Introducing the Institute for Policy and Engagement

Sharing knowledge to shape the future
The Institute for Policy and Engagement will ensure our research and academics are at the forefront of shaping public policy and debate, ultimately improving outcomes for all.”  

Stephen Meek  
Director, Institute for Policy and Engagement

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Universities play a vital role in the modern world. Through research, teaching and knowledge exchange they have underpinned the technologies that improve the world we live in. University research helps us live longer lives and move around more efficiently, to tackle challenges from poverty to biodiversity, and to develop the social and cultural understanding needed to apply these solutions to the real world.

This role extends to helping people understand the world better. Giving people an insight into scientific, technical, political and cultural developments that are changing the world at a dizzying pace. Universities can help people understand the sometimes overwhelming challenges they face, from indebtedness to climate change, and how they can do something about them.

This applies equally to policy and decision makers. They have to make critical judgements on hugely complex issues, at an ever faster pace. In an increasingly polarised environment, the volume of information can be overwhelming. Universities can provide considered, evidence-driven insight to sort the signal from the noise.

To play these roles effectively, universities need to reflect how the world has changed. In a less deferential world they cannot assume they have a right to a hearing. They need to be partners, not lecturers. They need to listen to and understand what people need. That is what the Institute for Policy and Engagement has been created to do.

We will help to create partnerships and networks between the world-class research undertaken at the University of Nottingham and the people and organisations it can help. By doing this, we aim to help fulfil the mission of our Research Vision to deliver research of truly global significance.

The University of Nottingham is home to research that is transforming lives. From the work of the Rights Lab, collaborating with governments, NGOs and businesses to end modern slavery, to the “Time to Talk” campaign with Nottingham Forest Football Club Trust to encourage football fans to open up about mental health issues, the University has some peerless examples of outstanding impact and engagement.

I am excited and privileged to have the opportunity to lead this Institute, at this great University, and know our potential to make a difference is huge.

Stephen Meek
Director, Institute for Policy and Engagement
Our mission

To support the exchange of knowledge and ideas to enrich policy making, inspire people, support communities, transform lives and shape the future.

Our vision

To be a beacon, renowned for creating partnerships between our world-class researchers, policymakers and the public. Through these partnerships we will tackle together the most compelling challenges locally, nationally and globally.
A number of key principles underpin the Institute’s approach to working with academic colleagues and external bodies.

**Partnership**
The Institute works closely with world-class researchers across the University, and with external partners to maximise impact and strengthen our reputation and civic role.

The challenges of the modern world are complex and multi-faceted, so our partnerships will cross disciplines and draw on a diverse range of perspectives.

**Listening**
We work by understanding what our external partners need and how we can contribute to that by drawing on our expert knowledge across disciplines. We aim to learn continually from experts inside and outside the University.

**Making a difference**
We focus on areas where we believe the University’s knowledge can most contribute to real change either locally, nationally or globally.

**A focus on solutions**
We aim to contribute to visionary new approaches to global challenges, as well as sharing technical expertise. We aim to lead debates as well as respond to questions set by others.

**A global perspective**
The Institute has a physical base in Highfield House on University Park, but we will draw on the University’s researchers globally, and the expertise at its campuses in the UK, China and Malaysia.

**A civic role**
We also have a local responsibility as part of a vibrant city and region. We are committed to working with local leaders to strengthen our communities; and to be a resource to help people in those communities understand and solve local problems.

**Social responsibility**
We put social value, social responsibility, equality and diversity at the heart of everything we do.
What we offer

The University of Nottingham offers a wealth of expertise and insight across a huge range of fields, shared across our campuses in the UK, China and Malaysia and our five faculties covering arts, social sciences, science, medicine and health sciences, and engineering.

The Institute for Policy and Engagement can help you navigate this terrain and quickly and easily get access to the researchers who can support you in your work.

You might be:
- A policy maker looking for expert insight
- A think tank or NGO seeking research evidence relevant to your cause
- A community group looking for innovative ways to engage your members
- A charity looking to partner with researchers to develop your latest project
- A thought leader looking to share a platform with world-leading academics

Through events and lectures, public engagement events, policy initiatives, sharing good practice, and connecting individuals, the Institute is here to help you connect to the world of knowledge that the University of Nottingham offers.

If you’d like to know more about how we can work with you, please get in touch.
Our research

The Institute for Policy and Engagement is a core part of the University’s Research Vision.

The Research Vision is one of the most comprehensive and ambitious programmes in the University’s history, supporting our mission of delivering exceptional research that transforms lives in our community, the UK and across the world.

Based on extensive analysis of our capabilities and potential, the Research Vision is mapped against the changing landscape of UK and international research funding and policy. Our six Beacons of Excellence are world-leading areas of transdisciplinary research that align with these strategic priorities, and each addresses UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The Beacons are one of seven areas of focus that comprise the Research Vision, the others being:

– The Institute for Policy and Engagement
– People – world-class researchers and Nottingham fellows
– World-class physical and digital environment
– Industrial collaboration and commercialisation
– Transdisciplinary research capabilities in our Research Priority Areas (RPAs)
– International collaboration

We have already seen major steps forward including the recruitment of outstanding fellows and world-class researchers, significant awards and accolades, and an increase in our research funding.

This renewed focus and support for research will ensure our vision remains agile, responsive and fully supportive of our world-class researchers, by delivering a research environment without barriers where excellent research can flourish; attracting and retaining world-class research talent; allowing staff the time, support and space to deliver research with excellence; and focusing on quality research outputs.

We will continue to support all areas of research excellence across the University and promote opportunities for interdisciplinary working in a rich research ecosystem. We will also seek to better align our research with UK and global strategic priorities.

By enhancing the support we offer for public and policy engagement, we will help our academics to forge new partnerships and ensure that their research has genuine global impact.”

Professor Dame Jessica Corner
Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Knowledge Exchange

More information is available at: nottingham.ac.uk/research
In its first year the Institute for Policy and Engagement has already made a difference.

We have hosted multiple events in parliament and government offices in London, as well as on our own campus in Nottingham, to facilitate contacts between policy makers and our academic experts. We have provided support to extend the policy impact of our world-class research in fields as diverse as road user behaviour, 3D printing in pharmaceuticals, financial resilience, and International Treaty Law.

We have hosted a series of public lectures and policy masterclasses, offering a platform to external partners as well as our own research staff to promote public engagement with research and evidence-informed policy making.

We have supported the University in several high-profile public engagement events, including SPARK 2019 in Hong Kong and Wonder 2019 in Nottingham, sharing our research with new audiences.

We have supported a range of University of Nottingham academics to contribute to policy consultations, select committee inquiries and other policy dialogues, bringing their insight directly to policy audiences.

And, as the current Chair of the Universities Policy Engagement Network (UPEN), we are leading a wider initiative to promote research-policy connections and the role of evidence in policy making.

Postgraduate student Yue Li working on the final touches to virtual time travel. Stepping back 800 years into Chinese heritage sites, shown at the SPARK Festival in Hong Kong.
Plans for the future

We will continue to seek new and innovative opportunities for our academics to contribute to policy debates and to engage the public with their research.

We will build a network of internal and external fellows to help us meet our ambition to be a leader in this field.

We will develop ways of working with our campuses in Malaysia and China, to ensure that stakeholders can access University of Nottingham expertise no matter the campus on which our academics are based.

We are developing a range of case studies, our series of policy briefing notes, and other online resources, to support our ambition to lead the debate around the biggest policy challenges and social issues of the day.

We will launch a quarterly external newsletter to keep you updated on the latest research outputs from Nottingham and the impact they are having on the world.

Above all, we aspire to become a thought leader: shaping the policy and public engagement agenda, not just responding to it. We hope you will join us on the journey.
Our leadership team

Stephen Meek
Director

Chris Sims
Head of Global Policy Impact

Dr Rachael Pearson
Head of Public Engagement

Get in touch

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