Public Engagement Strategy
Gurdon Institute Public Engagement Mission

To make our fundamental biological research accessible and responsive to the public for the mutual benefits of inspiration, knowledge-exchange and trust.

Julie Ahringer
Gurdon Institute Director
About us

The Wellcome Trust/Cancer Research UK Gurdon Institute is a world-leading centre for fundamental research into cell biology and development, and how this goes wrong in diseases such as cancer. Nearly 200 scientists and support staff work in the Gurdon Institute in a state-of-the-art facility within the University of Cambridge.

Key roles

Dr Hélène Doerflinger
PE manager

Naomi Clements-Brod
PE coordinator

Dr Philip Zegerman
PE ambassador
Why engage?

**Reaching the next generation**
One third of 11-15 year olds in the UK have low science capital, a multi-dimensional measure of a child’s sense that science is “for me” (Enterprising Science national survey 2015). Low science capital correlates with socio-economic and demographic factors (Wellcome Trust, 2016). By forging partnerships with under-served schools and their teachers, we will contribute to greater inclusivity in science and thereby support a diverse talent-pool of future researchers and influencers.

**Fundamental research science and society**
The UK public overwhelmingly think it is important to know about science, but 58% believe that scientists put too little effort into informing the public about their work and 69% think that scientists should listen more to ordinary people (Public Attitude to Science 2014, IPSOS MORI). Through dialogue and collaborative projects we will aim to generate increased trust by exploring how fundamental research can benefit and respond to society and remain relevant to individuals.
Public Engagement Strategy Summary

We aim to **empower and inspire the next generation**, promoting inclusivity by focusing on reaching students from socio-economic groups that are under-represented in science and academia.

We aim to **generate increased trust in fundamental research and ensure our research remains relevant to society** by creating a dialogue about fundamental research and encouraging knowledge-exchange through collaborative projects.

Through our work on these two goals, we will **embed public engagement into fundamental research** in order to develop a culture where Public Engagement provides recognised mutual benefit for all.
Gurdon Institute Public Engagement Goals

Goal 1 – Empower and inspire the next generation

We will form and maintain partnerships with under-served state schools and their teachers, aiming to empower and inspire 10-17 year old students (locally and nationally) from socio-economic groups that are under-represented in science and academia. Our projects include the collaborative development of educational tools and life-changing opportunities for young people to participate in our research and develop a network with scientists.

Goal 1 commitments

SCoPE: Scientists' Collaborative Project with Educators.
This is a collaboration between Gurdon Institute scientists and teachers to create practical toolkits for use in biology classrooms. The toolkits link the national curriculum to research at the Gurdon Institute.
Sixth-form student workshop programme.
In collaboration with the University of Cambridge Widening Participation team and neighbouring colleges, every year we invite 90 sixth-form students and their science teachers to attend workshops and discuss research at the Gurdon Institute.

Cambridge Academy for Science and Technology (CAST) microscopy challenge.
This is a collaborative project between CAST, the Gurdon Institute and microscope manufacturer Zeiss, providing a unique opportunity for students to develop a practical understanding of microscopy.

Aspiring Scientists Training Programme.
Each year, we provide a week-long work experience and training opportunity for ten bright sixth-form students who fulfil the University’s Widening Participation criteria.
Goal 2 – Generate increased trust in fundamental research and ensure our research remains relevant to society

We will create opportunities for meaningful dialogue and support mutually beneficial collaborative projects with communities who may not be familiar with fundamental research. This will encourage knowledge exchange, contribute to increased trust in fundamental research and ensure our research remains relevant to society.

Goal 2 commitments

Science and non-science festivals (e.g. University of Cambridge Science Festival, Big Biology Day, Pint of Science, European Research Night, Cambridge Big Weekend, University of Cambridge Festival of Ideas).
Through these festivals, in particular using our Tattoo my Science activity, we aim to facilitate dialogues between our scientists and the public about the fundamental research at the Gurdon Institute.
The Gurdon Institute Seed Fund
Through our own funding scheme, we aim to encourage Institute members to develop activities to reach new audiences. For example, Stitching Science has brought people together in an informal ‘crocheting group’ where scientists and crafters can exchange knowledge.

Instagram
Our Instagram feed is aimed at those without a specialist background in science or biology. Our content is designed to inspire curiosity about our fundamental research.

Partnerships with local art organisations
Thanks to the success of our “Experiments in arts and science” project, we will continue to develop collaborative projects with art gallery Kettle's Yard and others, aiming to work in partnership with under-served communities.
Goal 3: Embed Public Engagement in research culture

We will develop a culture where public engagement is valued and provides mutual benefit for all. This will involve ‘top-down’ support, recognition and training for all members of the Institute, combined with encouraging participation in the creation, design, and execution of public engagement activities. Fifty-five percent of the Gurdon Institute staff participated in at least one public engagement activity in 2019. We will also support public engagement in other research centres through collaboration and synergies.

Goal 3 commitments

‘Top-down’ support, recognition and training
All staff are informed of our public engagement strategy and opportunities through an induction seminar and the Institute’s welcome pack. Public engagement training is offered to staff members and students through the University’s ‘Engaged Researcher’ training Programme. Training and participation is recognised during the annual appraisal process and is rewarded through our annual Public Engagement Champion award.
**Inclusivity in the creation, design and execution of public engagement activities.**

The Gurdon Institute Seed Fund provides support and encouragement for our staff to develop projects in line with our strategic public engagement criteria (see goals 1 and 2). All projects are overseen by the public engagement committee, which is made up of representatives from across the Institute including our Director and non-scientific staff (see Appendix). Every 18 months we use a survey to evaluate staff perceptions of public engagement, identify barriers to participation and explore new ideas. We share expertise with other departments and research centres to generate synergies and excellence in public engagement.
Public Engagement Strategy Chart

**Mission**

To make our fundamental biological research accessible and responsive to the public for the mutual benefits of inspiration, knowledge-exchange and trust

**Aims**

- Empower and inspire the next generation from socio-economic groups under-represented in science and academia
- Build and maintain partnerships with under-served state schools by organising collaborative projects and by creating opportunities for scientists to interact with young people and teachers
- Empower and inspire the next generation from socio-economic groups under-represented in science and academia

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**Outcomes**

- Greater inclusivity in science and a more diverse talent-pool of future researchers and influencers
- Our research is perceived by society as relevant and trustworthy
- A research culture where public engagement is valued and provides mutual benefit for all

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**Outputs**

- Generate increased trust in fundamental research and ensure our research remains relevant to society
- Create opportunities for meaningful dialogue and support mutually beneficial collaborative projects with communities who may not be familiar with fundamental research
- Embed public engagement in research culture internally and externally

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- Assess the programme in the context of the PE strategy.
- Communicate opportunities, training and recognition.
- Share expertise with other departments and research centres.
Monitoring and evaluation

All public engagement activities are planned and evaluated for their contribution to our strategic goals. We use a range of evaluation methods including observation, surveys, interviews and external assessors. Some specific evaluation methods are outlined below:

- **SCoPE - Scientists' Collaborative Project with Educators**: Qualitative evaluation is conducted by the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education, focusing on interactions between teachers, scientists and learning specialists. An independent mixed methods evaluation focuses on the impact of toolkit usage on students and teachers.

- **Sixth-form student workshop** and **Aspiring Scientists Training Programme**: Pre- and post-programme surveys are filled in by the students. Data from all consenting students are entered into the university Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) to enable attainment tracking. Students are contacted 9 months after their placement to get additional feedback. Participating labs are sent an evaluation form to assess outcomes and add improvements.

- **Festivals**: Evaluation of these events is through post-questionnaires, observations and interviews with both the public and scientists.
Public Engagement Management

The public engagement committee is made up of representatives from the Gurdon Institute and the University of Cambridge (see Appendix). The public engagement committee reports to Institute group leaders and the Institute Director is a member of this committee.
## Appendix: Public Engagement Committee 2020

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hélène Doerflinger</td>
<td>PE Manager (co-chair)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phil Zegerman</td>
<td>Group Leader &amp; PE Ambassador (co-chair)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie Ahringer</td>
<td>Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>Naomi Clements-Brod</td>
<td>PE Coordinator (secretary)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dawei Sun</td>
<td>PhD Student</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weronika Fic</td>
<td>Postdoctoral Researcher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bernhard Strauss</td>
<td>Postdoctoral Researcher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alex Sossick</td>
<td>Imaging System Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Katherine Wallington</td>
<td>Business and Operations Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire O’Brien</td>
<td>Communications and Information Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca Jones*</td>
<td>PE Manager at Stem Cell Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diogo Gomes*</td>
<td>Public Engagement Coordinator for the Schools of Clinical Medicine and Biological Sciences, University of Cambridge PE team</td>
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*: External