Executive summary

Following the award of the RCUK Catalyst Grant in March 2012, the Public Engagement with Research Unit (PERU) at the University of Aberdeen has adopted a leading role in supporting and developing academic-led engagement activity across the institution. In a relatively short time, the PERU has achieved a measurable culture change in attitudes of the academic community towards public engagement (PE) and secured a number of strategically valuable successes through direct and joint-led fundraising and strategic partnership building. Through this work coupled with a considerable public-facing events programme, the PERU has escalated the University’s reputation as a recognised centre of excellence for PE in the UK Higher Education arena, notably reflected by various project and team accolades1.

One of the major foci of the Aberdeen Catalyst project was the progressive approach to skills development through the opportunities offered by public engagement. Over the past 3 years, this aspect of Aberdeen’s approach has resulted in public engagement being embedded in every aspect of staff/student inductions and professional skills development. These range from workshops for Post Graduate Researchers (PGRs) and Early Career Researchers (ECRs) through to residential courses for Principal Investigators. Recognition and reward has been part and parcel of this approach, with public engagement featuring clearly in promotion criteria and special incentives such as the Aberdeen Principal’s Prize for Public Engagement being implemented.

The visibility of the support and advocacy for PE in Aberdeen has also been enhanced during the Catalyst project, through regular e-zines targeting current opportunities, information sessions delivered at research group and discipline level, and the production of an easy to navigate web resource (www.abdn.ac.uk/engage). Alongside the public engagement website, our researcher development team produced their own resource (www.abdn.ac.uk/develop) with intensive cross-referencing between them.

The Aberdeen Catalyst project also explored approaches to pan-Scotland public engagement using the Scottish Universities Physics Alliance (SUPA) as an exemplar. Training for physics PGRs from across Scotland has been delivered as part of the project, piloting a new type of residential skills development format which embeds within it a real public event at which the students participate.

The University of Aberdeen has three academic colleges, and the Catalyst project featured the appointment of a dedicated PE Coordinator in each of these colleges. In doing this, more effective links into the research community were developed and interdisciplinary ideas around public engagement were better exploited. Each coordinator also built capacity for PE generally and would take forward pilot projects around PE.

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Figure 1: The advocacy of skills through practice pervaded our Aberdeen Catalyst project and the role of public engagement as a lever for professional development was a recurring theme.

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1 Times Higher Award Shortlisted in two categories 2013; Ken Skeldon - MBE (June 2012), investiture to Faraday Club (Sep 2013) and Honorary Fellowship of British Association (Sep 2013); Heather Doran - Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Fellowship (2015); Lucy Leiper – Scotland and NI VITAE Regional Rep’ (April 2015).
Key achievements over the 3 year period included:-

- Established a highly visible central Public Engagement with Research Unit
- Piloted model for academic-led coordinators for public engagement embedded within academic colleges
- Raised the profile of the public engagement activity, making Aberdeen competitive in major PE grants – e.g. European Researchers Night and most recently, the NUCLEUS RRI project
- Catalysed a culture of best practice sharing through the annual conferences of UKCGE, ARMA and ENGAGE
- Embedded PE in the peer review process for research grants making it a central consideration for academics in the context of their research
- Embedded PE in the skills development agenda, through robust overall with researcher development programme and incorporation into PG Cert in Academic Practice (accredited by the Higher Education Academy)
- Increased the number of academics seeking support for PE by 100% from the pre to post Catalyst period
- We have seen a 21% increase since 2010 in the proportion of academic staff who agree that the University values their contribution to public engagement (based on CROS survey data)

The Catalyst project has also provided an infrastructure to make Aberdeen competitive in securing related awards and infrastructure projects. Examples include the University’s recently secured Wellcome Trust Institutional Strategic Support Fund, a European Researchers’ Night Grant (Explorathon) and an EU Responsible Research and Innovation Grant (Nucleus). These are in addition to a range of smaller awards for public engagement secured by the PERU and the secondary funding successes enhanced through PERU support with impact and engagement plans in proposals to the research councils, EU, Wellcome Trust and other funders.

Finally, the Catalyst project has also opened up new pathways to share best practice and develop networks. Since the award of the Catalyst grant, the PERU team has led sessions at major conferences and meetings including the Public Communication of Science and Technology (PCST) conference, Association of Research Managers and Administrators (ARMA) conference, the UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE), Engage and Vitae.

**Key highlights of the Catalyst Journey**

The Catalyst journey has been progressed by co-leads Dr Kenneth Skeldon and Dr Lucy Leiper with senior academic lead from Vice Principal Phil Hannaford. Along the way, best practice sharing has been achieved through regular meetings with the other seven Catalyst universities and the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE).

In Aberdeen, this combination of robust following of our work plan, the support from senior management and the wider networking has helped us achieve four aspects of our journey:-

**Advocacy and Support around Engaged Practice**

We have established an expert support service around embedded engagement practice in research grants, fellowships and major, institutional level initiatives. Moreover, to lever PE strategic impacts on measures of excellence and compliance metrics such as REF, Athena SWAN, widening participation and outcome reporting *(in close partnership with Research & Innovation, Policy Planning & Governance and College Research Directors).*
Specifically this involves the PERU team members providing tailored feedback on individual grants around public engagement activities and embedding engaged practice into the research journey, and cross referencing it to pathways to impact and/or dissemination plans. Since 2012 we have provided 100 cases of advice and interaction with the academic community, compared with 20 in the three years previously. In total, 450 academic interactions have been recorded over the middle 18 months of the Catalyst project, during which time a database system was put in place to record team activity.

**Examples of success** include PERU role in securing Wellcome ISSF; other direct grant successes such as EU European Researchers’ Night and NUCLEUS Responsible Research & Innovation Awards; provision of bespoke RCUK and EU grant support – increasingly ITNs and DTCs – assisted by research-active College PE Coordinators; provision of first-grant support; review of NERC prioritised proposals; support in REF impact case studies and recording activity in PURE; Reporting into SFC Outcomes Agreements, Athena SWAN submissions, FR Excellence in Research Badge, Manifesto for Public Engagement, Concordats around early career development.

**Academic Professional Development and Skills**

We deliver a comprehensive professional development and training programme to upskill, empower and incentivise staff and students in their engagement activity and practice (in close partnership with the Centre for Academic Development).

Prior to the Catalyst award we provided activities and courses but these were not particularly joined up and were few in number. Since the Catalyst, which was motivated partly by the objective to more closely couple the PE and skills development agendas at Aberdeen, the provision of training has increased considerably. Moreover, the coupling of training to practical opportunities to evidence skills has been transformed. Between 2010 and 2012 a limited number of courses related to Public Engagement were offered (5 courses with 90 attendees). Since the Catalyst grant was awarded, together the public engagement and researcher development teams coordinated an enhanced suite of training and development courses to support researchers, in particular early career researchers, on their public engagement journey (between 2012 and 2015 – 39 courses, 571 attendees).

In addition to an improved training programme, as we outlined above, we placed a significant focus on coupling the training with specific public engagement events and opportunities. This ethos of skills through practice was a distinguishing feature of our Catalyst approach.

**Examples of training workshops (see below for the annual opportunities to which these workshops relate):** Sessions at all staff and PGR student inductions; provision of Impact and Engagement workshops at all PI Development Programmes; delivery of teaching and co-curricular opportunities to UG students; delivery of training modules in Social Media, Network Building, Communications, Talking with the Media, Public Engagement Principals & Practice and Grant Writing; Training across pan-Scotland GRAD Schools inc. EastBIO, SUPA, SGSAH and SGSSS.

**Evidencing and Achieving through a Vibrant Annual Programme**

Following on from the above, we coordinate and deliver a high-profile wide-ranging public facing programme that positions the University as a leader in civic, cultural and partnership led engagement and that is heavily influenced by our staff and students (in partnership with Festival & Events, Communications and Marketing Teams, Alumni and Development Trust).

Prior to Catalyst the events programme at Aberdeen largely ran independently of academic interests or strategies. However since the award, the programme has been transformed to be first and
foremost an infrastructure for helping academics to put their PE skills and ideas into practice. This is an essential part of the culture change journey as it offers flexible and accessible routes for our academic community to take advantage of. Often these are important first steps into the PE environment for some academics, particularly our PGR and early career researchers.

**Examples of public engagement opportunities (enhanced by the training programmes described above):** Activities embedded in the PER agenda include: UK’s largest community café series; Scotland’s largest British Science Week programme; University Annual May Festival ‘Discover’ Strand – part of Aberdeen’s Festivals Collective; European Researchers’ Night Scotland (Aberdeen led); Festival of Social Science (UoA has Hub status since 2014); Being Human Festival of the Humanities (UoA has Hub status since 2015); Director’s Cut; Annual Lecture Series; Junior Café Sci; Research Busking and Meet the Researcher events regularly throughout year.

**Context and Approach**

Details of the Catalyst project and the history of public engagement are given in Appendix 1.

Prior to the RCUK Catalyst the University did not have a dedicated Public Engagement Unit. However in 2008, the University implemented a strategy for Public Engagement with Science (PES) following the Beacons for Public Engagement initiative (to which the institution submitted an unsuccessful bid). The PES strategy was led by Vice Principal Dominic Houlihan and new appointee to the University’s Office of External Affairs, Dr Ken Skeldon. Dr Skeldon was based within the Office of External Affairs that includes Communications and Events teams. This strategy pioneered an approach to public engagement with science that was largely underpinned by researcher involvement.

The Catalyst award enabled us to extend focus beyond science to encompass all research at the University and, crucially, to put in place an infrastructure that would support this, and actively change attitudes towards public engagement within the academic community. Significantly we recruited two public engagement officers (details in Appendix 1) and seconded 3 academic college coordinators for PE (0.2FTE). This has involved detailed and personal consultation with individuals to identify needs, aspirations and barriers around public engagement, which has only been possible with the additional resource the catalyst enabled us to identify.

The three seconded academic College coordinators for PE were a particularly interesting resource to have as part of the project. The concept was to improve roots into the academic community. For example, the coordinators would be present at their respective College inductions, decision making committees and staff training sessions. Specifically we asked the coordinators to develop networks within their own college. This worked well because these coordinators were research-active staff members, peers to the community there were supporting. They were well placed to identify barriers and challenges. In other words, they helped address culture change challenges at the academic ‘coal face’ where professional services colleagues may have encountered other barriers. They also provided a profile for our PE agenda in each College which, when combined with the central unit, increased the effectiveness of the PE support.

The central teams’ activities were organised largely around projects. By projects, we mean training programmes, specific activities, analysing recognition and reward procedures among others.
Impact

Strategic commitment

As outlined in detail above during the course of the catalyst project we have established a highly visible central team that has been sustained beyond the project end date though a mix of core funds and a cost recovery model. The step change catalysed eventually by the project was initiated by the University signing the manifesto for public engagement in November 2012.

An interesting way to consider the impact of our Catalyst award is to reflect on key things that would or may not have happened. Below, we have identified some important developments we believe would or may not be in place, were it not for the Catalyst Award:

Direct impacts of Catalyst

- We would be unlikely to have a Public Engagement with Research Unit embedded into core support infrastructure and resourced in the way that we currently do
- We would not be regional hubs for the Festival of Social Science and Being Human Festival
- We would likely not have actively presented at conference and meetings with UKCGE and ARMA – helping to build ongoing links with other universities and leading to follow on articles, e.g. in published proceedings and Research Fortnight
- We would not have presented a joint Catalyst session at the international Public Communication of Science & Technology (PCST) conference
- We would have had a weaker case to the HR Excellence in Research assessment (in the event, we secured the Badge in May 2015 – with much reference to our Catalyst approach to researcher training and development)
- We would have had a weaker case to the Wellcome Trust Institutional Strategic Support Fund (successfully secured, with embedded public engagement in October 2014)
- Several of our research grants and fellowships submitted over the past 3-years would have been weaker for the lack of embedded public engagement and training plans (examples of successful research grants that PERU and RDU have supported run into the several £M).
- We would not have been shortlisted in the Times Higher Education award category for Outstanding Support for Early Career Researchers
- We would not have established a Public Research Interest Group for the assessment of lay summaries on research proposals
- We would not be delivering workshops and actively raising the awareness of public engagement across pan-Scotland Graduate schools including the Scottish Universities Physics Alliance, East BIO, Scotland Social Science Graduate School and most recently, the Arts and Humanities Scottish Graduate School
- We would not have established a Principal’s Prize for Public Engagement with Research
- We would not have monthly PERU e-zines and regular e-bytes
**Contributory Influence of Catalyst**

- The head of public engagement (Dr Skeldon) may not have advanced in the University's management structure so quickly without the repute and profile that the RCUK Catalyst grant contributed.
- We may not have applied, successfully for two EU awards – European Researchers’ Night and NUCLEUS.
- We may not have become such active players in national competitions such as FameLAB and 3-Minute Thesis – hosting regional heats and helping two PhD students reach the London national finals.
- We would have a weaker case made to our Athena SWAN institutional award.
- We would not have an annual University Festival hallmarked by such a highly successful academic-led strand, based on ideas and activities led by our own staff and students.

The table below outlines the specific objectives of our catalyst project and provided evidence for how we have met them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Evidence/Data</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Strategic commitment to public engagement</strong></td>
<td>• Pervasive inclusion of Public Engagement in Strategic Plan 2015-2020</td>
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<td>• Formal governance structure for Public Engagement through newly formed Advisory Group for Public Engagement – chaired by Vice Principal for External Affairs, reporting to Research Policy committee.</td>
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<td>• Preparation of REF impact and environment templates for guidance around PE</td>
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<td>• Signatory of manifesto for PE</td>
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<td><strong>Integration of public engagement into the core activities of HEIs, including measuring quality and impact of public engagement with research activities</strong></td>
<td>• Objectives in strategic plan/targets in operational plan around PE</td>
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<td>• PE training is integrated in research leadership/management training programmes – PI Development programmes since 2012 that have included embedding PE into research process (rather than information sessions pre-2012) – 6 programmes (115 PI’s /research leaders engaged). Impact on training – of that approx. 10% have engaged with the PE team to discuss funding applications, events/activities or exhibitions.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Inclusion of PE and KE into a newly HEA accredited Pg Certificate in Academic Practice – links with strategic targets for all university staff engaged in teaching to hold HEA Fellowship or above by 2020. Pilot programme in 2015, 4 participants, next</td>
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</table>
| Reward and recognition of researchers and staff involved in public engagement | • Public Engagement prize – endorsed by University Principal – 17 individuals recognised since 2013. Evidence of value of recognitions exemplified by Dr Ewan Campbell – winner in 2013, significant contribution to his successful Scottish Crucible application in 2014 which specifically focusses on importance of PE in a research career.  
• Ongoing review of PE in job descriptions and in promotion criteria  
• Changed perceptions of value of PE amongst research leaders 71% of research leaders/PIs thought PE important activity as a research leader in 2012 vs 82% in 2015 (PIRLS data) |
|---|---|
| Encouraging and supporting researchers and staff at all levels to become involved (e.g. by building capacity for public engagement amongst researchers), | • Increase in number of researchers taking part in PE courses (5 fold increase; maps with rise in awareness of PE support across the institution CROS/PIRLS data)  
• Increase in number of resources available to researchers (increase in number of courses offered - increase from 2 per year to 6-9 per year) |
| Creating networks within institutions to share good practice, celebrate their work and ensure that those involved in public engagement feel supported | • Research Staff Association established by Researcher Development Unit with specific interest in public engagement through training and events  
• European Researchers Night (Explorathon) application, arguably successful given the reputation of University of Aberdeen through the Catalyst work - partnership bid with 4 other Scottish Universities (180 euros). Shortlisted for a Times Higher Award for Outstanding Support for Early Career Researchers 2015. |
| Contribution to a wider network supportive of public engagement with research including the NCCPE, other recipient HEIs and the wider HE community. | • Partner/mentor of other universities in development of researchers – Pan –Scotland support through working with SUPA research pool, EASTBIO/SULSA research pool and Scottish Graduate Schools for Arts & Humanities and Social Sciences. In particular training course is centred around a PE event such that researchers develop skills and can immediately put them into practice. Events take place during Glasgow Science Festival, Festival of Social Science, Being Human and British Science week  
• Deliver courses for University of At Andrews (2x per yr to 15+ students/staff each time)  
• Specific initiatives to support the widening access priorities within Aberdeen |
Having achieved much, there are still areas we are making an impact in. For example the models for recognition and reward (through promotion) are under review and this is being informed by mapping exercises relating to public engagement and job descriptions. This work in ongoing but the intended outcome is that public engagement will feature across all research and academic related job descriptions that will filter through to workload models within schools and colleges. This is not an insignificant body of work and in a University like Aberdeen the process of change is understandably lengthy.

As detailed below in stories of change, Public Engagement features in the emerging strategic plan as a pervasive theme across each of the pillars of research, teaching and people. This is a significant step change in how engagement is viewed within our institution; from a role within a standalone strand of the previous 2011-2015 plan to an integrated model in the emerging plan thus placing public engagement at the heart of the ‘academic role’. The current strategy for Public Engagement with Research (2013-2015) is underdevelopment as part of the strategy of the Directorate of External Relations and will be published alongside the strategic plan in late 2015.

During the catalyst project we invested heavily in identifying champions (through the College coordinator model as detailed above) and in leadership development of our research active academics. This has been predominantly through involvement in Principal Investigator Leadership Development programmes aimed at new and aspiring and senior PIs in the university. We have moved from simply highlighting the support available to delivering interactive sessions around the PE agenda in HE context, how engaged research ‘fits’ in the REF and impact landscape; case studies showcasing different approaches to engagement across different disciplines and embedding and importantly costing engagement activity into research grants and pathways to impact sections. The outcome of this different approach has resulted in a significant increase in follow-through consultations. Currently the PERU has over 450 interactions with academic staff and students over the past 18 months. We have also devolved the culture change through companion schemes – for instance, Professor Peter McCaffrey, co-Director of our Institute of Medical Sciences was selected to attend a Wellcome Trust supported leadership masterclass, leading to a follow-up training event for staff back in Aberdeen in conjunction with consultants Graphic Science.

Critical to the success of any culture change initiative is having structures in place to recognise efforts and activities undertaken by those the initiative is aimed at. In this case as detailed elsewhere we are working towards positive changes in promotion criteria and job descriptions. However some other measures have been established to value engagement activities such as the Principals Prize for Public Engagement that recognises excellence (as judged by a panel of experts from the University and other UK institutions) in engagement across a range of criteria, disciplines and career stages.

**Metrics and Measures**

It is challenging to define meaningful metrics in a culture change project however we can positive report some data that allude to changing attitudes and culture.
• We achieved a six-fold increase in the number of courses supporting the full range of public engagement and in the number of researchers attending between 2010-12 and 2012-15 (data provided by the Centre for Academic Development training logs)
• We have enabled a 20% increase in the proportion of our academic staff reporting positive attitudes towards the value of public engagement activities in the context of a research portfolio (data from the national CROS survey)
• 462 interactions to the public engagement unit over 2 years from June 2012 – 2014
• Public engagement specified in academic expectations documents and promotion procedures (ongoing)
• Demonstrable success in PE-led grants including 2 major awards such as European Researchers’ Night (£160k) and NUCLEUS (£3M) as well as smaller grants from Scottish Government and Scottish Universities Insight Institute
• Pervasive context of public engagement throughout the Strategic Plan
• 48 applications to the newly launched Principal’s Prize with 17 awards made
• 10 applications to the dedicated PE enabling fund
• 82% of Research Leaders/Principal Investigators thought PE important activity as a research leader in 2015 compared to 71% in 2012

This last statistic is heartening to see because often it is the researcher leader ‘middle management’ level that acts as a constraint in public engagement particularly its adoption by postgraduate researchers or early career researchers. While it is not possible to directly connect this to the Catalyst project, we strongly believe it is the work and visibility of the project that has influenced the views of this cohort.

**Practical Support**

Since the catalyst project has been under way we have established a core training programme of workshops and training to support researchers becoming involved in public engagement. We also have in place a core team that provides bespoke support for researchers wishing to undertake engagement, embedding it into research proposals, identifying community groups and stakeholders.

The core workshops include: An introduction to public engagement (Research in HE context; diversity of public engagement and definitions); Engaging in the real world (opportunities); hanging your research out in public (practical support; creative techniques and evaluation); Social media; Preparing for Festivals; Talking with the media; Vodcasting your research; STEM Ambassadors Induction (including Science Communication); Preparing for Famelab.

Since the project started in 2013, we have delivered over 30 individual workshops to staff and research students within the University of Aberdeen engaging in total with almost 250 individual researchers as well as talking to all new staff and postgraduate students at their inductions. This compares to only 5 engagement focused workshops between 2010 and 2012. We have many examples of researchers attending workshops and then going on to undertake engagement activities
from taking part in national competitions (and reaching the UK finals) to developing engagement events that engage end users of research.

As indicated above the PERU team have recorded 450 interactions over the middle 18 months of the Catalyst project. Well over 500 individual interactions over the course of the project have been supported. This includes support with funding, PE and impact plans and advice on opportunities to identifying stakeholders and creating partnerships.

The catalyst initiative has also (as stated previously) enabled the establishment of a suite of opportunities that researchers can themselves engage with and take part in. Since 2013 over 600 researchers across the institution have engaged in some capacity. Underpinning this support was the creation of a monthly online newsletter (e-zine) that highlights specific issues of strategic importance to a University wide audience.

A particularly good example comes from a group of researchers from institutions across Scotland. The researchers took part in a collaboration workshop that included a competition to win funds to collaborate on an engagement activity. The winning group (www.funeralscapes.com) won £1000 to conduct fieldwork for the project on the island of Eigg; applied for a public engagement with research enabling grant to develop an engagement event on the island and as part of the University May festival. Using the impact and reach of the event the group has continued to work together and have won a further £1400 to continue the project.

As part of the HR Excellence in Research award review process in 2014, the institution reported against published actions towards implementing the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. As part of the review process we were required to take part in a peer review interview with reviewers form the UK and European Union. The Catalyst project was specifically highlighted as an exemplar of good practice and as an innovative initiative to create a supportive environment for researchers within the institution.

Over the duration of the project Drs Skeldon and Leiper have been involved in sharing best practice across the sector in Scotland and throughout the rest of the UK. In particular we have specifically developed and delivered bespoke workshops for other institutions including St Andrews and the Scottish Universities Physics Alliance (SUPA) (approximately 50 researchers engaged). As part of the St Andrews initiative we have also helped identify and create networks of engagement champions across the Universities that now feature as part of the public engagement workshops.

The Public Engagement and Researcher Development teams have also delivered presentations about the catalyst strategy and on sharing best practice and learning form the project at a number of national and international conferences such as ARMA (2014 and 2015), Vitae (2013), UKCGE (2014 and 2015), PCST (Brazil 2014) and Engage (2013 and 2014). On each occasion the team have been contacted by conference participants or by ‘virtual’ delegates following on social media to find out more and to ask for specific advice relating to their own public engagement endeavours within their institutions.
Beyond the UK, the public engagement and researcher development teams have also recently engaged with multiple European Universities as partners in European funded projects (Innovative Training Networks). Although the impact of this initiative is not yet clear there was significant understanding of the importance of engaged research that perhaps was not appreciated by the European partners prior to this. The group have also agreed to undertake a collective engagement event as part of the project in 2017.

**Edge Analysis**

The table in Figure 2 shows the pathway we believe we have taken with respect to the institutional EDGE tool. The University was starting from a reasonable baseline thanks to previous efforts, particularly in the Public Engagement with Science area. However as a result of the Catalyst work, in all areas we have moved to the right by one stage in the EDGE journey. We acknowledge there is still work to do, particularly in recognition and leadership. Changes in senior leadership at the University took place throughout the project, both at strategic (VP) and operational level, making continuity of advocacy an issue. However we have emerged from the Catalyst project in a strong position compared to many other institutions with an infrastructure and team dedicated to supporting and embedding public engagement and its benefits further. The close link with researcher and professional development will also prevail, and it is our strong preference to retain joint progress meetings and VP steer across these areas moving forward.
University of Aberdeen Catalyst Project – FINAL REPORT

Figure 2. The above mapping to the EDGE tool has been completed by Catalyst joint leads Dr Kenneth Skeldon and Dr Lucy Leiper. Significant progress has been made in many areas, while in others there is still work to do.

While we are pleased that we have made progress there is still a significant piece of work to coordinate around recognition. While there is ongoing review of promotion criteria during which the references to recognition are being reviewed, the institution has a strategic plan to focus on coordination, a body of work with formal responsibility for oversight of the key processes and resources available to assist the embedding of PE. There are a number of recognised and supported networks.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Embryonic</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Gripping</th>
<th>Embedding</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mission</td>
<td>There is little or no reference to public engagement in the institutional mission or to any other institution-wide strategies. PE is referenced sporadically within the institutional mission documents and strategies, but is not considered a priority area. PE is clearly referenced within the institutional mission and strategy, and the institution is developing an institution-wide strategic approach. PE is prioritised in the institution's official mission and strategic development plans, with significant indicators identified. It is a key consideration in strategic development planning and budgeting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Few if any of the most influential leaders in the institution serve as champions for public engagement. Some of the institution's senior team act as informal champions for public engagement. Some of the institution's senior team act as formal champions for public engagement. The VC acts as a champion for PE and a senior leader takes formal responsibility. All senior leaders have an understanding of the importance and value of public engagement to the institution's agenda.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>The institution is committed to public engagement. PE is featured in internal or external communications. Public engagement occasionally features in internal or external communications. Public engagement frequently features in internal communications. PE appears prominently in the institution’s internal communications. Its strategic importance is highlighted, and resources and strategic support are available to support its implementation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>There is no attempt to co-ordinate public engagement activity or to network learning and expertise across the institution. There are some informal attempts being made to co-ordinate PE activities, but there is no strategic plan for this work. There are opportunities for students to get involved, but there is no coordinated approach to promoting and supporting these opportunities across the institution. There are some formal opportunities for students to access professional development and training in PE. There are a number of recognised and supported networks.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>There is little or no opportunity for staff or students to access professional development to develop their skills or knowledge of PE. There are some opportunities for staff or students to access professional development and training in PE. There is a drive to expand opportunities within the institution.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recognition</td>
<td>Staff are not formally rewarded or recognised for their PE activities. Some departments recognise and reward PE activity on an ad hoc basis. Some departments have opportunities for their staff to get involved in PE, but not in all faculties or departments. There is a drive to expand opportunities to all. All staff have the opportunity to be involved in public engagement, either formally or as part of their formal duties, and are encouraged and supported to do so.</td>
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<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>Little or no attempt has been made to assess community need, or to support non-traditional groups in engaging with the institution. Some attempts have been made to analyse community need and interest, and to begin to tackle access issues by working with the institution and its activities to the public. The institution has committed resources to assessing community need and interest, and to using this insight and feedback to inform its strategy and plans. The institution has invested time and resources into understanding and supporting the needs of communities, and to systematically seek their feedback and involvement.</td>
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public engagement contribution will be reviewed, it is important that we are able to make concrete changes in criteria to reflect PE contributions. The development of the Principals Prize for Public Engagement (learning from the Edinburgh Beltane project) has helped drive this agenda forward.

Whilst we have improved in terms of people, with more researchers engaging with the PERU, with PE activities and sharing best practice, it is difficult to attribute this solely to the Catalyst project, external factors including REF, Pathways to impact; funding requirements have also increased awareness amongst our research community. We have improved our own engagement with undergraduate students (although out of the remit of this project), primarily through the annual opportunities that have been made possible through the staff capacity of the Catalyst project; continuing to work closely with our careers service we hope to embed PE into the STAR award scheme for undergraduates.

For our public focus, the university has committed resources towards public engagement across the city, in particular through the Aberdeen Festivals Collective – of which the University is a key partner.

Our progress measured against the EDGE tool has been instrumental in influencing our recommendations to senior management, summarised in our Conclusion and Recommendations section below.
The University of Aberdeen has a strong track record of public facing events and activities. Until recently, however, these activities have tended to be delivered by a few enthusiastic academics or staff employed specifically for the task. The Catalyst Project has provided the means to underline the University’s belief that public engagement is a key part of academic life. It has provided the stimulus to encourage, train and support as many as possible of our researchers (from postgraduate students to senior professors) to integrate public engagement into their academic life. The establishment of the Public Engagement with Research Unit (PERU) highlighted the University’s belief that public engagement should no longer should be seen to be ‘an extra’ or ‘nice thing to do’, but instead it should be seen to be a core aspect of academic work.

PERU has a number of important functions- to provide: a highly visible focus for our public engagement activities; academics with the skills and confidence to undertake public engagement activities; and a mechanism by which new opportunities for such activities can be identified in grant, fellowship and infrastructure proposals. PERU often discharges these functions in conjunction with our Researcher Development Unit (co-leaders of our Catalyst Project). We are currently reviewing at Aberdeen our frameworks for professional development and academic expectations, with our Catalyst team playing a central role.

PERU staff are increasingly involved in the peer review of applications to help identify public engagement activities at different stages of a project’s lifecycle- from the development of impact plans within grant applications to the dissemination of results in novel and exciting ways. In this way, public engagement and impact is becoming embedded in everyday activities. Indeed, public engagement is specifically stated in our new Institutional Strategic Plan for 2015 – 2020 to be a key aspect of our three main pillars of research, teaching and people. The University recognises the need to continue to invest in public engagement, for instance though core support for our PERU and Research Development Unit teams.

It is encouraging to see that our efforts are being increasingly recognised outside Aberdeen. For example, though grant success (such as EU grants won directly by the PERU and our recent Wellcome Trust Institutional Strategic Support Fund award which involves greatly the PERU team); and through recognition by outside organisations (for example, our Catalyst team is consultant on the University of Oxford’s Seed Fund Application and PERU staff regularly lead sessions at key UK and international meetings and conferences).

Undoubtedly, the prestige and success of the Catalyst Project has strengthened our approach to public engagement at Aberdeen. We are keen to explore ways of retaining our connection with the RCUK and other institutions supported by Catalyst funding. Although there remains much to do, I believe that there has been a culture change at Aberdeen with many more academics undertaking a
wide range of sector-leading public engagement activities. We remain deeply committed to building upon this success.

**Director of Research (College of Life Sciences and Medicine) – Professor Neil Gow**

In my role as Director of Research in the College of Life Sciences and Medicine, I have seen first-hand the impact of the Catalyst project. Since the project began we have observed public engagement with research pervading college strategies and infrastructures, in-particular through the college public engagement coordinator role – an initiative of the Catalyst project to better develop roots into our academic community (please see Context & Approach section for more detail on the college coordinators). The coordinator helped embed public engagement in key College committees responsible for research policy. Importantly, the coordinator role also permitted experimental approaches to public engagement. A good example was the establishment of the College’s Public Research Interest Group (PRIG) with a remit to provide ‘lay’ expertise in reviewing research proposals. Since its inception in 2014, the PRIG has over 50 public members and has provided input to around 15 applications.

Another example of the impact of the Public Engagement with Research team is in the University’s recent award of a Wellcome Trust ISSF. The team provided significant input to this bid and PE was identified by Wellcome as a mandatory components. The University has now appointed a dedicated PE coordinator as part of ISSF, however unlike many other institutions’ approaches – in Aberdeen we integrated this post, structural, within the central public engagement with research unit to ensure capacity is built and efficiency of approach maximised.

Another fundamentally important aspect of the Aberdeen Catalyst project was the positive impact on the development of early-stage researchers within the College. We have a vibrant programme of development workshops linked to tangible outputs for evidencing those skills, made possible through the work of the public engagement team. This is enhancing CVs and allowing for better career progression within the University and for those PGRs and ECRs who will progress to other employment routes. PE also features in all our PI Development Programmes in particular in relation to funding competitiveness and in discussions around leadership.

**Project Officer (Public Engagement with Research Unit) – Dr Heather Doran**

Working as a Project Officer as part of the Catalyst grant was a fantastic learning experience. Being embedded in a project that was bringing about change across the university was a chance for us as a team to generate new ideas and to be creative in how we approached challenges and new opportunities. It was also incredibly diverse requiring us to create from scratch everything from websites to new training courses (and delivery of those). Previously the websites had existed for public engagement with science, but with the Catalyst approach, they were brought into a much more strategic form. Being with the project for two and a half years meant I have seen the impact the early steps have had on the academic community and their approaches to engagement. Now we frequently receive requests for support and advice for engagement from researchers about how
they can engage with the public. The researchers value input from us and receive benefit from the engagement activities they participate in. Further, the Principal's Prize for public engagement is a fantastic opportunity to celebrate those advances.

The landscape of opportunities for engagement with public audiences has widened over the past few years too with opportunities for online as well as face-to-face encounters. This is an area which has been seeded but I am keen to see develop over the next few years. There was a great learning opportunity within the Catalyst project which I am keen to build on. My experiences from this project have provided me with opportunities including a Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Fellowship to investigate how engagement via social media is being approached by scientists, universities and museums around in the US, Canada, China and Japan.

Academic College Coordinator – Dr Liz Curtis

A changing and positive attitude toward the role of public engagement has been achieved through a range of engagements which included working one to one with academics who were in the process of writing research funding bids; facilitating discussion on the scope of public engagement to both disseminate and shape research, encouraging and supporting academics to contribute to festivals such as Being Human and the University’s May Festival. For example in relation to funding applications Dr Amy Bryzkel, (Art History) embedded a range of public engagement activities which support her research on Eastern European Performance Art and this contributed to her successful award of AHRC Early Career Funding in 2014. In relation to CASS, the Director of the College Research Committee, Prof Michael Brown is supportive of encouraging staff to embed public engagement into their research and values its contribution to the development of impact narratives for the next REF exercise. Through my own experience of working in the School of Education I have worked directly with Prof Karin Friedrich as part of her Scottish Universities Insight (SUII) Project, Linking Northern Communities socially, culturally and economically: East European Immigration in Scotland, supporting teachers and pupils in schools in Aberdeen to develop work around the story of Wojtek the Bear.

Lessons Learned

Aberdeen’s agenda for culture change towards public engagement had a distinctive narrative of placing academic development at the heart of the approach. This was a result of the early planning and shaping of the bid, led by Dr Kenneth Skeldon and Dr Lucy Leiper whose respective remits covered Public Engagement and Researcher Development. The role of public engagement as a lever and opportunity for enhancing research excellence, researcher skills and providing opportunity for staff and students made for a very clear approach anchored to institutional priorities. It also helped those less converted to public engagement to view its benefits in a different way.
Key elements necessary for effective culture change

We would highlight the following specific areas of work we felt important for culture change:-

- A shared University vision for this project and towards a shared vision of what University of Aberdeen Public Engagement encompasses. Our project would have benefitted from this and in particular from strong leadership – we had to change PIs during the course of the project due to retirement.
- Launch of Aberdeen’s Public Engagement with Research Unit (PERU) and associated strategy for support of the entire university community in its interaction with external audiences.
- Embedded professional development programmes in key areas such as transferable skills, the impact agenda, PI development and digital engagement and involvement in teaching.
- An annual programme of externally facing academic-led opportunities populated by ‘Calls for Ideas’ and linked to local, national or international themes, topical issues and agendas. Whilst the events were funded externally, without the Catalyst funding we would not have had the infrastructure to make them happen.
- Robust system of screening and reviewing of research grants and proposals, extending from RCUK to European calls, charities and trust funding. This is achieved through integration with the internal peer review process, with PERU highlighted on the internal paperwork from the outset.
- Suite of incentives such as our Principal’s Prize for Public Engagement with Research and Enabling fund for small PE projects and the new visibility of PE in frameworks and promotions.
- An internal engagement plan including the ‘Engage’ website www.abdn.ac.uk/engage, monthly PERU e-zine, appointment of academic college PE coordinators (supported by Heads of College and registrars) and attendance at staff/student inductions/college committees.

Key Outcomes

There have been notable achievements over the course of the Catalyst and extending into the period covered by our new Strategic Plan. Highlights include:-

- PERU and PE now in the regular vocabulary of academic staff seeking support in their personal development, academic activity, team-building and funding applications.
- Direct grant successes by PERU - for instance in helping secure the Wellcome ISSF (Oct 2014), securing the EU European Researchers’ Night Scotland (May 2015) and recently, the EU NUCLEUS project (March 2015). This latter project is a 26 partner consortium focused on the important European ‘Responsible Research and Innovation’ (RRI) agenda.
- Establishment of a significant number of community events and public festivals, including the UK’s largest community café programme, Scotland’s biggest British Science Week programme, Regional Hub status for Research Council supported Festival of Social Science and Being Human, organisation of Aberdeen’s Pecha Kucha series and the academic-led strands of the institution’s annual University Festival – now part of the region’s flagship Festivals Collective.
- An increasingly nationally and internationally recognised and respected team, most recently bolstered by Heather Doran securing a Winston Churchill fellowship.
University of Aberdeen Catalyst Project – FINAL REPORT

- Proactive contributions to institutional and external PE infrastructures, including leadership of Aberdeen Science Centre and ambition for our campus and PE (e.g. the new science building).
- Considerable training and development programme, available to our academic community through the year, and delivered by invitation to institutions across the UK.
- A robust approach to adding value across institutional priorities – e.g. Athena SWAN, HR Excellence in Research, adoption of PURE, raising collateral for recruitment and marketing, and evidencing/reporting on Outcome Agreements (SFC, RCUK Assurances) and Concordats.

Challenges and Future Work

The Catalyst project has transformed PE in Aberdeen. Before, there was little systemic approach to join elements around core business together. However challenges remain as we highlight below:

- How do we maintain a strong voice in the national PE discussion with major HE stakeholders? The RCUK project has given a network, contacts and platform which we can exploit.
- With the PE unit now the ‘go-to’ for academics seeking support around PE and related activity, there is an issue of keeping pace with growing expectations and academic need, particularly with support for grant and fellowship writing and provision of training.
- Having brought a strategic focus to academic-led public engagement, we need to consider how to position ourselves for future initiatives in public engagement and researcher/career development – including requirements of the UK Research Excellence Framework, the European ‘impact’ agenda (RRI) and various concordats and outcome agreements.
- How do we make a step change in the vibrancy of our campus? This requires alignment with priorities of the region and further afield, but also requires disruptive change and a bold approach around hybrid public/academic spaces.

How do we change attitudes towards peoples’ traditional view of PE and ‘culture’ including among our own community? Arguably, Aberdeen used to promote a narrow view on culture – often influenced by what others define or think. As an HEI we need to be less shy over our ‘culture of learning’, ‘culture of innovation’, ‘culture of science’ given the institution’s spectrum of academic endeavour.

Partnerships

Partnerships and networks are vital for effective public engagement that extends well beyond our academic borders. When we were awarded our Catalyst Grant, the University was already well underway with its planning of the British Science Festival 2012. This event alone was providing a lever for the development of many partnerships. However the Catalyst grant provided a focus for institutional culture change specifically in exploring support for academic-led public engagement using the British Science Festival as a model and apply it to the creation of a new University of Aberdeen May Festival which was held for the first time in 2013. The 2015 festival has just been delivered, with audiences reaching 10,500. It is also a partnership model in itself, and part of Aberdeen City’s Festivals Collective.

The festival is part of our wider public engagement programme which depends on partnership to thrive. These include businesses, charities, community groups, museums and science centres. We have also championed other types of partnership through the Catalyst project, bringing benefits to
large groups of academics – such as the memorandum of understanding with the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) to be a regional hub for its annual Festival of Social Science. We have just agreed a similar partnership with the School for Advanced Studies, University of London and AHRC for the regional hub status for the Being Human Festival of the Humanities.

We have also forged new relations with a series of partners through a knowledge exchange project with the Scottish Universities Insight Institute. This is a body several universities in Scotland subscribe to, and support, and then bid into for collaborative funds. The PERU in Aberdeen secured the first ever grant back to Aberdeen from SUII and used it to develop a wellbeing project involving community partners and charities.

Internal partnerships have also been extremely important in our institutional culture change agenda. The close coupling of the PERU and the RDU has expanded to include communications, research and policy offices, graduate schools and academic colleges, many of whom have previously worked in relative isolation. Co-creation and synergy is essential for a culture change initiative to be successful.

Our public engagement outputs have followed a very inclusive approach. For instance, British Science Week in Aberdeen is co-led by our PERU and invites 20 organisations each year to feature in the programme.

One of the largest pan-Scotland public engagement projects is European Researchers’ Night (Explorathon) and was secured by the Aberdeen PERU team working with the Universities of Strathclyde, Glasgow and Edinburgh. The wider partnership involved in this project involves upward of 30 bodies.

We have also actively engaged with professional bodies such as UKCGE, VITAE, ARMA and discipline specific societies such as RSC and IOP. We are actively engaged with the Scottish Government and local authorities.

Possibly one of the best examples of partnership recently was our role in NUCLEUS, an EU Horizon 2020 grant to support Responsible Research and Innovation. Aberdeen’s role is to lead a work package, and our leadership in this bid was strengthened by our RCUK Catalyst status particularly in the eyes of European project leads and partners who had a knowledge of the UK public engagement and impact agendas.
Sustainability Plans

As we have previously outlined in our paper to RCUK around post-Catalyst sustainability, the core PERU team has been sustained by the University and a Development Coordinator appointed to the team. Dr Kenneth Skeldon, project lead on the PE side was promoted to a senior position in 2013 and now has a wider remit, managing Festival & Events at the University in additional to Public Engagement with Research. The new Public Engagement with Research Unit is now comprised from a team of 3 people (2.7 FTE). The structure as of June 2015 is shown below in Figure 3.

**Figure 3.** This shows the structure of the Public Engagement with Research Unit (PERU) as of May 2015. Dr Kenneth Skeldon now manages a wider team, and the PERU is effectively comprised of the boxes in light grey. The posts to the right are the College coordinators, originally 0.2FTE research-active staff seconded to the effort and part supported by the grant. Moving forward it is more likely that these posts be transferred to a workload model, and discussions are continuing with the relevant academic College leads and the existing post-holders.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The RCUK Catalyst Project has had a transformative impact on the University of Aberdeen. There are several infrastructures, practices and outcomes that would not have happened had we not been successful with the grant. The Public Engagement with Research Unit exists in the form it does, thanks to the Catalyst grant and the project has instilled a close working synergy with the institution’s researcher development team that will continue long into the future.

The project has also enabled practice sharing across the HE sector far beyond what we would have been able to do otherwise. The Catalyst project meetings, ENGAGE conference and a range of other conferences and meetings have widened our networks and brought new ideas and approaches to Aberdeen. For instance becoming a hub for Festival of Social Science and Being Human followed from connections made at Catalyst meetings. Moving forward, we have been selected to work with the University of Oxford as it explores its public engagement pathway through its Catalyst seed fund application. Our involvement with ARMA has again fed back to Aberdeen, with project co-leader Lucy Leiper undertaking an ARMA accredited course to develop facilitation skills to enable more focused conversation with our academic community around embedding professional development.
into research grants and more specifically how this can be evidenced, the hallmark of our Catalyst approach.

However there is still much work to do. For instance, the perception of public engagement as a tangible mechanism against which reward and recognition can follow is still variable. As financial pressures increase, the focus on research excellence and funding become ever more stringent. The role of advocacy by the research councils and major funders therefore becomes even more important and influential. It is true that examples exist where public engagement has led to income generation or other gains. However the vast majority of public engagement is progressed for other reasons, and if wider benefits are not valued then we risk compromising the culture change we have worked so hard to achieve.

A main recommendation from our project is the strengthening of messaging from major funders and influencers – including the research councils. The role of impact and REF is achieving this somewhat but coherent messages across the research councils would be very welcome. Our Catalyst project has enabled an infrastructure in Aberdeen that has set us ahead of the curve, allowing us to be all the more effective when taken together with these influencing top-down advocacies.

In summary our recommendations would be:-

- **Institutional** – to provide a well-resourced professional public engagement team with strong senior academic lead, facilitating an embedded approach to PE in the research process. The team should deliver training and offer support beyond the creation phase. Specifically, the recording and capturing of activity will be of increasing importance as we enter into the next REF cycle. We also need to make strong advocacy around reward and recognition and provide overt references to public engagement, for example in our staff web pages and online presence.

- **External** – to continue to impress on the major funders and influencers the importance of strong, clear messages around public engagement in the research cycle and to work with external partners to bring meaningful engagement plans to individual staff and students.

- **Academic** – to provide strong leadership to research leaders and managers around the importance of public engagement in the context of the research portfolio. This should include tangible support and training, combined with a mix of high profile case studies, such that staff and students see the benefits of public engagement for their own careers, rather than as an ‘optional extra’ activity alongside other duties.

We have made a significant impact on all these fronts through our Catalyst project and continue to be pre-emptive of future trends, for the support and benefit of our internal and external communities.
APPENDIX 1

Public Engagement at the University of Aberdeen – history and context

The University of Aberdeen is the 5th most ancient University in the UK. Our current research portfolio includes world-leading research, impacting at an international level to make a difference. We conduct research across a wide range of disciplines from medicine, healthcare and nutrition, ecology, science, energy and engineering, social sciences and humanities. At present we have 4 cross-cutting research themes that build on current areas of research: Energy, Environment and Food Security, Pathways to a Healthy Life and The North.

The University is a multi-site campus, based predominantly over 2 main campuses with a soon to open overseas campus in South Korea (Postgraduate Research energy students). Our Kings campus covers a wide range of disciplines from Biological Sciences, Physical Sciences including energy and engineering, and computing sciences, Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities. Our Foresterhill Health campus includes medical and dental schools, medical and healthcare related research and teaching.

Within the University (2013/14 data) we have approximately 3000 staff of which 793 are research-only staff (11% hold grant funding as PI or Co-I); 965 academic staff of (49% had research holding either as PI or Co-I); 370 teaching-only staff (3.5% held grant funding as PI or Co-I); 850 (FTE) postgraduate research students and almost 1400 Professional Services staff. Our research income in 2013/14 was £65.8 million.

Public Engagement with Science was referenced in the 2011-15 institutional level Strategic Plan within strategic objective 5, Engagement and Partnership, with the following mission statement.

“we will further engage people across the globe with our cultural and science public engagement programmes and support our staff and students in contributing to these programmes”.

University of Aberdeen Public Engagement with Science Strategy 2008 - 2011

During this time the University established a vibrant research-led programme of public engagement opportunities and events including the UK’s largest community café programme, dedicated programme for British Science Week (the National Science and Engineering Week) and the Aberdeen Science Festival (Techfest) and in the University’s own annual Festival (at that time, the WORD festival). In his role within Public Engagement with Science Dr Skeldon also provided bespoke training and development within academic Schools and Colleges to researchers at all career stages and provided expert advice on large funding proposals involving public engagement (e.g. RCUK Digital Economy grant – securing over £12M to the institution).

During the Catalyst Grant: For the most part of the Catalysts project we had:-

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Central Team (based in the Directorate of External Relations)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr Heather Doran (Project Officer): Grade 6, 1FTE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Chris Croly (Project Officer from May 2015, succeeds Dr Thompson who left to take up another post in Dec 2014): Grade 6, 1FTE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Jennifer Scott (Development Coordinator): Grade 7, 0.7FTE joined the team in March 2015</td>
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College Coordinators for PE are currently being consulted on their views for continuation, along with senior staff within the respective Colleges. Currently, the preference from project lead Dr Skeldon is to seek sustainability based on a workload
Post-Catalyst Project: The structure has slightly changed as the University substantiated most of the core project officer team and also invested in a Development Coordinator:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Central Team</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dr Heather Doran</strong> (Project Officer): Grade 6, 1FTE – supported by Catalyst for a year before being moved to institutional core funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dr Rhiannon Thompson</strong> (Project Officer): Grade 6, 1FTE – supported by the Catalyst Grant</td>
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<tr>
<th>College Coordinators for PE (based in our Academic Colleges) Each coordinator was seconded 0.2FTE to the Catalyst Project with 0.1FTE supported by the Catalyst Grant, 0.1FTE supported by the institution. The coordinators were:-</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dr Janet Stewart</strong> (followed by Dr Liz Curtis): PE Coordinator for College of Arts and Social Science (0.2FTE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dr Mags Watson</strong>: PE Coordinator for College of Life Sciences and Medicine (0.2FTE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dr Clare Bond</strong>: PE Coordinator for College of Physical Sciences (0.2FTE)</td>
</tr>
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Further Structural Changes

**University Festival and Events Team:** In addition to the above, Dr Kenneth Skeldon – head of the Public Engagement with Research Unit has his management responsibilities widened to include the University’s Events team, currently consisting of four full time members of staff. Dr Skeldon had previously worked closely with the events team on projects with large public engagement elements including the British Science Festival 2012. In taking on management of the Events team he has renamed it Festival & Events Team, to make clearer the public engagement aspects of the roles, and there is now an increased synergy between the work of the Public Engagement with Research team and the Events specialists – allowing for effective support across projects that combine research-led approaches with project management skills. Examples include European Researchers’ Night, the annual University Festival and more recent projects being supported in collaboration with UK/Research Council initiatives such as the Being Human Festival and the Festival of Social Science.

**University Academic Development Team:** During the project Dr Lucy Leiper, Senior Researcher Development Lead at the University, and her team became embedded as part of the institution’s new Centre for Academic Development. While this made closer links between researcher development and other areas of academic support, for instance learning and teaching, it has compromised the physical proximity of the two main Catalyst teams – with PERU and RDU now located in different University buildings and with separate overarching Directorates. Despite this, the two teams have continued to work closely, with common senior Vice Principal advocacy particularly on the Research side, and joint projects now setting good examples also for cross-directorate working, as much for the advocacy in our original Catalyst project.

The original Principal Investigator for the Catalyst Project – Professor Albert Rodger – retired from the University in September 2014. The project was taken over by Vice Principal for Research and Knowledge Exchange Professor Phil Hannaford. Another change that took place was the establishment of a Directorate of External Relations in May 2014. Public Engagement was made one of three sections within this Directorate, the other two being Communications and Marketing. Meanwhile as indicated above, the Researcher Development Unit was incorporated into a Centre for Academic Development in December 2012.
APPENDIX 2

Case Study: The Future is RED - A Progressive Model for Researcher Development

Why: During the preparation of the catalyst proposal we undertook a consultation exercise to better understand the perceived barriers to academics undertaking public engagement. From this we learned that a lack of skills and confidence around engagement and concerns around recognition and reward were pervasive themes.

What did we do: The landscape in Aberdeen for researcher-led public engagement has been transformed over the past 18 months as we move towards an innovative model for researcher engagement and development that places personal and professional development at the heart of the process. Supported by a prestigious RCUK Catalyst Award, one of only eight across the UK, we are implementing a highly visible Researcher Engagement and Development (RED) pervaded by the principle of progression, applied wholly to the researcher career journey, but also to pathways of real-life public engagement opportunities that evidence new creative, communication, leadership and management skills. This approach enables our institution to be responsive, indeed pre-emptive to national frameworks including the concordat for engaging the public with research.

How did we achieve change: Our strategy is being driven by our public engagement and researcher development teams who have come together to exploit the multiple benefits arising from each area’s journey of learning and shared challenges. Fundamentally, both areas have demanded, and continue to catalyse, robust institutional culture change to transform attitudes towards the scope required for an effective research environment, specifically the potential for enhancement through public engagement and the impact that empowered researchers can play in this.

A dedicated Public Engagement with Research Unit has been established, with a central team enriched by research-active public engagement coordinators seconded from each of the University’s academic Colleges. This develops roots deep into the research community enabling us to respond quickly to emerging challenges and issues. The Public Engagement’s visibility is maximised through a website (www.abdn.ac.uk/engage) coupled to a monthly newsletter. Below are some example outcomes and outputs of our approach:

Benefits through Outcomes: Examples include: Markedly improved attitudes towards the importance and impact that public engagement as captured in CROS (Careers in Research Online Survey) and PIRLS (Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey) - 82% of Research Leaders/Principal Investigators thought PE important activity as a research leader in 2015 compared to 71% in 2012; highly visible early career progression targets embedded within a new University Framework for Academic Expectations; an enhanced research environment where engaged-research is recognised as a valued metric for success; enriched interaction between the institution and non-academic partners.

Benefits through Outputs: Examples include: Researchers with responsibility and stretched skill sets through public engagement, particularly relevant in a competitive global environment; multiple new pathways to externally facing researcher-led activity; a new Principal’s Prize and Enabling Fund to incentivise, encourage and recognise public engagement activity; dissemination of impact via public engagement though proactive involvement in Scottish and UK networks.
APPENDIX 3

Case Study: Launch of new University of Aberdeen Festival with major research-led strand

The rationale for this case study is the influence our public engagement with research approach had in transforming the University’s annual festival to be one that provided easily accessible channels for our academics to practice public engagement in the context of a significant support infrastructure, whilst ensuring our University public engagement is largely research-led.

What did we do: In 2012 the University embarked on a major new public festival initiative driven by open engagement with our academic community. The objectives were four-fold: To showcase University research at a public festival shaped through an informal ‘Call for Ideas’ opened to our academic community; to provide researchers contributing to the Festival with a progressive journey of skills development, creative design, marketing and evaluation; to produce high visibility case studies and role models among the early career cohort; to provide a prominent calendar anchor outlet for researcher-led public engagement that would complement other institutional initiatives including our Public Engagement Enabling Fund and Principal’s Prize.

How did we achieve the engagement: The Call for Ideas launched in summer 2012 and generated 50 activity suggestions involving over 100 researchers from multiple disciplines across the University. The festival ‘Discover Strand’ was developed from this, some involving new collaborations between separate proposal submissions suggested by the public engagement team. The process was further enhanced by two early career researchers recruited to the project through a linked application to an AHRC Cultural Engagement fund. Working together, these researchers helped shape and manage Festival content while developing bespoke training and evaluation toolkits for researcher use. The creative output of the process was an exceptionally well-received suite of 20 events for schools and the public, featuring over 90 staff and students from across the University.

Wider Benefit and Impact: Further to the festival itself, the process has produced a cohort of researchers, many of whom are early career researchers, newly engaged with the value of transferrable skills development linked to follow-through opportunities in a real-life setting. We also have examples of senior researchers whose attitude to training and engagement has changed for the positive, so vital for culture change and the flexible environment that allows early career researchers to flourish. Above all, we encouraged all researchers to view the Festival process in the context of their research environment, and the added value involvement would bring. For more information about the festival which was delivered in May of 2013 please visit www.abdn.ac.uk/mayfestival.
APPENDIX 4

Evaluating changes in perception towards PE from 2013 - 2015

We can report a positive trend in awareness of and of changing attitudes towards engagement; much is anecdotal form supervisors and research leaders around the importance of public engagement as an integral part of research and as a career development activity. As an institution we take part in the national surveys around researcher development. When asked whether researchers feel their institution recognises and values contributions they make in public engagement, there was an increase in positive responses between 2011 and 2015. In the Careers in Research online Survey (CORS) we can also report an increase in awareness of the Concordat for Engaging the Public in Research much of which can be attributed to the extensive work undertaken by Skeldon and Leiper in discussing the importance of the engagement agenda and its implication in HE more widely across the institution and in leadership development courses including PI Development programmes and the Researcher Development module as part of a newly accredited Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice.
Catalyst final reporting guidance: Annex 2 – Impact Framework

APPENDIX 5

University of Aberdeen Public Engagement Strategy 2015 - 2020

Our Catalyst project and the related Public Engagement with Research Strategy has been instrumental in defining major components of the institution’s overarching public engagement strategy – ratified by our senior management team in June 2015. This is summarised below:

Context

Engagement with wider society has become a pervasive and unequivocal aspect of Universities’ missions, both across the UK and internationally. Fundamental drivers such as research excellence and impact, teaching innovation and institutional cultural profile all benefit from high quality public engagement, as do the individuals and/or communities underpinning it. The need for robust, overarching guidance and support around public engagement has therefore never been more important, especially given the increasingly competitive, and also influential, nature of the higher education landscape.

Mission

To provide a well-defined direction for public engagement aligned to the University Strategic Plan engaging student, academic, alumni, and external communities while embedding social, cultural and economic impact.

Strategic Goals

- To provide a year-round suite of opportunities and activities building on the research, teaching and wider cultural offerings of the University, exemplified through a prioritized list of core events, festivals and engagement activities
- To strengthen research funding proposals, fellowships, doctoral training centres and other institutional projects with tailored stakeholder engagement ensuring robust alignment to national frameworks, concordats and funding objectives
- To develop the University of Aberdeen campus as a destination of choice for local, national, and international visitors by providing appropriate infrastructure, venues and access
- To work with the academic community, University Administration, the Development Trust, and external funders to identify resources and build capacity both within and outside the University to support a strong program of public engagement
- To ensure effective support and training is in place to empower our staff and students to engage with wider publics, to capture and record activity, and to advocate for suitable recognition and reward in respect of public engagement activity.