

**SEN15D025**

**Title:** Managing and Developing Engagement Activities at UEA  
**Author:** Professor Yvonne Tasker  
**Date:** 26<sup>th</sup> May 2016  
**Circulation:** Senate – 8 June 2016  
**Agenda:** SEN15A004  
**Version:** Final  
**Status:** Open

---

**Issue**

The document has two purposes:

1. A report on the first Engagement half-day, Engagement awards and establishment of Engagement network.
2. Summary of recommendations with respect to the management and development of Engagement activities at UEA.

**Recommendation**

Members of Senate are asked to note and advise on engagement activities at UEA and proposals for future management of engagement within Schools and Faculties.

**Resource Implications**

There is no additional request for resource. There is however a need to establish greater awareness of routes to existing resource relating to areas including reputation building/marketing, research impact and outreach.

**Risk Implications**

The most immediate risk is twofold: decline in the range and quality of engagement work undertaken at UEA; failure to capitalize on the reputational and research gains of engagement work.

**Equality and Diversity**

The appropriate definition of benchmarks and thresholds for engagement activity within a School is necessary to ensure clarity of promotion criteria for academic

staff. Incorporating engagement into appraisal, planning and performance review is compatible with Athena Swan processes (now applicable in all four Faculties).

### **Timing of decisions**

The arrangements outlined here will be operational from academic year 2016/17 with an initial review of effectiveness in May 2017.

### **Further Information**

Professor Yvonne Tasker, Executive Dean, Faculty of Arts and Humanities x2799  
[y.tasker@uea.ac.uk](mailto:y.tasker@uea.ac.uk)

### **Background**

The first annual Engagement half-day was held on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2016, culminating in the presentation of this year's engagement awards. The establishment of the **UEA Public Engagement Network** was announced at the event with four dates of meetings appearing in the University Calendar:

November 3<sup>rd</sup> 2016, 2pm, January 5<sup>th</sup> 2017, 2pm, March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2017, 2pm, May 18<sup>th</sup> 2017, 2pm

Engagement is an expectation of RCUK-funded research. It has been shown to generate high quality impact case studies vital for REF2020. Additionally public engagement plays an important part in promoting the University regionally, nationally and internationally.

An Engagement Executive was established in 2011. However, support for and management of engagement is mixed. Some Schools have Directors of Engagement who facilitate work in this area and provide advice on best practice, others operate without such support which can be challenging in relation to current promotions guidance.<sup>1</sup> Some Deans and Heads of School have expressed concern that they were not sufficiently aware of engagement projects and activities undertaken by staff, and that some engagement work is not appropriately aligned with the strategic objectives of the School or Faculty. In turn, members of staff particularly active in public engagement have expressed frustration at a perceived lack of support for their work, and a failure to garner the reputational benefits of engagement via the production of 3\* or 4\* impact.

### **Discussion**

---

<sup>1</sup> Together with Enterprise, Engagement is a key criteria for promotion in the current "Green Book". Although the "Green Book" is currently under review, the expectation is that engagement will remain an element within promotion criteria for both ATR and ATS staff but that it will be assessed in relation to areas such as teaching, research and leadership.

The following proposals are designed to ensure that public engagement activities developed and undertaken by staff are aligned with School, Faculty and University plans, as well as being appropriately supported and managed:

1. Schools will be responsible for managing engagement activity, ensuring that it is factored into workload planning, appraisal and promotions procedures, and that it is aligned with the strategic goals of the School, Faculty and University;
2. PURE be used to capture engagement activities, providing Heads of School and others (Research Directors regarding impact opportunities, for example) with an overview of engagement activities on behalf of ATR and ATS staff;
3. An annual half-day Engagement event will be established (on the model of the teaching day) in order to recognise and share best practice;
4. A regular network of academics with expertise in engagement (with past award winners taking a key role) will replace the current Engagement Executive; supported by ARM and with input from REN, the network will provide a forum for innovation and good practice in the area of public engagement;
5. A member of Executive Team will provide the academic lead on engagement ensuring oversight of training, support and web presence. For 2016/17 this will be Dean HUM, current Chair of Engagement Executive.
6. Arrangements to be reviewed for effectiveness in May 2017.

The proposals outlined here have been circulated to all four Faculty Executives with discussion in FMH, HUM and SCI. The response was supportive from Deans and heads of School. Some concerns were noted with respect to the capacity of PURE, the need for more effective training, and the precise nomenclature given the range of engagement activities.

It has been argued that there is a significant risk of generating an internal perception that engagement is not valued at UEA – this at the point when both RCUK and competitor Universities are increasing their emphasis on this aspect of University activity. Given the importance of public engagement in profile raising, reputation and research agendas this will need to be factored into implementation and review arrangements.

Appendix A – UEA Engagement Awards 2016. The citations are also available at <https://www.uea.ac.uk/community-university-engagement/awards>

## **UEA Engagement Awards 2016**

### **Project Awards:**

#### **Dr Jessica Johnson, a Lecturer in Solid Earth Geophysics in the School of Environmental Sciences**

The Norwich Cathedral inaugural Science Festival in March 2016 saw a team from UEA's School of Environmental Sciences deliver a suite of volcanology-related activities. The festival's drop-in family day attracted around 10,000 visitors to the Cathedral site. As part of the team, Dr Jessica Johnson developed a novel activity giving visitors a chance to engage with an expensive, and normally inaccessible, seismometer. Jessica's presentation was pitched perfectly to the audience, generating curiosity and enthusiasm. When a fellow expert had to pull out from a Bin Bang display, Jessica, undaunted, carried on with a demonstration creating a controlled explosion using liquid nitrogen in front of huge crowds of children and adults - with only the support of students and non-specialist colleagues. Despite being inundated with curious visitors for almost six hours without respite, Jessica displayed exceptional professionalism, ensuring every interaction was a positive and meaningful one and that attendees left with a genuine insight into her area of research and its impact outside academia.

#### **Dr Tom Licence, Director of the Centre of East Anglia Studies and Senior Lecturer in the School of History**

Tom established "What East Anglia Threw Away" in 2015. This innovative, multidisciplinary project brings together academics, students, local authorities, community groups and members of the public in order to study and explore the delights of historic rubbish dumps. In sampling landfill sites originating between 1870 and 1960, "Garbology" combines with methodology to enhance knowledge about how our ancestors lived and forge important links between UEA and regional research partners. In parallel to this, the "Historical Landfill" strand of the project involves consultation with local authorities on the issue of contaminated land. In Norfolk alone, the project has increased the Environment Agency's database of historic landfill sites by approximately 70%. "What East Anglia Threw Away" has, so far, engaged with up to 23.9 million people globally, with media appearances, public lectures, school workshops and community excavations.

### **Joint Project Award**

**Dr Tom Phillips, Tutor in Humanities, Foundation Year in the Interdisciplinary Institute for the Humanities and Dean Bowman, Student, School of Art, Media and American Studies.**

The Norwich Gaming Festival, now in its 3<sup>rd</sup> year, is a major celebration of the cultural importance of videogames and highlights the local creative sector as part of this growing industry. This year the festival saw an official partnership with UEA and, as part of a week of activities, Tom and Dean organised two days of public talks and workshops. Tom and Dean presented on key areas of games studies; showcasing current research on the subject at UEA. The public talks quickly sold out but were livestreamed on YouTube, extending their public reach beyond the festival. Tom and Dean maximised UEA's involvement by encouraging staff and PGR participation in the public events. Feedback from an estimated 52,000 visitors indicated that 55% of attendees felt the event to be of educational value. Further UEA involvement is planned for the festival in 2017.

### **Achievement Awards:**

**Carl Philpott, senior lecturer, Norwich Medical School**

Carl, an expert Ear, Nose and Throat consultant, was approached about the possibility of creating a charity to support and inform sufferers of smell and taste disorders. Fifth Sense was born and things have developed rapidly with the charity currently providing 2000 members with support, advice and a signpost to potential diagnosis and treatment. Carl has been centrally involved in the charity's many public engagement activities, including "Food, Flavour and Fifth Sense" in 2012 and "Get a Whiff of This" in 2013. Future plans include a national survey of sufferers in 2018 which will be the first of its kind and provide statistics to campaign for better patient services and further research. Carl's enthusiasm, dedication and expertise have been vital to the charity's development and the connection between the public and ENT clinicians such as Carl is fundamental to its continued success.

**Dr Marina Prentoulis, a Senior Lecturer, School of Politics, Philosophy, Language and Communication Studies**

Marina has an outstanding record of interaction with non-academic audiences ranging from local schoolchildren to panel discussion on the BBC Andrew Marr show and speaking at Glastonbury festival. During the Euro crisis of 2015, Marina became the "go to" contact for

national media to aid understanding about contemporary European movements and the rise of Syriza and Podemos in Greece and Spain respectively. Media and public appearances as senior lecturer at UEA have brought enormous credit to the School of Political, Philosophy, Language and Communication Studies. No matter who the audience is, Marina presents research and political expertise in an accessible way and her passion and subject knowledge combined with the ability to engage and debate with experts, politicians and hardened journalists is to be highly commended.

**Dr Jenni Rant, Honorary Lecturer, School of Biological Sciences**

Jenni was introduced to the SAW (Science Art and Writing) Trust as a volunteer during her PhD and postdoctorate years at the John Innes Centre and has run the charity full-time since 2012. As a public engagement approach, SAW shatters the notion that science is “difficult” and instead stimulates an interest in and an empathy with science. SAW workshops in schools bring scientists, artists and writers together with teachers and children to explore scientific themes in an accessible, cross-disciplinary way. Jenni runs SAW workshops locally and nationally and makes regular visits to collaborative bases in Shanghai and Boston, USA where SAW is very much part of teacher tool kits. SAW delivers activities at big public events including the Royal Norfolk Show, Science at the Cathedral and (this year) to Latitude Festival. SAW is chosen by many scientists across the Norwich Research Park wishing for support in the design and delivery of accessible public engagement as part of their RCUK Pathways to Impact. Jenni is a passionate, tireless and committed advocate for public engagement.

**Group Achievement Award**

**The unit of Language and Communication Studies from the School of Politics, Philosophy, Language and Communication Studies**

The unit of Language and Communication Studies has together created a thriving and dynamic range of engagement activity to help promote languages and the wider benefits of language learning. Colleagues in Language and Communication Studies are proud to be ‘champions of languages’. The unit’s French theatre company, “Sacré Théâtre”, has organised plays in French at UEA for over 30 years. The Spanish sector publishes a magazine in Spanish every semester which includes articles from members of the public. The Japanese sector runs the successful “Discover Japan” day on campus, which attracted 160 participants in its first year. This year the unit also hosted the third “Norwich City of Interculture” at the

Forum. The event offered free hands-on activities for all ages and an exhibition looking at the challenges involved in communicating in different languages. It featured talks and discussions, which brought together lecturers from across PPL and UEA, the public, and external organisations, to discuss and raise awareness about the diversity of Norwich and Norfolk, through perspectives ranging from language, translation and intercultural communication to migration, citizenship or studies on politics or policy that have an impact on the local and regional communities. Other public engagement activities include a free cinema club, a public lecture series and community radio shows.

### **Student Award**

#### **Hussam Hussein, Research Student from the School of International Development.**

As the Ethnic Minorities Officer for UEA's Student Union, Hussam Hussein led campus events throughout October 2015 for Black History Month. Twenty-three student societies were involved in events that drew hundreds of students, staff and the general public to diverse activity from panel debates, seminars and film screenings to exhibitions and music performance. Hussam launched the month at Norwich City Council and widely publicised events via thousands of widely distributed programmes across the city. As a researcher in hydropolitics and an international student ambassador, Hussam has presented at several Rotary events in Norwich and to students from all over the world studying at the English Experience School in Norwich. Hussam was one of 50 world youth delegates to the UNESCO Education for Sustainable Development conference in Japan and continues to present his research to policy-makers as well as the public at conferences on a global level.