

# NERC Researcher Engage Academy

**Professional development for researchers in public engagement with environmental science**



The Natural Environment Research Council ([NERC Researcher Engage Academy](#)) is a 9-month online and experiential learning academy for environmental science researchers and project staff, either funded by NERC or working in research teams and/or institutions within the [NERC remit](#), who are seeking to develop their public engagement work. Participants will explore relevant content with expert facilitators, learning group mentors, and peer learning groups. This is a bespoke opportunity for environmental researchers, informed by research done with the NERC community, and steered by an advisory panel of engagement, academic and wider sector experts. It is led by the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE), who have over a decade of experience supporting universities to engage the public with their work. Participants will have opportunity to build new networks; develop and consolidate their engagement work; and enhance their careers. Participants will have the opportunity to receive formal recognition from NERC for taking part in this course.

**This information pack contains information about the programme, including the application process, support available, key dates and time commitment, and recognition options.**

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## Introducing the NERC Researcher Engage Academy

The NERC Researcher Engage Academy is an online learning academy for researchers and project staff, either funded by NERC or working in research teams and/or institutions within the [NERC remit](#), developed by the NCCPE. The Academy consists of three separate but interrelated cohorts, each running over a 9-month period. Each of the programmes is described in more depth below, and applicants will have the opportunity to choose which programme they want to participate in when they apply.

### **NERC Researcher Engage Academy Cohort 1: Working in partnership**

Are you already collaborating with others as part of your work, or is this something you want to explore in the future? This Academy Programme will get to grips with mutually beneficial partnership working in all its forms: how partnerships can develop engagement with impact; how to collaborate effectively and ethically; evaluation; and if and how to sustain collaborations.

Participants in the programme will have the opportunity to:

- Gain an understanding of high-quality public engagement with research, planning, process and outcomes
- Improve or develop partnerships with others to create relevant and meaningful impacts
- Gain skills in assessing the types of partnership relevant to their work
- Build understandings of how to find; develop; conduct; sustain and end partnerships well
- Identify a strategic approach to working in partnership
- Work with peers to explore the specific challenges and opportunities of partnership working relevant to their work, and determine actions pertinent to their context

This cohort is for researchers (post PhD) and project staff working at any career level. No prior experience of working in partnership is required to participate in this cohort.

### **NERC Researcher Engage Academy Cohort 2: Peer review process**

This Academy cohort will explore what it means to assess engagement within funding grants using practical examples and learning group mentor support including: how to assess engagement that will have impact; what makes a fair and operational budget for public engagement activities; and how evaluation can be used as an effective tool for quality practice.

Participants in this cohort will have the opportunity to:

- Gain an understanding of high-quality public engagement with research, planning, process and outcomes
- Build skills in assessing public engagement as part of research including identifying key indicators of effective or questionable practice
- Contribute to a toolkit to support those in the peer review process to evaluate public engagement within research grants
- Understand the role of engagement within their own research, with an opportunity to consider how to embed engagement into their own work

This cohort is for current or previous NERC Peer Review College members and researchers who have sat on NERC research grant, fellowship or public engagement panels. This opportunity is also open to those who are interested in taking part in NERC peer review roles and processes in the next three years.

### **NERC Researcher Engage Academy Cohort 3: Engagement and impact leadership**

This cohort will be dedicated to developing leadership and strategy development skills including what it means to lead engagement for impact; how to address challenges at a strategic level; what it means to embed engagement within an institution; managing change; and navigating the current and future context for engaged research.

Participants will have the opportunity to:

- Gain an understanding of high-quality public engagement with research, planning, process and outcomes
- Enhance their approach to public engagement within their research group / team
- Develop an engagement strategy relevant to their area of work

- Understand how research cultures can enable or disable effective engagement and develop skills to build effective support for engagement
- Develop tools and approaches to improve support for public engagement within their research area
- Identify their own leadership skills and deploy them effectively to embrace engagement within their research group
- Consider their own motivations for public engagement, and how to champion engagement within their work
- Participate in peer-to-peer action learning sets to address specific issues from within their own context

This cohort is for researchers and project staff working at a mid to late career level (min 3 years working on a UKRI grant-funded role – not including PhD studentships).

### Mixed-method delivery

The NERC Researcher Engage Academy is an online programme, delivered as a mixture of live events and self-directed tasks. Across the programme, participants will take part in a wide range of activities, such as:

- Live, facilitated online workshops
- Self-directed learning resources such as webinars and reading materials
- Cohort-specific learning groups, with mentoring support
- Programme-wide networking and practice sharing sessions involving participants from all three cohorts
- Participant-led online networking space
- NERC supported public engagement opportunities

The programme will be delivered using the following tools:

- Blackboard Collaborate and Zoom, with PowerPoint presentations, chat function and breakout rooms for live workshops and events. Live transcription will be available.
- Video webinars with audio narration and closed captions
- Online networking through a Slack channel
- Webpages, documents and Padlet boards for self-directed learning resources

Instructions on how to use each tool will be provided.

### Networking

Building connections and expanding support networks is key to navigating the engagement world. The NERC Researcher Engage Academy will facilitate formal and informal discussions with peers

and learning group mentors throughout the programme, ensuring participants have the opportunity to meet others and to develop connections with people from across the programme.

At the heart of the course is an online networking space to bring the cohorts together for peer support, discussion groups and shared learning.

## Peer Learning

Each cohort will be divided into learning groups of around 6 delegates. These learning groups will meet frequently throughout the programme to interrogate content, share learning and develop skills together. Each learning group will be allocated an experienced mentor from the engagement sector to support the group and contribute to group discussions.

Members of the Impact and Engagement leadership cohort will participate in action learning as part of their peer learning group.

## Is this programme for me?

Applications will be accepted from researchers and project staff, either funded by NERC or working in research teams and/or institutions within the [NERC remit](#), based within [eligible research organisations](#). This includes current and past grant holders, and potential future grant holders, those working across other disciplines that are linked to environmental science and those who work on NERC funded projects but may not be named on the grant. Applications from PhD researchers will be considered where the applicant can demonstrate they have public engagement experience and where this programme will further develop their skills, particularly moving from one-way to [two-way models of engagement](#).

Priority will be given to researchers who can demonstrate that they do not have access to free engagement and impact support and/or networks of those involved in environmental science engagement within their institution or project.

We actively encourage proposals from applicants with diverse backgrounds and experiences.

## Support to enable researchers to take part

NERC are offering small grants to individuals from UKRI eligible research organisations who take part in the NERC Researcher Engage Academy:

- Small grants will be available to cover time spent participating in the programme, when this is not part of normal work duties and when it cannot be claimed through learning and development programmes, as set out by your employer organisation or company, and cannot be claimed under institutions learning and development time.
- Grants do not cover time spent planning and development of engagement activities generated in relation to this training course, which is considered part of your responsibilities as a researcher.
- Evidence will need to be provided to show resourcing is not available elsewhere to facilitate individual's attendance. NERC will request this from successfully accepted individuals closer to the time.
- NERC will not pay the small grants to individuals. Payment will only be sent to UKRI eligible research institutions via a purchase order process.

Individuals must let NERC and NCCPE know in their application form if they will need the support of the grants to attend this training.

**We are committed to making this programme open and fully accessible to all.** The application form includes space to outline accessibility requirements such as the provision of screen readable material, sharing documents before events where possible, the use of closed captions for events, etc.

## What do I need to commit to?

The NERC Researcher Engage Academy cohorts run over a 9-month period.

We anticipate the minimum time commitment to complete a cohort programme is approx. 35 hours. All participants are welcome to take part in additional events and activities if they wish.

Applying for a place will be taken as confirmation that you can commit to the minimum programme time commitment above.

## Key dates

### Working in partnership cohort (March – November 2022)

Date	Activity	Approx. time (hrs)
2022		

<b>Wednesday 15 March</b> 14.00-16.00	High Quality Public Engagement Q&A and Learning group 1	2
<b>Tuesday 12 April</b> 10.00-13.00	Engaging with impact workshop	3
April-May	Learning group 2 (self-organised by groups)	1.5
<b>Wednesday 25 May</b> 10.00-16.00	Programme-wide event 1: Networking and sharing practice	5
<b>Thursday 16 June</b> 10.00-13.00	Practicalities of partnerships workshop	3
June-July	Learning group 3 (self-organised)	1.5
<b>Tuesday 6 September</b> 10.00-16.00	Programme-wide event 2: The ethics of engagement, and dealing with controversy	5
September	Learning group 4 (self-organised)	1.5
<b>Thursday 13 October</b> 14.00-17.00	Evaluating and sustaining partnerships workshop	3
October-November	Learning group 5 (self-organised)	1.5
<b>Evaluation throughout programme</b>		<b>1.5</b>
<b>Coursework and online engagement throughout programme</b>		<b>6.5</b>
<b>Total approx. time commitment</b>		<b>35 hours</b>
<b>January 2023 (optional)</b>		
<b>Thursday 12 January</b> 10.00-16.00	Programme-wide event 3: Evaluation, sustainability and making a case	5

#### Peer review process cohort (May 2022 – January 2023)

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approx. time (hrs)</b>
<b>2022</b>		
<b>Wednesday 11 May</b> 10.00-12.00	High Quality Public Engagement Q&A and Learning group 1	2
<b>Wednesday 25 May</b> 10.00-16.00	Programme-wide event 1: Networking and sharing practice	5
<b>Tuesday 7 June</b> 14.00-17.00	Engaging with impact workshop	3
June-July	Learning group 2 (self-organised by groups)	1.5
August-September	Learning group 3 (self-organised)	1.5
<b>Tuesday 6 September</b> 10.00-16.00	Programme-wide event 2: The ethics of engagement, and dealing with controversy	5
<b>Tuesday 20 September</b> 14.00-17.00	Panel workshop	3
October	Learning group 4 (self-organised)	1.5
<b>Tuesday 8 November</b> 10.00-13.00	Assessing quality engagement workshop	3
November-December	Learning group 5 (self-organised)	1.5
<b>Evaluation throughout programme</b>		<b>1.5</b>
<b>Coursework and online engagement throughout programme</b>		<b>6.5</b>
<b>Total approx. time commitment</b>		<b>35 hours</b>

<b>January 2023 (optional)</b>		
<b>Thursday 12 January</b> 10.00-16.00	Programme-wide event 3: Evaluation, sustainability and making a case	5

### Engagement and impact leadership cohort (June 2022 – February 2023)

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Approx. time (hrs)</b>
<b>May 2022 (Optional)</b>		
<b>Wednesday 25 May</b> 10.00-16.00	Programme-wide event 1: Networking and sharing practice	5
<b>2022</b>		
<b>Thursday 29 June</b> 10.00-13.30	Leading engagement for impact workshop Learning group 1	3.5
<b>Thursday 13 July</b> 14.00-17.00	Strategy development and logic models workshop	3
July-August	Learning group 2 (self-organised by groups)	1.5
<b>Tuesday 6 September</b> 10.00-16.00	Programme-wide event 2: The ethics of engagement, and dealing with controversy	5
September-October	Learning group 3 (self-organised)	1.5
<b>Tuesday 24 October</b> 10.00-13.00	Leadership in this context workshop	3
November	Learning group 4 (self-organised)	1.5
<b>Wednesday 13 December</b> 14.00-17.00	Strategy review workshop	3
December	Learning group 5 (self-organised)	1.5
<b>January 2023</b>		
<b>Thursday 12 January</b> 10.00-16.00	Programme-wide event 3: Evaluation, sustainability and making a case	5
<b>Evaluation throughout programme</b>		<b>1.5</b>
<b>Coursework and online engagement throughout programme</b>		<b>5</b>
<b>Total approx. time commitment</b>		<b>35 hours</b>

## Recognition

As part of the support offered by NERC, participants can request an Orchid recognition letter. If your application is successful, there will be an opportunity to request Orchid recognition and other forms of recognition during the programme.

## Application Process

Applications will be assessed by NERC and NCCPE based on the potential benefit to the researcher, their research and others they work with. This process will also assess how suitable the researcher is for the cohort they have selected and reallocate them if needed.

In addition, the panel will select researchers to ensure a balance of different perspectives, disciplines, expertise and affiliations, with diversity in mind. We hope that the full cohort will spread across [NERC's remit](#), from fundamental research to applied research, and work across institutions and organisations.

Priority will be given to those who do not have access to free engagement and impact support within their institution or project.

You can review the application form assessed questions in advance in Appendix 1.

To apply to be part of the programme, please complete [this application form](#) by **5pm on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> of January 2022**.

## Appendix 1: Application form – assessed questions

**These are the questions that will be assessed in the application form. Please use the [online form](#) to apply.**

- 1) How do you hope any or all of the following will benefit from your involvement in the NERC Researcher Engage Academy:
  - You and your professional development;
  - Your research;
  - Other people within your organisation and/or research teams

*(up to 800 characters, including spaces)*

- 2) Are there any barriers you face in accessing free at the point of access engagement and impact support and/or networks which focus on environmental science engagement within your institution and/or projects?

*(up to 200 characters, including spaces)*

- 3) For those interested in the Peer review process cohort: How do you hope this programme will improve your skills in embedding public engagement in your proposals and into the peer review process?

*(up to 800 characters, including spaces)*

- 4) For those interested in the Engagement and impact leadership in mid – late career researchers cohort: How do you hope this programme will help you develop as an engagement and impact leader within your institution?

*(up to 800 characters, including spaces)*

- 5) For those interested in the Working in partnership cohort: Please tell us about any current partnership work you are taking part in, and how you hope this programme will help you develop your collaboration skills?

OR

Please tell us about any partnership work you hope to take part in in the future, and how this programme will help you develop skills to do this.

*(up to 800 characters, including spaces)*

- 6) What are your engagement hopes for the future? Feel free to share hopes for your engagement practice or for the wider sector.

*(up to 800 characters, including spaces)*