

# Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research

## NCCPE briefing for supporters of researchers

### About this series

This is one of several briefing documents developed by the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) for stakeholders with a role to play in the implementation of the principles in the Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research. It should be read in conjunction with the Concordat itself, which constitutes the set of principles officially agreed to by signatories and supporters ([www.rcuk.ac.uk/per](http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/per)). The series draws on the learning from the Beacons for Public Engagement project initiative to provide guidance and practical tips which we hope will prove useful as your institution works to implement the principles. Of course, how the Concordat is implemented is the responsibility of individual organisations, but we hope that you find this briefing helpful.

The NCCPE's website hosts a wealth of additional resources to support managers and research staff to develop their public engagement activities and institutional strategies, complementing and deepening the advice offered here. In particular, we would draw your attention to our Manifesto for Public Engagement, which was launched in December 2010. By signing up to the manifesto, institutions can declare their strategic commitment to public engagement, and access additional support and guidance from the NCCPE: [www.publicengagement.ac.uk](http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk)

### The Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research

The Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research is a joint statement from Research Councils UK (RCUK), the Funding Councils, academies and research charities. It describes the expectations and responsibilities of research funders with respect to public engagement. Its goal is to increase the quality of public engagement by reducing barriers and rewarding the efforts of researchers. It seeks to avoid compulsion or the creation of additional burden.

The Concordat outlines four key principles:

- UK research organisations have a strategic commitment to public engagement.
- Researchers are recognised and valued for their involvement with public engagement activities.
- Researchers are enabled to participate in public engagement activities through appropriate training, support and opportunities.
- The signatories and supporters of this Concordat will undertake regular reviews of their and the wider research sector's progress in fostering public engagement across the UK.

This briefing takes each of the concordat's principles in turn, suggesting areas for consideration and providing a simple set of prompts to help you consider the implications for your work. Parallel briefings are provided for senior managers, managers of researchers and for researchers themselves. It provides links to the NCCPE's site, where much more in depth guidance, support and advice can be found, as well as information about events and networking opportunities.

## Strategic Commitment

### UK research organisations have a strategic commitment to public engagement

Public engagement thrives when there is strategic commitment 'from the top' of the institution. It is likely that you will be called upon to contribute to the wider strategic thinking about why public engagement matters to your institution, and to how it can best be supported. Your ideas about how to meet the Concordat challenges and your commitment to making things happen could make a real difference.

### Your challenge

Being informed about your institution's strategy for engaging with the public and where appropriate contributing your expertise and insight; being an effective advocate and champion for that strategy; maximising the opportunities to translate that strategy into operational support.

### Areas to consider

The NCCPE site contains much more information and support, including a self assessment tool and a range of case studies and exemplars showing how different institutions have tackled the key areas identified below.

Area of focus	Concordat principles	What you can do
<b>Developing a shared understanding of public engagement and its value</b>	Research organisations should hold an understanding and definition of public engagement, appropriate to their context, which is shared and used consistently across the organisation.	<p>Although it is impossible to expect to achieve a completely uniform understanding of public engagement, it is important that your institution opens up the debate: to develop a definition for public engagement and its value which can be used consistently, and which is based on a robust rationale for your engagement activity. It's worth taking time to get to grips with the topic – and to contribute to the debate!</p> <p>The NCCPE site includes a section dedicated to answering the question 'What is public engagement?':  <a href="http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/what">www.publicengagement.ac.uk/what</a></p> <p>Another explores 'Why public engagement matters':  <a href="http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/why-does-it-matter">www.publicengagement.ac.uk/why-does-it-matter</a></p>
<b>Strategic planning</b>	Public engagement should be embedded within research organisations' missions, key strategies and operational plans to help to provide focus, meaning, emphasis and support for public engagement. This may include an organisational public engagement strategy led at senior levels and communicated effectively (internally and externally).	This may take time, but your institution is likely to be seeking to incorporate public engagement in its official mission statement and in other relevant institutional strategies and operational plans, with success indicators identified. You should take time to find out what strategic commitment has been made, and how this is translated into operational plans relevant to your particular role: you will no doubt be able to make a very important contribution to how these plans are actually delivered.

Area of focus	Concordat principles	What you can do
<b>Leadership</b>	It is recognised that senior public engagement champions are essential in fostering public engagement throughout all researcher levels, and these individuals should be encouraged and supported by their research organisations.	Formal policies and statements of intent are important – but equally so are individuals who act as advocates and champions, and in the process positively influence the culture or the institution. Ideally, the Vice-Chancellor/ Principal will act as a champion for public engagement, as will research managers; but your role is critical too in demonstrating your commitment to your colleagues and the researchers you support. You can find out how other universities have developed their leadership around public engagement here: <a href="http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/leadership">www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/leadership</a>
<b>Communication</b>	The Concordat states that your public engagement strategy should be: communicated effectively (internally and externally).  It also recommends that: research organisations are encouraged to celebrate and communicate their researchers' successes in public engagement.	Communication helps bring engagement to life, and to create a positive climate for it to thrive. It is important to find ways to share and celebrate the engagement activities of the researchers you support – perhaps through including information in newsletters and publications.  You can find out more here: <a href="http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/communication">www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/communication</a>

## The strategic importance of public engagement

University College London (UCL), for instance, prides itself on being 'a modern, outward-looking institution, committed to engaging with the major issues of our times'. The University is currently developing a public engagement strategy, involving senior academics from across the institution.

*"Universities are very different places than they were even ten years ago, and their focus is much more outward-looking. The focus on dialogue, on exchange rather than simple knowledge transfer, which is the heart of true public engagement, is one of the greatest challenges for the modern university. It is also a significant opportunity for universities to reinvent themselves as a public good for the 21st century."*

**Professor Michael Worton,  
Vice-provost, UCL**

The University of Bristol has made its commitment to engagement explicit in its corporate plan. It has developed an 'Engaged University' strategy, and established a high level steering group to oversee the delivery of this.

*"Engagement with our publics is vital to modern researchers - it informs us about society and its hopes and fears for the work we do, and challenges us to improve the quality and impact of our research. To articulate the reasons why we do research and be reminded of the expectations that society has for us is both directly refreshing and beneficial - and for many is a very enjoyable, stimulating and rewarding experience."*

**Professor Guy Orpen,  
Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research),  
University of Bristol**

Find out more here:  
[www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change](http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change)

## Reward and Recognition

Researchers are recognised and valued for their involvement with public engagement activities.

Recognition and reward are key ways in which you can demonstrate to staff and students that your institution genuinely values public engagement. In many HEIs, staff and students feel they get little or no acknowledgment for the work they do around public engagement, evidenced for instance in the Royal Society's 2006 report 'Factors Affecting Science Communication: A Survey of Scientists and Engineers'. If people feel that their career prospects are not improved (or even sometimes jeopardised) by engaging with the public then many of them will choose not to. Small steps can make a big difference in terms of encouraging engagement enthusiasts and convincing novices to give public engagement a try.

### Your challenge

Ensuring recognition for engagement with the public is reflected in institutional Human Resources policies, and in more informal ways (e.g. through positive feedback in meetings, regular mentions in internal communications, or through establishing awards that celebrate success).

### Areas to consider

The NCCPE site contains a section offering practical guidance on this topic. You will find a self assessment tool, several case studies and exemplar policies / job descriptions etc. at:

[www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/recognition](http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/recognition)

Area of focus	Concordat principles	What you can do
<b>Embed support for public engagement in your staff policies and processes</b>	<p>Research organisations should consider whether public engagement is appropriately represented in staff policies and processes (such as for inductions, performance review, promotions criteria or workload planning) to allow researchers to be involved in public engagement activities without impairing their career.</p> <p>Those responsible for the implementation of such processes, including research managers and relevant supporters of researchers, should receive appropriate briefing and support.</p>	<p>Your institution should be considering whether public engagement is appropriately represented in staff policies and processes. You can make a significant contribution by working with senior management to instigate a review of current Human Resources policies and processes and developing a policy to ensure public engagement is recognised.</p> <p>You could encourage your institution/department/teams to promote public engagement activity by offering incentives. These could be as simple as small bursaries or secondments. Equally important is emphasising the valuable role public engagement can play in career progression, for instance through developing transferable skills.</p>
<b>Actively promote and celebrate public engagement activity</b>	<p>The benefits of public engagement to researchers should be clearly recognised and promoted at all stages of their career, including its valuable role in developing transferable skills.</p> <p>Research organisations are encouraged to celebrate and communicate their researchers' successes in public engagement.</p>	<p>It is important to celebrate the achievements of your researchers in public engagement. It may be that your institution decides to award prizes for public engagement in which case you could encourage your researchers to apply for these, or even instigate something similar within your department. However, you can also do small things to help e.g. regular mentions in internal communications, or by personal emails to staff, recognising their achievements. This can make a huge difference and is relatively easy to implement.</p>

## University of East Anglia (UEA) engagement awards

UEA and the Norwich Research Park have launched an Individual Engagement Award to acknowledge the remarkable contribution that staff and students at UEA have made to university public engagement, and to raise the profile of this area of work. The Awards are presented at UEA Congregation ceremonies and take the form of an ex-gratia payment. Whilst it was acknowledged that a financial reward is not the key incentive to getting involved in public engagement, this scheme formed part of an overall incentives package at the University which now includes staff promotions criteria.

One of the first winners was Dr Stephen Ashworth who has been actively involved with public engagement for the past ten years and is the Schools Liaison Officer for the local section of the Royal Society of Chemistry. He has worked with hundreds of local pupils of all ages; run regular

workshops for Women's Institute Groups on forensic and food science themes; developed a workshop for blind and partially sighted participants called 'Looking Glass Laboratory'.

*"The news of the award was a lovely surprise and I am honoured to be a recipient of one of the first individual engagement awards."*

### Dr Stephen Ashworth

Find out more about the award and about UEA's approach here:

**[www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/recognition](http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/recognition)**

Researchers can also be encouraged to apply for national awards, such as the Royal Society's Kohn Award for Excellence in Engaging the Public with Science:

**<http://royalsociety.org/Kohn-Award/>**



*The Butterfly Effect Project at the Norwich and Norfolk Sustainable Living Festival, organised by the CUE East Beacon. A giant map is used to elicit public input to UEA research into the future of the Norfolk Broads.*

**Keiron Tovell**

## Skills, Support and Opportunities

Researchers are enabled to participate in public engagement activities through appropriate training, support and opportunities.

Public engagement can bring great rewards – both for the university and for the public that its staff and students engage with. However, this mutual benefit can't be taken for granted: it relies on researchers developing new skills, understandings and expertise. Recently, this has been recognised by the launch of the Researcher Development Framework (RDF), “a tool for planning, promoting and supporting the personal, professional and career development of researchers in higher education” (Vitae, 2010). One of the four domains within the RDF is ‘Engagement, Influence and Impact’, recognising the critical role that engagement plays within a researcher’s career.

There are also strong synergies with the Concordat for the Career Development of Researchers. Supporting staff to engage effectively with the public can contribute to the development of transferable skills and lifelong learning.

### Your challenge

- Ensuring that researchers can access informal support and formal career development to advance their skills in public engagement; and that a range of opportunities to engage with the public are on offer.
- Developing a strategic approach to staff development that integrates the demands of the two concordats and the Researcher Development Framework.

### Areas to consider

Area of focus	Concordat principles	What you can do
<b>Providing co-ordination, support and infrastructure</b>	<p>Research organisations are encouraged to consider how public engagement is co-ordinated across the institution to enable the sharing of good practice and help ensure activities are consistent with the institution’s policy.</p> <p>Research organisations should seek to provide practical support for researchers to engage with the public, whether delivered at a departmental, institutional or regional level (e.g. through deployment of staff). This could include administrative support, expertise, advice, access to information on financial assistance and/or signposts to examples of good practice and potential partners.</p> <p>Research organisations should actively assess and manage potential institutional and personal risks associated with public engagement.</p>	<p>You can act as a catalyst to ensure that high quality, practical support for researchers is delivered effectively across the institution. The goal is to ensure that researchers can access advice, training and support, and to ensure that there is effective co-ordination of engagement activity, for instance through updating central web-based resources and supporting active networking.</p> <p>You can find out about a variety of support and co-ordination mechanisms here:  <a href="http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/support">www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/support</a></p>

Area of focus	Concordat principles	What you can do
<p><b>Providing opportunities for researchers to get involved in public engagement and for informal learning</b></p>	<p>Research managers should support and encourage the development of their teams' public engagement practice (e.g. through professional development and appropriate participation in public engagement activities).</p> <p>Researchers share the responsibility for developing their engagement practice and are encouraged pro-actively to engage in appropriate professional development.</p> <p>Research organisations should facilitate opportunities for researchers to engage with the public.</p>	<p>For many researchers a big barrier to engaging with the public is knowing how to get started. Again, you can make a real difference by actively facilitating and communicating opportunities to get involved (e.g. through schemes like 'Researchers in Residence', or an departmental events programme), and working with research managers to invest in a variety of practical support measures (e.g. brokerage; bursaries; fellowships; secondments). You can find out about a variety of support and co-ordination mechanisms here:</p> <p><a href="http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/support">www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/support</a></p> <p>Learning informally from colleagues and sharing public engagement experience is very valuable. Actively bringing together people from across your department (and the wider institution) with an interest in public engagement, and helping them to access and share relevant information can build a sense of community and lead to new partnerships and collaborations that significantly improve the quality of public engagement activities. You can find out about ways of supporting informal learning here</p> <p><a href="http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/support">www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/support</a></p>
<p><b>Building formal support into CPD programmes</b></p>	<p>Research organisations are conscious of the attributes required for public engagement, recognising that such attributes are a subset of the skills, behaviours and personal qualities that researchers should be aspiring towards in their professional development (as outlined in the Researcher Development Statement and relevant professional qualifications).</p> <p>Research organisations recognise the importance of professional development in public engagement for researchers and provide access to relevant training and development opportunities (for example by integrating public engagement attributes into institutional professional development plans), ensuring that a lack of skills is not a barrier to engagement.</p>	<p>The attributes needed for public engagement are a subset of those skills, behaviours and personal qualities that researchers should be aspiring towards in their professional development (see the Researcher Development Statement). You can help by supporting the inclusion of public engagement within your institution's professional development programmes and/or signposting researchers to external provision. Reviewing the skills and aptitudes you want staff to develop and ensuring there are opportunities for them to access quality training and development in these areas is critical. This will involve building partnerships across the institution between Human Resources and CPD specialists, administrators and managers of researchers and probably the development of a training and development strategy.</p> <p>The NCCPE site contains a section dedicated to advice about how to support learning and CPD internally:</p> <p><a href="http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/learning">www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/learning</a></p> <p>It also lists current external training courses:</p> <p><a href="http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/how/training">www.publicengagement.ac.uk/how/training</a></p>

## Supporting early career researchers to develop their public engagement skills

The Manchester Beacon and the Vitae North West Hub are working together on a programme of public engagement support for early career researchers across the North West. This was kicked off with a mini conference at Manchester Metropolitan University. At the workshop, experts shared their knowledge and experience whilst delegates attended practical workshops based on three levels of public engagement experience – beginners, developers and advanced. As part of the programme, the Manchester Beacon launched and awarded Early Career Researcher Awards to five pilot projects to create opportunities for early career researchers to communicate their research and develop supportive partnerships with experienced public engagement providers. To foster these new partnerships, a Public Engagement Opportunities Zone was hosted at the conference. A showcase event was held

during the Manchester Beacon Summit Week in November 2010 to celebrate and share the learning from these projects.

*"I met inspiring people that inspired me to broaden my public engagement activities."*

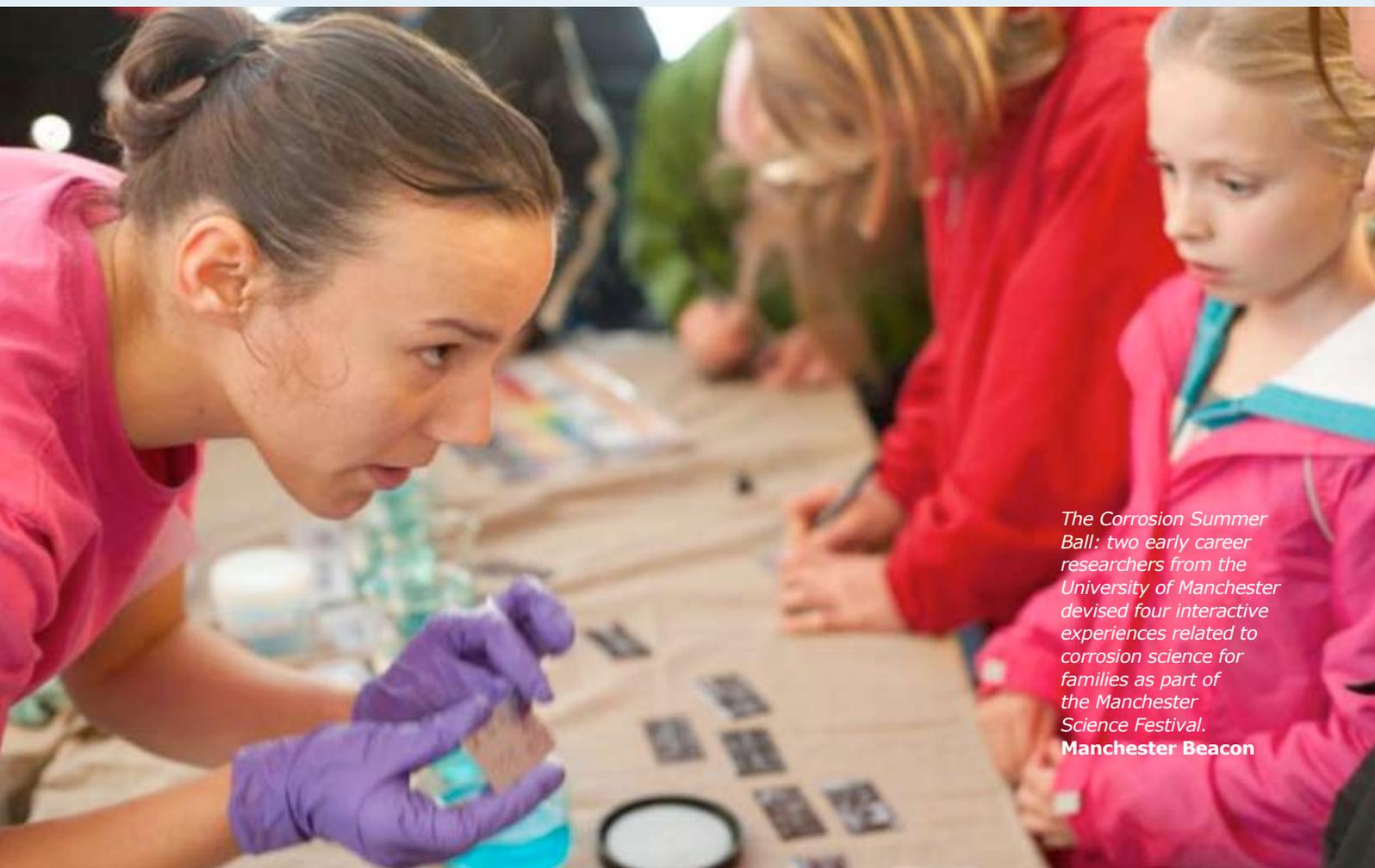
### Conference delegate

*"I felt it gave me renewed vigour and passion for my PhD particularly in relation to my dedication to working with members of the community on research projects."*

### Conference delegate

You can find out more about similar projects here:

**[www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/learning](http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/learning)**



*The Corrosion Summer Ball: two early career researchers from the University of Manchester devised four interactive experiences related to corrosion science for families as part of the Manchester Science Festival.*  
**Manchester Beacon**

## Implementation and Impact

The signatories and supporters of this Concordat will undertake regular reviews of their and the wider research sector’s progress in fostering public engagement across the UK.

The signatories to the Concordat are not seeking to establish further reporting structures to monitor ‘compliance’. Their expectation is that existing reporting requirements will be adequate.

### Your challenge

- Being able to articulate the outcomes and impact of the engagement activity underway in your department.
- Ensuring that mechanisms are in place to allow you to monitor the effectiveness of your department’s support for engagement, and the extent to which you are meeting the principles of the Concordat.

### Areas to consider

Area of focus	Concordat principles	What you can do
<b>Supporting staff to evaluate their own engagement activities and monitoring how well your research ‘environment’ supports researchers to engage effectively</b>	Research organisations should themselves monitor and evaluate the efficacy of the public engagement they support in addressing their strategic aims and the extent to which they are meeting the expectations outlined in this Concordat. This could include seeking feedback from staff, students and the public.	<p>There are two key challenges here. One is to ensure that your staff are supported to evaluate their own engagement activity, to enhance its quality and impact. The NCCPE site contains links to a variety of practical evaluation guides, including RCUK’s Practical Guidelines to Evaluation: <a href="http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/how/guides/introduction-evaluation">www.publicengagement.ac.uk/how/guides/introduction-evaluation</a></p> <p>Institutions are expected to also consider the extent to which the expectations of the Concordat are being met. Working with your departmental managers and senior team to periodically review your strategic and operational support for engagement will therefore be critical to meeting the funders’ expectations. Again, the NCCPE site can provide examples of how other institutions have achieved this: <a href="http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/support/evaluation">www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/support/evaluation</a></p>
<b>Sharing effective practice in public engagement with other research organisations</b>	Research organisations should work together to develop and share good practice in public engagement and in the implementation of the Concordat.	<p>You can encourage your researchers to share their expertise in public engagement both within and outside the institution. The NCCPE provides several mechanisms to support this such as the NCCPE national network or ambassadors’ scheme.</p> <p>It is also important to consider how you might interact with colleagues both across the organisation and in other institutions to share experiences in supporting public engagements and implementing this Concordat.</p> <p>The NCCPE are also very keen to publish case studies from different institutions. You can find out more here: <a href="http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/how-we-help">www.publicengagement.ac.uk/how-we-help</a></p>



*Geographer Jason Dittmer speaks at Bright Club, UCL's variety night, where researchers perform stand-up comedy about their work.*

**Hilary Jackson**

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## Other briefings to support the Concordat for engaging the public with research

You can also access the following individual briefings and guidance on implementing the Concordat from the NCCPE site:

- An introduction and overview
- Senior manager briefing
- Researcher briefing
- Managers of researchers briefing

You can download these briefings at: [www.publicengagement.ac.uk/concordat](http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/concordat)

## Beacons for Public Engagement

Funded by the UK Higher Education Funding Councils, Research Councils UK and the Wellcome Trust, the Beacons for Public Engagement initiative aims to inspire a culture change in how universities and research institutes engage with the public.

It consists of:

- the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE), which co-ordinates, captures and shares learning between the Beacons and across UK higher education institutions and research institutes;
- six Beacons, university-based collaborative centres that help support, recognise, reward and build capacity for public engagement work. The six Beacons are based in Newcastle and Durham; Manchester; CUE East UEA; UCL; Wales; and Edinburgh.

## Other NCCPE Resources

The NCCPE provides a 'one stop shop' for anyone in the university and research sector with an interest in public engagement. Set up in 2008 as part of the Beacons for Public Engagement initiative, our focus is on supporting university staff and researchers to develop their skills in engagement, and to assist senior managers to develop strategic approaches to supporting public engagement.

Our website provides:

- Advice on public engagement practice: an extensive collection of guides and case studies [www.publicengagement.ac.uk/how](http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/how)
- Context: exploring what public engagement involves and why it matters [www.publicengagement.ac.uk/what](http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/what) and [www.publicengagement.ac.uk/why-does-it-matter](http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/why-does-it-matter)
- Resources for managers: an extensive collection of resources to help institutions assess their own strategic and practical support for engagement, and a rich array of case studies and tools developed from the work of the Beacons and other institutions [www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support](http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support)
- The Manifesto for Public Engagement: by signing up to the manifesto, institutions can declare their strategic commitment to the Concordat principles, and access additional support and guidance from the NCCPE [www.publicengagement.ac.uk/why-does-it-matter/manifesto](http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/why-does-it-matter/manifesto)

## Other Useful Links

- Research Councils UK: Public Engagement with Research [www.rcuk.ac.uk/per](http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/per)
- Researcher Development Framework [www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice/234381/RDF-overview.html](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice/234381/RDF-overview.html)
- The Engaging Researcher booklet [www.vitae.ac.uk/CMS/files/upload/The\\_engaging\\_researcher\\_2010.pdf](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/CMS/files/upload/The_engaging_researcher_2010.pdf)