



Towards an engaging research culture

Professor Richard Holliman

<http://www.open.ac.uk/people/rmh47>

@science_engage

Holliman, R. (2016). 'Towards an engaging research culture'. Leadership for Engaged Research: Sharing Practices, Embedding Principles, Improving Quality Workshop. Hosted at Otago Museum. Organised by University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand, 11 November.

Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research

A set of principles drawn up by the Funders of
Research in the UK

1. A strategic commitment to engaged research
2. Researchers are recognised and valued for excellent engaged research
3. Appropriate training, support and opportunities
4. Regular reviews of sector's progress

RCUK, 2010





The aims of the eight Public Engagement with Research Catalysts were to create a culture within the grant holding HEIs where **excellent** public engagement with research is **formalised and embedded**.

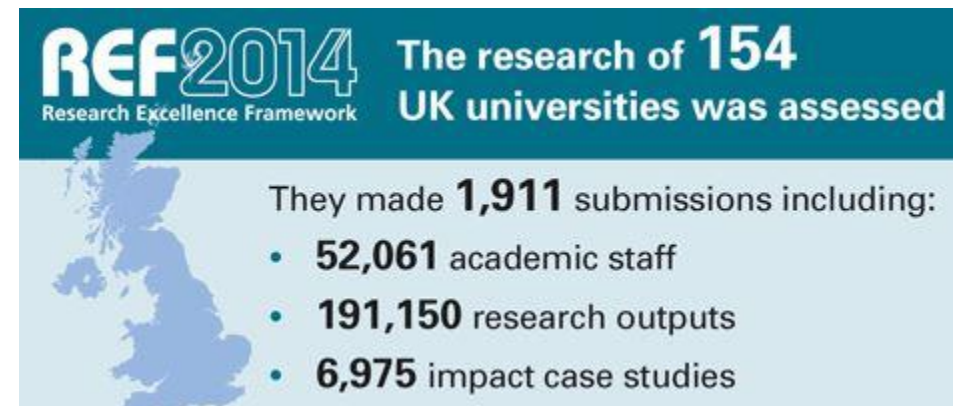
[RCUK, 2012](#)

1. Why bother to embed engagement?

- ‘Carrots’
 - idealism; ‘epistemic justice’
 - Who should have a ‘voice’ in research?
 - because you see some value in the approach or outcomes
- ‘Sticks’
 - instrumentalism
 - audit reporting requirements
 - links (in)directly to funding
 - NZ PBRF vs. UK REF



[@FabienMedvecky](#)



[REF, 2014](#)

2. Why bother to embed engagement within research?

- To improve the quality of your research
- To improve the impacts arising from the research for those who participate in its production and those affected by the outcomes

Holliman *et al.*, in press

Holliman and Warren, in press

- Reputational risk

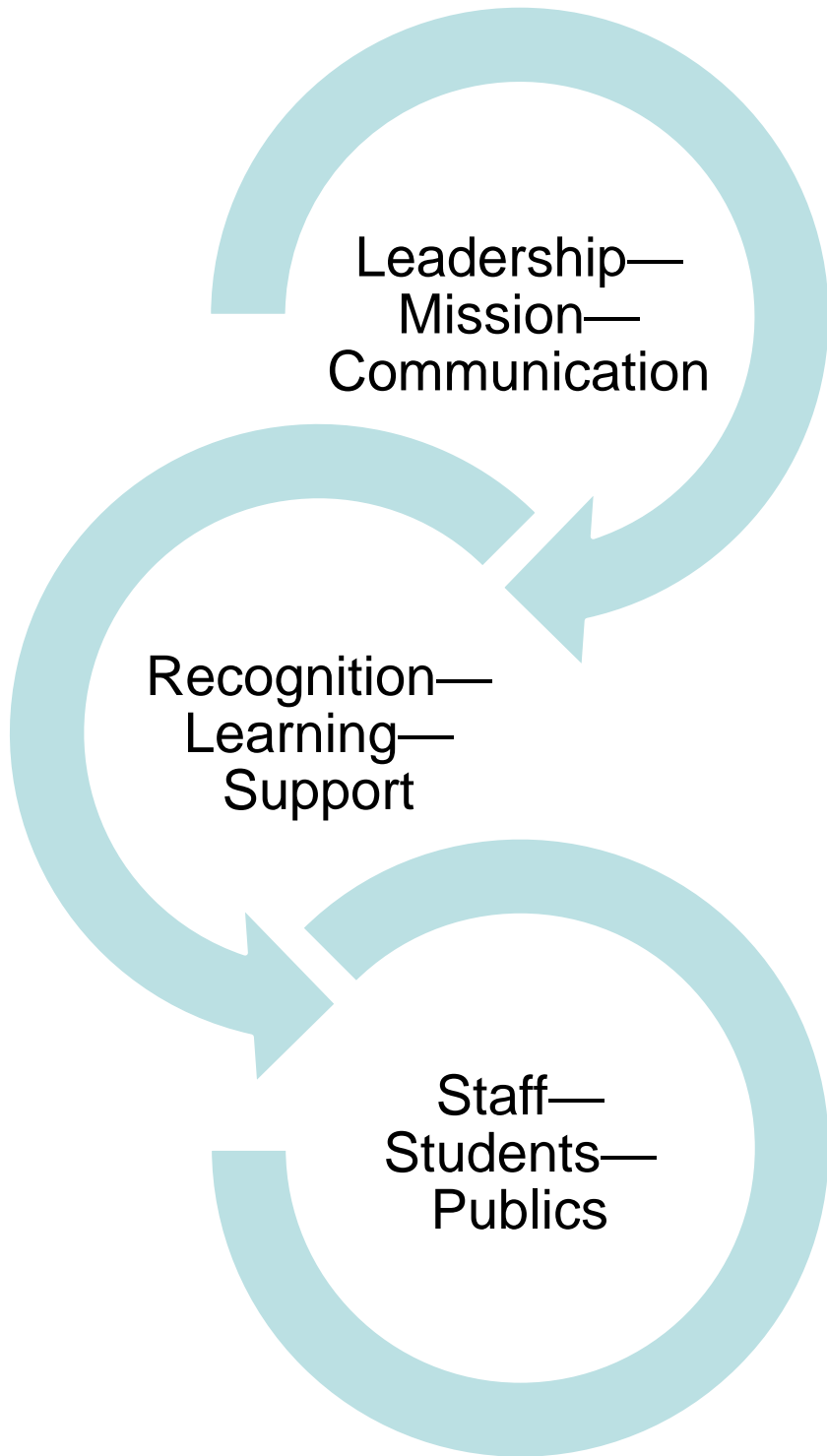
3. Why bother to embed engagement?



The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of The Guardian website. It includes a user profile for 'RichardHolliman', a 'subscribe' button, a search icon, and links for 'jobs', 'dating', 'more', and 'UK edition'. The main header features the 'theguardian' logo with the tagline 'website of the year'. Below this is a horizontal menu with categories: 'UK', 'world', 'politics', 'sport', 'football', 'opinion', 'culture', 'business', 'lifestyle', 'fashion', 'environment', 'tech', and 'travel'. A 'home' link is also present. The main content area displays a headline: 'Impact of research: Brexit exposed deep rifts in Britain. Universities can help heal them'. Below the headline is a sub-headline: 'Students and staff are leaving the lecture theatres and reaching out to those in their communities who need it most'.

- Communication was not a sufficient solution

From personal motivation to institutional support



An Open Research University



Richard Holliman	Gareth Davies	Fiona McKerlie
Anne Adams	Sally Dibb	Nick Mahory
Tim Blackman	Ann Grand	Astrid Wissenburg
Trevor Collins	Richard Hotti	



Holliman et al., 2015

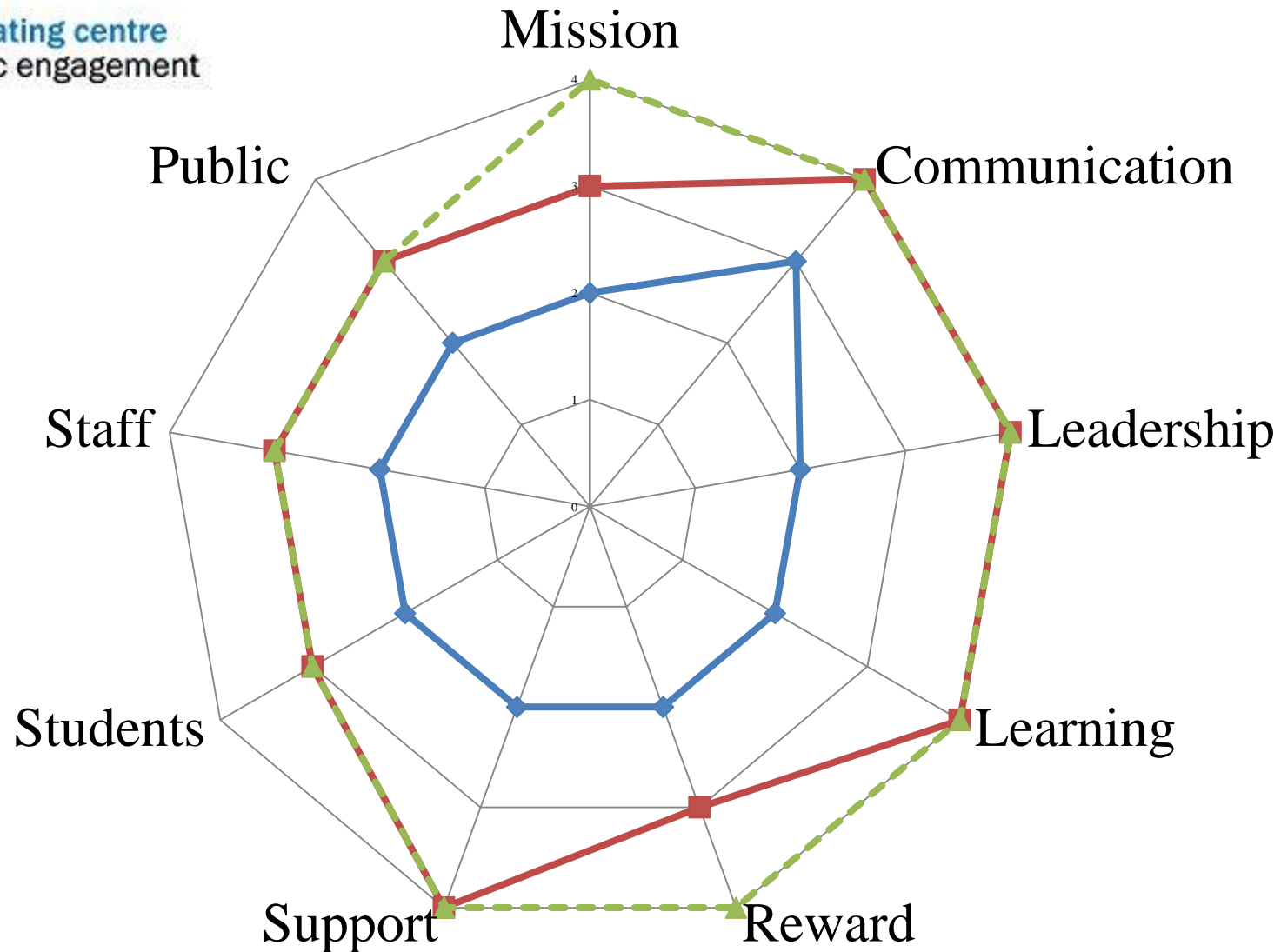
Has your institution got the EDGE?



- Purpose: leadership; mission; communication
- Process: learning; support; recognition
- People: staff; students; publics

- Embryonic; Developing; Gripping; Embedding

- Where are 'you' now?
- Where do you want to be in 3 years?
- What would you prioritise?



—◆— How embedded was engaged at the Open University in Nov 2011?

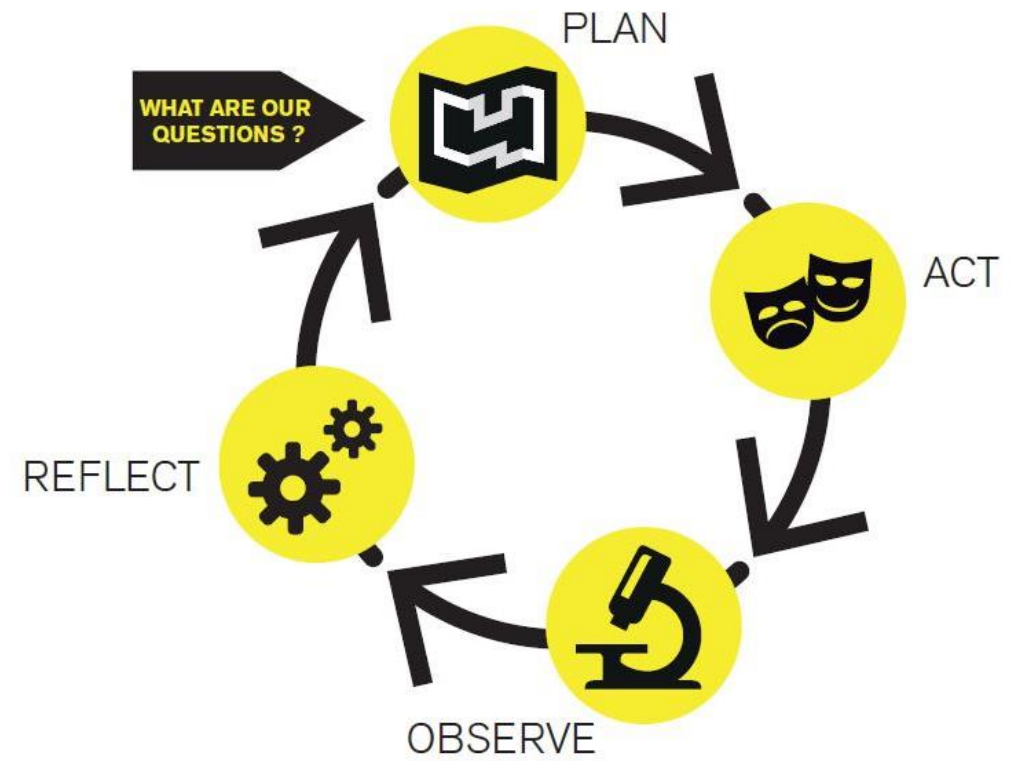
—■— Where did we hope to be by March 2015?

—▲— How embedded is engaged at the Open University in Mar 2015?

Holliman,
et al., 2015

Action Research Design

- literature review
- analysis of key strategic documents
- institution-wide survey (n=171)
- interviews with senior staff (n=15)
- analysis informs interventions



[Grand et al., 2015](#)

What is public engagement with research?



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Mapping Public Engagement with Research in a UK University

Ann Grand^{1*}, Gareth Davies², Richard Holliman², Anne Adams¹

In fewer than 150 words, how would you define 'public engagement with research'?

[Grand et al., 2015](#)

What is public engagement with research?

Code	Description	%	n
Dissemination	<i>Dissemination/communication/presentation</i> : Through appropriate language and a variety of one-way communications, ensuring wider (e.g. non-academic) audiences can receive information about the process of research and research findings; outreach; talks/lectures; explaining, clarifying, translating, simplifying or educating.	32	54
Collaboration	<i>Collaboration/participation/consultation</i> : Involving people in research from the inception of projects; affording people the opportunity to understand, participate and shape research priorities and the design of projects; consulting groups that want to do something with the research.	11	19
Dialogue	<i>Dialogue/exchange of ideas</i> : Engaging in dialogue or exchanging ideas with a diverse range of audiences/user groups/specialist researchers/interested parties/publics; enhancing mutual benefit by listening/participating in ways that help shape/reshape the social demand and understanding of research; influencing policy.	8	14
Useful	<i>Demonstrating the usefulness/benefits of research</i> : Demonstrating the importance of research; enhancing people's understanding of how research can affect their community and improve their lives (e.g. offering economic benefits); demonstrate economic value of research.	7	13
Functional	<i>Functional/strategic/occupational</i> : Sustaining resources and concrete targets in research projects; training researchers in engagement; offering media support; meeting institutional targets for public engagement; a defined part of the job role.	4	6
Non-participation	Antithetical/negative/dismissive views about public engagement with research.	1	2
Don't know	Responses given as 'don't know' or similar.	2	4
Unclassifiable	Responses that did not include a definition.	8	13
No answer	Respondents left the question blank.	27	46
Total		100	171

doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0121874.t001

[Grand et al., 2015](#)

See also [Jensen and Holliman, 2016](#); [TNS BMRB, 2015](#)

selected interview questions

- Who are the publics your researchers engage with?
- What examples of public engagement with research are you aware of within your unit?
- What level of success do you think these examples are achieving?

communication vs. engagement

“I think we should be much more proactive in defending large-scale public engagement, **including broadcast work**”

Interview with Associate Dean, Research

“I've been really shocked by at various levels across the university is the lack of understanding between **dissemination and impact** [...] it's not the same...

Interview with Associate Dean, Research

OU definition of engaged research

Engaged research encompasses the different ways that researchers meaningfully interact with various stakeholders¹ 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.

- Is engagement a valid career option?
- What needs to change to make engagement aspirational?

[Holliman, 2015](#)



THE WORLD UNIVERSITY RANKINGS

HOME NEWS COMMENT FEATURES BOOKS RANKINGS AWARDS JOBS SUMM

HOME PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT MEANS 'SACRIFICING' ACADEMIC CAREER

Public engagement means 'sacrificing' academic career

Perception that time should be spent improving research progress

July 9 2015

BY PAUL JUMP
FOLLOW AUTHOR ON PAULJUMP

f t in



quality and (lack of) recognition

“...there’s a conflicting degree of un-clarity as to how you **measure** these things...

I think it’s fair to say that we probably **slightly under appreciate people** who do that type of activity but probably no more than we under appreciate people who excel in research...”

Interview with Associate Dean, Research

reward and recognition: drivers for quality & career progression

- **External**
 - REF 2014: 20% on the impact agenda
 - reviews of grant proposals (and papers)
 - accreditation and/or charter schemes?
- **Internal**
 - promotion criteria: knowledge exchange
 - awards scheme
 - seed funding schemes
 - workload management
- **Individual**
 - career development and appraisals
 - opportunities and training
 - mentoring and support mechanisms

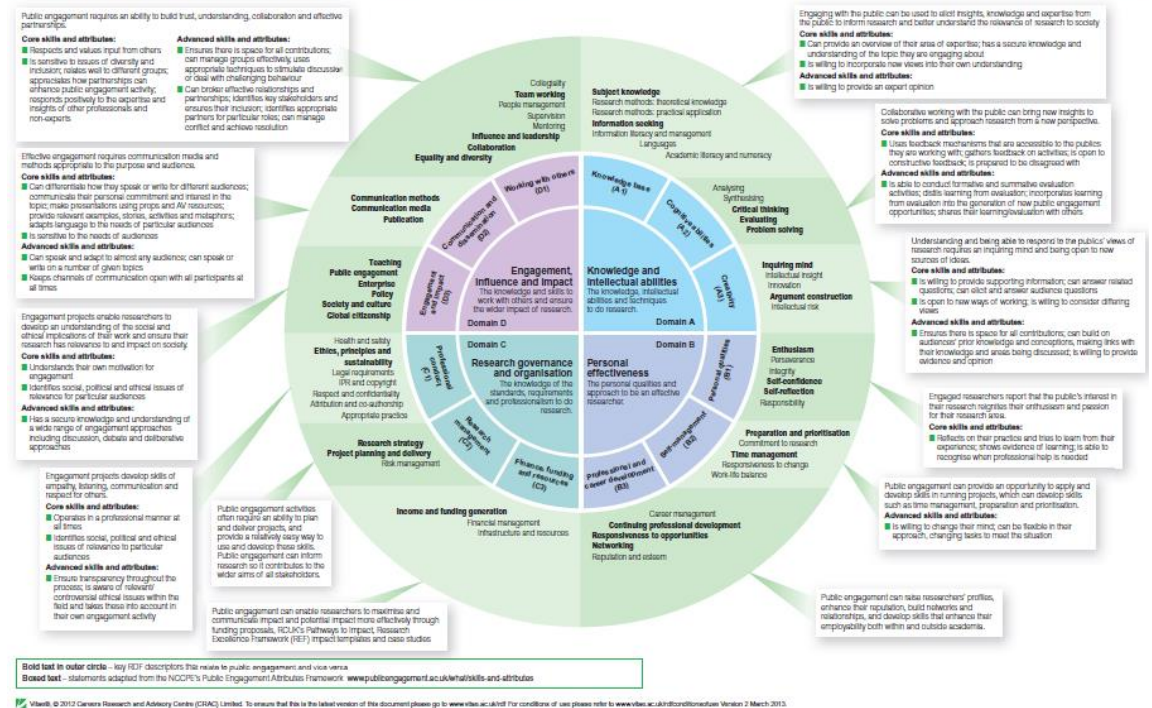
Career development and progression

- Recruitment to Research Leadership
- Training
- Support
- Recognition

Recruitment & Leadership

- Do the Advance Skills look useful to you as a Research Leader?
- Is there anything obvious missing?
- What Basic Skills would you look for in a researcher?

Public engagement lens on the Vitae Researcher Development Framework

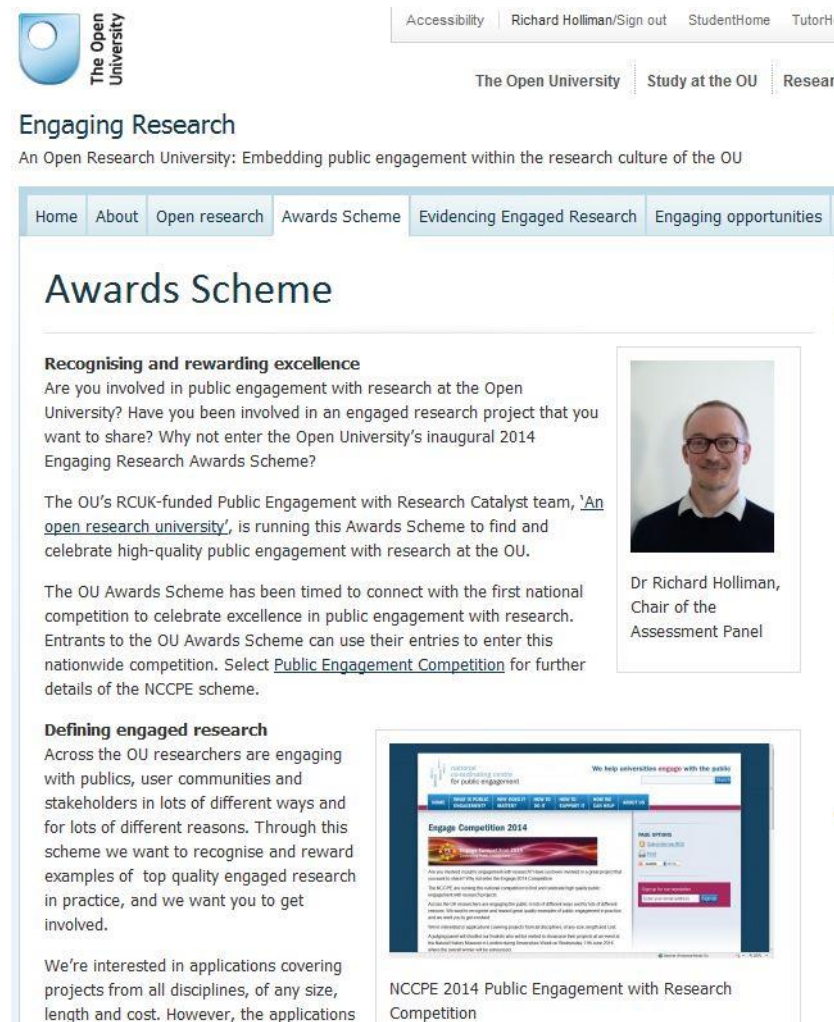


Training and support

- Communication
 - representation, mediation, identity collaboration, etc.
- Engagement
 - who, why, how, when (how often), to what ends, etc.
- Mentoring and collaboration

Recognition: award scheme

- What measures can be used proposed to explore the quality of engaged research?
- What criteria/metrics should be used to assess excellence?
- How will the findings be used to improve future practice, and shared with other researchers?
- Do we have a shared understanding of what we're assessing?



The screenshot shows the 'Engaging Research' webpage. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'Accessibility', 'Richard Holliman/Sign out', 'StudentHome', and 'TutorHr'. Below this is the Open University logo and the text 'The Open University | Study at the OU | Research'. The main heading is 'Engaging Research' with the subtext 'An Open Research University: Embedding public engagement within the research culture of the OU'. A secondary navigation bar includes 'Home', 'About', 'Open research', 'Awards Scheme', 'Evidencing Engaged Research', and 'Engaging opportunities'. The 'Awards Scheme' section is highlighted. It features a sub-heading 'Recognising and rewarding excellence' followed by a paragraph asking if the user is involved in public engagement with research at the Open University. A photo of Dr. Richard Holliman, Chair of the Assessment Panel, is shown. Below this is a paragraph about the OU's RCUK-funded Public Engagement with Research Catalyst team. Another paragraph explains the timing of the awards scheme to connect with the first national competition. A section titled 'Defining engaged research' describes the scope of the scheme. At the bottom, there is a screenshot of the 'Engage Competition 2014' website and a caption: 'NCCPE 2014 Public Engagement with Research Competition'.

Engaging Research Award Scheme

- 3 categories

- Research Leaders
- Early Career Researchers
- Postgraduate Researchers

[Holliman et al., 2015](#)

- Assessment criteria
 - two protocols
 - process vs. product

1. Connection to research
2. People
3. Purposes
4. Processes
5. Quality and reflective practices



Promotion

- Single academic contract
- Differentiated profiles
- Knowledge exchange
- Developmental feedback
- Leadership
- Enabling others to succeed
- Three out of six criteria
- Flexibility, not rigid metrics

Dibb and Blackman,
in [Holliman et al., 2015](#)



“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

Summing up...

The battle for engaged research

Researchers

- effective upstream planning
- engaged project management
- full economic costs for all participants
- quality outputs

Universities

- incentivise researchers
- provide support mechanisms for all grades

Funders

- consistent messaging
- quality assurance (assessors and panels)

[Holliman, 2015](#)

So, what do we know?



- Important update of initial 2006 study
- Supported by fifteen major research funders
- Basis for significant additional work & analysis
- In a nutshell – things are getting better, slowly

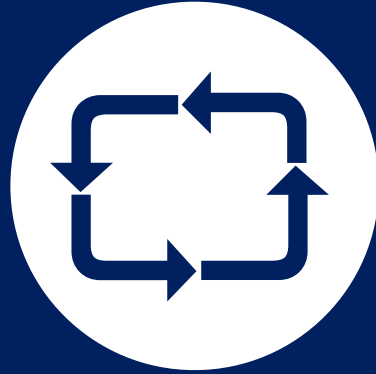


- How has the attitude of STFC's research community changed towards engagement?
- An expert working group reviewed results of interviews and a community survey

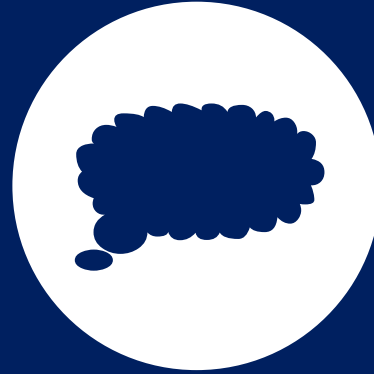
What did we find?



Engagement
is valued



Evaluation should
be better



New ideas need
encouraging



Institutions need to
give support



Time is the major
barrier



Recognition
is patchy



Dedicated funding
is important



Definitions remain
an issue