

Summary: Auditing, Benchmarking and Evaluating Public Engagement

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National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement

The National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE)'s vision is of a higher education sector making a vital, strategic and valued contribution to 21st century society through its public engagement activity. Our mission is to support universities to increase the quality and quantity of their public engagement activity.

Part of this work is to develop a research base that supports people in their public engagement work. This research summary is the first in a series that we will be publishing over the coming years.

The full paper: Auditing, benchmarking and evaluating university public engagement (Hart, Northmore and Gerhardt, 2009) can be accessed on our website www.publicengagement.ac.uk

Summary: Auditing, Benchmarking and Evaluating University Public Engagement

1 Introduction

This paper explores the roles of auditing, benchmarking and evaluating university public engagement. The range of university public engagement is vast – and there are a variety of different approaches and contexts for this work. The paper brings this multitude of approaches into a framework that seeks to capture this variety under seven broad dimensions. There exists no one tool to effectively evaluate all forms of university public engagement; however the paper identifies a number of existing tools that may be effective for different dimensions.

This summary shares headlines from this work, but readers are directed to the full paper for an in depth analysis of the subject (www.publicengagement.ac.uk).

University public engagement: some key points

- There is a huge body of work around different types of both community and public engagement. This paper focuses on higher education perspectives, and specifically does not delve into the extensive community engagement literature
- There is no one consistent definition of the terms public engagement or community engagement. These terms are used to cover a wide range of activities and approaches
- There exists no one tool for auditing, benchmarking or evaluation that covers all aspects of the public engagement activity of universities
- There is a tension between locally driven indicators and measures, designed to evaluate specific public engagement activities, and those seeking to identify or encapsulate more universal measures
- There is little literature expressly focused on measurement of community perspectives on HEI engagement activity
- In any situation where change is being measured, establishing a baseline against which subsequent changes can be identified is vital. In the context of evaluating university public engagement, establishing a baseline can highlight the extent and nature of such engagement over time.

The differences between audit, benchmarking and evaluation are detailed in Table 1

Table 1 Differences between audit, benchmarking and evaluation

Audit	Benchmarking	Evaluation
Measures what is being done	Identifies problem areas and areas of excellence	Assesses the value of what is being done
A cyclical series of reviews	An ongoing process	A series of individual assessments over time
Collects routine data	Exchanges information	Collects complex data
Review of what practitioners actually do	Review of best practice in a sector	Evaluative research methodology can vary but should be rigorously defined
Not possible to generalise from the findings	Possible to make comparisons across a process or sector	Often possible to generalise the findings

Adapted from the PDP Toolkit. See <http://www.pdptoolkit.co.uk/>

2 Dimensions of public engagement

- A framework outlining seven dimensions of public engagement is proposed. This is not a comprehensive guide to public engagement but is a starting point when considering ways to measure engagement
- The numerous attempts to define indicators for university public engagement suggest that there is no single approach to audit, benchmarking and evaluation that can be applied to any given university and its community partners
- With the different institutional stages of development, the variety and variability of links being forged between universities, their communities and the public and the complexity and breadth of university public engagement activities, a variety of measurement instruments are needed to provide an informative and useful picture of public engagement activity and strategy
- Many other UK HE institutions and their community partners are negotiating their way through this territory. The framework is one which others may wish to challenge or refine
- The framework attempts to clarify the public engagement activities that universities might want to measure. It sets out in summary form some potential indicators for audit, benchmarking and evaluation, related to the dimensions of public engagement identified
- The dimensions are complementary and not discrete categories. They need to be used in combination to provide an overview of a university's public engagement activity.

The seven dimensions of public engagement identified are:

- 1 Public access to facilities
- 2 Public access to knowledge
- 3 Student engagement
- 4 Faculty engagement
- 5 Widening participation
- 6 Encouraging economic regeneration and enterprise
- 7 Institutional relationship and partnership building.

These are described in Table 2, together with examples of each dimension.

Table 2 Dimensions of university public engagement, with examples

Dimension of public engagement	Examples of engagement	Audit – possible indicators	Evaluation and reflective practice/ outcomes	Examples of approach to measurement
<p>1 Public access to facilities Includes: Commercial and non commercial use Restricted and unrestricted access</p>	<p>Access to university libraries Access to university buildings and physical facilities eg for conferences, meetings, events, accommodation, gardens etc Shared facilities eg museums, art galleries Public access to sports facilities Summer sports schools</p>	<p>Number of public accessing facilities Accessibility Charges Customer satisfaction surveys Responsiveness Relationships management</p>	<p>Increased public support for the institution Better informed public Improved health and well-being</p>	<p>HEFCE (2002) Higher Education Community Engagement Model Kellogg Commission AUCEA Talloires Outcome indicators COPE</p>
<p>2 Public access to knowledge Universities' capacity for creating and transmitting knowledge makes public access to this a central strand of public engagement</p>	<p>Access to established university curricula Public engagement events eg science fairs; science shops Publicly accessible database of university expertise Public involvement in research</p>	<p>Number of public accessing/ participating Satisfaction surveys</p>	<p>Outcome indicators include: Co-production models such as public value, cultural capital Increased quality of life and wellbeing Increased social capital, social cohesion, social inclusion Enhanced public scholarship</p>	<p>Museums, Libraries and Archives: GLO (Generic Learning Outcomes) Work Foundation: Public Value Measurement Framework Accenture: Public Service Value Model</p>
<p>3 Student engagement Releasing student capacity for community (and student) benefit</p>	<p>Student volunteering Experiential learning eg practice placements, collaborative research projects Curricular engagement Student-led activities eg arts, environment etc</p>	<p>Number of volunteers Number of hours worked Service learning record – formal support and academic credit</p>	<p>Increased student sense of civic engagement/ political participation Benefit to students/ organisations/ users/ community/ university relationships</p>	<p>Institute of Volunteering Research Matrix for assessing impact of volunteering on variety of things Carnegie Foundation Curricular engagement/ outreach and partnership outcomes</p>
<p>4 Faculty engagement Overlaps with dimension 2, but emphasis here is on individual staff involvement</p>	<p>Research centres draw on community advisers for support and direction Volunteering outside working hours eg on trustee boards of local charities Staff with social/ community engagement as a specific part of their job Promotion policies that reward social engagement Research helpdesk/ advisory boards Public lectures Alumni services</p>	<p>Number of volunteers/ hours worked Attracts formal professional recognition/ career progression</p>	<p>Social benefit to the community Increased staff sense of civic engagement Institutionalised/ embedded faculty engagement More 'grounded' research</p>	<p>Difficult to capture outcomes as intended to have social impact – need to be defined in specific contexts. The ACE Way UPBEAT University of Brighton audit tool</p>

<p>5 Widening participation (equalities and diversity agenda)</p>	<p>Improving recruitment and success rate of students from non-traditional backgrounds through innovative initiatives eg access courses, financial assistance, peer mentoring A publicly available strategy for encouraging access by students with disabilities</p>	<p>Numbers of students from non-traditional backgrounds/ excluded communities Numbers of 'looked after' children recruited Retention rates Equalities and diversity monitoring Mentoring programmes for 'non-traditional' students</p>	<p>Improved recruitment and retention of undergraduates, especially from excluded communities Destination of leavers of HEIs</p>	<p>Higher Education Statistics Agency collate and publish Annual Performance Indicators (PIs)</p>
<p>6 Encouraging economic regeneration and enterprise Already a number of research projects focussing on measuring this eg Heart Project (Open University)</p>	<p>Research collaboration and technology transfer Meeting regional skills needs and supporting SMEs Initiatives to expand innovation and design eg bringing together staff, students and community members to design, develop and test assistive technology for people with disabilities Business advisory services offering support for community-university collaborations (eg social enterprises) Prizes for entrepreneurial projects</p>	<p>Number of initiatives/ enterprises supported University awards for entrepreneurial activity Mechanisms to provide systematic feedback to community partners Number of formally credited community based learning courses offered Number of departments/ staff/ students involved Examples of staff outcomes for curricular engagement</p>	<p>Local/regional economic regeneration Social and economic benefit to the community Effective examples of innovative collaborations Expanded and effective community partnerships Enhanced public scholarship Teaching, learning and scholarship which engages faculty, students and community in mutually beneficial collaboration</p>	<p>Research Initiative, funded by ESRC and HEFCE, looking at Social Impact: Students and Graduates: Regional Competitiveness: University-Industry Relationships SIMPLE model (McLoughlin, 2008) Impact Measurement Tool New Economics Foundation Social Enterprise Partnership (SEP) : Quality and Impact Model UPBEAT</p>
<p>7 Institutional relationship and partnership building How the institution operates and organises itself to meet public engagement objectives through corporate level activities.</p>	<p>University Division or office for community engagement Collaborative community-based research programmes responsive to community-identified needs Community-university networks for learning, dissemination, or knowledge exchange Community members on board of governance of university Public ceremonies, awards, competitions and events Website with community pages Policies on equalities; recruitment; procurement of goods and services; environmental responsibility International links Conferences with public access and public concerns Helpdesk facility Corporate social responsibility</p>	<p>Public engagement identified as priority in institution mission statement, strategic plans, awards and celebrations, data recording, marketing materials etc Proportion of total university operating budget allocated to engagement Co-ordinating infrastructure to support engagement System for assessing community perceptions of institutions engagement with local community Assessment data is used</p>	<p>More effective strategic investment of resources Conservation of natural resources and reduced environmental footprint Expanded and effective community partnerships Social and economic benefit to the community</p>	<p>Carnegie Foundation Institutional identity and culture/ institutional commitment outcomes REAP (University of Bradford) Community engagement metric The ACE Approach</p>

3 Current approaches to evaluating university public engagement

The diversity of approaches to university public engagement has resulted in the development of several indicator sets for evaluating this engagement.

There are a number of important questions to ask before deciding on the most appropriate tool or indicator set. Namely:

- Do we want to capture change over time or is this a one-off exercise?
- Do we want to establish a set of targets, and then measure whether we've completed them?
- Do we want to compare what we are doing with what others are doing?
- Do we need external verification, or can this be an internal exercise?
- Do we need to measure what the whole institution is doing?
- Do we want to understand what is happening at the individual project level?
- Are we interested in finding out how individual faculty members and their community partners best collaborate for mutual benefit?
- Do we want to measure engagement from a community perspective?

Once these questions have been answered the following table may help to assess the variety of tools and approaches available, and their appropriateness to the individual institution.

Table 3 Summary review of approaches to capture public engagement

Tool	Dimensions useful for						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
HEFCE Benchmarking Tool (2002) - http://www.hefce.ac.uk/ Designed to help higher education institutions assess the contribution they are making to the economic and social development of their region, and how these contributions might be developed						X	X
HEFCE Higher Education-Business and Community Interaction (HE-BCI) survey - http://www.hefce.ac.uk/ To inform the strategic direction of Third Stream action undertaken by funding bodies and HEIs in the UK. Data is gathered on a wide range of Third Stream activities, reflecting the contribution of HEIs to the economy and society						X	X
The Higher Education Community Engagement Model - http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/about/community/communityhub/model/ Created in 2003 by several Russell Group universities, in collaboration with the Corporate Citizenship Company. Based on the London Benchmarking Model which is used by many large companies to measure their contributions to the community			X	X			X
REAP (University of Bradford) - http://www.ae.salford.ac.uk/JamesPowell/forum/documents/Institutional%20Reports/Salford/booklet_1_background.pdf This approach to measuring community engagement (Pearce, Pearson and Cameron, 2007) uses a self-assessment and measuring tool aimed at supporting and encouraging those involved in community engagement activities to critically reflect on and analyse their work. The REAP model is based on four key principles: Reciprocity; Externalities; Access; and Partnership	X	X	X	X			X
Work Foundation - http://www.theworkfoundation.com/ The Work Foundation has proposed a framework for reviewing outcome measures. Key criteria are whether measures are: appropriate; holistic; democratic; trustworthy; and that the measurement process itself generates public value	X	X					

<p>SIMPLE Developed by the University of Brighton Business School, the SIMPLE model (McLoughlin, 2008), is a holistic impact measurement tool for social enterprise managers. The impact model offers a five step approach to impact measurement called: Scope it; Map it; Track it; Tell it & Embed it</p>						X	
<p>University of Brighton Community Engagement Audit Tool - http://www.brighton.ac.uk/cupp/ Developed to capture baseline information about university-community engagement to support the social engagement aspirations of the university's corporate plan (University of Brighton, 2007a), and to underpin the development of its long-term economic and social engagement strategy</p>			X	X			X
<p>ACE Provides a practical methodology for documenting drivers, processes and outcomes of partnership working where the university and the community collaborate for the purpose of socially beneficial results. The ACE Way sets out seven dimensions: Attractions, Conservation, Crevices, Contingencies, Expectations, Enlightenment, and Emergence</p>			X	X			X
<p>UPBEAT - http://www.ae.salford.ac.uk/JamesPowell/forum/documents/Institutional%20Reports/Salford/booklet3_matrix.pdf A project development and evaluation tool developed at Salford University aimed at helping universities learn how to reach out to business and the community by encouraging HEIs to transform academic research into 'real world' projects, products and services</p>						X	
<p>Carnegie Classification - www.carnegiefoundation.org/dynamic/downloads/file_1_614.pdf The leading framework for describing institutional diversity in US higher education. The first elective classification, released in December 2006, focused on community engagement</p>			X	X			X
<p>Campus Compact - www.compact.org/resources/declaration Produces regular updates and 'Benchmarks for Campus / Community Partnerships'</p>			X	X			X
<p>Kellogg Commission/ Committee on Institutional Co-operation Created a White Paper that outlines seven categories of engagement indicators that institutions can use for documenting scholarly engagement, developed by the Committee on Institutional Cooperation, an alliance of 'Big Ten' Universities plus the University of Illinois, Chicago</p>			X	X			X
<p>The Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) - www.cic.edu/projects_services/infoservices/kit.asp CIC have developed benchmarking toolkits, including KIT (Key Indicators Tool) which 'is aimed at improving the capacity of member institutions to gain access to and utilize data to enhance institutional decision-making and improve institutional effectiveness'</p>				X	X		X
<p>Civic Engagement Task Force (University of Minnesota) - www.engagement.umn.edu/cope/reports/report02.html Sets out the parameters of an engaged university, and recommends measures for assessing the impact of public engagement</p>			X	X	X		X
<p>Australian University Community Engagement Alliance (AUCEA) - http://aucea.med.monash.edu.au:8080/traction In process of developing benchmarks for engagement activity</p>							X
<p>Tailloires/Tufts Inventory Tool for Higher Education Civic Engagement - http://tuftstoolkit.pbwiki.com/ This benchmarking questionnaire aims to address universities' civic engagement activity including how engagement informs and influences the universities' range of operations and monitoring achievements, constraints and future opportunities for civic engagement and social responsibility</p>			X	X			X

4 Case study: Auditing, evaluating and benchmarking public engagement at the University of Brighton

The Community-University Partnership Programme

(<http://www.brighton.ac.uk/cupp/>)

Founded in 2003 to tackle disadvantage and promote sustainable development through partnership working, the Community-University Partnership Programme (CUPP) is working with colleagues across the higher education sector to develop understanding of and effective practice in auditing, benchmarking and evaluating public and community engagement. Following an initial three year external evaluation, the University of Brighton undertook an institutional audit to establish a baseline to assess whether its social engagement aspirations were being realised. CUPP has since developed an audit model in partnership with Cambridge University, and is currently working with the University of Bradford to develop their REAP tool for measuring community engagement (Pearce, Pearson & Cameron, 2007).

Lessons learnt from CUPP

- Think about the questions you want to answer
- Aim to measure impact and change, not just activity
- Don't expect to get it perfect – decide on what pay-off you will accept between completing the task and being as comprehensive as you can
- Get pragmatists, not just perfectionists, involved in the work
- Collect basic statistics from the start – the statistics the University of Brighton built up on the Helpdesk function, for example, enabled it to closely monitor its use and to understand trends over time
- Before embarking on audit, evaluation or benchmarking it is helpful to know what other models have been successful for other institutions. Seek advice from colleagues in other universities who have overcome similar challenges – meeting in person is invaluable
- Staff and community stakeholders implementing audit and evaluation need to motivate others to understand the importance of collecting meaningful data, i.e. actively chasing up Heads of Schools and Departments; sharing examples of what is being done
- Academics involved in projects need support in evaluating community-university partnerships. Their subject specialism may not give them the expertise to evaluate in this specific way
- Community partners need encouragement and support to embrace evaluation as worthwhile; involving community partners is essential for good data collection. Most will be understandably focused on the outcomes they wish to see, and mapping the detail of community-university collaboration does not always seem relevant
- Support from senior management is vital – in the case of the University of Brighton, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor is part of the audit working group
- Audit and evaluation mechanisms need to be cross-referenced, with transparency attached to procedures, methodology and findings
- Establish a Community of Practice on audit and evaluation to allow staff space to reflect on their evaluative work
- Include community partners in audit and evaluation groups and give them incentives, including payment, to be involved.

5 Conclusions

Given the complexity of university public engagement activity, and the wide range of available tools for measuring it, this briefing paper attempts to illustrate the scope and relevance of specific measurement tools as a guide to others working in this area. There is undoubtedly much more that could have been included and different interpretations that can be put on the initiatives highlighted. The authors hope that others will join in debating the issues, and in pooling knowledge and experience as part of an audit and evaluation community of practice in this area. In particular, colleagues are urged to write up their own institutional experiences as case studies which could then be compared.

The National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement would love to hear from colleagues working in this area. If you would like to share your own experiences you can contact the NCCPE at nccpe.enquiries@uwe.ac.uk