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An Open Research University

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The Open University

An Open Research University

The Open University's Public Engagement with Research Catalyst Team[1]
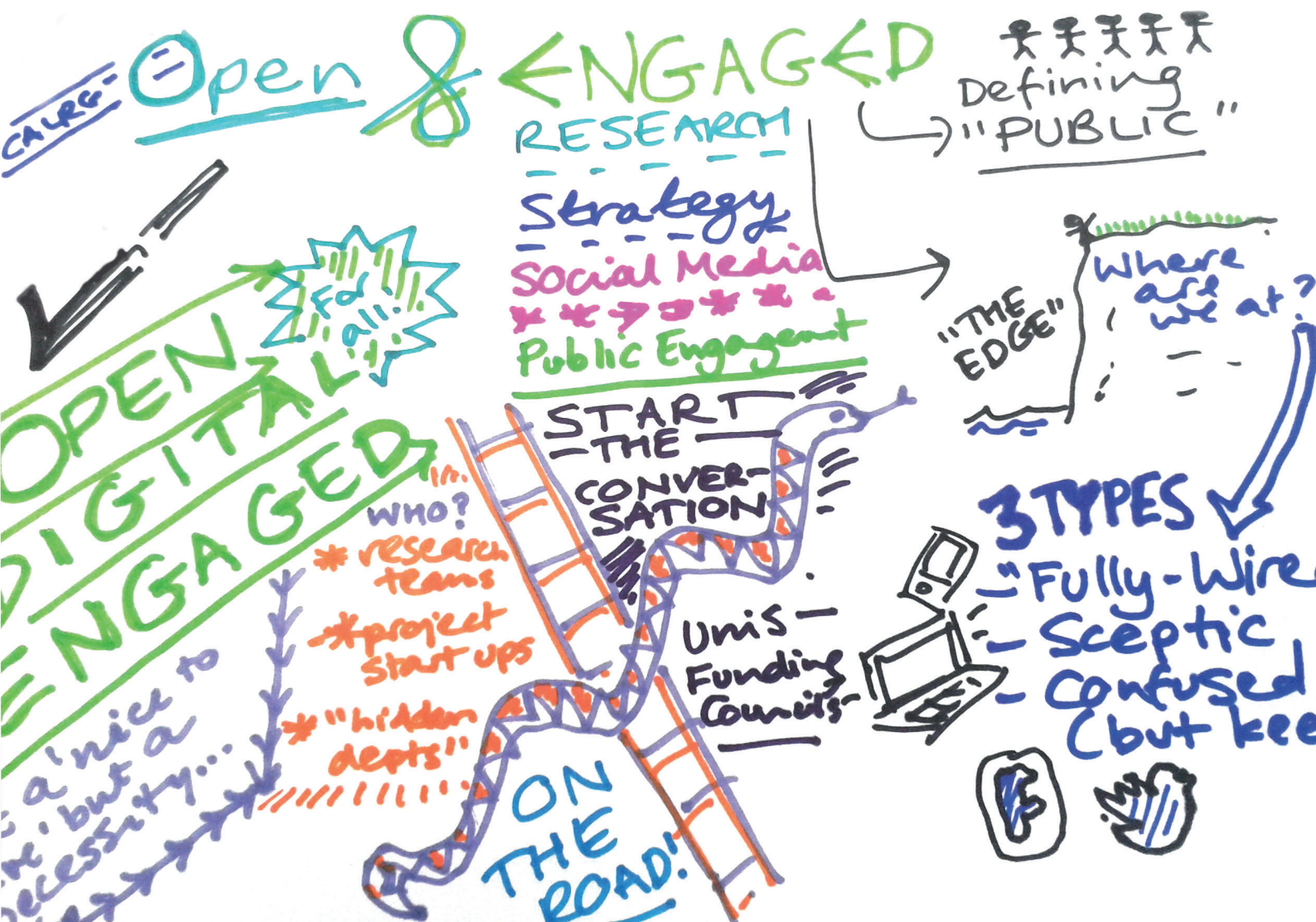
Anne Adams, Tim Blackman, Trevor Collins, Gareth Davies, Ann Grand, Richard Holliman, Richard Holti, Fiona McKerlie, Nick Mahony, Eileen Scanlon, Hilde Stephansen.

Advisory Board

Rosemary Bechler, openDemocracy.net; Nicky Buckley, University of Cambridge; Robin Durie, University of Exeter; Paul Manners, NCCPE; Judith Nichol, BBC; Nigel Winser, EarthWatch Institute.

Significant contributors

Alan Bassindale, Meg Barker, Martin Bean, Anthony Beck, Frazer Bird, Julie Bounford, Stuart Brown, Gill Clough, Emily Dawson, Peter Devine, Sally Dibb, Helen Donelan, Sophie Duncan, Keri Facer, Dorothy Faulkner, Helen Featherstone, Beverley Gibbs, Gerard Giorgi-Coll, Christothea Herodotou, Clem Herman, Lucian Hudson, Jef Huysmans, Allan Jones, Kerry Leslie, Mary Kellet, Karen Littleton, Natalia Kucirkova, Nigel Mason, Patrick McAndrew, Encarni Montoya, Hélène Murphy, John Oates, Erinma Ochu, Clare Warren.

Engaging Research Award Winners

2014 Winners

Jacqui Gabb and Janet Fink, Christothea Herodotou, Natalia Kucirkova, John Maiden, David Gowing, Joe Smith.

2014 Highly Commended

Peter Wood.

2015 Winners

Martin Weller, Rosa Hoekstra, Katy Jordan.

2015 Highly Commended

Elton Barker, Cindy Kerawalla, Saskia van Manen, Graham Pike, Paul Stenner, Verina Waights.

Contents

Trevor Collins presenting at the OU-hosted PER Catalyst workshop. Bedford, Autumn 2014

Preface

This is the final report of The Open University's RCUK-funded Public Engagement with Research Catalyst, 'An open research university' (EP/J020087/1). The project ran over three years (2012-2015) and involved academic staff and professional services from across the large, complex organisation that is The Open University. The report has been written by a number of key contributors to the project. The different voices of these authors represent some of the diversity in how engaged research is being conceptualised in different academic domains at The Open University.

Involving these 11 authors in co-producing this report is indicative of our approach to culture change. One of the main challenges we encountered on our project was identifying shared language to connect with different researchers and diverse publics. Rather than impose solutions, we sought to offer advice and a supportive framework where researchers and their publics could define engagement on their terms; in other words to offer consistency within diversity (Holliman, Featherstone and Frost, 2015).

The report is split into different sections, beginning with an overview of our achievements and our approach to change in the context of significant changes across the HE sector, both in terms of research and teaching. This is followed by a

number of Stories of Change, which document specific interventions we have introduced in more detail. Each Story of Change is self-contained, including a summary of lessons learned and any resources. The project concludes with a number of shorter sections, exploring: lessons learned; partnerships; planning for sustainability; impact; and a series of conclusions and recommendations for universities starting a process of organisational change. It follows that the report can be read sequentially or by selecting particular sections.

On a personal note, I am hugely grateful to a large number of Open University (OU) staff for their contributions to our Public Engagement with Research Catalyst, also to our Advisory Board, and to the other seven Catalyst universities. We have acknowledged as many of these contributors as our failing memories could recall toward the start and end of this report. Closer to home, I would like to thank Trevor Collins, Fiona McKerlie and Tim Blackman from the OU, Paul Manners and Sophie Duncan from the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement, and, always, Jane Perrone. When things got difficult, and of course they did, you were the people I turned to for advice.

Richard Holliman

Executive Summary

The Open University's Public Engagement with Research Catalyst, 'An open research university', proposed a three-year (2012-2015) evidence-based strategy designed to embed engaged research within the University's strategic planning for research and the operational practices of researchers.

Aims

The overarching aims of our project were:

> To work with Open University researchers at all levels to create the conditions where engaged research can flourish.

> To raise the profile of The Open University's international reputation for excellence in engaged research.

Evidence-based change

Our approach to organisational change was informed by action research. We worked collaboratively with researchers across the institution to identify and implement strategies that work for them and the stakeholders, user communities and members of the public that engage with their research. We have used evidence to inform the interventions we introduced, then studying the outcomes of these interventions to direct further research questions.

Understanding culture to change culture

Our project has extended The Open University's international reputation for open learning. Building on this existing culture of excellence, allied with the University's strengths in collaboration and multi-disciplinary working, we have developed and implemented a successful strategy for engaged research that extends our commitment beyond open learning, changing the culture of our research, and aligning this with our mission to be 'open to people, places, methods and ideas'.

Sustainability

Over the three years of The Open University's Public Engagement with Research Catalyst we have galvanised change, laying the foundations for an embedded and strategically-informed culture of reflective practice. These foundations need to be built on. There is still much to be achieved within the Open University to genuinely embed the progressive practices of engaged research in ways that are sustainable beyond a hard core of enthusiasts. We address these issues towards the end of this report in the section on sustainability.

There are also difficult sector-wide questions that have yet to be fully addressed. Putting people at the centre of a culture of open and engaged research in meaningful ways raises questions of ownership, ethics, transparency and responsibility. Funding is required to further develop the evidence base to address these important issues.

Engagement can enhance the quality of research and improve the social and economic significance of the resulting impacts. But many researchers are still struggling to make sense of this agenda. There is still a battle for open and engaged research to be won. It is fought each time a researcher starts to plan their pathways to impact, and the winners are declared in panel meetings and with the awarding of external funding. For a culture of engaged research to be sustainable in the medium to long-term requires ongoing recognition and acceptance of its progressive value(s) by researchers, universities, funders, and ultimately, policy-makers.

Key Highlights

The Open University's Public Engagement with Research (PER) Catalyst, 'An open research university', proposed an ambitious set of aims and objectives for our three-year project. In this section Richard Holliman, The Open University's Champion for Public Engagement with Research between 2012 and 2015, outlines a number of key highlights from the project.

Restating a strategic commitment to engaged research

In 2012 The Open University (OU) became a signatory to the NCCPE's Manifesto for Public Engagement (NCCPE, 2010a). More recently, our Research Committee endorsed a university-wide definition of engaged research.

THE ENGAGED UNIVERSITY
A manifesto for public engagement
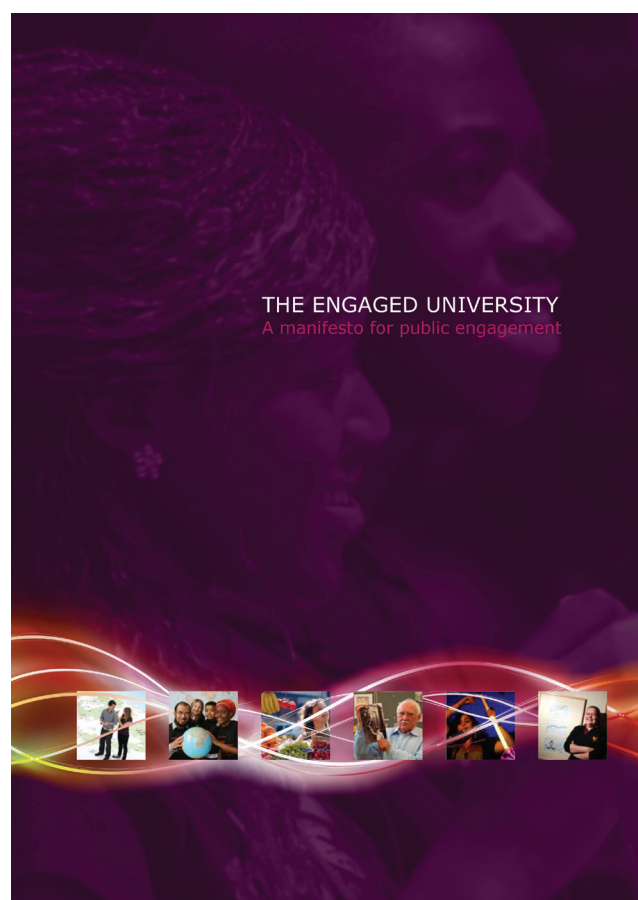
The engaged university: a manifesto for public engagement (NCCPE, 2010a)

"We were delighted to become a signatory to the NCCPE's Manifesto for Public Engagement. Engagement has always been an integral part of our open learning mission, putting students at the heart of everything we value. Becoming a signatory to the NCCPE Manifesto gave us an opportunity to re-state this commitment, exploring how these principles could become embedded within our research culture, incorporating the perspectives of stakeholders, user communities and members of the public.

We remain committed to creating the conditions where engaged research can flourish and where excellence in research engagement is recognised and valued. In embedding the principles, values and reflective practices of engaged research within The Open University, we want to ensure that our research has relevance in wider society, embracing an 'ecology of openness' as we celebrate success as an open research university."

Peter Horrocks
Vice-Chancellor, The Open University

Defining engaged research

Much of our work has involved detailed discussions with researchers from across the University. Often we found ourselves discussing similar issues, but using different terminology. We therefore sought to create a shared understanding of the challenges researchers from different academic domains were facing.

We employed an evidence-based approach that was also informed by consultation. Our approach combined the findings from research (Grand, Davies et al. 2015), which highlighted researchers' confusion about the relationship between public engagement and research impact, with consultation across The Open University.

2014 Open University Champions of Engaged Research: l-r Richard Holliman, Joe Smith, Natalia Kucirkova, John Maiden, Tim Blackman, Peter Wood, David Gowing, Nick Mahony (on behalf of Jacqui Gabb & Janet Fink) & Christothea Herotodou

Informed by more than 60 interventions with more than 1,100 researchers, and endorsed by our Research Committee and Senate (Holliman and Holti, 2014), we produced a university-wide definition of engaged research as the first stage in laying the foundations of an open and engaged research paradigm.

> Engaged research encompasses the different ways that researchers meaningfully interact with various stakeholders[1] over any or all stages of a research process, from issue formulation, the production or co-creation of new knowledge, to knowledge evaluation and dissemination.

1. Stakeholders may include user communities, and members of the public or groups who come into existence or develop an identity in relationship to the research process.

Recognising excellence in engaged research

Drawing on the work of the Beacons for Public Engagement we agreed at an early stage in our project that effective and widely recognised mechanisms that reward and recognise excellence in engaged research are crucial in effecting change.

We introduced two interventions to address the short and long-term agenda: an award scheme and revised criteria for academic promotion[2]. The Engaging Research Award Scheme, which ran in 2014 and 2015, was designed to find and celebrate high-quality engaged research. Overall, we recognised the work of 16 projects, with nine winning and seven highly-commended entries.

We also sought to deliver embedded and sustainable long-term change through career progression; to extend the possibilities of today's postgraduate researchers so that they consider engaged research as a viable option for their academic careers.

In addressing this ambitious goal The Open University recently approved revised criteria for academic promotion. These revised criteria include a new knowledge exchange route for progression from Lecturer through to three professorial bands.

2 For further details of the Engaging Research Award Scheme and our approach to revising the criteria for academic promotion, please see our Stories of Change.

The context for our culture change project

Fiona McKerlie

The role of The Open University's Public Engagement with Research (PER) Catalyst was to introduce mechanisms to change our research culture. Such change is dependent on the pre-existing conditions within the organisation. In this section Fiona McKerlie, the PER Catalyst's Project Manager, documents some of the context for our work.

Research at The Open University

Research underpins our teaching as the UK's largest university with around 200,000 students and more than 30,000 postgraduate students. It also informs the programmes we make with the BBC, reaching more than 40 million viewers every year. The University is unique in having both an open access mission and research excellence.

The Open University has a vibrant research environment with more than 1,000 academics covering a broad range of disciplines from arts to science, with a combined research income of circa £26m per annum. Leading research groups at the OU include: Education and Educational Technology; Business and Management; Art and Design; Music; Sociology; Earth and Environmental Sciences; Computer Science; History; and English.

Affiliated Research Centres

The Open University has **24 Affiliated Research Centres** around the World.

These are the following:

USA **2**   Italy **7**
The Gambia **1**   Thailand **1**
England **10**   Viet Nam **1**
France **1**   Kenya **1**

24 Affiliated Research Centres (ARC)

RESEARCH AND ENTERPRISE   For more research visit **www.open.ac.uk/research**

The OU also has just over 1,000 postgraduate research students, some of whom are based on campus, with others doing research online and some who are part of the OU's 24 worldwide Affiliated Research Centres, including Public Health England, the Transport Research Laboratory and the UK Medical Research Council Laboratories in The Gambia.

Research at the OU is carried out across seven faculties and two research institutes, with 72% of its research deemed world-leading or internationally excellent[3]. To ensure this research is used, it is made as open and accessible as possible. This includes making research publications in academic journals freely available online. The OU has one of the largest and most used open access research repositories in the UK, Open Research Online[4]. It is also a leader on Open Educational Resources, which can be accessed via its innovative OpenLearn[5] platform and our contributions to FutureLearn[6].

A brief history of Public Engagement at The Open University

Prior to our PER Catalyst, there was no established Public Engagement team in the University, though digital engagement featured strongly throughout both teaching and research, and public engagement has always been an integral part of the OU's mission.

Our commitment to public engagement with research is informed by our long-term commitment to openness, innovation and inclusion (Wilks and Pearce, 2011; Weller, 2011). For example the BBC programme Frozen Planet, first broadcast in 2011, had the highest ratings for a natural science television programme since 2001.

As a result, 263,000 polar maps containing OU science research were requested by members of the UK public. The series promoted a public debate which influenced the passage of the UK Antarctic Bill through the Houses of Parliament. Dr Mark Brandon's 20 years of polar science research informed the programme (e.g. Walker, et al. 2007), with this work also being submitted to the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF 2014) as an Impact Case Study[7].

Our Catalyst Team

All the team members in our project, bar the Project Manager, are active researchers. All the staff remained until the end of their original contracts and we were able to extend the work of one of the Research Associates to further develop the digital engagement work package. We employed an additional Research Associate to develop the project's work on evaluation methodologies.

The University provided additional support through its Communications Unit, media professionals, Learning and Teaching Solutions (LTS), Human Resources (HR), Information Technology (IT), and through additional strategic support from the Director of Research, Scholarship and Quality.

Changes to The Open University during the project

There were no major changes to institutional structures that affected the project and all senior staff directly associated with the project remained to the end. However several senior leaders, e.g. Deans, Associate Deans Research and Research Centre Directors changed roles during the project, requiring additional briefings and connections to be made to ensure continuity.

The project spanned the REF 2014 preparation and submission period, introducing a short-term impact on staff time and focus. Whilst the REF was at one level a challenge on staff time, it did increase requests from throughout the University for advice and training on public engagement as a route to research impact. This put significant pressure on the OU Champion for Public Engagement with Research to work within a very large and widely-dispersed organisation.

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3 'Open University combines open access with research excellence'; available from: http://www3.open.ac.uk/media/fullstory.aspx?id=28405
4 *Open Research Online* is the Open University's repository of research publications and other research outputs (http://oro.open.ac.uk).
It is an Open Access resource that can be searched and browsed freely by members of the public.
5 OpenLearn provides free access to course materials and expert opinion on topical issues (http://www.open.edu/openlearn).
6 Futurelearn is a private company wholly owned by The Open University, working with partners from around the world.
Futurelearn provides free online courses from top universities and cultural institutions (https://www.futurelearn.com).
7 This work also resulted in a *Times Higher Education* award for Mark Brandon as the 'Most Innovative Teacher of the Year' in 2012.

The OU's PER Catalyst team, 'An open research university': l-r Trevor Collins, Richard Holliman, Fiona McKerlie, Ann Grand, Eileen Scanlon, Richard Holti, Hilde Stephansen & Nick Mahony. Missing: Anne Adams, Tim Blackman & Gareth Davies.

Overall, however, the REF did help to raise the profile of the PER Catalyst, stimulate debates about the role of public engagement in research, and bring it higher up the academic agenda. This was capitalised on with the introduction of seed funding and awards for engaged research.

The project also spanned significant changes to the organisation of teaching at The Open University following the implementation of recommendations in the Browne Report (Browne, et al. 2010). This report led to the introduction of higher fees for HE students in England and Wales, including part-time students. Whilst the changes to teaching and learning at the OU did not directly affect the work of the PER Catalyst, the indirect influence was profound. In effect, our project sought to effect organisational change within an organisation already undergoing profound changes forced upon it by the external environment. Given the drop in teaching income (e.g. see Parr 2015a), which outstrips research income by roughly 10:1, it is understandable that organisational changes in teaching were a higher priority on many colleagues' time.

Strategic priorities

Richard Holliman

The strategic priorities for The Open University's Public Engagement with Research Catalyst connected with our long-term commitment to social justice and inclusion, building on our established international reputation for open learning.

In our initial discussions about the RCUK call for proposals a small team of senior researchers foregathered to discuss the following related questions: does The Open University need to change; if so, what needs to change and in what order?

Following these initial negotiations we agreed to use a technique known as the 'EDGE[8] Tool' to make an initial assessment of the OU's commitment to engaged research (NCCPE, 2010b). We applied the nine categories outlined by the EDGE Tool to assess the University's support for engaged research in November 2011 (Figure 1; in blue), comparing this with where we planned to be by March 2015 at the end of the project (Figure 1; in red).

This process highlighted the need for the institution to change, and provided a framework to organise how this could be achieved. As such, each of the nine elements in the EDGE Tool relates to an objective and a project work package[9].

Leadership

We introduced a senior leadership role to work as the operational lead for the project, connecting senior executives with faculties and researchers at all levels. We also embedded strategic planning for research impact as a requirement for faculties' unit plans.
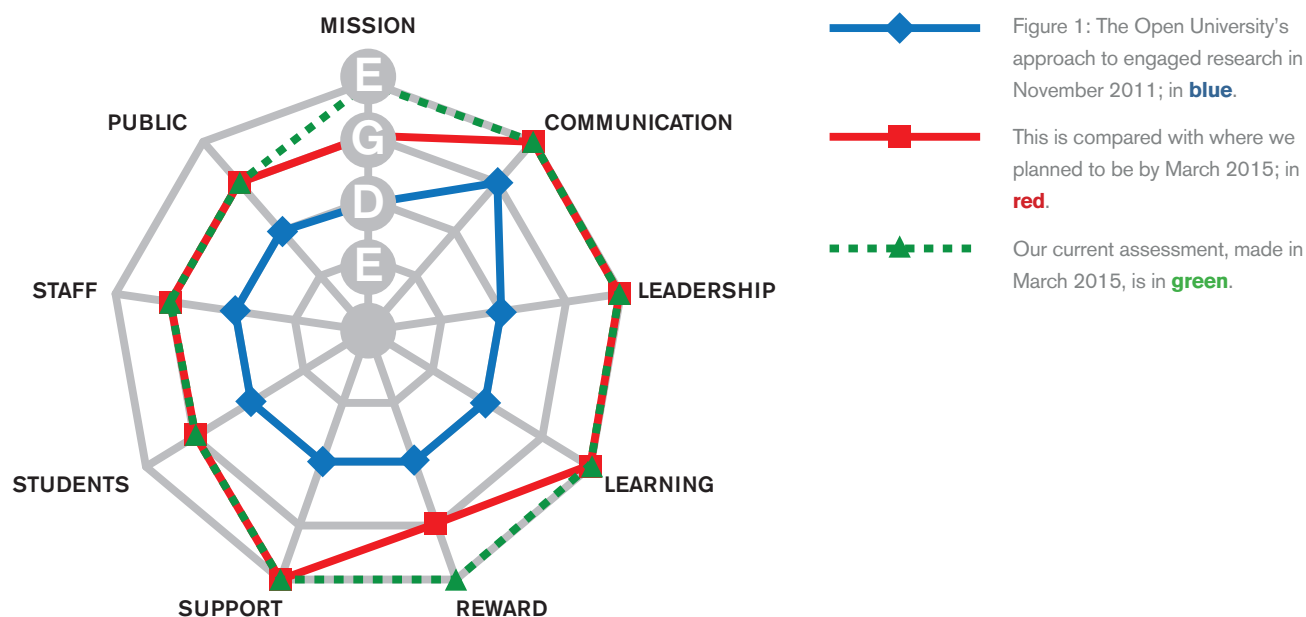
Mission

We secured approval to become a signatory to the NCCPE's Manifesto for Public Engagement (Holliman, 2012); and developed and promoted a university-wide definition of engaged research (Holliman and Holti, 2014).

Communication

We developed a communication strategy for engaged research: introducing an OU-wide blog featuring to date more than 90 posts from more than 30 OU researchers and nearly 20 external stakeholders (http://www.open.ac.uk/blogs/per); co-producing more than 30 videos with 30 postgraduate and early-career researchers and 40 school students, viewed more than 5000 times; and organising an engaged research seminar series with live and archive webcasts (the latter generating more than 14,500 hits).

8 EDGE is an acronym that stands for Embryonic, Developing, Gripping and Embedding.

9 For further details of the Leadership, Communication, Reward, Support, Staff, Students and Public work packages, please see our Stories of Change.

Figure 1: The Open University's approach to engaged research in November 2011; in **blue**.

This is compared with where we planned to be by March 2015; in **red**.

Our current assessment, made in March 2015, is in **green**.

Learning

We provided training and professional development opportunities for more than 1,100 academic researchers through more than 60 interventions; also developing legacy resources for use by researchers across the sector (e.g. Mahony, 2015; Grand, Donelan et al., 2015; Collins, et al. 2015)

Reward

We changed the University's promotion criteria to include Knowledge Exchange routes for career progression and introduced an Award Scheme to recognise and reward excellence in engaged research.

Support

We investigated how researchers plan, enact and evaluate their engaged research work and explored the support mechanisms they require to improve performance.

Staff

Building on our researcher findings, we focused on the tools researchers require to collect evidence of impact from engaged research, mentoring three seed funded projects as they developed mechanisms for capturing research impact, and upgraded the University's blogging platform.

Students and Publics

We offered structured opportunities for stakeholders, user communities, students and members of the public to engage with Open University research, e.g. Participation Now (Mahony and Stephansen, 2014).

Our overarching aim was to transform The Open University's research culture from a 'developing' phase, following the assessment in November 2011, to a 'gripping' or 'embedding' phase by March 2015. We made progress in all nine of the work packages; in two of them we went beyond our planned targets (Figure 1, in green), consolidating the Open University's international reputation for excellence in engaged research.

Our approach to culture change

Richard Holti

In this section Richard Holti, one of the co-investigators of our PER Catalyst and an expert in the barriers to strategic change and approaches to working with these barriers, explains the rationale behind our approach to culture change.

From the outset our PER Catalyst intended to bring about change in the practice of research across the University by building on existing strengths in the theory and practice of engaged research (e.g. Grand, Davies et al. 2015; Holliman, Collins, et al. 2009; Holti, 2011; Mahony, 2015; Mahony and Stephansen, in press; Scanlon, 2013), aligning these with sector-wide strategic developments in relation to research (e.g. RCUK, 2013; 2010).

We saw the task as bringing already existing examples of achievement and innovation in engaged research into wider play across faculties, research centres and groups that make up the variety of research communities within a research active university. The idea of using existing strengths to produce further development amounts to encouraging dynamics of change that are already underway, harnessing the impetus to engage various stakeholders, user communities and publics that is present within our research communities.

We have sought to complement this 'bottom up' or emergent model of change with some 'top down' elements, providing a strategic framework to enable and guide rather than to control. At the outset we identified a number of key elements for this: a more explicit strategy about engaged research for the University as a whole (see the section on Sustainability); further development of our digital infrastructure and engagement capabilities (see the Story of Change by Trevor Collins); and a raft of communication, training, career development and reward schemes that have been outlined in the previous section.

Reflecting on how we have worked and how engaged research has developed over the last three years (2012-2015), it is clear to us that understanding the relationship and interplay between strategic direction and emergent change has been crucial. The idea of 'culture change' carries with it a notion of achieving change in taken-for-granted assumptions, perceptions and feelings, in this case about what is involved in doing academic research.

According to Schein's (2004) classic formulation of organisational culture, it is these underlying and largely unconscious shared ways of thinking that ultimately shape the practices that people take part in. They may also have an uneasy, contradictory or ambivalent relationship with espoused goals and strategies. So, new strategies and missions about engaged research can have a role to play in shaping what researchers do, but are not ultimately the source of changes that put engagement with stakeholders, user communities and publics more centrally in research practice. People – researchers and their various stakeholders, user communities and publics – have their own cultures. In a sense this is the very nature of a culture; it is something that exists and evolves in embodied social interaction. It is possible to find ways to influence this process, but not to control or 'manage' it directly or with predictability.
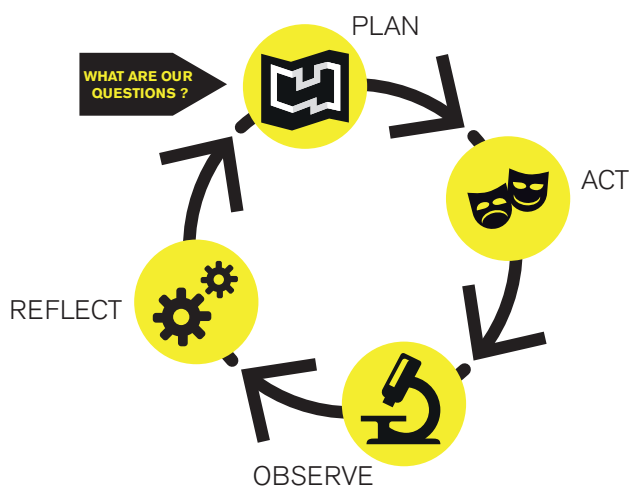

Figure 2: Cycles of action research

These insights have led us to adopt a philosophy of action research in developing engaged research strategies and practices (Figure 2), with cycles of alternating study of how research and research leadership are currently conducted leading to interventions, and leading in turn to further evaluative study of the impact and then further interventions (Grand, Davies et al. 2015).

In this overall iterative process, we gave a central role in the first year to a diagnostic exploration of the current state of engaged research across the University's faculties and research centres,

covering also perceptions of the roles of research leadership within faculties and centres and of central university policies and functions, in particular the Research, Scholarship and Quality Unit. This research revealed a rich variety of kinds of engaged research, as well as forms of leadership for developing it further (see Grand, Davies et al. 2015). To some extent, particular notions of engaged research had emerged to fit the possibilities inherent in different academic fields. For example, in the Science Faculty and its research centres, one emphasis remains on innovative and high-profile approaches to dissemination, although our inquiry revealed desires for more systematic and strategic support from the University for initiatives emerging from research project teams. At the same time, collaborations between academics from Science and the Institute of Educational Technology have produced an impressive and influential body of practice in 'citizen inquiry', where digital technologies provide the capability for members of the public to gather data in various, mainly biological, fields and feed them into large programmes of research. In the social sciences and vocational areas such as education, health and social care and management, there are similar emerging bodies of participatory research, with new ways of involving various non-academic practitioners in formulating, building and evaluating knowledge with strong academic value.

Overall, our diagnostic study underlined the variety of ways that 'publics' can participate throughout the cycle of research or knowledge generation, and suggested that a key role of the PER Catalyst should be to continue to challenge different research communities to assess what engaged research currently means for them and what the intellectual as well as practical, commercial, reputational and ethical gains might be of deepening or extending it.

We were confirmed in our stance that any attempt to define or specify a single model of engaged research for all our research communities would be a mistake. Rather, we have prompted the academic bodies that provide research leadership across the University to adopt a definition of 'engaged research' (see our Key Highlights) that emphasises the voyage of discovery that our research communities are undertaking, finding out how academic and non-academic knowledge can combine, interact and develop together through processes of inquiry (Holliman and Holti, 2014). The various career development, seed funding and recognition schemes we have implemented have continued to encourage further exploration of new frontiers of engagement (see our Stories of Change).

Our definition of engaged research has been used not only to clarify thinking and strategy at University Level. Members of the PER Catalyst team have also used it to prompt thinking at Faculty and Research Centre leadership level. A further key finding from the diagnostic exploration was an apparent lack of formal leadership for developing engagement at the level of faculties and research units. Particularly in the final year of our PER Catalyst, the intervention that has flowed from this finding has been for us to work with faculty senior teams to develop their own models for providing leadership allied with strategic planning and sustainable support mechanisms for researchers.

In the following sections, grouped collectively as Stories of Change, we begin to explore some of the interventions we have used to introduce change across the institution. The sequence begins with some reflections on the concept of engaged leadership, followed by a review of our evidence-based approach to culture change.

Engaging leadership

Richard Holliman

My role as a change agent

As the Open University's Champion for Public Engagement with Research I had overall operational responsibility for coordinating and leading all aspects of this complex action research project. Furthermore, I helped to shape the Open University's strategic objectives for engaged research over the three-year project (2012-2015), also contributing to the University's Research Plan.

Connections and communication are crucial to the success of a complex project. Throughout this process I worked closely with Professor Tim Blackman (Pro Vice-Chancellor Research, Scholarship and Quality (RSQ), and the Principal Investigator), Drs. Astrid Wissenburg (Director, RSQ), and Fiona McKerlie (Project Manager) to collectively develop strategy, review operational progress on the project and plan for a sustainable future for engaged research.

On a day-to-day basis I led the multi-disciplinary research team, involving eight researchers, based in five of the OU's nine Central Academic Units. I also connected the work of our project with relevant strategy committees, via written 'policy updates' for Deans and Research Directors, and more widely with researchers across the University through a range of communication channels, including the intranet, a bi-weekly newsletter for researchers, seminars, workshops and events, and a blog.

Approach to change

One of the great strengths of The Open University is its commitment to multi-disciplinary working. Whilst my academic background is informed by sociological perspectives, I've worked in the Faculty of Science for more than 15 years, where I've taught science communication and engagement. At the same time I've researched these issues, submitting to the Education Unit of Assessment for the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) and more recently the Research Excellence Framework (REF). In this respect, I've been described by members of the project team as a 'boundary creature' (Adams, Fitzgerald, et al. 2013); alternatively, my role over the past three years could fall into the category of a 'third-space professional' (Whitchurch, 2013).

In exploring the interface between the sciences and wider society I've explored and contributed to debates about the changing nature of scientific research and how it is shaped by, whilst also informing, wider society (Holliman, Whitelegg, et al. 2009). In essence, I'd talked the talk and to some extent at least walked the walk (e.g. Holliman, Collins, et al. 2009). I saw the opportunity to lead The Open University's PER Catalyst as a chance to broaden my perspectives beyond the sciences, to explore the ways that researchers from across the University's academic domains engage meaningfully and progressively with stakeholders, user communities and members of the public.

Over the course of my career I've witnessed the emergence of engagement as a concept in search of a clear definition. A range of factors, including policy changes, technology, and the practices of engaged research, introduced the idea of the 'dialogic turn' (Davies, 2013) where 'bottom up' and contextual approaches have been championed as potential solutions to questions of trust, openness, transparency and democracy (Irwin, 2008). What's fairly consistent in these arguments, if not necessarily in the practical implementation of them, is that 'top down', imposed solutions are generally problematic and ultimately self-defeating. In this context it's possible to argue that the concept of engaged leadership is a paradox. How then did I resolve my instincts for engagement with a need to direct and deliver change across a complex institution?

First and foremost, I drew on prior experience. Over the years I'd encountered a range of support, confusion and resistance, from professors to postgraduate researchers (e.g. Jensen and Holliman, 2015; Holliman and Jensen, 2009), all of whom deserved an effective response to their questions about engaged research. I approached the challenge of leading the PER Catalyst as a researcher, drawing on a mixture of pragmatism and pluralism, informed by perspectives from researchers from different academic disciplines, but also by research support staff and other service providers.

Collectively our approach to change represents a form of distributed knowledge exchange. We were informed by research findings but also a consultative approach, with the aim of creating a culture of reflective practice. I argue that this approach had four main advantages: 1) our collective wisdom was greater than the sum of its parts; 2) we were predisposed to listening to other perspectives; 3) we had buy-in from relevant stakeholders because they partly owned the solutions; and 4) we could demonstrate to researchers how we had approached the same challenges that they face in terms of planning for, and collecting evidence of, research impact.

Lessons learned

If I had to characterise my leadership style I'd argue that 'I led from the middle'. Given that we were often required to break new ground, would I try the same approach again? Put simply, yes. Of course, other models of leadership can work effectively; the point being that there is no one type of leader for a culture change project. Rather, I'd argue that engaged leadership requires certain skills and competencies. It requires staff who can actively listen by connecting meaningfully with people from different academic disciplines and roles, and with multiple external stakeholders. It also requires analytical and rhetorical skills to filter ideas and construct arguments that work in particular contexts. At times it requires flexibility, adaptability, tact and diplomacy; at others a progressive vision. You will encounter significant challenges and resistance. If you don't have tenacity and a real belief in the principles in engaged research, don't apply.

RESOURCES

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Holliman, R. and Hudson, L. (2013). *Championing engaged research*. Spotlight interview. Milton Keynes: The Open University. Available from: http://youtu.be/IU7Dl4f5uhY

Further Particulars for the Open University's Champion for Public Engagement with Research, recruited in May 2012, can be downloaded from: http://www.open.ac.uk/blogs/per/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/OU_PER_Catalyst-Champion-further-particulars.pdf

An evidence-based approach to culture change

Ann Grand, Gareth Davies,
Richard Holliman and Anne Adams

Our role as change agents

Although higher education institutions around the world have acknowledged the value of public engagement, we found there was little evidence about how researchers conceptualised public engagement, what kinds of activities they labelled as engagement and what communities they considered they were engaging with. Given that researchers' concepts and views of engagement must inevitably affect how they operationalise their public engagement activities, our aim was to understand those concepts more clearly; to better inform our interventions and to broaden and deepen researcher engagement.
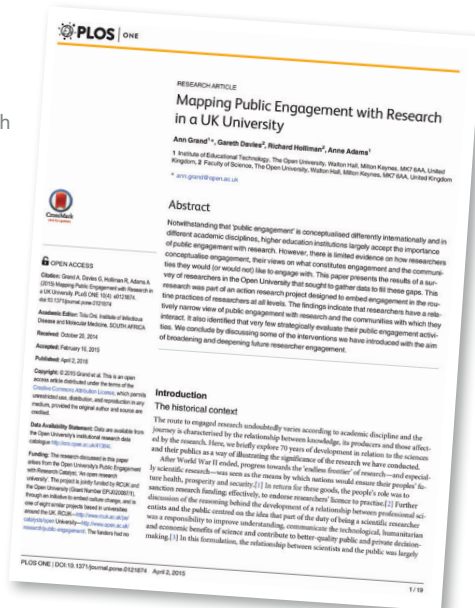
Approach to change

The biennial Careers in Research (CROS) and Principal Investigators and Research Leaders (PIRLS) online surveys are run by Vitae on behalf of a group of UK universities. Each survey has a set of common questions and each university can opt to include a set of institution-specific questions. We were able to add four questions to The Open University's 2013 CROS and PIRLS surveys.

We chose to ask open questions, so that we could explore researchers' experiences and how they were forming and transforming their understanding of the meaning of public engagement. We asked researchers for:

> a definition of 'public engagement with research' (in fewer than 150 words).

> a description of a successful activity involving public engagement with research in which they had participated, and how they judged its success.

> what non-academic communities they considered had connections with their research, what publics they would like to engage with and any publics they would choose not to engage with.

> their three top reasons for engaging with non-academic communities.

Our findings are documented in an academic paper (Grand, Davies et al. 2015; 2014; Figure 3). To summarise, we had 171 responses; approximately 30% of the OU's researcher population. We found that the researchers offered a relatively limited view of public engagement with research; the most common definitions focussed on the dissemination, communication or presentation of research.

This was repeated in researchers' descriptions of activities they considered to be public engagement; about half of the respondents described such an activity and the most common descriptions were of research being 'conveyed', 'shown' or 'explained' to the public, although a small number described activities that involved 'collaboration' with non-academic communities. Researchers' reasons for engaging included education and communication, collaboration and dialogue and the need to improve the quality of research. The biggest group of responses focussed on the idea that public engagement enabled researchers to influence policy or drive social change.

Lessons learned

Our work uncovered a lack of shared language about engaged research, a finding which underpinned much of our subsequent efforts, including the development of a definition of engaged research (see Key Highlights).

We have included a series of questions in the 2015 CROS and PIRLS surveys, which will give us the opportunity to uncover longitudinal data about researchers' views of engaged research. Responding to the 2013 results, we have modified the questions to include a question on researchers' perceptions of institutional support mechanisms for engaged research and how it can be used in promotion criteria.

Figure 3: Mapping Public Engagement with Research (Grand, Davies et al. 2015).

10 Combining the data from PLOS ONE and Open Research Online, this paper has been accessed more than 3000 times.

Knowledge exchange as an academic promotion route

Tim Blackman and Sally Dibb

Our roles as change agents

Tim Blackman was the sponsor for changing The Open University's academic promotion criteria (as Pro Vice-Chancellor responsible for academic professional development) and Sally Dibb chaired the working group.

Approach to change

Across higher education, there is a trend for the 'all-round' academic to be complemented by colleagues who specialise in either research or teaching. While some universities have re-shaped their academic workforces along these lines, The Open University has retained a single academic contract but introduced differentiated promotion profiles, seeing the separate roles as primarily about career development and progression, including a new knowledge exchange route.

The OU's scheme was developed by a working group with a mixed gender and seniority make-up, and taken through two rounds of university-wide consultation. Particular attention was given to incorporating explicit consideration of equal opportunities and to a more explicit approach in general to the criteria against which promotion cases would be judged and developmental feedback given to unsuccessful candidates.

The scheme requires all roles to demonstrate academic leadership, with a strong emphasis on teamwork and enabling others to succeed. This is expected to contribute to the roles working together and to equal esteem. Leadership must be demonstrated, at equivalent levels of increasing excellence, scope and complexity, through the scheme's four grades of senior lecturer and three professorial bands.

Knowledge exchange criteria are written into all the profiles, but an important innovation is the introduction of grade profiles for knowledge exchange specifically as a defined promotion route alongside teaching and research. This is aimed at creating a community of academics at the OU developing their careers as experts in knowledge exchange, both for their own advancement and

as a source of advice and collaborators for their research and teaching-focused colleagues. Their knowledge of the external environment through translation, commercialisation, engagement, collaboration, partnerships, and of what works and how in knowledge exchange, will be an increasingly valuable resource for the institution as a whole.

We defined knowledge exchange to align broadly with the types of activity used in HEFCE's higher education-business and community interaction survey (HE-BCI), but with the addition of teaching and learning to the HE-BCI categories of continuing professional development, contract research, consulting, development projects and public engagement.

Promotion requires meeting criteria for at least three out of six of these defined types of activity. Progression through the grades is recognised by increasing the required reach and significance of these activities. This must include 'scholarly outputs, or other forms of substantive professional practice or intellectual property, in any medium print or digital', demonstrating either 'novel applications or inventions which are appropriately shared and protected', 'impact on policy, practice or product/service development', or both.

Total career outputs are considered but there is particular regard to trajectory: four outputs in the most recent 6-year period must be identified as having national or international recognition, with the criteria ramping up through the four grades. The key criteria also include clear external income expectations, which similarly increases with grade, and for the professorial grades expectations about external reputation in the form of national committee membership or prestigious national awards.

Lessons learned

An early version of the promotion scheme received negative feedback following consultation because it was seen as too prescriptive. Revisions were made to increase flexibility, including promotion candidates being able to balance possible under-achievement against the key criteria of their chosen profile (say research) with supporting criteria from other profiles (say knowledge exchange). Overall, it was important to spend time explaining the reasoning behind the profiles with a range of stakeholder groups.

Ultimately, this engaged process helped to secure Senate approval for the new promotion profiles in Autumn 2014, resulting in media coverage (Parr, 2015b), and the successful promotion of a number of candidates including Professor Jonathan Rix.

"As a practitioner within education and as a parent and sibling of disabled people my research and teaching have always been rooted in notions of participation and of relevance for the learner and service user. I want to see those who are researched play a key role in that research and within learning contexts I wish the learner's perspective to be central. My work is about seeking ways to enable this involvement."

Jonathan Rix, Professor of Participation and Learning Support

RESOURCES

The outputs are sixteen promotion profiles (Senior Lecturer and Professor Bands 1-3) for each of teaching and research, teaching, research, and knowledge exchange.

Promotion Guidelines: http://www.open.ac.uk/foi/main/policies-and-procedures#overlay-context=policies-and-procedures

The Engaging Research Award Scheme

Richard Holliman

My role as a change agent

As The Open University Champion for Public Engagement with Research I led the development of this scheme and chaired the Assessment Panels in 2014 and 2015. The overarching aim of the scheme was to identify and celebrate excellence in engaged research. A secondary aim was to support unsuccessful entrants through detailed feedback on their applications.

Initially, I secured approval from the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research, Scholarship and Quality) to introduce the scheme. I then developed all aspects of the scheme, including the assessment criteria, initially working to complement planning for the NCCPE's 2014 Engage Competition. I also recruited and briefed the judges in 2014 and 2015, and provided detailed feedback to the unsuccessful entrants.

Throughout this process I worked closely with Fiona McKerlie (Research, Scholarship and Quality Unit), as Secretary to the Assessment Panel. In addition, Gareth Davies made contributions to the development of the Assessment Criteria (Holliman, McKerlie and Davies, 2015).

Approach to change

The Open University's Engaging Research Award Scheme was designed to find and celebrate high-quality engaged research at the OU, demonstrating the different ways that researchers meaningfully interact with various stakeholders over any or all stages of a research process, from issue formulation, the production or co-creation of new knowledge, to knowledge evaluation and dissemination.

What follows is a selection of the eligibility criteria for the scheme:

> The award scheme was open to all current, 'active' Open University researchers, including postgraduate researchers.

> Applications from partners in collaborative projects were encouraged. However, the named applicant needed to be a current Open University researcher or postgraduate research student.

> All partners to the application needed to agree to the entry into the competition and be acknowledged in the entry.

> The activity had to be an example of engaged research, as defined by the Award Scheme, and approved by The Open University (see our Key highlights). The entry could be of any size, length or cost.

The 2015 Winners & Highly Commended Entries: l-r Richard Holliman, Paul Stenner, Katy Jordan, Graham Pike, Rosa Hoekstra, Francesca Benatti (on behalf of Elton Barker), Alan Bassindale, Verina Waights, Martin Weller, Cindy Kerawalla, Saskia van Manen & Fiona McKerlie. Photo: Chris Valentine.

The scheme ran twice (2014 and 2015) during the course of the Open University's Public Engagement with Research Catalyst. Overall, we received nearly forty entries from seven of the nine Faculties and Institutes. Of these, we recognised nine winning and seven highly commended entries.

One of the most useful outcomes from the scheme was the direct, targeted support offered to entrants. For example, I mentored three of the 2013-14 winners when applying to the NCCPE's Engage Competition. Furthermore, all the applicants who were not recognised by an award received detailed feedback. Notably, two of the unsuccessful applications to the 2013-14 scheme subsequently used this feedback to re-apply to the 2014-15 scheme; both received awards.

Lessons learned

In 2014 we ran the scheme with three categories: Research Leaders; Early Career Researchers; and Postgraduate Researchers. Several prospective entrants argued that the categories were overly prescriptive. We therefore removed all the categories in 2015.

If we were to run the scheme again we would reintroduce the Postgraduate Researcher category and explicitly judge entries according to the experience of the entrant.

We offered to pay travel costs for two non-OU contributors to each of the winning engaged research activities so they could attend the awards ceremony. This increased attendance, helping to recognise the distributed expertise in these excellent engaged research projects.

We organised publicity for the winning entries, including stories on the Open University's Research Website (Murphy, 2015; 2014), via the University intranet, through the blog (Holliman, 2015a), and through a Spotlight interview featuring three of the winning entrants in the 2014 scheme. Five of the seven winners from the 2014 scheme presented their work at an engaging research seminar where we launched the 2015 scheme (see Grand, 2014a). Three of the 2014 winners wrote about their work on the Engaging Research Blog (Kucirkova, 2014; Maiden, 2014; Rothero, 2014), and two returned as judges for the 2015 competition.

RESOURCES

All the documentation to support the 2015 Engaging Research Scheme is available from the OU's Engaging Research blog (http://www.open.ac.uk/blogs/per/?page_id=4377). This includes the entry form and the eligibility and assessment criteria for the OU scheme. (Holliman, McKerlie and Davies, 2015)

Members of the OU's PER Catalyst team commented on the NCCPE's (2014) guide on running an Engagement Competition.

The values of digital engagement

Anne Adams and Ann Grand

Our roles as change agents

As the UK's largest university, with a large cohort of distributed learners, much of our teaching and learning is mediated through technology. We argued in our original project proposal that a better understanding of how academics are using digital tools and technologies in their teaching could help us to learn from good practices, share ideas for support mechanisms and shape interventions that also work for engaged research.

Our digital engagement research was collaborative and multi-disciplinary in nature, involving Richard Holliman, Trevor Collins and Peter Devine, as well as a variety of publics. The overarching aim of the scheme was to identify practices and support communities through appropriate digital engagement procedures.

A key barrier to digital engagement has been that of 'value' assigned to the activities, both at an individual and institutional level. In part due to external pressures, this perspective is starting to change, introducing a skills gap and a new type of academic 'digital divide'. Through research we identified a culture of 'muddling through' and a need to support academics in their digital engagement skills (Grand, Adams et al. under review)

Approach to change

Our initial approach was to conduct interviews with research projects across the University with the over-arching theme of reviewing the dimensions of engaged research: Publics, Processes, Participation, Performance, Purposes and Politics (see Holliman, 2013a). These interviews explored and informed the technologies and social practices that are required to engage stakeholders, user communities and publics with research as mediated through the use of digital tools and technologies.

Through the interviews we found that researchers tended to support one another informally, working together to share skills, experience and practice in different forms of digital engagement. We identified three 'ideal types' of digitally-engaged researcher (Grand, Adams et al. under review), noting the importance of researchers addressing the reasons for engaging, the potential methodologies, and then matching these requirements with the most appropriate digital tools.

In implementing our findings we have looked to facilitate change within our project, e.g. collaboratively communicating progress and documenting the processes of engagement through the Engaging Research blog and other forms of social media. We have also contributed to institutional initiatives around the need to 'Communicate Academic Excellence', delivered workshops, and developed resources such as 'The snakes and ladders of social media' (Figure 4).

This board game, developed in collaboration with other researchers (e.g. see Donelan, 2015) and a graphic designer (Peter Devine), was designed to help researchers to position themselves within this muddling-through culture. Once identified, researchers are asked to consider what they could change to create an ecosystem where engagement can flourish.

Lessons learned

Institutional ownership balanced with individual ownership of digital tools is a key tension within large organisations. A key emphasis for the project was around establishing value at higher levels within the University for digital engagement and thus digital tools. We were therefore delighted to work with Fiona McKerlie on the development of a set of resources supporting the digital attributes of engaged researchers (Collins, et al. 2015). Furthermore, we recently presented some of the findings from this work package to the Research, Scholarship and Quality (RSQ) Unit (Holliman, Grand et al. 2015).

As a result, RSQ are reviewing their policies around the digital presence of their staff. We have also used the resources we developed in training for postgraduate researchers in the sciences (Grand and Donelan, 2015), arts (Collins and Grand, 2015a/b), for academic staff at the OU (Grand, Holliman et al. 2015), for several other institutions (Grand, 2014b), and at the NCCPE's Engage 2014 Conference (Grand and Collins, 2014).

Members of the project team also contributed to the OU's Communicating Academic Excellence initiative, resulting in the publication of a minimum set of expectations for researchers to be visible in online spaces. This requirement is supported by a set of resources incorporated within the Academic Professional Development Framework, which is available on our intranet to all OU researchers.

RESOURCES

Copies of the snakes and ladders of social media, a board game developed to stimulate strategic discussions about digital engagement, have been sent to more than 20 organisations, including 15 universities and a number of the UK's Research Councils. The game is available for download from the Engaging Research blog under a Creative Commons licence (Grand, Donelan et al. 2015).

We have developed a set of linked resources to support researchers as they consider the digital attributes of engaged researchers (Collins, et al. 2015).
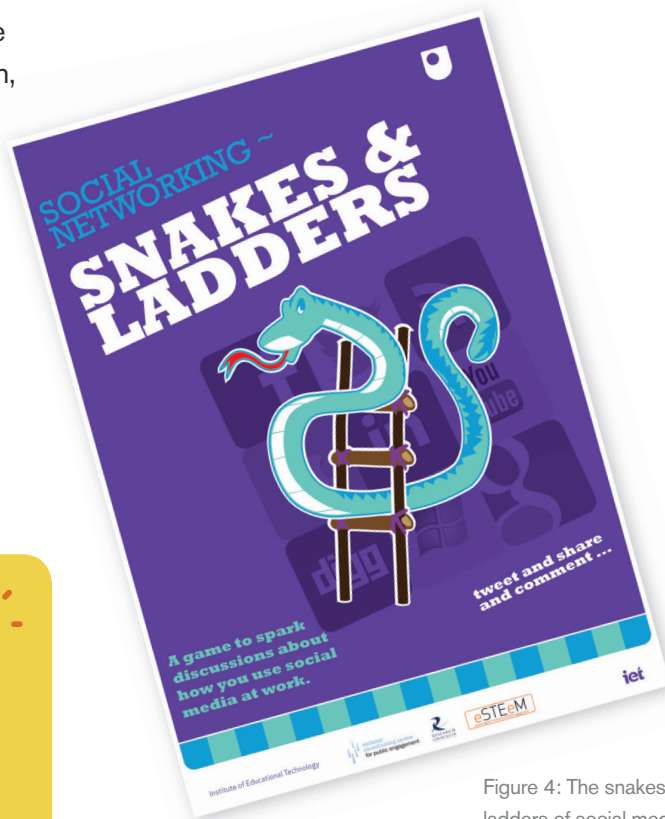
Figure 4: The snakes and ladders of social media. Poster design: Peter Devine

Infrastructure to support digital engagement

Trevor Collins

My role as a change agent

In a similar vein to the previous Story of Change my focus was on the types of digital tools and technologies that could help to support online engagement with OU research.

More specifically, my role was to explore the IT infrastructure provision for supporting online engagement with research. I worked with researchers from across the University, and with colleagues within the PER Catalyst, the Communications Unit and IT Systems Unit, to understand the practices and requirements of researchers and research stakeholders, and to review the service provision. The goal was to establish sustainable support for digital forms of engagement by researchers that met their needs and the needs of the University and the publics who want to engage with us.

Approach to change

Our project adopted an action research approach. Within the context of digital engagement this involved working with a range of research, IT and communications stakeholders across the University in multiple iterative cycles of planning, action, observation and reflection. Three recurring themes emerged from this work: awareness, responsibility and sustainability. Initially, there was

a general lack of awareness among researchers of what institutional support was available for digitally mediated forms of engagement. The use of project websites, blogs and social media for disseminating research was common, but in some cases these sites were hosted by a third-party provider, resulting in questions about sustainability and about who should be responsible for supporting the digital infrastructure for engagement. Knowledge of how to set up and edit University-hosted services was held by administration or web-support staff within faculties, and by some motivated researchers, but it was not common knowledge.

The University-hosted WordPress-based blogging service had been set up in 2007, but was not formally owned or managed by any specific unit within the University. As a result, the University's IT Unit had not been maintaining the service, and a decision had been made to decommission it and either archive the existing University-hosted blogs, or move them on to either Drupal or SharePoint-based web servers. I developed a proposal and business case to maintain the blogging service, which was championed by the PER Catalyst and subsequently the Research Scholarship and Quality Unit, and supported by the Communications Unit. This led to the service being reinstated and upgraded, including the use of an updated University-branded theme.

One planned activity that has not been completed, because it requires a fully functional and upgraded blogging system to work with, is the development of web analytics reports tailored to the needs of researchers, research managers and faculty managers. Currently, generic web analytics reports can be produced for all University-hosted websites. The Research Scholarship and Quality Unit will continue to work with the Communications Unit to develop more bespoke reports on research blogs for the associated stakeholder groups.

Lessons learned

The main lessons learned through the digital engagement infrastructure work relate to the communication, negotiation and leadership required for systemic change. Communicating with all the parties involved was critical for gaining an understanding of the practices and needs of researchers and research stakeholders, and enabled a strong argument for the requested services to be established. Negotiation with the existing service providers, to understand their institutional constraints, and collaboratively develop a case for maintaining and upgrading the blogging service, was necessary to ensure that the service would be sustainable. Also, collaborating with leaders across the University to lobby support and influence enabled change within the University, resulting in a long-term solution; a stable, sustainable, OU-branded blogging platform for researchers and their publics.

Outputs

The University-hosted WordPress-based blogging platform has been upgraded and will be maintained as a result of the project's work on digital infrastructure support. An Open University-branded WordPress theme has been developed (Figure 5). It is now being tested and will be maintained by the University's Digital Engagement Team (part of the Communications Unit). Further work to improve the web-analytics reports for blogs and promote their use has been taken over by the Research, Scholarship and Quality Unit.

Figure 5: The new Open Univerity Wordpress theme
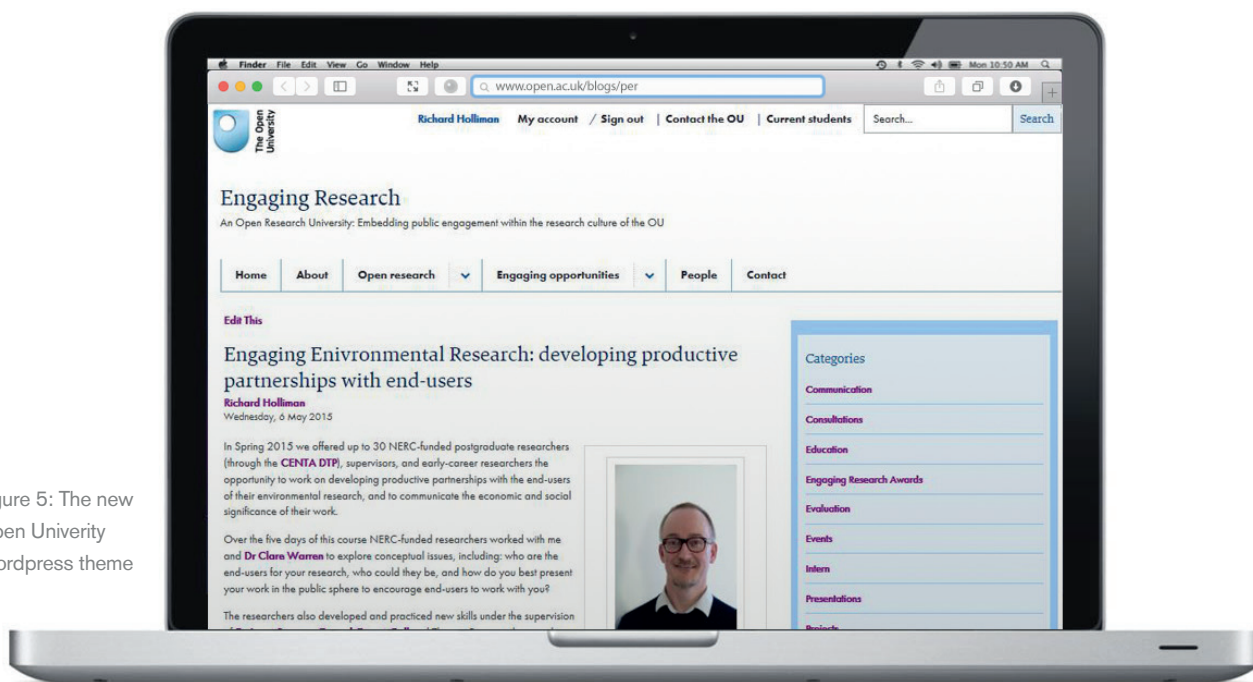
RESOURCES

We introduced a University-hosted WordPress-based blog called Engaging Research: http://www.open.ac.uk/blogs/per

Exploring the creation of publics

Nick Mahony

My role as a change agent

Everywhere you look people are talking about participation. Whether it concerns publicly engaged research; 'people powered' public services; customer-driven innovation; patient involvement in health; crowd sourcing; or open data, we are entering a new paradigm of public involvement that is sweeping across every sector, from higher education to business. The organic nature of these developments is creating a wealth of innovation and an urgent need for scholarship, networking and capacity building if this innovation is to be nurtured, consolidated and further developed.

My role was to explore this evolving ecosystem of participation through an experiment in multi-disciplinary engagement, thereby developing a case study in digital and participatory engagement with research. The findings from this experiment have been shared with relevant stakeholders across the OU, and developed into a pamphlet which has been shared across the HE sector (Mahony, 2015).

Approach to change

Our approach to change was to produce an online resource called Participation Now, in effect to explore the dimensions of engagement through research-informed practice. The aim of Participation Now was to provide an authoritative and inspiring resource as well as a robust support infrastructure for researchers, practitioners and the growing numbers of other people who are interested or involved in participatory public engagement. Working through the PER Catalyst and supported by collaborations forged with OpenLearn and openDemocracy.net, we have turned this idea into a reality.

The three main elements of the Participation Now site are first, an accessible, indexed, searchable and expanding collection of contemporary examples of participatory public engagement (Figure 6). This collection brings together more than 150 illustrative examples of practice drawn from the areas of government, charities, social movements, health, technology, science, arts, design as well as higher education. The collection is open access and available to researchers looking for examples of participatory public engagement.

Figure 6: A selection of the projects in the Participation Now collection

The second main element of Participation Now is a space of reflection where researchers and practitioners are invited to network and debate the possibilities and difficulties associated with different forms of emerging practice and opportunities for further innovation. Thirty-five blog-style contributions, including a series of interviews with key researchers and practitioners, have been published in this part of the site. Again, this resource is available to researchers wishing to explore how researchers and publics are making sense of participatory public engagement.

Participation Now, thirdly and finally, is designed as a resource for research, teaching and scholarship. For example, Mahony and Stephansen (in press) have undertaken a systematic comparative analysis of the characteristics of the initiatives archived in the Participation Now collection. In terms of the site's pedagogical possibilities, the University of Westminster's Politics Department has begun using the site as a resource to help deliver an undergraduate module on 'Democratic Innovations'; and Participation Now is also being used as a teaching resource to help deliver a new PhD training module on participation as part of a new ESRC-funded online course on 'Advancing Image Elicitation Methodologies'. Participation Now has also begun to be used by members of a network linked to a charitable organisation, the Raymond Williams Foundation, to support informal educational discussion groups who are interested and/or involved in public engagement and activist projects of various kinds.

Lessons learned

Overall, the Participation Now project has contributed to academic knowledge about the contemporary landscape of public engagement and participation (e.g. see Mahony and Stephansen, 2015). The site has facilitated a public debate about these developments via the new online resource the project has founded for academics and non-specialists interested in these on-going developments. The project has also prototyped a new public-centric framework for designing and evaluating public engagement (Mahony, 2015, Figure 7); and, finally, this project is now also making a contribution to engaging student and wider publics in a set of ongoing, formal and informal, educational programmes.

Figure 7: Designing 'public-centric' forms of engagement (see Mahony, 2015). Poster design: Peter Devine

RESOURCES

Mahony, N. (2015). Designing 'public-centric' forms of public engagement with research. Milton Keynes: The Open University. Available from: http://oro.open.ac.uk/42551

Participation Now: http://www.open.edu/openlearn/society/politics-policy-people/participation-now

Exploring the impacts of engaged research

Gareth Davies and Richard Holliman

Our roles as change agents

One of the key areas for development in relation to our programme of culture change is the need to produce rigorous, systematic accounts of the impact of engaged research. This need was highlighted by researchers in our initial diagnostic research (Grand, Davies et al. 2015). As a result, the seed funding scheme was introduced to share different approaches to the generation and systematic collection of evidence of the impacts from engaged research (Davies, Holliman and McKerlie, 2014).

Here we: 1) explain our approach in rolling out the seed funding award scheme; 2) provide links to the final reports from the three funded projects; and 3) offer a summary of the key insights we can offer having hosted the scheme.

Approach to change

Our approach to the PER Catalyst seed funding scheme was informed by an earlier Open University scheme which funded projects that explored STEM approaches to engagement (for one of the funded projects, see Donelan, 2015). Initially, we put together the rationale for the scheme, also producing an application and assessment process (Holliman, 2014a). To help researchers better understand the objectives of the call for seed funding the project team ran an engaging research seed funding workshop. During the workshop researchers were given some examples of what could be funded by the scheme. We also presented The Open University's definition of engaged research (see our Key Highlights).

Applying for seed funding

Drawing on work led by Helen Featherstone as part of the Exeter PER Catalyst, and in keeping with the funds on offer, we kept the application process simple. Application forms required an 'elevator pitch' (up to 600 words) covering the aims and objectives, how these could be achieved, with whom, what made the researcher/research-team ideal for achieving this and how outcomes would be shared with other researchers (see Resources). In addition, applicants were required to provide a breakdown and justification of the costs of carrying out the proposed research.

Assessing the applications

The ground rules for assessment included only making assessments based on: the evidence provided (not on prior knowledge and/or additional materials); the first 600 words of an application; activities that conformed to the definition of engaged research; proposals for 'active' researchers (not just engaged scholarship); and approval given by the applicant's line manager.

Ensuring these criteria were met, reviewers assessed whether applications were fundable based on four criteria (see Resources). 'Fundable' applications needed to achieve an overall score of ≥80% and be considered fundable by the assessors. Of the 10 applications that were submitted we could afford to fund the top three. We supported each of the projects over the course of their duration. Links to the final reports are listed under resources.

Key insights offered for hosting a seed funding award scheme

> The recognition of how hard it can be to gain access to stakeholders and the importance of understanding the constraints stakeholders work to; allowing enough lead time, taking into account the time that's required to gather, analyse and report findings. Researchers should anticipate a mismatch between what they and their stakeholders consider being essential or urgent. Priorities may change during the course of engagement, making it challenging for researchers to continue with their work.

> The importance of having multiple pathways for engaging with stakeholders and recognising that they will inevitably be working to constraints that will to some extent conflict with the purposes of the research. Researchers will benefit from knowing who their stakeholders are, what methods of engagement work most effectively for them, and what different stakeholders are looking to gain from the research.

> As relationships develop it helps to think about succession planning: "What happens if my key contact leaves?" This can help to ensure partnerships are sustained.

> Making sure plans for evaluation are flexible and adaptable so valuable insights can still be gathered when things don't go to plan. Having someone in post to conduct and analyse the evaluation data is a real boon, e.g. to help with scheduling of interviews and the provision of expertise required for gaining ethics approval, gathering and analysing evaluation data.

> Researchers need to recognise that instant change will be unlikely and evaluation of longitudinal effects should be their aspiration.

> Starting a partnership often comes as a consequence of being willing to try different forms of communication (e.g. using a combination of face-to-face, electronic and phone contact).

The seed funding award scheme represented a move away from an ad hoc relationship between researchers and their publics towards a more strategic approach. Our aims were twofold: to improve the quality and raise the profile of the funded projects; and to provide examples for other researchers that illustrate the benefits of effective planning and evaluation to improve performance.

In practice, the funded projects reported several benefits of engaging stakeholders with their research. It made researchers aware of the scope they had for taking proactive action to engage stakeholders and it heightened the importance of engaging stakeholders regularly.

Cricklade Floodplain Meadow, one of the sites of the seed funded projects. Credit: Mike Dodd and Emma Rothero

RESOURCES

Hartnett, E. Clough, G and Adams, A. (2015). 'Evaluating ways of capturing engagement processes.' *Engaging Research Blog*. Milton Keynes: The Open University.
Available from: http://www.open.ac.uk/blogs/per/?p=5851

Oates, J., Mengoni, S. and Bardsley, J. (2015). 'Engaging publics in developing key working for families with children and young people with SEND.' *Engaging Research Blog*. Milton Keynes: The Open University.
Available from: http://www.open.ac.uk/blogs/per/?p=5849

Rothero, E., Davies, G. and McGinlay, J. (2015). 'Assessing the impact of advice given to site managers for the management of floodplain meadows'. *Engaging Research Blog*. Milton Keynes: The Open University.
Available from: http://www.open.ac.uk/blogs/per/?p=5843

The rationale for the scheme, application forms, assessment criteria for the seed funding scheme are available at:
http://www.open.ac.uk/blogs/per/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Seedfunding-resource.pdf

Lessons learned

Richard Holliman

We have interleaved some of the lessons learned through our work, e.g. each of our Stories of Change includes a summary of key reflections. Here we list important lessons not addressed elsewhere in our report.

Engaged leadership

In the Leadership Story of Change I briefly outlined our approach to engaged leadership, informed by distributed knowledge exchange. This approach has its merits but it is not without its challenges. The main challenge to working in an engaged way is communicating effectively. Making your thinking visible to create a shared understanding is the touchstone for this approach, but this can be a very real challenge when working with multiple stakeholders, speaking from different backgrounds.

A second key challenge is addressing the perspectives of researchers who see the engaged research agenda as an imposition or an irrelevance. In these instances, I've relied on two strategies: 1) using examples where engagement has improved research to make an argument for planning effectively; 2) to locate at least one key stakeholder, user community or public that the researcher already values to inform that planning process. As my knowledge and experience of engagement beyond the sciences has grown I've found it easier to draw on relevant examples. However, this is still no guarantee of success.

It follows that I see one of the fundamental tenets of engagement as process over outcome or product. Alternatively, conducting an engagement process should not and will not, if conducted effectively and fairly, guarantee a pre-defined outcome. Having said this, for engagement processes to be meaningful they should have some form of outcomes, outputs, 'legacies'[11] and/or products, ideally ones that work for the various participants in the engagement processes.

Evidence-based change

Our Initial Diagnostic Exploration was a particularly valuable exercise. The evidence we gleaned helped to raise the profile of our PER Catalyst, and gave OU researchers the chance to contribute to the project's action research-informed methodology. Now published (Grand, Davies et al. 2015; 2014), the preliminary findings were used as learning points to inform many of our subsequent interventions.

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11 Keri Facer, from the University of Bristol, has talked of the significance of legacies arising from the AHRC-funded Connected Communities programme (http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/Funding-Opportunities/Research-funding/Connected-Communities/Pages/Connected-Communities.aspx).

Culture change is not a linear process

There are a number of risks associated with the embedding process, not least ensuring that all parties have at least some level of shared understanding and value(s) that are sufficiently compatible to facilitate cooperation and collaboration. Without these fundamental commonalities engaged research will struggle to flourish.

Capacity and capabilities are two further issues for sustainability within the OU and across the HE sector. There is a much greater awareness of the nature and challenges of engaging research, and an increasing desire to participate. To become embedded requires sufficient numbers of staff with the capabilities to critically engage with a rapidly-developing agenda to commit to embedding engaged research within their careers.

It was always clear that the PER Catalyst team could not achieve these ambitious aims on its own. The embedding agenda demands a more distributed approach, much of which is outside the direct control of the PER Catalyst, including: external clarity on the descriptions of engaged research and routine assessments of quality (e.g. in assessing grant proposals); agreement to change promotion criteria; and approval to develop a Business Case for upgrading OU blogging software.

The Snakes and Ladders of Social Media Design Team: L–R, Helen Donelan, Anne Grand, Peter Devine, Richard Holliman.
Photo: Gareth Davies

Partnerships

Richard Holliman

Partnership working is at the heart of an engaged research culture and many OU researchers have established partnerships with relevant stakeholders, user communities and publics. We have also developed partnerships through our project, several of which are described in our Stories of Change.

We have worked productively with two of the OU's three Doctoral Training Partnerships, delivering engaged research training to arts and humanities (e.g. Holliman, 2014b; 2013b) and environmental researchers (e.g. Holliman, Lawson, et al. 2015; Holliman, 2015b), respectively.

We have also engaged productively with the NCCPE, the seven other PER Catalyst universities, and the RCUK Public Engagement with Research Unit, e.g. working collaboratively to prepare and present workshops and presentations (e.g. Featherstone, et al. 2013; 2012; Holliman, Featherstone and Frost, 2015; Holliman, 2014c).

More specifically, we have worked with the Institute of Education (principally Sandy Oliver) and the NCCPE (principally Sophie Duncan) as they have developed plans for a new journal, *Research for All: Universities and Society*[12]. We look forward to working with them on this important vehicle for publishing the outputs from engaged research.

Members of the PER Catalyst also contributed to a successful business case securing Higher Education Innovation Funding (HEIF) for a partnership between the OU and the educational charity The Brilliant Club. Initially, this partnership ran as a pilot for 12 months; favourable reviews have extended this work and led to discussions about a possible Knowledge Transfer Partnership. Members of the PER Catalyst team negotiated with teaching staff at a school in Milton Keynes to run a pilot exercise, involving the Brilliant Club. The pilot involved two postgraduate researchers and 16 Key Stage 5 pupils. Gareth Davies and Richard Holliman are currently analysing the data from this pilot evaluation. Richard Holliman is also a member of the Working Group, supporting this partnership beyond the initial pilot.

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12 *Research for All: Universities and Society*: http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/work-with-us/current-projects/research-all-journal

Impact

Richard Holliman and Anne Adams

Any research proposal submitted to one of the UK's seven Research Councils is required to complete an Impact Summary and Pathways to Impact plan. Our project was no different in this respect. Ironically, given the nature of our work, our plans for impact do differ from a standard grant, however, in that our primary impacts have been aimed at changing academic strategy and practices, with a view to generating secondary, long-term change in how researchers engage with stakeholders, user communities and publics.

Impact within The Open University

We have introduced measures to influence short and long-term change in the ways Open University research is planned, supported and conceptualised by researchers and their publics. We have secured a long-term commitment to 'engaged research' (Holliman and Holti, 2014), e.g. through our commitment to the NCCPE's Manifesto for Public Engagement (NCCPE, 2010a), and by embedding this concept through a shared university-wide definition which is central to our future Research Plan (e.g. Bassindale, 2015) and the annual planning rounds for our Faculties and Institutes. More pragmatically, members of the PER Catalyst team have retained leadership roles (with workload allocations) beyond the funded period for our project to support researchers as they plan for and collect evidence of research impact. We have also upgraded the OU's infrastructure in support of digitally-mediated forms of engagement.

We have changed our promotion criteria to include Knowledge Exchange profiles. Academics across the institution have the opportunity to plan their careers to evidence excellence in engaged research, with training programmes emphasising these benefits (e.g. Holliman, 2015b)[13]. The legacy of our Award Scheme, described in one of our Stories of Change, will be an equivalent scheme to recognise and reward excellence in planning for and generating impact from Open University research. Furthermore, whilst there is still work to be done to embed this across all academic units, some areas now routinely require applicants for academic jobs to 'demonstrate a good record of demonstrable research impact, commensurate with stage of career' as either an essential or desirable criterion.

In terms of professional development we have made more than 60 interventions with more than 1,100 researchers[14], directly supporting a further 37 research proposals with bespoke advice and support[15]. We have also successfully secured funding for engaged research, including our RCUK-funded School-University Partnership Initiative partnership with the Denbigh Teaching School Alliance (EP/K027786/1) and a NERC-funded Innovation Award to support the CENTA Doctoral Training Partnership Consortium (NE/L002493/1).

13 Member of the OU's PER Catalyst team will continue to provide professional development opportunities for OU researchers. We have also used the 2015 CROS and PIRLS surveys to collect data from researchers on the impact of our project. These data are currently being analysed. Findings from the 2013 surveys have been published (Grand, Davies et al. 2015; 2014).
14 This figure includes a small number of postgraduate researchers from beyond the OU, e.g. through work with the NERC-funded and AHRC-funded CHASE Doctoral Training Programmes.
15 Members of the project team, principally Holliman and McKerlie, also made significant contributions to the OU's submission to the Research Excellence Framework (REF 2014).
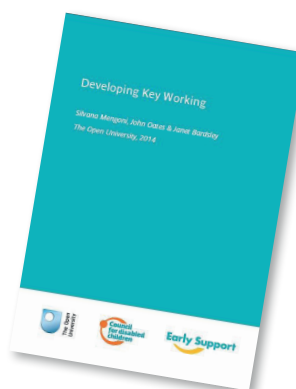
The resources generated through this programme of professional development will be incorporated into the OU's new Academic Professional Development Framework. They include:

> online resources supporting researchers engaging with publics through technology (Collins, Grand, et al. 2015);

> a board game to support researchers as they explore how social media could support forms of engaged research (Grand, Donelan et al. 2015);

> a pamphlet supporting how researchers conceptualise publics (Mahony, 2015);

> an archive of engaged research seminars delivered by leading experts in the field of engaged research (http://weblab.open.ac.uk/catalyst/per-seminars), which have been viewed by more than 14,500 people;

> a series of case studies describing different approaches to generating and collecting evidence of research impact (Hartnett, Clough and Adams, 2015; Oates, Mengoni and Bardsley, 2015; Rothero, Davies and McGinlay, 2015).

These resources are licensed under Creative Commons to promote sharing and re-use.

Impact beyond the Open University

The influence of our work goes beyond The Open University, to include wider policies and governance of engaged research. For example, our work has informed the Department of Business Innovation and Skills, e.g. when members of the team contributed to the national consultation, and through a series of invited workshops to collaboratively shape the Charter for UK Science and Society (Hodges and Folkes, 2014) and giving evidence to a Sciencewise-sponsored report on responsible research and innovation (Raman, 2014).

Members of the team have also worked extensively with the NCCPE, e.g. contributing research evidence as part of a wider HEFCE consultation about the introduction of assessments of research impact helping to extend the definition to include 'effects and changes' alongside benefits. Members of the team have also informed NCCPE-coordinated continuing professional development programmes, and the Engaged Futures Consultation.

Our work has influenced funders, e.g. through invited contributions to RCUK and all seven component Research Councils. To illustrate the point, members of the OU team were invited by RCUK to contribute evidence through the Concordat Working Group to the cross-Research Council Harmonisation Programme around Pathways to Impact Assessments. This led to revised guidance being issued to UK universities.

Looking beyond the immediate impacts from the current project, members of the OU team were invited by RCUK to comment on their plans to fund an additional round of culture change projects. Through this work we have engaged with universities across the sector, e.g. most recently involving ten research-intensive universities applying for RCUK Catalyst Seed Funding. Members of the OU team have also worked with the Institute of Education and the NCCPE as they have developed plans for a new journal, *Research for All: Universities and Society*. Recently, Collins and Holliman have agreed to take on roles in support of the journal's Editorial Board.

Taken together, these impacts represent continuing progress for a project that was completed in March 2015. Staff at The Open University will continue to update the ResearchFish entry for our PER Catalyst project over the coming months and years.

Developing Key Working (Mengoni, Oates and Bardsley, 2014)

Planning for sustainability

Astrid Wissenburg

The Open University's approach to sustainability has been to embed engaged research within future strategic planning and the operational practices of researchers at all levels. We will continue to mainstream engaged research as a core part of our research culture, promoting a progressive vision across the HE sector by engaging meaningfully with relevant stakeholders, user communities and members of the public.

Our PER Catalyst has been very successful in meeting the overall objective of embedding engaged research as documented in this report, thereby positioning the University for its next step in its sustainability strategy: further mainstreaming of the PER Catalyst's work within our faculties and institutes, and the integration of engaged research within routine working practices of OU researchers.

Open University research shaping the future

Our charter documents The Open University's commitment to the advancement and dissemination of learning and knowledge by teaching and research. It is on these foundations that we have built our commitment to engaged research as signatory of the NCCPE's Manifesto for Public Engagement.

Our planning for sustainability beyond March 2015 is demonstrated by our new Research Plan and its ambitious vision:

Research Shaping the Future

Open University research will transform lives by meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century and promoting social justice.

We will be ranked among the UK's top forty universities for the excellence of our research.

Our research will achieve global influence through open and innovative forms of knowledge sharing, supported by digital technologies.

Our research will continue to inform our curriculum and underpin an outstanding learning experience for all our students.

We will support, develop and value all of our research community in a sustainable environment that fosters creativity and collaboration.

Extracts from The Open University's Research Plan

This vision was developed through extensive consultation with the academic community, including members of the PER Catalyst. Such an approach demonstrates the grassroot commitment to engaged research at The Open University.

Our Research Plan has three priorities:

i. The Open University will build our position for the next Research Excellence Framework exercise. This includes ensuring the OU's research has economic and societal impact through the conduct of engaged research.

ii. We will create a focus on strategic research areas. These areas address twenty-first century challenges where the OU has a critical mass of internationally-recognised expertise, and where it can make a strong impact in social, cultural, economic or policy arenas.

iii. We will improve the environment for research at the OU. This includes a commitment to improved leadership and resourcing of impact, both centrally and in faculties, and to appropriate academic professional development.

We continue to acknowledge the need to recognise and reward staff for their excellent work; valuing, incentivising and supporting engaged research has been a key objective in this respect. The introduction of new staff promotion criteria (see the Stories of Change) demonstrates the value the University puts on engaged research through the inclusion of knowledge exchange profiles. The University will carefully monitor the effectiveness of the new criteria. We will continue to celebrate success in engaged research through Impact Awards, building on the lessons learned from the Engaging Research Award Scheme. Supporting all of this is the OU's new Academic Professional

Development Framework, which allows the University to analyse and take a strategic view on all professional development available across all four 'pillars': Knowledge Exchange; Research; Learning and Teaching; and Leadership.

The OU has chosen not to develop separate central support structures for engaged research, but to embed support within its Research and Enterprise Office. We have established an 'Impact Lead' in this office, working alongside those supporting research and knowledge exchange activities and bidding. Central funding for dedicated activities will likewise be embedded in existing funds, e.g. through the OUs HEIF budgets and its central research fund.

At faculty level, engaged research is embedded as part of faculties' and institutes' impact strategies, including a network of faculty impact champions[16]. The OU's business planning process includes consideration of actions on engaged research using the EDGE tool assessment NCCPE 2010b to better understand faculty/institute ambitions and objectives going forward. This allows for a discipline appropriate approach to impact generating activities, including engaged research, whilst the network of impact champions provides opportunities for both best practice sharing and coordination.

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16 Members of the PER Catalyst supported the annual business planning process for the nine faculties and institutes and the Research, Scholarship and Quality Unit in 2013-2014, 2014-2015 and 2015-2016, commenting on strategy and support mechanisms for engaged research.

Conclusions and recommendations

Richard Holliman

Introducing institutional change

The first question a university needs to ask when starting out on a culture change project is, 'Do we need to change?' If the answer is yes, it can go on to ask 'What needs to change, and in what order of priority?' One of the biggest challenges facing the Beacons for Public Engagement and the NCCPE in 2008 was the lack of tools to make these assessments. Their solution was to develop the EDGE Tool (2010b).

The EDGE tool provided the coordinating framework for our culture change project. The agreement to use the tool to analyse the OU's pre- and post-Catalyst context for engagement was hard-fought. Academics argued that the tool lacked complexity, proposing a linear model of change. They were correct, but this overplays what the tool was designed to do. In effect, it was developed to surface problems and priorities, not the solutions.

In our experience, the EDGE tool delivered answers to those initial 'starter for ten' questions and we recommend its use to universities across the sector. It is then for academics (and stakeholders) to propose solutions and consider how to achieve them.

Improving quality

When working with researchers, we have focussed on process (over products or outputs) as a driver for change. In effect, we have sought to develop a scholarship of engagement (drawing on Boyer, 1996), a community of reflective practice where engagement can flourish.
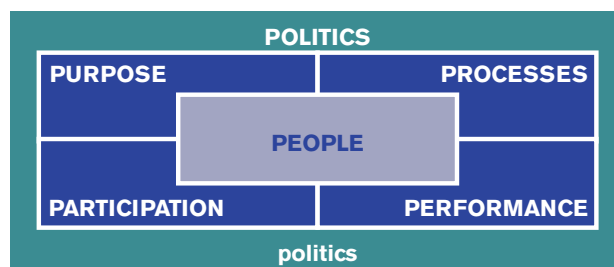

Figure 8: The dimensions of engaged research

We argued consistently that imposing the principles of engaged research on researchers would be counter-productive. Instead we chose to support researchers by inviting them to explore how six dimensions of engagement could apply to their research (adapted from Holliman, 2013a; Figure 8).

People: Who are the stakeholders who could and should be engaging with the research? Has the research been discussed with the stakeholders?

Purposes: What are the aims and objectives of the engaged research? Have the stakeholders been consulted and what they would like the impacts of the research to be?

Processes: How will the research involve relevant stakeholders in meaningful ways? When, and how often, will stakeholders be involved? Where are these interventions likely to take place, and through what mechanisms?

Participation: What measures are proposed for exploring how the stakeholders and researchers participated?

Performance: What measures are proposed to explore the quality of the engagement processes? How will the findings be used to improve future practice, and shared with other stakeholders and researchers?

Politics: Has the researcher taken into account the wider context for engaged research and the localised political context of the stakeholders involved with the research?

Assessing quality

In spite of concerted efforts against this direction of travel (for discussion, see Watermeyer, 2012), the mainstreaming of engaged research was always destined to become enmeshed with the agenda for research impact. As such, it will only be prioritised on a sustainable basis if researchers:

1. Generate funds to cover the costs for them, their stakeholders, and associated expenses for activities.

2. Produce quality outputs, ideally ones that can be submitted to future sector-wide assessments of research[17].

These requirements place responsibilities on universities, researchers and funders, but also on politicians.

› Researchers need to plan effectively, to focus on process and ensure that they consider the potential to generate both social and economic impacts.

› Universities need to provide support mechanisms for all grades of staff, developing measures for the routine collection of evidence from the impacts of engaged research. Some of this can be achieved through technology. It also requires investment in staff to collect evidence and analyse evidence.

› Funders should provide consistent messaging and ensure that assessors and panels make robust assessments of Pathways to Impact plans. The *significance* of the impacts from engaged research should not be downplayed by the seductive siren of *reach* (Holliman and Davies, 2015); they should be considered in relation to each other. Furthermore, funders should reinforce the mantra that "all pathways to research impact are created equal", allowing assessors to judge the quality of the plans on their merits.

In the final analysis, this is a political agenda. It requires political leadership to give funders the confidence to support excellent, progressive and sustainable approaches that meaningfully engage stakeholders with research to generate emergent benefits, effects and changes.

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17 These outputs may involve research papers, outputs supporting the research underpinning impact case studies, and/or evidence of the impacts from engaged research

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The PER Catalyst Universities with the NCCPE and RCUK PER team, Bedford 2014.

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Embedding public engagement with research within the Higher Education (HE) sector has been, and remains, a priority of the RCUK Public Engagement with Research strategy. RCUK has a vision for a research culture that encourages, values and is supportive of public engagement.

In 2011, when RCUK published the call that supported our project, there was a recognition that work still needed to be done to create a culture that values, recognises and supports public engagement with research, and to support researchers to undertake these activities.

To address this challenge, RCUK asked eight universities to embed public engagement with research within the policies, procedures and practices of their organisations.

As one of the eight Public Engagement with Research Catalyst universities, The Open University was asked to:

> Create a culture where excellent public engagement with research is embedded through:

  » A strategic commitment to public engagement with research,

  » Integration of public engagement with research into the core activities of The Open University, including measuring quality and impact of public engagement with research activities,

  » Reward and recognition of researchers and staff involved in public engagement with research,

  » Encouraging and supporting researchers and staff at all levels to become involved (e.g. by building capacity for public engagement amongst researchers),

  » Creating networks within institutions to share good practice, celebrate their work and ensure that those involved in public engagement with research feel supported,

  » Contribution to a wider network supportive of public engagement with research including the NCCPE, other recipient HEIs and the wider HE community.

> Build on experience from the Beacons for Public Engagement and other HEIs (including grant holders) to develop best practice that recognises the two-way nature of public engagement with research.

This report documents how we responded to this ambitious set of aims and objectives, with the ultimate aim of becoming an open research university.