand for our educational programmes, improving our ability to attract and retain the very best people to develop their academic and professional careers in Leeds, and improving our reputation with potential funders and policy makers in the public and private sectors
- Strengthening our relationship with local and regional communities.

¹ Within the University of Leeds, engagement activities aimed at children in school settings with the main purpose of student recruitment is defined as outreach and is the remit of Educational Engagement. Business and civic engagement is coordinated by other teams and we are about to introduce a pilot programme to step up our engagement with Whitehall and politicians. Our PE activity is complementing these activities.