

What is ASHPIT?

ASHPIT stands for Arts, Social Sciences & Humanities Policy and Practice Implementation Think Tank. ASHPIT is as a collaborative, cross-institutional and discipline-specific think tank which will enhance the ability of researcher developers to deliver innovative, discipline-appropriate training and support to researchers in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities. The project is funded by Vitae.

The key aims and objectives of the ASHPIT project for the next two years are:

- To facilitate engagement with ongoing policy and practice in researcher development.
- To share, embed and sustain best practice via a national, cross-institution network of ASH subject researcher developers.
- To provide a discipline-specific network for ASH researcher developers.

These aims and objectives will be addressed at six policy and practice days (three per annum) whose outputs will be published at <http://ashpit.wordpress.com/>

The 1st policy and practice day took place in Nottingham and focused on Public Engagement.

Reasons to focus on Public engagement:

- The updated version of REF in Nov 2010:

The notion of impact will have a huge place in the way researchers will report through REF. Although Public engagement is in the impact section of the REF it is not so clear yet what is expected. The launch of the RCUK Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research (CEPR) The launch coincided with the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) conference and was written so it can support the NCCPE Manifesto.

- Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research (CEPR)

David Willetts wrote few words for the introduction of the Concordat and emphasize the importance of engaging with the public, it was also highlighted that no extra fund will be allocated by the government to Public engagement Initiatives.

The CEPR is a statement of expectations and responsibilities of research funders in the UK to help embed PE in universities and research institutes. The four principles recognised by signatories and supporters. Signatories are meant to be research funders who will therefore commit to support HEIs and research institutes to implement the CEPR. This new CEPR will facilitate the sharing of best practice.

“The aim of the CEPR is to build on previous commitments to PE and add value to existing effective practice by providing a single, unambiguous statement of the expectations and responsibilities of research funders in the UK in meeting this challenge”

This Concordat provides a common framework for regular reviews of progress across the sector by the Funders, through existing reporting structure.

The NCCPE was then invited to translate the statement into practical guidance for :

- Senior managers
- Managers of researchers

- Researchers
- Supporters of researchers
- The NCCPE manifesto

The CEPR is a policy framework to set expectations and responsibilities. The NCCPE manifesto has a different perspective. The Manifesto is a strategy to implement the framework as it provides a way to identify best practice, share and support the public engagement activity within HEIs and research institutes. Signatories of the manifesto will have access to bespoke consultancy, drawing on the learning from the Beacons for Public Engagement and the vInspired students project.

- The QAA amplified version of the Code of Practice, in October 2010

It was adapted and changed in part to address the importance of PE and get the PIs and supervisors on board.

N.B: It was highlighted that HEFCE and RCUK value PE in different ways:

RCUK is looking at pathways to impact (where PE is a valuable way to provide access to impact) whereas HEFCE is looking at direct outcomes (where PE is unlikely to generate direct measurable outcomes)

About the NCCPE:

They have developed a self assessment matrix for researchers called EDGE. It helps exploring what the researcher has already achieved and how he/she could improve in the PE sphere.

<http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/self-assess>

Case studies

Southampton: “think outside the book” session

6 researchers are coming to a session with one object/book they are studying. Then they exchange it with one of their colleague. The aim is for each colleague to introduce this new piece of research they’ve got and try and explain how it could be used.

Manchester: “researcher showcase” - poster presentation open to the public

The session is organised during a graduate fair.

Even if the session is open to everyone, researchers presenting their work have to make a list of invitee coming from outside of their research environment.

Workshop:

The focus of this workshop was on designing a public engagement project. Participants were split into 3 groups to discuss some feasible and realistic ideas for Public Engagement ventures. The outcomes and ideas developed can be viewed on the blog at <http://ashpit.wordpress.com/>