

Knowledge Exchange Framework Narrative 2023

Public and Community Engagement

Lancaster University is committed to being a force for good and creating positive economic, cultural, societal and environmental change.

Our latest strategic plan places equivalence on engagement, education and research. Our values of respecting each other, building strong communities and creating positive change underpin our long-held commitment to civic, public and community engagement.

We are embedded within a full range of regional, national and international communities whilst participating in, and driving, sustainable regional growth and development. We build innovative, interdependent relationships with key partners and civic leaders to understand needs and contribute expertise and resources.

We support public and community engagement related to, and driven by, research and education; and we facilitate community access to our facilities and cultural assets.

Strategy

Lancaster is a top 15 research-intensive University in a region encompassing urban, rural and coastal communities, and with global strategic partnerships in Malaysia, Ghana, Germany and China. Committed to being a force for good and creating positive economic, cultural, societal and environmental change, we have three priority strategic themes for our place-based engagement encompassing our regional and global communities: inclusive economic growth and major infrastructure projects, developing a regional skills 'ladder of opportunity', and developing the role of our overseas campuses in their local places.

The University's stakeholder groups have been identified through consultation within the University and include regional, national and international organisations across business, arts, health, policy, civic and education related sectors.



We take a stakeholder-informed approach to engagement through:

- Community and stakeholder views gathered via market research, the annual [Lancaster Exchange](#) and events and meetings
- Trusted relationships with partner organisations, underpinned by shared aims set in formal Agreements
- Staff input gathered via departmental and faculty engagement strategies and 'Big Conversations' on topics including sustainability, our values, and our civic role
- Student representatives embedded in key committees
- Staff representation on a range of external bodies, including NHS Trusts, Chambers of Commerce, Schools, FE Colleges, and third sector organisations, resulting in stronger relationships and a better understanding of local needs.

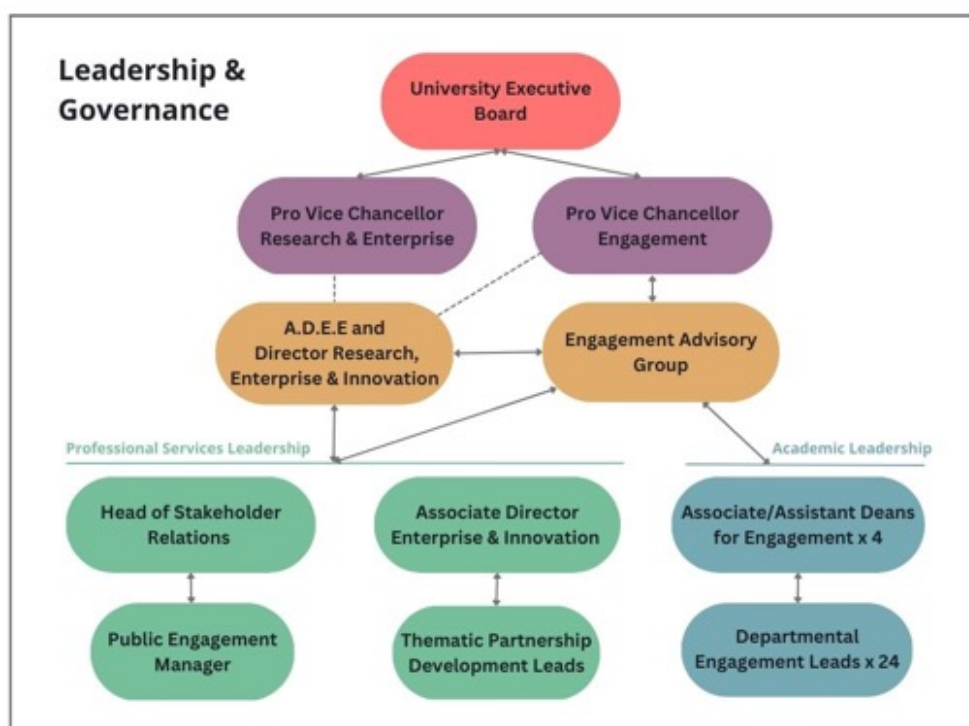
Public and community engagement (PCE) is embedded in the University's [strategic plan](#), published in 2021 following widespread consultation with staff, stakeholders and the local community:

- **Research** that transforms practice and thinking ... driving forward research quality and impact through our **public engagement activities**.
- Engage actively with our communities and partners to co-create positive ... change, and to inform and stimulate our research and teaching.

PCE is also incorporated in Knowledge Exchange (KE) strategies and plans, including the [HEIF Accountability Statement](#) to 2024/5 and the KE Concordat Action Plan. In 2021-22 investment was agreed to build capacity to develop and embed an institutional approach to **Civic, Public and Community Engagement**. Priority activities include:

- Building a PCE implementation strategy, including expert advice, evaluation, training; equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI); and continuous improvement;
- Meeting our responsibilities as a civic university through increased engagement with civic stakeholders and developing partnership agreements
- Delivery of the PCE programme
- Supporting community use of University facilities.

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor Engagement (PVC-E) and Associate Dean for Enterprise and Engagement (ADEE) formally lead institutional engagement. The infographic shows how this leadership is supported and embedded across the University.



In support of our civic and PCE activity, a range of external funding has been awarded including:

- Over £19.5m of highly competitive grants for research projects since 2018 including Beyond Imagination E3, Future Places, H-Unique and [GREAT](#), all embedding public engagement from local to global levels
- Public investment leveraged for Lancashire (£5bn National Cyber Force, £50m Eden Project Morecambe)
- c. £1.8m ESRC and AHRC Impact Acceleration Accounts supporting engagement with the social sciences and arts and humanities
- HEIF investment to support the development of Community and Business Partnerships
- £105K annual Arts Council England NPO funding

Lancaster is committed to creating a fairer and more inclusive University for all staff, students, visitors and our wider university community, where EDI is an integral part of our plans and activities.

Support

The PVC Engagement provides strategic leadership for civic and PCE activity, with aligned professional services support provided via the Stakeholder Relations Team, part of Research and Enterprise Services. Thematic Partnership Development leads support researchers across the range of KE activity, including PCE. A Business Gateway Team acts as first point of contact for business, public sector and community organisations.

Practical support is provided to researchers to engage the public with Lancaster's research and teaching. This includes copy writing and social media support, facilitating opportunities to participate in public events, exhibitions and festivals, and engaging young people in science and the social sciences.

Funding for public and community engagement includes:

- Academic-led public engagement activities
- Wind Turbine Community Fund
- Impact Accelerations Accounts
- Partnership with the local Dukes theatre.

Recognition and Reward

Following widespread consultation, the University launched an Engagement pathway for academic promotions in 2021 which recognises PCE as one of five categories (other categories include Business, Civic and Cultural, and Policy Engagement). Training is offered on an annual basis to support researchers in understanding the requirements of the criteria. In year 1 of the new criteria being implemented, the number of engagement-led promotion cases doubled and 35% researchers who were promoted had engagement as a significant element of their case.

The 'Lancaster Award' recognises the extracurricular activity undertaken by students, including volunteering. Recent winners of Lancaster University staff awards have included colleagues nominated for their work with schools, teachers and the local community.

Training and Development

The University delivers training and development for researchers, including impact and engagement. Other support includes intensive media training, events training and an events network for researchers and professional staff. All staff are required to complete mandatory EDI training.

Ad hoc training is also provided, for example 'Bright Club', supporting academics to share their research through comedy. In 2021, our internal KE resources were brought together on the intranet to make information, policies and advice easier to navigate and access for staff.

The University's 2021 KE Concordat Action Plan identified a number of priority actions relating to PCE, including the development of the training and support offer for Engagement. During 2021-22 researchers were consulted on what support is needed to develop their engagement practice, with PCE identified as a priority area. A three-pronged plan encompasses the development of digital learning resources, commissioning and delivering bespoke training, and establishing a mentoring network. This work is being supported by a dedicated Learning Developer in 2023.

Student volunteers receive safeguarding and bespoke training each year to support a range of community and schools' engagement activities.

Activity

The consultation processes set out in Aspect 1 provide insight into community and stakeholder needs, which include: collaboration as partner and facilitator; contributor to and driver of economic development; developing cultural assets; accessing university expertise; and providing community access to our research and facilities. These have informed the focus of the University's approach. Examples are outlined below.

Working collaboratively with partners and driving economic development

[Eden Project Morecambe](#) (EPM) exemplifies the impact of a university in its place, when harnessed with key partners and an inspiring vision. Originating from engagement with our local community, we have co-led this development as a founding partner and in 2022 contributed strategically to a successful £50M Levelling Up Fund bid led by Lancaster City Council (LCC). Our contribution to wider economic development is detailed in our Local Growth and Regeneration narrative.

More than £200k has been invested in developing the [Morecambe Bay Curriculum](#) since 2020, a community-curated, place-based approach to learning about sustainability. Inspired by plans for EPM, the curriculum aims to ensure that the different stages of the education system provide the green skills, knowledge and behaviours required by industry to respond to the climate emergency. An impact framework is being developed in 2023 to set clear success measures.

The University signed an MOU with LCC in November 2021, including the establishment of an Insights Hub as part of the £13.2m Beyond Imagination project. A key output of the research project is the '[Beyond Imagination Life Survey](#)' which will inform council policy and planning for the future as well as informing future research projects.

Developing Cultural Assets

'The Ruskin – Museum and Research Centre' is home to the leading collection of works by the epoch-defining writer, artist and social thinker John Ruskin and his circle. Arts Council England (ACE) has renewed [Lancaster Arts'](#) National Portfolio funding to March 2026. With a mission to address social and environmental justice through partnerships with communities, artists and the academic community at the University, work includes managing the Mill Race Cultural Programme, including the [FLOW](#) and Butterfly Dream commissions. 40% of the artists were ethnically diverse in 2021/22.

Accessing university expertise: research that transforms practice and thinking

There is a rich tapestry of research-led public and community engagement activity:

- Capacity building projects include [Elie](#) 2.0 focussed on enterprise education in the local community of Morecambe, and the PARTICIPATE programme of online engagement activities with the [RECIRCULATE](#) and ACTUATE projects driving eco-innovation in Africa.
- Continued support for public engagement with science included a fourth successive live exhibit at [Royal Society Summer Science](#) (RS SSE) Exhibition in July 2022 featuring Space Weather, and [Curious Investigators](#) for primary school children.
- With a sustained focus on participatory and lived experience research, outputs include the [For Equity](#) platform, a training resource on [Advance Care Planning](#) (ACP) for healthcare providers and a report on [Mothers in recurrent care proceedings](#).

- A range of work to explore experiences of communities with protected characteristics, including [The Marketplace and I](#), and to develop resources to support [public involvement](#).
- Academics are supported to participate in a wide range of free PCE events. Activities include [public lectures](#) and local and national events such as [Light up Lancaster](#) and ESRC [Festival of Social Science \(FoSS\)](#). As FoSS Festival Manager in 2021 Lancaster co-ordinated the delivery of 409 events nationally, with over 18,849 attendees.



Caption: Butterfly Dream was attended by more than 6000 visitors at Light up Lancaster in 2022.
Credit: Robin Zahler

Community access

- In the six-month period following the introduction of a free library community card in 2021/22, public membership increased 178% from 142 to 395.
- 15% of Sports Centre users are community members; the sports facilities are used by a wide range of adult and youth community and sports groups.
- 64,412 Covid-19 vaccinations were delivered to the community by August 2021 in the new Health Innovation One building.
- 4,842 students, staff and community members participated in Green Lancaster projects and events, providing practical responses to the climate emergency.
- 'Meet the Buyer' and local recruitment events are connecting local suppliers and community members with opportunities in the University.

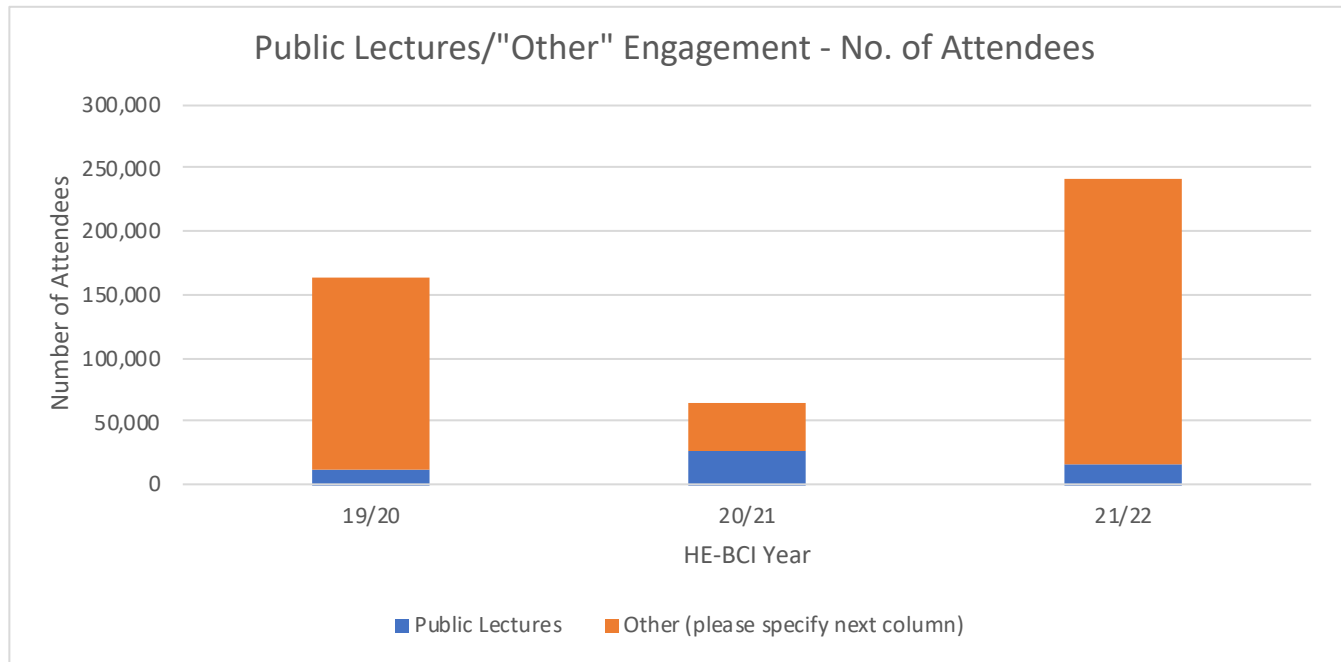
In addition, more than 350 student volunteers provide over 10,000 volunteer hours, working with 3500-4000 KS2 local children each year.

Enhancing practice

The impact of our Engagement is measured via performance in the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF), with Lancaster performing strongly in KEF 2 (published September 2022). Monitoring and evaluation of PCE is undertaken as follows:

KEF PCE Self-assessment narrative	Placed in top 40% of 122 English HEIs in KEF1 (see Aspect 5 for continuous improvement). Self-assessment score in KEF1 provides baseline.
HE-BCIS Table 5 data	Year on year growth, discounting 2020-21 pandemic year (see below)
Bespoke Evaluation	Tailored to the requirements of individual research projects and PCE activities – see examples below and in Aspect 3.

Over the period August 2019 – July 2022, more than 467,000 people participated in PCE activities and 171,000 participated in performance arts, exhibitions and museum education.



Caption: Data from Table 5 HEBCI Survey

A range of quantitative and qualitative measures are used to evaluate the reach and impact of different PCE activities. In some cases, evaluation forms part of the process to inform the development of the research (for example the ACP training). Examples of evaluation measures include:

Cultural programme A broad range of tools from peer-to-peer national programmes and ACE Activity Plan framework. Outcomes are reported to funders against agreed KPIs including numerical data, surveys and artistic assessment.

Cultural programme	A broad range of tools from peer-to-peer national programmes and ACE Activity Plan framework. Outcomes are reported to funders against agreed KPIs including numerical data, surveys and artistic assessment.
Research engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 93.8% of visitors to RS-SSE 2022 rated the exhibition 'excellent' or 'good'; 100% teachers personally gained more scientific knowledge >1100 visitors to 4 Marketplace and I exhibitions; 4* review from Neurodiverse Review; research findings translated into Accessible Training Workshops and undergraduate teaching. PARTICIPATE delivered 20 interactive capacity building webinars to <1,500 participants from <40 countries, including Africa, Europe and Asia. Informal community members of the project were consulted from the outset and integrated throughout. Launched in June 2022, ACP training has been viewed over 1600 times to date. 95% agreed the training covered all key areas of ACP; 88% intended to use it in their future practice
Public and community engagement events	<p>Curious Investigators changed children's aspirations: before the show, 66% of children answered "no" when asked "would you like to be an engineer when you are older?"; afterwards, this dropped to less than 5%. 96% answered either "yes" or "maybe".</p> <p>FoSS evaluation used ESRC framework and gathered evaluation from attendees, event leaders, teachers and organisations who collaborated on an event, and the research institutions hosting a programme of events for the festival</p> <p>Qualitative and quantitative data are gathered through physical and online surveys for public lectures, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >91% attendees who responded learned something new in 2021/22 >98% attendees who responded rated events as excellent or good.
Media Engagement	In the year to June 2022, Lancaster academics reached an estimated potential global audience of 350m, through 470 TV and radio interviews. Experts contributed to The Conversation, generating more than 3.7m reads.

As outlined in Aspects 2 and 5, two roles have been appointed in 2023 to create a step change in the institutional approach to PCE. This will include providing advice to researchers in evaluating PCE, and identifying KPIs for the institutional PCE plan which will be developed in 2024.

Building on success

As outlined in **Aspect 1**, PCE is now more visible and embedded in key strategic documents. Performance is formally reported internally through the governance structures highlighted in Aspect 1 and externally via mechanisms including the KEF and HEIF accountability statement.



Caption: Feedback from 2021 Lancaster Exchange

The KEF1 PCE self-assessment narrative was used as a baseline against which priority actions were identified. As referenced in **Aspect 2**, the University's KE Concordat Action Plan identified a number of priority actions relating to PCE, with two roles appointed in 2023 to create a step change in the institutional approach to PCE. Additional investment is being made in research culture and environment and public policy support. The impact of these investments will be seen in future reports.

The activities and outcomes highlighted in **Aspects 3 and 4** are reviewed and communicated in a variety of ways, responding to the needs and interests of different stakeholder groups. For example, cultural activities are reported to funders and Advisory Boards, major research and science outreach projects are [communicated widely](#) via multi-media, and success is celebrated via internal and external news and [awards](#).

In response to and informed by community feedback, a dedicated [website](#) has been launched to highlight activities and opportunities to work with the University. A range of [case studies](#) has been developed and communicated. 3,684 community members receive a monthly newsletter.

Launched in 2019, the annual Lancaster University Exchange invites a wide range of stakeholders to discuss areas of mutual interest. The forum is used to communicate University updates, and to hear from the public. The word cloud illustrates feedback received in 2021 which directly informed the focus of the Exchange in 2022 (economic growth and place) and 2023 (sustainability).

There is a drive to promote a vibrant engagement culture within the University. 'Big Conversations' provide an engagement mechanism for important debate, and improved data capture is leading to stronger evidence for public and community engagement activities, knowledge exchange priorities, training and support needs.