

Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research

NCCPE briefing for senior managers

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). 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

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 supporters of researchers, 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

Senior managers in universities and research institutes play a critical role in creating the conditions within which public engagement can thrive. When leaders champion public engagement and its contribution to the institution’s wider mission, and then express that commitment in strategic and operational planning, they create a climate within which engagement can flourish.

The challenge

The key challenge is to clarify why engaging with the public matters to your institution, and then to ensure that this sense of purpose is reflected in your institution’s mission and strategic plans. Communicating this commitment is crucial, and is greatly helped by building up a network of individuals – at all levels – who actively champion engaging with the public across the organisation, starting at the top.

Areas to consider

Signing up to the NCCPE’s Manifesto for Public Engagement is an opportunity to publicly declare your strategic commitment to public engagement, and to link up your work with other institutions that have made a similar commitment.

www.publicengagement.ac.uk/why-does-it-matter/manifesto

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

Area of focus	Concordat principles	What you can do
Developing a shared understanding of Public Engagement and its value	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 to invest time in opening 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.</p> <p>The NCCPE site includes a section dedicated to answering the question ‘What is public engagement?’: www.publicengagement.ac.uk/what</p> <p>Another explores ‘Why Public Engagement Matters’: www.publicengagement.ac.uk/why-does-it-matter</p>
Strategic planning	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).	<p>This may take time, but it makes a critical difference if your commitment to public engagement is reflected in your institution’s official mission statement and in other relevant institutional strategies, with success indicators identified. Developing a strategic plan specifically focused on advancing public engagement, which includes viable short-term and long-term goals, helps ensure that the commitment is followed through.</p> <p>The NCCPE site provides guidance on how different universities have tackled this area: www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/mission</p>

Area of focus	Concordat principles	What you can do
Leadership	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.	You might identify a senior leader with formal responsibility; encourage other senior leaders to informally champion public engagement; and support a wider network of champions and enthusiasts at all levels of the institution. You can find out how other universities have developed their leadership around public engagement here: www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/leadership
Communication	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.	Your institution should have a high quality web presence and may wish to consider engaging with the public through new media. How visible your commitment to public engagement is in internal and external communications is also important. Ensuring that your public engagement activity features regularly across your communications contributes significantly to the creation of a positive climate. You can find out more here: www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/communication

The strategic importance of public engagement

Many universities now have a commitment to engagement embedded in their corporate strategies. 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

Reward and Recognition

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

Recognition and reward is a key way 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.

The challenge

Ensuring recognition for engagement with the public is reflected in institutional HR 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 to this topic. You will find a self assessment tool, several case studies and exemplar policies and job descriptions at www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/recognition

Area of focus	Concordat principles	What you can do
<p>Embed support for public engagement in your staff policies and processes</p>	<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>The NCCPE site provides examples of how universities have reviewed their appraisal processes and developed policies to ensure public engagement is recognised in relevant role reviews. It's not enough just to change the paperwork - staff will need to be supported to implement this, for instance through developing a good understanding of the skills and aptitudes required for engagement (see the next section for more about this). You can also seek to ensure that public engagement is a legitimate activity in workload planning.</p> <p>Your institution could conduct a systematic review of role profiles and integrate public engagement into relevant roles. Public engagement could be an explicit part of the promotions criteria at your institution, and recognised as a legitimate career pathway – with relevant staff provided with appropriate briefing and support to implement this. The involvement of your human resources staff will of course be critical in effecting these changes, and they can access case studies, exemplar policies and guidance here: www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/recognition</p>

Area of focus	Concordat principles	What you can do
<p>Actively promote and celebrate public engagement activity</p>	<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>Your university could celebrate public engagement with high profile awards, to emphasise the importance that is given to public engagement within the institution. This can have a big impact and is relatively easy to implement. Small bursaries or seed funding can also generate enthusiasm and catalyse innovation and new collaborations.</p> <p>There are also lots of other more informal ways that you can signal your support, for instance through regular mentions in internal communications, or by personal emails to staff, recognising their achievements.</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

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/>

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. But 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 is a key way in which institutions can increase the attractiveness of research careers, and 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
<p>Providing co-ordination</p>	<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>Learning informally from colleagues and sharing public engagement experience is very valuable for researchers. There are likely to be multiple strands of activity across the institution. Some form of co-ordination and support for networking can greatly enhance the sharing of learning and expertise and therefore enhance the quality of future activities, as well as ensuring efficiency and that activities are consistent with any institutional public engagement policies. Find out more here about how the beacons have gone about providing such co-ordination: www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/support</p>

Area of focus	Concordat principles	What you can do
<p>Practical support and infrastructure</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 (supporters of research)). 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>Many universities and research institutes now have a small core team of public engagement experts, who provide advice, training and support (e.g. in writing funding bids, or by brokering partnerships with external organisations), and who help to build capacity across the organisation for instance through organising training or internal skills-sharing events.</p> <p>Others have included support for public engagement into the remit of staff with wider responsibilities, for instance for Knowledge Exchange.</p> <p>www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/learning</p>
<p>Providing opportunities for researchers to get involved in public engagement and for informal learning</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 institutional events programme), and investing 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: www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/support</p> <p>You may also want to consider providing central web-pages listing for public engagement opportunities and systems for staff to set and track their own goals and link these to the institution's appraisal process etc. You can find out about ways of supporting informal learning here: www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/learning</p>
<p>Building formal support into CPD programmes</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>Involvement of your HR and training and development staff is critical here, to enable you to embed support for public engagement within your institution's professional development programmes.</p> <p>A key starting point is to review the actual skills and aptitudes involved in effective public engagement, and to map how these are currently supported through your CPD. It's likely that you already run many relevant courses, but there may be gaps too. The NCCPE site contains a section dedicated to advice about how to support learning and CPD, with case studies drawn from the Beacon universities: www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/learning</p> <p>It also lists current external training courses: www.publicengagement.ac.uk/how/training</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 four 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."

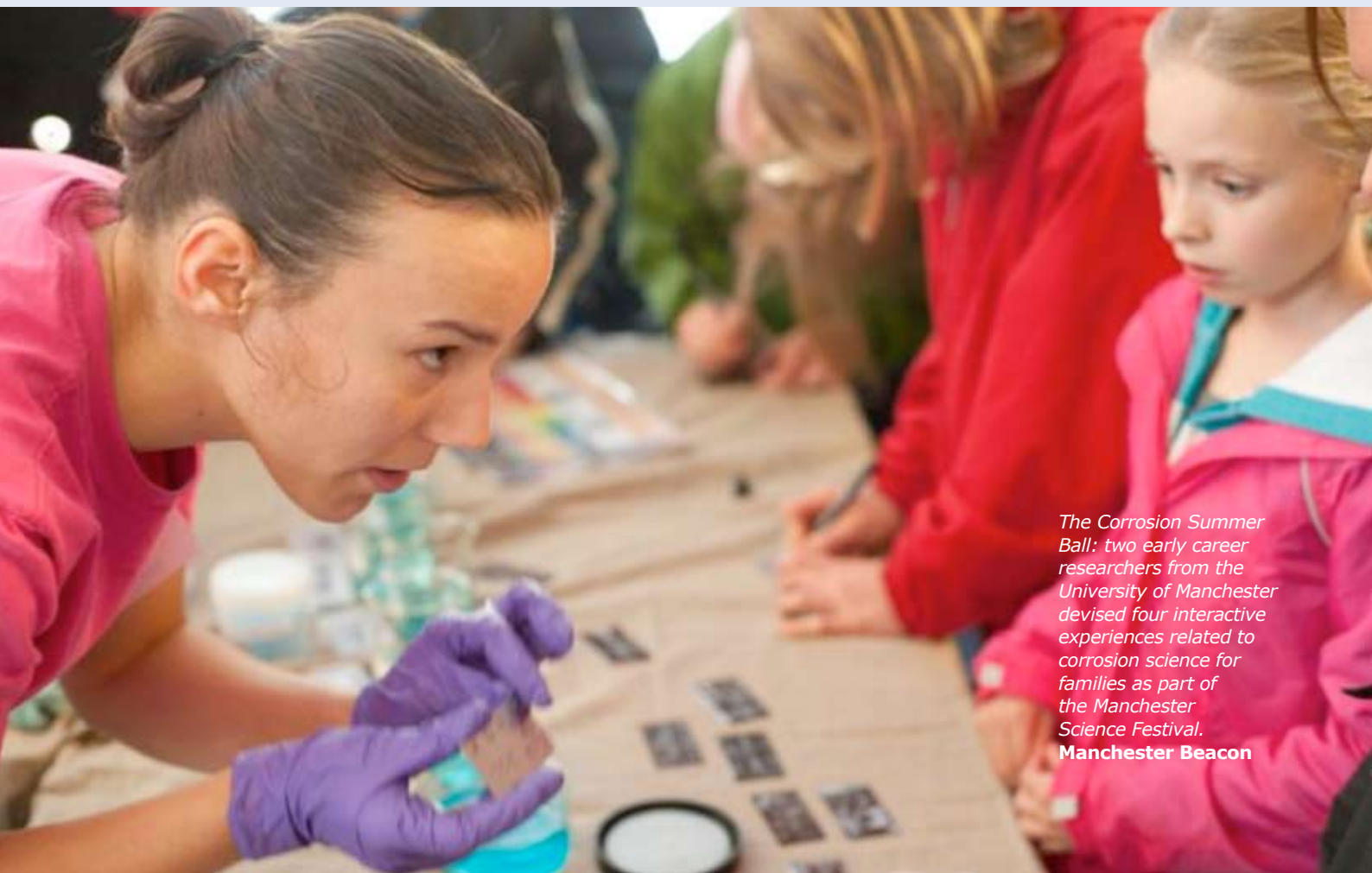
Conference delegate

"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.

The challenge

- Being able to articulate the outcomes and impact of the engagement activity underway in your institution.
- Ensuring that mechanisms are in place to allow you to monitor the effectiveness of your institutional 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
Supporting staff to evaluate their own engagement activities and monitoring how well your research ‘environment’ supports researchers to engage effectively	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 themselves 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: www.publicengagement.ac.uk/how/guides/introduction-evaluation</p> <p>The other challenge is to monitor how effectively the environment of your department supports public engagement. The NCCPE site contains a range of practical examples to show how different institutions have gone about evaluating their engagement activities: www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/support/evaluation</p>
Sharing effective practice in public engagement with other research organisations	Research organisations should work together to develop and share good practice in public engagement and in the implementation of the Concordat.	<p>Signing up to the NCCPE’s Manifesto for Public Engagement is an opportunity to publicly declare your strategic commitment to public engagement, and to link up your work with other institutions that have made a similar commitment.</p> <p>The NCCPE also supports a network of public engagement champions across the sector, and provides a route to sharing case studies, resources and expertise with others. Please get in touch to find out more: nccpe.enquiries@uwe.ac.uk</p>



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

Hilary Jackson

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



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; 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
- Context: exploring what public engagement involves and why it matters www.publicengagement.ac.uk/what and 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
- 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

Other Useful Links

- Research Councils UK: Public Engagement with Research www.rcuk.ac.uk/per
- Researcher Development Framework 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