

# Supporting public engagement with research University of Edinburgh statement

Agreed by Research Strategy Group March 2021

Our [Strategy 2030](#) vision for the University is for *our graduates and the knowledge we discover with our partners to make the world a better place*; that we will achieve this through a *values led approach* and through the *strength of our relationships both locally and globally*. Our values include *listening, inclusivity, accessibility, and respectfulness*, in our aim to achieve *excellence and impact of our research*. The [Community Plan](#) sets out the different ways we want to engage and involve our local stakeholders in our work across widening participation, festivals and cultural engagement, and knowledge exchange. As a research intensive university, public engagement with research is at the heart of this.

## Vision for supporting Public Engagement

Our vision is to create a research community where public engagement is valued as an integral part of research activity, where researchers are supported to develop their approaches and have the skills to deliver successful engagement. We will build a community that works with external groups and organisations to shape research and innovation that is responsive to the needs of society, develops relationships that enhance public trust in research and innovation, and maximises the opportunities for the public to benefit from our world leading research.

This means providing more people with more opportunities to engage in our research. It also means working in ways that generate mutual benefit for our staff, students and wider society. This includes not only informing the public about research findings, but also engaging in a multiway conversation that shapes our research through consultation and/or collaboration as the purpose of the engagement dictates.

## Our understanding of Public Engagement with Research

Public Engagement with Research (PER) describes the many ways we can share research with audiences beyond the academy and listen in response. It is a two-way process that enables change and has mutual benefit. High-quality engagement enhances the impact of research.

PER may involve direct engagement with citizens e.g. through events, consultations and collaborative activities. This often takes place through partnerships with other organisations including advocacy groups, service providers and cultural organisations. We may also include engagement with policy under the banner of public engagement. All engagement requires clear communication and consideration about who we engage, why and for what mutual benefits.

## Why Public Engagement is important

We have a duty as a publicly funded institution to ensure our research is relevant to society and is shared widely. Public engagement builds relationships that enhance trust, which is important for uptake and impact of research, and is crucial in order to sustain trust in public funding of the sector.

With research funding increasingly focussed on engagement and impact we need to ensure our researchers have the capacity to develop collaborations for mutual benefit. Public Engagement enriches research by adopting new perspectives into the research. By engaging, researchers develop

communication skills that benefit academic writing, teaching, and engagement with industry and professional stakeholders. There can also be impacts on research plans, with researchers responding to perspectives shared by the people they engage.

## Support structure

The public engagement team based in Edinburgh Research Office connects and coordinates the wider support throughout the university by

- providing leadership and coordination for communities of practice
- creating University wide platforms for engagement
- delivering training and development
- embedding public engagement in research culture and management.

We work in partnership with the College leads for public engagement, who along with colleagues in Schools, Institutes and Centres provide direct support to researchers. We will endeavour for all local research offices to have overview of and to be able to signpost to central resources as well as the specific services available to researchers in their areas. We will also work for this to be included in academic and research staff inductions.

To ensure connection to the wider community we have the following regular meetings:

- Monthly with leads in the Colleges of Science and Engineering, Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, and Medicine and Veterinary Medicine, to ensure priorities and activities are joined up.
- 6 monthly meeting with College Leads and Community Engagement colleagues in Social Responsibility & Sustainability (SRS) and Communications & Marketing (CAM) to ensure link with Community Plan.
- All colleagues with support for public engagement as part of their remit are invited to meet 3-4 times a year in the Edinburgh Public Engagement Forum.

We service the Research Engagement sub-group to the University's Research Strategy Group. This group is chaired by Deputy Vice Principal for Research Michael Rovatsos, and consists of academic and professional services colleagues from across the three Colleges and relevant sub-units promoting engagement with research.

For more information about support for public engagement with research at the University of Edinburgh please contact [ERO-publicengagement@ed.ac.uk](mailto:ERO-publicengagement@ed.ac.uk).