

Public and Community Engagement Strategy 2023-29

The University of Westminster - an Institution for the Public Good

Our Mission: Finding solutions to make a difference for our communities and the world.

Public and Community Engagement at Westminster

Since its foundation as the Polytechnic Institute, The University of Westminster has been committed to the enrichment and benefit of the wider community by making knowledge available to all. We occupy a privileged location and have a distinctive profile that allows us to engage ethically with a range of stakeholders for mutual benefit. Serving our communities by co-designing research, knowledge and expertise has been central since we received our Royal charter in August 1839 to create the world's first teaching Polytechnic. Public and Community Engagement is defined by our commitment to *"make a distinctive contribution to understanding and improving our world"* (Being Westminster 2022-29) through the sharing of our research, knowledge, and facilities for the mutual benefit of all. Our people stand out as significant contributors to their communities – through their innovation, enterprise and problem-solving – seeking to make the world a more equitable, sustainable, and healthier place.

Introduction

Our University's long history of sharing knowledge and innovation with the people of London is inspirational. The original Polytechnic of Central London's public showcases invited visitors from all walks of life into 309 Regent Street where they discovered the "Hall of Manufactures" with its range of technology exhibits including the infamous diving bell demonstration, culminating in the "optical theatre" where the first microscopes and 'dissolving views' were on display.

Almost two centuries later we continue to make a distinctive contribution to understanding and improving our world, guided by our three priorities: wellbeing; inclusion; and sustainable development. We excel in areas represented by our research and knowledge exchange communities: Arts, Communication & Culture, Health Innovation & Wellbeing, and Sustainable Cities & the Urban Environment which cut through traditional disciplinary divisions and academic hierarchies, *to push boundaries and break barriers*.

Education for the Public Good - sharing our knowledge and research to solve problems and add value to our local communities underpins our mission, 'to help students and colleagues from different backgrounds fulfil their potential and contribute to a more sustainable, equitable and healthier society.' (Being Westminster 2022-29)

External Context

Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF)

The KEF's first results appeared in March 2021. There are seven perspectives against which levels of engagement are measured. One such measure is Public and Community Engagement.

Research England's Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF)

HEIF provides funding for the support of knowledge-based interactions between higher education providers (HEPs) and the wider economy and society.

Research Excellence Framework (REF) - Impact <https://results2021.ref.ac.uk/profiles/institutions/10007165>

Our principles

- 1. Research into action** – We will work to translate our research into real world solutions through business and policy engagement, research dissemination and knowledge exchange.
- 2. Knowledge co-creation and evaluation** – we will work with our communities to identify projects that meet our stakeholders' needs and co-develop solutions, which will be evaluated against stakeholder needs.
- 3. Creating Civic Citizens** - We will embed community-based learning generating powerful learning outcomes with students and professionally and academically employed staff working in partnership with communities and co-producing new knowledge.

4. **Giving back** - We will utilise our place in the heart of London and our strengths in culture and heritage to host public events and make connections and develop collaborations with those who share our values and create mutually beneficial outcomes.

Our Priorities

We will engage with communities, partners, and stakeholders to:

1. Identify shared interests and build partnerships with external community groups and stakeholders using internal expertise for the public good.
2. Demonstrate a strong relationship to articulated community needs.
3. Align with national, local, and regional development strategies.
4. Encourage and enable a wider and deeper understanding of our PCE strategy and priorities across Westminster and Harrow and their partnership networks to help mobilise commitment to our PCE mission.

Our Strategic Aims

1. A focus on place-based inequalities and inclusion aligned to our strategic priorities.
2. Developing our social and civic activity by entering key civic alliances with a clear evidence base for impact cross referenced to our three guiding priorities, wellbeing, inclusion, and sustainable development.
3. Community-based learning generating powerful learning outcomes with students and professionally and academically employed staff working in partnership with communities and co-producing new knowledge.
4. Civic engagement through volunteering or civic leadership promoting staff and student wellbeing. Volunteering should be promoted and supported.
5. Strengthening our community engagement with public policy and public service delivery, especially with vulnerable groups and neighbourhoods. This includes research on policy and service delivery impact evaluation.
6. Leadership within institutional, community and governmental organisations – this includes staff, academic and professional services, and students taking part in activities that support and enhance the quality of leadership in communities and strengthens the interface between public, community and government institutions, and communities and the public, for public good and good governance.

Enablers

Our People

Our people and our partners, and the way we work together as a community, are the underpinning foundation of our institution. Public and Community Engagement has been thriving at Westminster, uncultivated. We will focus on:

- Recognising the PCE community involves all colleagues in academic, technical, specialised, and professional services roles.
- Supporting and developing those in PCE leadership roles to innovate, take initiative and galvanise others around them to achieve our agreed ambition.
- We will celebrate and recognise best practice.

Our Place

Our physical place cements both the communities who we work alongside and represents the physical spaces we share.

We will capitalise on our location in the heart of London and our facilities, the Soho Poly Theatre, Regent Street Cinema, Menswear Archive, the Polyclinic, Fyvie Hall, Ambika P3 and many more.

What success looks like

- We will increase our KEF outcomes within our KEF quintile to become recognised as an organisation that is 'highly engaged' within its KEF cluster (E) for PCE. We will do this through ensuring we capture and rigorously evaluate our performance, based on stakeholder needs. This will allow us to evidence our high levels of engagement with grass roots activity and areas of PCE excellence.
- All students will have an opportunity to enrol in a community service-learning work-based learning module, with progressive uptake over the next 5 years.
- Our REF2028 submission reflects the importance of PCE as a pathway to research impact and illustrates how PCE contributes to the overall culture and environment of the University's REF2028 submission.
- PCE is supported sustainably through investment through four principal income streams: 1) external research grant funding to support pathways to impact 2) QR investment to support pathways to impact 3) designated HEIF allocations supporting PCE 4) Quintin Hogg Trust initiatives that facilitate PCE.
- We will grow and deepen our existing relationships with community partners while expanding our network in strategic priority areas guided by our three priorities: wellbeing; inclusion; and sustainable development.