

Committee on Community Activities - Annual Report to Council 2008-09

The Committee on Community Activities oversees the University's public engagements and reports here on its activities in 2008-09. The Committee's three year plan is available on request.

The activities which were overseen by the Committee in 2008-09 were funded by HEFCE's Innovation Fund and Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund, and supplemented by sums raised from other sources. The TQEF has now finished and future funding remains uncertain.

Public engagement continues to be an important facet of Cambridge life. The last Community, Outreach and Widening Participation Survey, undertaken in 2005-06 showed that:

- 8,250 staff and students were involved in outreach or voluntary activities
- these staff and students invested 370,000 hours of their time, worth approximately £4,000,000 to the community
- more than 1 million people benefited from voluntary activities undertaken by University staff and students.

The majority of departments and Colleges undertake some sort of public engagement, including public lectures, public access to departmental museums, involvement in the Science Festival or Festival of Ideas, or work with schools. A number of student societies support communities in Cambridge and internationally, ranging from supporting homeless people to run a social enterprise in Cambridge to improving water testing systems in Africa.

In 2008-09, the Committee oversaw the following activities which were delivered by the University's Community Affairs team in collaboration with departments, Colleges and student societies:

Public engagement

1. The Festival of Ideas was launched in October 2008 – with departments across the arts, humanities and social sciences offering a wide range of activities to nearly 10,000 members of the public.
2. The fourteenth Cambridge Science Festival was held in March 2009, with 30,000 attendees. The Festival is the largest free science festival in the UK.
3. The Committee on Community Activities supported the outreach efforts taking place as part of the University's 800th celebrations. The 800th Anniversary's Outreach Officer was based in the Community Affairs team and delivered a wide range of outreach activity to schools and community groups including:
 - a. 'Letters to the Future' written by 300 local school pupils.
 - b. University presence at community events including Arbury Carnival, Chesterton Fair, Town and County Show and Big Day Out.
 - c. Alternative 800th Michaelmas term – lectures for local senior citizens.
 - d. 800th themed presentations to schools and community groups.
 - e. Activities with St Matthews primary school resulting in eight portraits of historic University figures now on display in the University Centre.
4. 'Open Cambridge' was launched in September 2008 with Colleges providing tours for 600 local residents as part of national Heritage Open Weekend. In September 2009, the scheme expanded with over 1,000 tour places, an 'Open Libraries' scheme and a series of talks about the University.

5. 2,500 local residents took part in the Bridge the Gap walk in September 2008 and again in September 2009, walking round 8 or 9 Cambridge Colleges each year and a University museum. The walk raises around £40,000 each year for local charities.

Student and staff development

6. 'Rising Stars' was in its third year in 2008-09, providing intensive training in public engagement to graduate students and early career academics. The scheme is an effective way of supporting the University's ambassadors of the future to communicate their research to a wider audience.
7. In 2008-09, the Active Community Fund allocated £86,560 to 29 organisations which ran community projects involving 3,472 volunteers from the University. The Active Community Fund ended in 2009, following the termination of HEFCE TQEF funding. Since 2002, the Fund has been an important source of funding for those across the University wanting to engage with the public and its loss will be particularly felt by those needing seed corn funding to set up new community activities.
8. The Committee funded Student Community Action to undertake 600 criminal record checks for University of Cambridge staff and student volunteers.
9. Volunteering was promoted as a means of gaining new skills and experience, for example, through volunteering information sessions for staff and the allocation of Student Volunteering Gold Awards.

Knowledge Exchange

10. We received EU funding to launch the Cambridge Community Knowledge Exchange to work with academic departments to broker a small number of student Tripos projects in not for profit organisations.
11. We organised training, information and networking opportunities for a wide variety of departments, Colleges and student societies involved in public engagement across the University. Sessions included a networking evening for student societies to meet community organisations, training in fundraising and evaluation and the ongoing co-ordination of the Working with Schools network.

Public communication

12. We improved communication about the range of public activities offered by the University and Colleges through the ongoing co-ordination of the Cambridge in the Community web directory, a public event e-bulletin (2,500 subscribers by end 08-09) and an e-bulletin for community organisations.
13. We continued to use new media to extend the reach of our face to face work – in September/October 2009, a Science Festival garage laboratory podcast received 188,000 views on You Tube Edu.
14. We acted as a portal into the University for many schools and community groups and we co-ordinated the Cambridge Business Community Action Network which is a local network of companies interested in contributing to the Cambridge community.

Extending participation

15. We continued to develop work with non-traditional audiences, extending the reach of the University to different communities. 'Ideas in the Community' took the Festival of Ideas into three local community centres in Abbey, East Chesterton and Romsey. The Open Cambridge community art project worked with a mental health group, a youth club and a young mothers group to record their perceptions of the University.
16. In summer 2009, the 'Summerdaze' partnership with Cambridge City Council reached 500 young people and their families on Cambridge recreation grounds. The educational activities provided by departments and student societies included rocket building from the Department of Engineering and nutrition activities from the MRC.
17. A variety of smaller outreach initiatives were delivered including the University's first museum sleepover at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, a children's lecture on Horrible Cambridge Science and Book a Speaker, which offers talks by academics to schools and community groups.

Leadership in public engagement

18. We continued to promote Cambridge's leadership in public engagement nationally and internationally, working through bodies such as the Russell Group Community Engagement Network.

Appendix

Members of the Committee on Community Activities 2008-09

Representative of	Name
1. Colleges Committee	Vacant
2. University	Kate Pretty (Pro Vice Chancellor, CHAIR)
3. General Board	Rob Wallach
4. Council	Liba Taub
5. CUSU	Andrea Walko Mark Fletcher
6. Graduate Union	Siza Mtimiri
7. UAS	Christopher Padfield
8. Physical Education	Karen Pearce
9. Joint Museums' Committee	Margaret Greeves
10. Co-opted	David Good (CMI)
11. Co-opted	Julia Hawkins (Millennium Maths)
12. Co-opted	Terry Ndee (Development Office)
13. Co-opted	Frances Meegan (Careers Service)
14. Co-opted	Sue Oosthuizen (Continuing Education)
15. Co-opted	Sigrid Fisher (Human Resources Division)
16. Secretary	Penny Wilson (Secretary of the Committee and Head of Community Affairs)