

University of Dundee

Public Engagement with scholarship and research strategy

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DOI:
[10.20933/100001280](https://doi.org/10.20933/100001280)

Publication date:
2023

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication in Discovery Research Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Hardee, E., Cameron, A., & Stanley-Wall, N. (2023, Mar). Public Engagement with scholarship and research strategy. University of Dundee. <https://doi.org/10.20933/100001280>

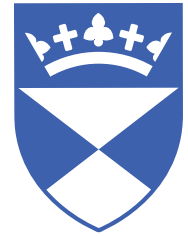
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Public Engagement with scholarship and research strategy



The work we do in the School of Life Sciences significantly impacts people's health, our shared economy, and the environment. Today, making our science accessible through public engagement is part of the responsibility and remit of being a scientist. Public engagement is a way for us to interact with people of all ages and backgrounds and listen to what they say in response; it is by definition a two-way process. It helps build relationships and trust between communities and shows that science is not a closed endeavour, but **open to all**.

Professor Nicola Stanley-Wall, Academic Lead for Public Engagement in the School of Life Sciences



Our Vision

Our vision is to enable researchers and scholars to connect with society for mutual benefit.

Our Aims

- Build on our partnerships to deliver a high-quality, innovative engagement programme.
- Engage a diverse range of people and ensure our engagement approaches follow best practices in inclusivity and accessibility.
- Regularly listen to local and global communities to ensure our mutual needs are met.
- Promote and support a culture of active participation in public engagement within our life sciences community and that of the broader university.
- Ensure our engagement work is financially sustainable and environmentally responsible.

Our Context

The University of Dundee is a triple intensive institution with social purpose at its core. The three components are research, education, and engagement. This activity is underpinned by the University Mission to 'transform lives through the creation, sharing and application of knowledge'.

The University Strategy runs from 2022 to 2027. Our activity will feed directly into building on our reputation as a leader in public engagement.

More widely, our key funders have developed new strategies that mirror many of the University of Dundee's approaches. This includes an increased focus on equity and inclusion, sustainability, and net zero, and bringing a broader range of people into the research sphere.

Our activity also supports the Scottish Government STEM Education and Training Strategy (2017 - 2022) which was refreshed in 2022 to extend its remit until 2024. This includes the following actions:

- Increasing access to public science engagement events
- Maintaining our research excellence in our universities
- Delivering up-to-date advice and information on STEM careers





Our Approach

- Ensure that our engagement programme aligns with the world-class expertise of the School of Life Sciences.
- Enrich our public engagement programme by continuing collaborations with organisations, community and patient groups, and local schools by:
 - building on our existing partnerships to create innovative public engagement projects.
 - maintaining partnership agreements to ensure equitable and effective working methods.
 - working with organisations to ensure our activities align with existing science and technology education support across Scotland and the Curriculum for Excellence.
 - developing, implementing, and managing a work experience programme for school pupils from traditionally under-engaged backgrounds.
- Embed science communication and public engagement courses into the undergraduate and postgraduate curriculum.
- Encourage collaboration and share best practices by acting as a point of contact for all School public engagement activities.
- Ensure that we are working sustainably and aligning with the School's Sustainability Action Plan.
- Ensure our activities are appropriately funded to allow for the longevity of the outputs.
- Work with the school management team to continue to embed public engagement in the School culture and operational plans.
- Work with Human Resources to continue to embed reward and recognition mechanisms for public engagement.
- Ensure University and Government policies and procedures are followed correctly.
- Continue to develop and utilise the best methods for evaluating our activities.
- Highlight the advantages that taking part in public engagement can have for professional development and career progression.
- Celebrate excellence in public engagement and support colleagues in their activities.
- Encourage participation in externally recognised schemes such as the University's Dundee Plus Award and the STEM Ambassadors Scheme.
- Share our knowledge with and learn from the wider engagement community through publications in peer-reviewed journals, attendance at conferences and events, and by using other dissemination methods.
- Record our activities on the Discovery Portal and support researchers to include their own activities.

Our Resources

- A school-wide support structure for public engagement that links into the central public engagement team. This includes:
 - an Academic Lead for Public Engagement
 - a Schools Outreach Officer
 - a Public Engagement & Communications Officer
 - a Public Engagement Champion for each Division
 - and may also include Divisional specific public engagement professional support
- A monthly drop-in session in the School with the Schools Outreach Officer and Public Engagement & Communications Officer for informal enquiries.
- Public engagement training for staff and postgraduate students that develop skills and confidence when undertaking engagement activities. Many of the training courses are offered through the University Organisational and Professional Development offering allowing formal recognition in training records.
- Public engagement opportunities to the Life Sciences undergraduate community by providing formal training and access to participate in events.
- Regular communications about public engagement opportunities both within Life Sciences and the broader University community.
- Access to LifeSpace, which provides a space for engagement as a venue for exhibitions or events.
- Funding for public engagement activities and training.
- Support for researchers when including engagement activities in external grant funding applications. This includes a guidance document, feedback for lay abstracts and developing feasible plans to share the research covered in the grant.
- A database of activities and participants to allow reporting and to allow reward and recognition of contributions.
- An external-facing website of accessible science activities for the public
- Training courses on a range of public engagement topics
- Short, animated films on accessibility and inclusivity in public engagement
- A suite of online resources to support those undertaking engagement activities. This includes:
 - planning checklists
 - evaluations strategies
 - risk assessments
 - navigation to external resources available for supporting and funding public engagement
- Written case studies and documentation for reporting to external organisations such as Research Excellence Framework and ResearchFish databases.

Closing Remarks

As we implement our strategy we will value input from our School, the wider University, and our partners and communities. We will review and update this Strategy every five years through consultation with the wider School of Life Sciences and the broader university community. Contact us by email: SLS-PublicEngagement@dundee.ac.uk

Terms of Reference

University Strategy: <https://www.dundee.ac.uk/strategy>

UKRI Strategy: <https://www.ukri.org/publications/ukri-strategy-2022-to-2027/ukri-strategy-2022-to-2027/>

Wellcome Strategy: <https://wellcome.org/who-we-are/strategy>

Scottish Government STEM Education and Training Strategy (2017 – 2022) extended to 2024:
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/stem-education-training-strategy-refresh/pages/1/>

How this document was prepared

This document builds on and replaces the previous School of Life Sciences Public Engagement Strategy (<https://doi.org/10.20933/100001156>). The content draws on contributions from the School of Life Sciences community and on current best practices in the field.

Nicola Stanley-Wall, Amy Cameron and Erin Hardee

