

Engaged Research EDGE Tool

Supporting researchers and principal investigators to
embed engagement in and with research

About the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement

The NCCPE advocates for the role of public and community engagement in building a more inclusive higher education sector. Our vision is of an inclusive higher education sector where communities can contribute to, and benefit from, knowledge, teaching and research.

We are focused on mobilising higher education (HE) and knowledge institutions to realise the value of public and community engagement, for long-term change.

We aim to inspire collective action across and beyond the HE system and promote environments and cultures where high-quality and equitable engagement activity is recognised, rewarded, and can flourish.

How to use this tool

For each domain of the Engaged Research EDGE tool rate where engagement is situated currently. Use your ratings to identify where you would like engagement to be more strongly embedded. Create an action plan or theory of change to support moving from one domain of the EDGE tool to the next.

This tool is currently in draft form and will be iterated in 2026-2027

Domain	Focus	Embryonic	Developing	Gripping	Embedding
Purpose	Research Vision	Engagement is an add-on to research.	Engagement is recognised as potentially beneficial to some projects.	Engagement is recognised as an important means of improving research quality, relevance and impact.	Engagement is a defining feature of research identity and the approach to knowledge creation.
Purpose	Leadership	Engagement depends on individual people's enthusiasm and voluntary time.	Principal investigators encourage engagement.	Responsibility for engagement is shared among researchers.	Leadership for engagement is distributed among researchers and external partners.
Purpose	Communication	Engagement rarely appears in internal or external communications.	Engagement is highlighted when opportunities arise.	The achievements and learning emerging from engagement are regularly shared through internal and external communications	Dialogue among researchers and external communities is actively encouraged and maintained through multiple internal and external communications media.
Process	Support	Engagement is largely unsupported and uncoordinated	Some project-level support and coordination for engagement exists.	Support mechanisms for engagement are deliberately built into projects and funding applications. Some coordination exists across the institution.	Engagement is systematically planned, resourced and managed across the institution and is strategically aligned.
Process	Learning and Reflection	Engagement skills are assumed rather than developed.	Occasional engagement training and support programmes are offered to researchers.	Reflection and learning on engagement are incorporated into projects and programmes.	An ongoing programme of learning and reflection on engagement is embedded across the institution.
Process	Research Culture	Engagement is viewed as peripheral to research excellence.	The contribution of engagement to research is positively regarded by some researchers.	The contribution of engagement to research excellence is regularly acknowledged and celebrated.	Engagement is recognised as a valued form of research and scholarship across the institution.
People	Research and Professional Services Staff	Engagement is undertaken by a small number of professional services staff and/or researchers	A range of opportunities exist for professional services staff and/or researchers to undertake engagement, and a wide range of staff is involved.	Most staff participate in engagement.	Engagement is seen as a normal and valued aspect of professional practice.
People	ECRs	Early career researchers have limited opportunities to engage.	Opportunities exist but are inconsistent across the institution.	Early career researchers are encouraged and supported to engage. Support is consistent across the institution.	Developing engagement capability is a core feature of researcher development.
People	Communities, Publics and Partners	Engagement is limited and transactional.	Limited dialogic and contributory partnership relationships exist	Long-term partnerships are developed and sustained.	Communities and partners help shape priorities, activities and future directions of research