HE Outreach: Guidance on Good Practice for Academics

The Association for Academic Outreach[1]

Abstract: How should academics engage in outreach? The need of academics to answer this question has become all the more pressing given increasing concern for Widening Participation, Employability and Impact in an era of austerity and £9,250 fees. While outreach professionals have access to a range of resources and support mechanisms by which to advance programmes, academics often face a series of profession-specific pressures that make engagement in outreach all the more complex at a time in which that engagement is needed more than ever. This article draws upon the experience of twenty five academics from eighteen different subject areas and eighteen institutions to present guidance for academics involved in outreach. This guidance covers such issues as: the formulation of programmes; funding; workload management; relationships with internal and external partners; the place of capacity-building; style and content of programmes; integration of outreach into curricula, and evaluation of programmes. The guidance offered is not all encompassing, but a series of reference points to be revised and updated over time.

Introduction

A number of recent trends, notably the rise of £9,250 fees and the changing agendas of Research Councils and funding bodies, have brought into sharper focus the civic duties of HE institutions to engage in outreach (see Johnson and Mutton 2018). Historically, outreach has encompassed any number of different civic roles and activities (see Bowyer 1990; 1996) that serve to advance ideas and practices capable of fostering human well-being (Katula and Threnhauser, 1999, 249–250). Such civic roles have included not just the advancement of knowledge, but the fostering of critical cognitive capacities. At various different points in the history of the academy, outreach has been seen as an integral facet of institutions embedded culturally in communities. In that regard the 'Out' morpheme is, perhaps, a misnomer, insofar

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as, physically, activities may take place within the academy's walls. Wherever they take place, there is consensus that those activities involve engagement with those whose lives *are* oriented outside its walls, such that they are neither academics nor HE students. Individuals and communities engaged through outreach are diverse and myriad and cannot clearly be defined independently of context.

However, in the contemporary UK (and particularly English and Welsh) context, it has increasingly been 'taken to apply to any activity that reaches out beyond higher education providers to engage with wider communities in order to raise HE awareness and aspirations' (Moore, Sanders and Higham 2013, iii). This has often been taken to denote the practice of Widening Participation (WP) – the duty of institutions to encourage participation of students from a range of groups identified by the Office for Fair Access – the Office for Students from April 2018 – as being under-represented and disadvantaged (see OFFA 2018a). As part of the present fees regime, universities charging over the basic full-time tuition fee of £6,165 are legally obliged to submit Access Agreements (until September 2019, at which point they become Access and Participation Plans) to the OfS demonstrating how they intend to spend 30% of additional fee income on WP measures. In effect, this stems directly from Government policy and a recognition that inequality in participation in Higher Education is unpalatable in an era of supposed meritocracy. Accordingly, fulfilment of this narrow duty for outreach is often grounded instrumentally in recruitment (see Harrison and Waller 2017, 81; Harris and Ridealgh 2016, 81; Johnson 2016), increasingly so in an era of marketisation that had previously been associated most clearly with U.S. contexts (see Long 2008, 20; UCU 2010) and competition between institutions and, even, departments fostered by the removal of caps on students (see Morgan 2016).

This has, clearly, changed Higher Education fundamentally (see The Economist 2017). This is evident in the shifting content of study, with increased focus on Employability and engagement with employers and the general public at the exit end of HE study as means of demonstrating value for money (see Harrison and Waller 2017). Here, too, outreach has become a site of innovation, providing work and civic experience for students as they approach graduation (see Newcastle University 2018; Lancaster University 2018c; 2018d). Similarly, outreach has provided opportunities for individual academics to integrate the Impact agenda into their work, including through participatory research (see Morton and Flemming 2012; Cook, et al. 2017), with research councils and the Research Excellence Framework (REF) increasingly concerned with the value of projects beyond academia (see, for example, AHRC 2018). Indeed, many different academics remain committed to Public Engagement (PE), through approaches such as citizen science, by virtue of commitment to intrinsic goods. In different ways, these agendas are placing pressure on academics in ways that may not have existed in the past. Indeed, interestingly, each of the WP, Employability and Impact agendas reflect deficit models, in which outreach is seen to be a means of overcoming fundamental deficits in value in HE, rather than as a core, intrinsic element of the academy itself. While they each constitute forms of outreach, outreach itself cannot be reduced to any or, indeed, the sum total of all of them – a fact apparent in any discussion with colleagues from outside the UK.

With that in mind, it is clear that UK academics, often in collaboration with non-academic partners, are dealing with these context-specific challenges in different, subject- and discipline-specific ways. It is precisely this academic, subject- and discipline-specific content and focus that distinguishes such approaches from non-academic, non-subject-specific approaches associated with outreach programmes advanced from the university centre (see discussion of shifting administrative roles in Whitchurch 2006). Although steps have been taken by the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) to close the gap between academics and WP practitioners by training the latter in research and fostering WP as a subject both alongside and beyond Educational Research departments (see OFFA 2018b), non-academic approaches

generally focus on finance and aspiration. While there are clear reference points for outreach professionals in developing, say, WP approaches (developed via OFFA guidance, as well as through WP professional networks and National Collaborative outreach Programme (NCOP) consortia, see Office for Students 2018; Dent et al. 2014), there is seldom guidance on good practice for academics, precisely because of divergences in motivation and content and, perhaps most importantly, because outreach seldom forms the central focus of professional life for someone appointed to a traditional academic position. Most outreach professionals are not academics and, given that outreach is often regarded as an administrative side-line (or distraction) for academics (see Johnson and Mutton 2018), the principles behind *academic* approaches to outreach are rarely disseminated, depriving colleagues of essential knowledge at a time in which many such endeavours, such *Radical Pedagogies* (see Hurley and Ritchie 2018), are in their experimental infancy. This is unfortunate, as academics can deliver, skilfully, the very subject- and discipline-specific content capable of engaging and interesting non-academic communities (see Clarke 2017; examples in Harris and Ridealgh 2016) in ways that non-subject-specific programmes may not. Indeed, as funded research opportunities become squeezed, forms of outreach represent avenues for academics to demonstrate genuine value of their work.

In what follows, we attempt to outline and advance guidance on a set of issues that affect forms of outreach. We work through illustration precisely because so much of our work in this area lacks accessible precedent. This is the culmination of a project involving twenty five academics from eighteen different subject areas and eighteen institutions. It has been developed across a number of iterations centring on a conference, 'HE outreach: Developing Guidelines on Good Practice', held at Lancaster University on 14th April 2018. In some cases, the guidance offered is qualified and contextualised, reflecting disagreement about how best to proceed given various contingencies at play. This reflects the way in which approaches to outreach are, in some ways, necessarily innovative and organic, constantly subject to revision as the moving parts of a career and a set of relationships forged through outreach shift. Where there is divergence, the guidance offered is grounded in approaches that have worked for colleagues. The guidance and illustration accompanies the associated collaborative website, (National Association for Academic outreach 2018), in which approaches to outreach are indexed, explained and linked and further explanation on funding and other consideration provided. We begin by defining outreach.

'Outreach' in a civic context
The intellectual heritage of outreach is rich and has often been seen to be captured within Boyer (1990, 1996) notion of the 'scholarship of engagement'. This civic account holds that scholarship fulfils four key social roles: the scholarship of discovery through research; the scholarship of integration through situating ideas within broader contexts; the scholarship of sharing knowledge through dissemination beyond academia; and the application of knowledge, in which theory and practice interact reflexively informing one another in the process (Boyer 1996, 16; 19; 23; 23). Reflecting on contemporary discussions, Fitzgerald et al. (2016, 245) call for engagement scholarship to be made central to HE activity in order to 'contribute meaningfully to transformational change in society'. The means by which that change is achieved are necessarily diverse and complex and include, but cannot be limited to, a fostering of cognitive skills and expansion of institutional networks (see Granovetter 1973; 1983; Ó Tuama, Fitzgerald, Sandmann and Votruba 2017). While each of Boyer's roles relates to different social goods, he is clear that the cumulative value of academia must be advanced with concern for society as a whole: 'higher education must focus with special urgency on questions that affect profoundly the destiny of all' (Boyer 1996, 77). As we might expect, given the diversity of ends to which such a normative account might give rise, there are, of course, many

sites of contact between academics and non-academic groups and communities. In this regard, the concept of 'outreach' is all encompassing, embodying a range of activities, engagements and relationships with non-academic communities.

Most clearly, academics are often engaged in research on and with specific groups, with an increasing shift away from the former to the latter (see Durose, Beebeejaun, Rees, Richardson and Richardson 2012) as intrinsic and instrumental concerns for impact and attendant ethical processes evolve (see Banks and Manners 2012, 8; McNicoll 1999, 56). There is already guidance relating to management of the more elaborate, participatory incarnations of research relationships that seek to dissolve distinctions between researcher and researched (Pain, Whitman and Milledge 2011, 4; Gallagher, et al. 2017). At the dissemination end of the research cycle, there is often concern for Public Engagement (PE), which is variously seen to include forms of Knowledge Exchange (KE) and capacity building. This form of outreach is increasingly a precondition of Research Council and funding body funding. The rise of Impact Case Studies as part of the REF mean that engagement is increasingly elaborate and substantive, with demonstrable transformative outcomes sought for a range of internal and external purposes. For example, while not solely due to REF considerations, institutions and individual academics themselves are making innovative use of public space through such projects as pop-up campuses that emerge from collaboration between a range of institutions and organisations to bring research findings, processes and outcomes to the general public (see OPAL 2018; Café Scientifique 2018; Paul and Motskin 2016). The outcomes of this form of outreach may range from cognitive development, to intersubjective change with regard to the development of relationships, to transformative change cumulatively (see Bassford, O'Sullivan, Crisp, et al. 2015) in terms of breaking down social and, indeed, spatial barriers to HE (see Lancaster University 2015; West and Pateman 2016).

Beyond research, perhaps the most substantive, long-standing site of outreach lies in Professional Networks of Practice (PNP) between academics and those in other roles. In many cases, such networks revolve around relationships between academic theorists and professional practitioners, but there are also contexts within which those from particular professions, such as law, enter academia and continue to sustain networks of practice. Such networks might effectively be distinguished by concern for civic matters from contracted forms of work, which relate much more clearly to enterprise, extra-curricular capitalisation on skills and commercial KE. In this respect, the defining feature of such forms of outreach is the symbiosis between the respective parties in advancing civic interests. In forms of substantive PE through PNPs, there is scope for the exchange of subject knowledge and pedagogical expertise with opportunities for practice and continuing advancement of practice knowledge. This is apparent through PNPs in planning that link academic activity at University of Chester (see 2018) with, among other organisations, Planning AID Wales (see 2018).

The bulk of guidance in this article relates to outreach grounded in WP and Employability. It is perhaps indicative of the shift away from intrinsic civic goods that both of these agendas have emerged centrally as a consequence of marketisation (see McCaig 2015), particularly via the removal of caps on student numbers and attendant performance indicators, such as attrition, degree outcomes and graduate employability, that inform student choices. These factors have fostered a series of, long predicted (UCU 2010), but increasingly evident, threats to the viability of institutions (Fazackerley 2017). Put simply, recruitment of undergraduate students is now, more than ever, the key determining factor in the health of departments, faculties and institutions. Indeed, this is leading to concern for Employability and engagement, during study, with external organisations to foster CV-enhancing skills and experiences among students, since recruitment depends increasingly upon the ability of prospective students to conceive study as a means of career progression.

As a consequence, ever more pressure is being placed on academics to engage in activity to increase recruitment and retention, often as part of the WP agenda. This has led WP, at times, to be elided with outreach and, in turn, seen through the lens of recruitment. Indeed, central teams are sometimes grouped under the banner of 'recruitment' *and* 'outreach', which may lead to an attendant assumption that the two are interchangeable and that 'best practice' can be calculated on the basis of returns on investment. While WP is an example, along with KE, PE, PNP, Employability, and other instances of engagement with non-academic communities, of outreach, outreach, itself, simply cannot conceptually be reduced to WP and WP *ought* not to be reduced to recruitment. Indeed, given the civic concerns historically associated with outreach, there are good reasons politically and professionally to resist that slide. However, in this UK context, it is essential that academics understand the elision, not least because funding sources relating to outreach may exclusively and implicitly be reserved for WP or recruitment activities – a reservation overseas colleagues may find confusing. Accordingly, the language of outreach is in flux, but it is important that academics understand that, while government policy has a particular impact on its conceptualisation, that conceptualisation is liable to shift. With that caveat, how can academics manage responsibilities for outreach?

The aims and objectives of outreach
Given these, often chaotic, transformations and given the imperative of outreach in general, the aims of outreach may seem secondary to the act of outreach itself. However, it is essential to determine, often through collaboration with academic colleagues, the specific aims and objectives of outreach at the very outset of a project. This requires identifying, in the first instance, the specific needs that motivate outreach. It is then necessary to consider: the groups or individuals most in need of, or most receptive to, outreach; the particular features of those groups or individuals that make it possible to forge a relationship; the obstacles, including resources, geographical location and perspectives on academic research, that they face in being able to engage effectively with a project; the human and material resources available in order to advance any course of action; the place of outreach within workloads and its impact on career development, and the prospective value of the host institution itself to those outside its walls. Each of these considerations helps to shape the particular practical objectives to be pursued in order to achieve the specific aim of outreach.

While the need for planning might seem obvious, projects do fail by virtue of insufficient consideration of such questions. Determining answers to those questions at the outset mitigates the possibility of a project's impracticality or, perhaps most importantly, unattractive to target audiences. Common problems include: information or advertising not reaching intended audiences; events in particular sites, such as university campuses, proving intimidating for some groups; costs of travel to other venues being prohibitively expensive, and timing interfering with school scheduling or work and/or family commitments. In particular, schools and colleges also have limitations on the numbers of hours or days students can be 'off-site' and lengthy and cumbersome compliance procedures for such excursions that require consent of parents and senior management. A clear plan can address these obstacles, and others such as promotion and participant recruitment, and identify the necessary lead time for any given event. In the case of schools or colleges, the longer the notice period the better: it is best to be able to present a programme of events at the beginning of the academic year or, at the very least, half a term in advance of an event. The need for specificity in design is apparent in citizen science work, which involves PE in a range of settings, from shopping centres to science festivals or from the Glastonbury Music Festival to the Chelsea Flower Show (see OPAL 2018). Each of these engagements requires significantly different frameworks in order to cater for the demographics and interests of the audience (see West and Pateman 2016).

There is, clearly, no 'general public' to reach across the examples but, rather, a series of particular 'publics' that can only be reached in different, particular ways. By developing particular approaches to each engagement, the possibility of failure is reduced and the likelihood funding over the lifetime of a project increased, since funders are more likely to support approaches that take seriously the need for consideration of audiences, not least because those projects will be more able to collect and draw evaluative conclusions on relevant data (see Reed et al. 2018). In general, it is essential that steps are taken to refer back to aims and objectives throughout the project, first to ensure that the goals of the project are upheld, but also to enable considered revision through evaluation where needed.

Funding
There are many different sources of funding for outreach, ranging from *ad hoc* departmental or faculty funds for research-, Impact-, WP- or recruitment-related activities, to university-wide OFFA allocated funds/OfS countable spend and Knowledge Exchange programmes to national Research Councils (AHRC, BBSRC, EPSRC, ESRC, MRC, NERC, STFC) to funding bodies (PS, RSC, RSB) and to professional bodies and charities related to the subject (IoP, RAEng, Wellcome Trust). Those funds relating specifically to research and KE can be expected, more often than not, to be competitively awarded and grounded in concern for academic excellence. Those funds relating to WP and generic recruitment may more often tend towards allocation on the basis of departmental need or demonstrable prior success in terms of recruitment and retention-based interventions, for reasons of financial imperatives outlined above (see also Johnson and Mutton 2018, 136-137). Appreciating the distinction between the two criteria of evaluation can save considerable effort in developing applications, since the latter may depend more on recognition of a shortfall in student numbers or types of students than assertion of the academic excellence of the proposal. It is also essential to understand that, in a contemporary UK context, funds for 'outreach', whether internal or external through NCOP and similar organisations, often refer to WP-related activities, whereas other forms of outreach are generally supported through funds for KE or PE. In either instance, however, there is good reason to expect funding to be allocated predominantly to programmes that demonstrate potential for sustainable and incremental impact, rather than *ad hoc* individual activities, even when those activities might have some demonstrable impact and require relatively small investments in materials and equipment. This is, in part, because longer-term projects generally represent investments that attract buy-in from partners and increase, in cases of internal sources of funding, chances of external funding. As with much outreach work, funding that reflects and supports a research career is both more attractive for applicants, since the funding itself and resulting impact can be articulated in ways conducive, say, to REF Impact Case Studies (see Harris and Ridealgh 2016, 80), and for funders, since it increases the likelihood of academics devoting necessary energies towards completion of projects. The more long-term the focus, the greater the chances of securing additional funding for either related or follow-on activities.

The place of outreach within academic workloads
At some institutions, outreach is viewed as an essential part of a portfolio of academic work and is evaluated within promotions frameworks, often under the category of 'Citizenship and Leadership' or, even, 'Teaching'. Indeed, at some institutions, even successful researchers can be denied promotion on the basis of a dearth of such citizenship contributions. In some other instances, however, outreach work is not recognised as part of an academic's workload. Even if it is, the allocation may not be sufficient to enable fulfilment of responsibilities without impinging upon the research work that is more likely to lead to career development and advancement (see discussion in Harris and Ridealgh 2016, 81). In part, this is because departments often operate with an outdated understanding of outreach as *ad hoc* delivery of

guest lectures to Sixth Form students or other non-academic parties. This form of outreach is often regarded as being part of collegial 'Good Citizenship' within an institution and can, in fact, be a good entry point for such activity (see Watson 2018). However, the activities and programmes needed to make a significant impact often require much more active and innovative engagement. Even administering the most basic of talks is a time-consuming task, since relationships with schools facing their own sector-specific pressures need to be nurtured. Leading programmes, which involves such activities as recruiting students or other participants, ensuring enhanced DBS checks are processed, scheduling events, developing and organising materials, completing health and safety risk assessment forms and delivering training to participants, can be even more complicated than convening undergraduate modules, such is the complexity of work with those outside the university.

Demonstrating this to colleagues and, especially, Heads of Department, can prove difficult. In this respect, it is valuable to record the amount of time spent on particular tasks, compiling, in the first instance, the products of outreach, such that a coherent, cogent case can be made for recognition of efforts. In various instances, outreach activities can be integrated into workload models quite effectively. For example, as part of its OFFA Access Agreement, the University of East Anglia created one academic post per faculty with an administrative workload allocation focused solely 'on the development, coordination and delivery of [WP] outreach activities and establishment of strategy within their faculty' (Harris and Ridealgh 2016, 74). The percentage of workload allocated will necessarily depend upon such factors as: the extent to which departments recognise the need for coherent programmes of outreach; the scale of recruitment pressures; the relative weighting of other administrative workload allocations (and the relationship of activities to admissions roles), and the full investment in time needed to ensure that a programme fulfils its intended function. It must be recognised that some institutions may respond to decreased recruitment with reduced workload allocations. Regardless of the ways in which departments organise, calculate and recognise workload, there are good reasons for departments to create roles that formalise outreach, whether in terms of WP, recruitment, Employability or PE, as a legitimate and valuable activity for academics.

Means of managing workloads
While valuable, outreach bears a high opportunity cost. As such, whether recognised in workloads or not, there are good reasons for academics to manage and make efficient engagement in outreach.

Avoiding duplication
The key means of managing workload individually is by avoiding duplication of activity and sustenance of networks, such that up-front investments turn into sustainable programmes of engagement. There are examples throughout this article, and the associated website, that indicate successful courses of action to deal with particular issues. Drawing upon and recognising those precedents can ensure, without sliding into plagiarism, that academics avoid reinventing wheels. It may be that, beyond avoidance of duplication, there is scope for colleagues within a single institution to participate in a multidisciplinary programme that reduce costs involved in establishing external partnerships by respective departments, while maximising the value of outreach for the respective partners. This is apparent in Bassford, O'Sullivan, Crisp, et al.'s (2015) work on Crime Scene Investigations at De Montfort, and University of Portsmouth's (Hill and Mulhall 2017) gSTEM programme in primary schools, in which colleagues from a range of disciplines each contribute to a single programme of engagement, leading to outcomes enhanced by the multidisciplinarity (see also, Harris and Ridealgh 2016, 75).

Targeting effectively

Avoiding duplication must be complemented by avoiding activities that fail to reach target audiences. To achieve this, it is essential that the criteria by which a target audience is identified are clear and coherent. For example, there are serious challenges, with regard to WP and recruitment, in balancing investments between, say, schools that already send many students to university and those that send few. While there are 'easy wins' in competing for the existing pool, this does not widen access overall (see Harrison and Waller 2017, 81). Indeed, there are good reasons to believe that the criteria deployed by specific institutions to identify WP students may actually replicate inequalities in access (Rainford 2017). As such, there are very good intrinsic, civic reasons to target schools that receive little or no input at present. Indeed, OFFA's (2017) top strategic priority in 2018 – increasing attainment – recognised that attainment at HE stems from higher attainment in school, while the Scottish Government upholds such thinking as a central pillar of its WP funding guidelines for Scottish universities (see Commissioner for Fair Access 2017). In thinking about WP, to manage those obligations, there is generally scope for using data derived from national mapping, either through university-specific OFFA target schools or other sector-wide projects, that identify 'cold spots' or underrepresented demographics or areas (see Wass 2016; Social Mobility Commission 2017). Targeting effectively requires collaboration with those at departmental, faculty or university level with access to the relevant data and examination of national mapping, where this exists. Value commitments may lead towards programmes that are sub-optimal in terms of data, but more efficient and focused in advancing those values than they would otherwise have been.

It should be recognised that the more expansive and intensive the activity, the more important the precision in targeting must be in order to avoid onerous long-term commitments that undermine fulfilment of other responsibilities. This is especially true of instances in which outreach programmes engage with individuals as, for example, prospective HE students, rather than individuals embedded within institutions, such as teachers in schools, since the latter offer the benefit of refining engagement in response to the specific needs of projects. In one respect, the consequence of targeting can be as straightforward and flexible as ring-fencing proportions of places within a programme, such as a summer school. For example, Lancaster's 'New Political Minds' summer school reserves 50% of the 32 places for WP students (Johnson 2018). In another respect, it can lead to complex, but essential, processes that facilitate contact with remote and distant groups in order to create, often through electronic means such as web chats, contact with and pathways to HE and beyond (see I'm a Medic 2018; see separate processes in in2science 2018; Harris and Ridealgh 2016).

Making sensible, up-front investments that forge relationships

Beyond this, it may be that more ambitious projects that require significant up-front investment are more sustainable in the long-term. Perhaps the clearest reason for this is that outreach rests upon networks of relationships which, once made, can facilitate, support and, in time, lead forms of outreach to outcomes that less ambitious projects that depend upon *ad hoc* activity may lack. In part, this is because good forms of outreach serve to foster KE with partners to such an extent that constituent parts of programmes enable partners to participate in, lead and revise activities as needs and interests emerge. This is often the case in school-based activities, in which teachers come to be able to co-deliver and lead activities, such as role plays (see Johnson, et al. 2016), and to disseminate programmes and expand networks over time. Having partners that trust and appreciate the specific form of outreach, means that programmes can expand incrementally and exponentially as recognition spreads. In effect, while fluidity in employment and identity of post-holders should be expected, sustaining relationships means

reducing the number of unpredictable moving parts within a programme, reducing time-investment and increasing the value of the time that is invested.

Securing administrative support
It may be that such investment in the advancement of relationships is not viable given a particular workload or timeframe. Increasingly, departmental administrative support is allocated to outreach activities. It may be that administrators can assist in the process of contacting and securing relationships. However, where there is no such support, it may be possible to create paid or unpaid internship positions for undergraduate or postgraduate students that provide administrative and outreach experience in return for assistance in administration. This can create pathways into careers, as we will outline later.

Support from central teams
Beyond time constraints, academics may often lack the experience to engage effectively in outreach. Institutions are, increasingly, committed to the provision of designated, largely non-academic, outreach teams, often badged under the remit of Widening Participation, which may sit in a broader Admissions and Recruitment team concerned with recruitment more broadly. These teams may include student ambassadors to facilitate certain activities, including, in the main, non-subject-specific talks and summer schools. Those teams may have significant experience in leading programmes and have existing relationships with partners around which activities can be organised. Indeed, institutions may have designated outreach leads at departmental, faculty or university level, each responsible for supporting and facilitating academic engagement with particular sections. There is the potential, within such teams, among other things, for production of non-academic, non-subject-specific materials, organisation of risk assessments, DBS clearances, delivery of training to students engaged in programmes and dissemination of programmes and activities through newsletters to contact teachers in schools and university events calendars. Where universities have ITE (Information Technology Equipment) provision, there will generally be a school placements manager who may be able to help in identifying appropriate departmental contacts with schools, which can be more effective than going through a school's administrative team. Additional support may exist in Marketing and Press Office centres, which may assist in producing materials and marketing activities more broadly. More substantively, it may be that central university teams have programmes, such as Research in a Box at Lancaster University (see Johnson et al., 2016; 2017), that are already funded, but require subject-specific academic input in order to function.

All of these activities require significant effort in terms of nurturing networks (see Dent et al., 2014, 8), but it may be that that investment increases chances of successful overall outcomes and of efforts being recognised by the university centre. Beyond instrumental concerns, the nurturing and sustaining those networks will inevitably feature as a responsibility of academics whose administrative roles centre upon outreach.

Nurturing relationships

Understanding points of tension in academic/professional relationship
Although collaboration between academics and outreach professionals is *prima facie* valuable for both parties, there are common points of tension that arise across the sector. Academics often report a lack of support from central teams in advancing activities and programmes, when they feel that those activities and programmes are directed toward ends, such as recruitment, that are in the institution's interest. Conversely, outreach professionals often report a perceived hierarchy in relationships with academics, particularly when developing academic programmes of study, in which they feel reduced to an advisory capacity that fails fully to recognise their

professional knowledge and understanding. In part, this is because of the wholly contrasting terms of employment and workloads of the respective parties. Academics on full-time contracts (with the exception of those on teaching only contracts) generally have research foci, workloads attendant to that research, as well as teaching and administration, departmental responsibilities in terms of the benefit of outreach, and traditionally, though decreasingly, indefinite contracts. In contrast, outreach professionals have a clear focus on outreach activities, are evaluated in terms of largely non-departmental outcomes and have a mixture of fixed-term and ongoing contracts that are often dependent upon receipt of internal recognition and funding for their existence (see Johnson and Mutton 2018). Indeed, outreach professionals may have tight circumscriptions over the type and nature of projects they can support, particularly with regard to target groups and forms of evaluation. This necessarily creates conflicts in terms of foci, agendas and weighting of activities within workloads. Public choice concerns for budget maximisation need not be adopted fully to recognise that there are incentives for different programmes and courses of action (Niskanen 1968; 1971). At the very least, while academic concerns often lie more with the well-being of departments, central teams' concerns lie more with centralised programmes and university-wide outcomes. This tension can lead to anxiety about academic departmental activities being expressed in terms of concern for 'branding' or 'cohesion' with partners or prospective partners.

Dealing with points of contention in relationships with outreach professionals
All of these divergent concerns create potential for mutual misunderstanding and pose obstacles to effective collaboration. As such, part of Dent et al.'s (2014) nurturing of networks in this context must surely include attempting to find forms of mutual understanding, including through translation where necessary, and patterns of working that make the most of the various strengths of the different actors. This is especially important in those instances in which academic researchers and outreach professionals actually approach the same issues with the similar agendas, but very different languages and strategies. This need for translation is illustrated by the way in which concepts such as 'resilience' can be understood entirely differently by the two parties. In one sense, the cultural work needed to foster symbiotic collaboration is imperilled by the short-term goals and means of evaluation imposed on respective parties. However, the need for such work by academics remains, not least because of the instrumental need to demonstrate impact by the closing the research-practice loop.

Clearly, it is possible to identify a number of essential reasons for outreach professionals to take the lead in fostering mutual understanding, not least because of the relative importance of outreach within their roles, but, for academics, there are good reasons, in seeking to nurture relationships, to advance overviews of working modes, priorities and perspectives to at least allow professionals to understand the various different prospective points of tension in a relationship. At the University of Sussex, there has been a concerted effort by academics, University WP teams and wider WP practitioners to close this loop through close, ongoing collaborative work. This has included secondment of three academics from the Education department (Louise Gazeley, Tamsin Hinton-Smith and Emily Danvers) to WP teams in order to foster relationship building and collaborative knowledge sharing, WP practitioners studying towards PGT qualifications and co-researching and co-authoring between different stakeholders (Gazeley, et al. 2018). This is now forming the basis of a REF Impact Case Study. At the University of East Anglia, the designated academic WP roles ensured that post holders were 'able to act as intermediaries between their home faculties and the wider central administration, bridging the gap between the two and managing expectations on both sides' (Harris and Ridealgh 2016, 76). Similarly, the Universities of Portsmouth, Southampton and Brighton employ academics with a defined workload allocation for outreach for the same

reason. This indicates the importance of academics being granted responsibility for shaping relationships.

In one sense, just as efforts are being made to close the research-practice gap by training outreach professionals in academic skills, academics are also having to develop an unprecedented array of non-academic skills. Where academics have limited support, it may be worth acknowledging that more effort may be exhausted by seeking support than by completing tasks individually. Indeed, academics are already producing materials to a high standard (see, for example, Rhys 2018) and presenting resources publicly in ways that were previously restricted to module reading lists (see, for example, Watson 2018). It is highly likely that, if no support is available centrally, that other academic colleagues, perhaps from other departments, have developed outreach materials.

More broadly, there is value in academics' asserting responsibility for and leading on outreach both in terms of articulating clear intrinsic, civic goods, but also shaping subject-specific approaches that serve people's interests well. This need not mean criticising individuals within outreach teams, since there ought to be awareness of hierarchies or perceived hierarchies within relationships. However, there can be criticism of approaches in general, particularly where approaches slide wholly into instrumental, marketing-based commitments that regard academic, subject-specific content as an afterthought. This can all be viewed as part of good academic citizenship.

Finally, anecdotally, academics engaged in outreach report additional cultural capital being granted to academics over outreach professionals, such that it may often be easier for academics to establish relationships with non-academic partners. This, again, highlights both the potential for perceived or real hierarchies and misunderstanding about one another's capacities and the prospective pragmatic value of academics taking initiative to forge external relationships.

Collaboration between universities

Marketisation and competition between universities presents a clear obstacle for collaboration between universities. While there are various forms of, sometimes precarious, co-operation between universities, such as through STEM, Doctoral Training Consortia, the Russell Group or the N8 Research Group, collaboration on outreach presents challenges insofar as recruitment, funding and even sites of impact are often, understandably, contested in terms of zero-sum competition (see discussion in Harrison and Waller 2017; Rainford 2017). However, there may be specific forms and sites of collaboration that side-step competition. For example, the Universities of Nottingham and Leicester have collaborated with a communications company, Gallomanor Ltd, to enhance recruitment to medicine in Lincolnshire – a significant 'cold spot' for access to the profession. This work stems from recognition of the gap between demand and supply of primary healthcare practitioners and the likelihood, acknowledged within NHS England's sustainability and transformation plans, that it will grow more acute. Wass's (2016) report, *By choice not by chance*, identified raising early awareness and interest of children in secondary education as one component in a multi-pronged approach to the training of GPs. To address this, the universities used funding from Health Education England to create an interactive website – I'm a Medic (2018) – to support online webchats between school children and panels of primary care practitioners. Three 2-week events were run that engaged 42 WP schools and over 700 young people in years 9-12 across East Midlands. Practitioners taking part included established GP partners, GP trainees, practice nurses, practice managers and healthcare assistants. Without that collaboration between the universities to achieve scale, and the assistance of professional communications services, it may not have been possible to engage pupils in areas of low levels of progression to healthcare careers. One key facilitating reason for the success of the approach may lie in the two institutions having a shared

non-zero-sum interest in attracting students from an otherwise under-represented area and a shared professional interest in fostering pathways to practice for reasons of civic, sectoral responsibility

A similar concern for scale is evident in localised WP programmes in Sussex (Sussex Learning Network 2018a), in which attempts have been made to model close collaboration between the three Universities, Schools, Colleges and Community organisations. In the spirit of participatory methods, central to the local approach is enabling partners to self-identify the direction of activities as the experts with their own user groups. Development of collaborative partnerships across research and practice has resulted in joint authored publications produced from a range of perspectives that offer more insight than academic or practitioner work alone (Gazely, et al. 2018). This all reflects the possibility and value of inter-university collaboration.

By virtue of the possibility of inter-university collaboration, there is good reason to 'log' outreach activity institutionally in case it fulfils such objectives.

Collaboration with schools

Perhaps the most prominent partners for outreach activities today are the schools and colleges from which students are drawn. While schools have a necessary interest in fostering pathways to Higher Education, not least by virtue of competition between Sixth Forms for students, the institutions themselves and teachers, in particular, face a number of serious constraints on their ability to engage in activities that are largely extra-curricular. Increase in quantity and intricacy of assessments, expansion of assessment culture, risk aversion with regard to engagement with external organisations and periodic reorganisation of institutions all mean that teachers are less able than they have been to engage in outreach programmes precisely at a time in which academics need to engage most. In order to minimise frustration, outreach engagement with schools has to be understood sympathetically within that context. Indeed, there are means of maximising the success of relationships with schools.

In the first instance, programmes may stand a greater chance of being supported by schools if they link with the National Curriculum (see Department for Education 2014) and Schemes of Work (see, for example, Historical Association 2018) to ensure that teachers value the activities as more than mere opportunities to raise aspirations. Although that link is not always straightforward – for example, there are six Geography specifications, with choices within them, and few themes that cross over –, understanding that, fundamentally, teachers have a central interest in ensuring that their students succeed within their existing courses of study means that there are ways in which content can be tailored and supplemented with academic expertise to ensure attractiveness. Conversely, some programmes operate precisely in order to supplement or to challenge deficits within the curriculum, as in the case of Second Thoughts Philosophy (2018), which seeks to foster critical, philosophical thinking in ways currently inhibited in schools through a combination of the curriculum, teaching, disciplining and testing. Beyond individual subject areas, there are agendas, such as Prevent (Department for Education 2015), that have to be addressed by schools in order to fulfil broader obligations. This is not to say that outreach in schools to promote goods, such as adoption by children of philosophically-informed analyses (see Second Thoughts Philosophy 2018), is unfeasible – simply that it may require additional justification to teachers.

Effective forms of outreach with schools ought to lead to sustainable, long-term relationships with individual teachers or groups of teachers capable of upholding programmes and disseminating information about the programme and participating institutions. Equipping partners through research training support and resources empowers various stakeholder groups, specifically, though not exclusively, within a WP context, to become researchers of their own lives and contexts, enabling them to advance their own stories, rather than to have these told by academics (see Sussex Learning Network 2018a). In addition to reducing workload over the

period of a programme, this nurturing of relationships increases the number of incidental contact between academics and students as interests among the latter emerge, opening new, and particularly local, pathways to university in the process. By virtue of their offering a range of qualifications that bridge school and university, Further Education Colleges are often easier partners with which to forge relationships.

Style and content
Achieving these sorts of outcomes rests upon developing style and content that differ significantly from those found in traditional, lecture-based university teaching. For example, outreach in schools is not mere replication of university content and style, even when opening pathways to HE is the aim. Pedagogically, the needs and interests of younger people and those outside traditional academic backgrounds are divergent and need to be appreciated in order to achieve the aim of outreach itself. Indeed, activities that lie within an academic comfort zone may end up alienating audiences, which, in the case of WP, serves only to compound disadvantage. Attempting to cater for a vague 'general public' can lead to underwhelming results. Rather, there are various, innovative means of deploying complex ideas in ways that work for teachers, many of whom are engaged in developing these approaches, and students themselves. In schools, these include concern for active learning and the use of activities such as role plays and engagement with mock research or workplace scenarios (see Williams 2017a; 2017b; Johnson et al., 2016; Johnson 2016; Street Doctors 2016).

A good illustration of this is De Montfort's 'CrashEd', which received a Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence 2018 (see HEA 2018). This 'multi-disciplinary, cross-Faculty, University project' arose from the collaborative commitment of six university lecturers, a Further Education lecturer and a police forensic crash investigator to develop a car crash scenario as a means of integrating undergraduate study and WP work in schools. The approach involves 'academically challenging forensic scenarios' being deployed in schools by subject specialists across five Schools, an FE college and Leicestershire Constabulary. CrashEd team members and the Police Forensic Crash Investigator deliver subject-specific content on 'anatomy and physiology, ballistics and trauma injuries to students on an FdA Artistic Make-up and Special Effects course, who then develop 'bespoke prosthetic resources designed from remits written by University Forensic Science students' for use in an undergraduate module. 'This is a novel example of students working as co-creators. The connectivist approach has stretched students to think across subject boundaries; a great motivator that has enhanced student engagement' (Bassford, O'Sullivan, et al. 2017; see also Bassford, Crisp, et al. 2016). Indeed, it is apparent that a range of outreach activities have the capacity to foster skills and knowledge incidental to tasks, but essential for personal and professional development. For example, the University of Portsmouth's Raspberry Pi programme introduces a hacking mindset to students, which provides strategies for solving real world problems in areas such as cybersecurity, engineering or maths (see Marsden and Hill 2017; Hill 2017), while the University of Nottingham's (2018) 'Healthy Bodies' programme fosters understanding, not just of biology, but of human health of direct relevance to Year 5 and 6 pupils who undertake the sessions. While Primary School activities are unlikely to appeal to recruitment-oriented funders, they occur at a time more likely to make a substantive difference to a young person's educational career (Department for Innovation, Business & Skills 2013).

Concern for audiences in schools leads, naturally, to co-design of interventions with schools and, where possible, school students, to take account of age, subject and the agendas, including attendance and attainment, that matter to schools (see University of Bath 2018a; 2018b). This also means that activities across age groups ought to build upon one another, such that information from one level of activity informs the next. Specificity of style and content extends to recognition of the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and language barriers,

such as those who speak English as an Additional Language (EAL). Precisely because it can be extremely difficult to tailor content and style to such diverse groups, the onus must be on collaboration with teachers, since it is those teachers who will know how to best meet the needs of those students.

More broadly, there is scope within engagement, for fostering understanding of healthcare workplace demands and attendant issues, such as diversity. As in I'm a Medic, the STEM Learning (2018) Ambassadors scheme, which involves experienced professionals demonstrating and discussing their work with students, illustrates the importance of authenticity to engagement, since impact stems, not just from appropriate content, but from the social capital inherent in contact between practitioners, or trainee practitioners, and potential students (see Jackson and Price 2017). In both cases, open-ended engagement is supplemented by concern for placing control over conversation in the hands of school students, in contrast to the prevalent scenario in which a designated speaker talks at audiences regarding elements of a course of study or career that they regard to be appropriate and important (see I'm a Medic 2018; Harris and Ridealgh 2016, 77). This reflects concern for the power relations at play in outreach, fostering innovative styles of engagement and divergent forms of content.

Perhaps most importantly, as academics, the key defining value of work is subject- and discipline-specific input. Content and style necessarily flows from the research and teaching experience accumulated across professional lives. Whereas outreach professionals have the capacity to contribute essential administrative, organisational and, in parts, subject-specific content relating directly to the particular, broad issues addressed by programmes, such as the nature of WP and enterprise, academic involvement, if it is to be justified, has to orient around specific research, teaching and professional knowledge and skills. Academic facilitation of subject- and discipline-specific content may actually engage with target audiences in ways that do not feel commercial, which may be beneficial, particularly with regard to recruitment and WP, in terms of not alienating those who dislike active forms of selling. This is apparent in De Montfort's innovative use of crime-based role play as a means of eliciting interest among those disengaged from academia (see Bassford, et al. 2015). In the absence of academic, subject- and discipline-specific it may be in the interests of all parties for outreach to be facilitated by others.

Capacity building

Mutuality and reciprocity
Given the grounding in civic duty, outreach must contribute fundamentally to capacity building and career development among those engaged. There ought to be emphasis on co-creation and design. This stems most easily from participatory projects (see Johnson et al., 2017; Gallagher et al., 2017), but also, as indicated above, from recruitment and WP work, in which the onus should be on collaboration between, not simply academics and teachers, but also undergraduates, academics, employers (see, for example, Bassford, Crisp, et al. 2016) and professional bodies (see, for example, Nicholls, Wilkinson and Bull 2018). This is not simply about development of content, but expanding and advancing a complex cluster of skills of benefit to all participants. This has been a core element of the Sussex Learning Network (2018a) approach, including designing research skills training materials for WP staff to train young people as researchers of their own HE hopes and journeys; developing WP parents' research skills to tell their own perspectives; and engaging young people in designing WP outreach activities of the future.

Achieving capacity building is time consuming, but, as suggested above, leads to sustainability and impacts across related agendas including WP and Employability. While there should be little expectation that academics have the knowledge by which to train others, the mere act of collaboration can constitute capacity building. This is one area in which

collaboration with central teams capable of delivering training is likely to prove fruitful. There might be good reason, beyond this, for institutions to invest in external training of academic staff so as to foster their own capacity to work effectively in this area. Indeed, collective experience demonstrates that engagement in outreach does not leave academic practice untouched. The insight and experience of teachers in schools, professional partners in networks of practice and community professionals in collaborating organisations offers significant scope for impact on subsequent work in HE, particularly with regard to pedagogy – an important concern in an age of TEF (Teaching Excellence Framework). In sum, collaboration ought to be approached as a collective endeavour aimed at mutual and collective capacity building and career development.

The value of undergraduate and school student participation
Given the importance of authenticity noted above, the value of undergraduate participation is often underestimated and sometimes solely considered within the context of the Employability agenda. However, this serves to marginalise a potentially vital component of outreach, since students often have the insight and social capital capable of forging links with partners, particularly within a WP context. This is because obstacles to HE may only fully be felt from the inside, such that any WP programme, however thoroughly advanced by those within the academy, may misunderstand and misarticulate the interests and identities of those outside it. The best means of understanding pathways to university is through engagement with those who have already made the journey and those who are yet to do so. One useful guiding principle in WP work, seen in various disciplines at the universities of Brighton (see examples in University of Brighton 2018), De Montfort (Bassford, O'Sullivan, Bacon, et al. 2015), East Anglia (2018) and Bath (in2science 2018), is that involving students multiplies the benefits of any piece of outreach work: in addition to supporting the activity, the students often provide a stronger connection or example for attending students, develop confidence, improve communication skills and enhance their employability in the process. To support this component of outreach, there should be scope for development of training for young people as researchers of their own lives, along with research training support for other key stakeholder groups including school and college teachers, community and WP practitioners, School HE Champions and parent ambassadors (see Sussex Learning Network 2018a). This forms part of a strategy of wider creation of ongoing opportunities for feed-forward between research and practice through a collective, structured form of knowledge exchange and capacity building.

Paying students for their participants
There is, of course, general social controversy over unpaid placements and internships and both the part they play in exacerbating inequalities and their relative merits in fostering employability. In HE, when students are representing a university, including through activities funded by Access Agreements, it is good practice that such work is recognised through titles, such as 'Student Ambassador', and paid. This is because such participation in WP or recruitment work has an implicit or prospective commercial benefit to the institution. For that reason, universities ought to recognise full responsibility by providing full training and safeguarding, including enhanced DBS checks, specifically in cases in which there is prospect of unsupervised contact with minors. Taking responsibility for student behaviour means imposing responsibilities on those students which can only be fulfilled within a paid context. However, there may be other, non-commercial forms of participation in which voluntary work can be recognised without payment. For example, work in outreach that is recognised through curriculum credits or, in the case of publications, co-authorship, may be seen to be voluntary and to confer benefit on participants without imposing the same responsibilities as those associated with roles such as 'Student Ambassadors'. There may also be voluntary

opportunities for individual students to engage in mentoring or support, particularly within their own region, for which there ought to be recognition, not just through expansion of CVs, but also entry into formal awards programmes, such as Action on Access (2018) and NEON (2018).

The cycle of WP from entry to exit

There is considerable awareness of anxiety among students from non-traditional academic backgrounds of transition and its impact on attainment, retention and progression. Navigating and managing institutional transitions from school to HE to employment requires investment in fostering self-confidence, self-efficacy and social capital (see Jackson and Price 2017). Given the relationship between entry (recruitment) and exit (Employability) concerns in a number of predominantly non-vocational subject areas (see Johnson 2016; Newcastle University 2018a), it is essential that institutions view WP, in particular, as a cycle requiring a different set of interventions before (Access), during (Retention) and, even, after (Progression) undergraduate study (see Canning 2017; Rainford 2017). There are various examples of institutions succeeding, to different extents, with the entry element. For example, Newcastle University runs a PARTNERS summer school aimed at students from non-standard backgrounds for whom the typical entry requirements might prove unfairly exclusionary. The programme combines academic subject- and discipline-specific interventions, such as a summer school, with periodic in-school non-subject specific interventions on finance and employability (see Newcastle University 2018b).

However, awareness is increasing about the importance of the second and third elements of the cycle, leading academics to a number of curricular and extra-curricular programmes that seek actively to foster self-confidence, self-efficacy and social capital, as well as a number of subject- and non-subject-specific employability skills. While these programmes are available for all students, the benefits may be felt most by those from WP backgrounds. Examples of approaches can be found in the School of Geography, Politics and Sociology at Newcastle University, where a year-long stage 2 module has been introduced in Politics entitled POL2096 Politics Work Placement (see Newcastle University 2018a). The module offers students the opportunity to undertake work-related learning in a variety of different politics-related placements, including MPs' offices, NGOs, charities and businesses. For students, it is an opportunity to enhance employability skills and to examine the application of political theory to practice. For hosts, it is an opportunity to embed fresh perspectives on the organisation and, ideally, to benefit from a completed piece of research on organisational interests.

In the Department of Politics, Philosophy and Religion at Lancaster University (2018c), 3rd year students on PPR390: PPR in Education gain experience of educational environments. The module is organised and delivered collaboratively between the department, LUSU (Lancaster University Students Union) Involve and schools or colleges in which placements are based. Students work with teachers, LUSU Involve representatives and the module convener to develop a series of reflective assignments that hone the application of subject area knowledge, the development of transferable skills and the production of pedagogical resources. This fosters clear professional pathways to education, in particular. In PPR389: Politics Employability through outreach (Lancaster University 2018d), students undertake a series of employability-related activities leading to the production of pedagogical resources that enable engagement with Politics and specific political issues through communication with Sixth Form students. This skills-based, CV-enhancing module enables students to be able present tangible evidence of their employability to employers in the form of three minute long pieces to camera explaining politics, mentoring and supervision of local WP EPQ students and role play scenarios for use in schools. The importance of mentoring is highlighted by research on a

postgraduate mentoring programme for undergraduate Music students at Trinity Laban of Conservatoire of Music and Dance, which demonstrates outcomes including 'greater understanding of routes of progression into further study and modes of networking with regard to developing employment opportunities' (Jackson and Price 2017, 2; see, also, placements in Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance 2018). Each of these approaches takes collaboration with external partners and fostering of relationships with experienced colleagues and students within institutions as the very foundation of Employability, specifically with completing the cycle of WP in mind, since it is these experiences that best serve to foster social capital and awareness of institutions needed for the pursuit of any career.

Throughout these stages, and particularly in advance of HE study, academics have a responsibility to consider the ways in which messages about the value of study may be understood by participating groups. In this respect, academics are well-placed to develop and deliver subject-specific, academic content that enthuses and attracts students to courses of study. If those students then find subjects boring, it may simply be that their interest has waned and shifted. If they have suffered from poor teaching, they have means of holding academics accountable through anonymous teaching evaluation feedback forms, which can have an impact on lecturers' career progression. In contrast, if students believe their degrees to be of questionable monetary value (see Neves and Hilman 2017, 12-18) and themselves overqualified or unemployable, there is growing momentum behind calls for institutions to be held responsible in ways previously restricted to financial institutions. Academics have every reason to take responsibility for enthusing and encouraging interest in subject areas and some very good moral and instrumental reasons to avoid taking responsibility for non-academic justifications for study.

Sustaining academic standards

Introducing such vocational elements into curricula has raised a number of questions regarding academic standards: How can employability be incorporated into a degree programme otherwise assessed by criteria of subject knowledge and disciplinary method without compromising the integrity of those criteria? What is an appropriate balance between academic content and vocational experience, even if the latter constitutes an application of the former? What part can non-academic host organisations play in the assessment of work? In what ways might existing factors at play in disadvantage dissuade particular students from enrolling on such modules? At present, anecdotal evidence suggests that colleagues have a wide range of responses to these questions, some dismissing such curricular interventions outright and favouring extracurricular work and some integrating such interventions wholeheartedly, particularly in vocational subjects. Evidence from student engagement may vary, but carefully considered, ambitious forms of innovative assessment can be well received. For example, Bassford, O'Sullivan, et al. (2016) argue with regard to CrashEd that

> Qualitative evidence drawn from multiple deliveries of the course suggest that authentic assessment is a valuable tool for improving student learning outcomes and delivering key insights into workplace practices. Students were enthused by this novel approach; 'It was such a refreshing change to our usual assessments'.

It may be, simply, that the criteria by which we judge students is necessarily shifting in accordance with the broader socio-economic climate. Given Boyer's concern for the social value of HE, this may not represent a distinct departure from the intellectual foundations of the academy but, rather, an evolution in order to ensure its relevance at a time of flux. Given such flux, knowledge of existing approaches can only help academics and departments to develop

their own responses to these challenges – even if they are simply to reject shifts in curricula outright.

Evaluation of activities

Finally, there is increased concern about the evaluation of activities and programmes. While it is often seen as the end point in outreach, it is a fundamental part of the cycle of a project and must be addressed in the planning phase, not least in order that any ethical processes needed to permit long-term follow-up and dissemination of data are cleared. Unplanned projects sometimes reveal their vagueness in practice and having an in built reflexive evaluation phase can, and ought to, foster periodic revision and improvement. For example, between 2011 and 2016, the Indian Soldiers project at the University of Brighton (see 2015 for associated content) went through five sets of changes to sharpen and refocus the event directly as a consequence of building evaluation into the programme. Indeed, pedagogically, academics ought to engage in assessment, however informal, of the needs and interests of participants within activities to maximise benefit for those present in each iteration.

Beyond the need for revision and improvement, concern for evaluation often stems from increasing concern, at a time of austerity and marketisation, about value for money (see Harrison and Waller 2017). Increased scrutiny from the OfS (Office for Students) and the devolved Administrations with regard to university-wide allocation of funds trickles down to increased scrutiny of activities at the very lowest, departmental, level. This is a cultural change and one that requires adjustment. In many contexts, the criteria by which programmes are evaluated are asserted at institutional level, particularly with regard to WP.

While this may make securing evaluation, at an instrumental level, less onerous, there are ways in which the inflexibility of such approaches may evaluate elements of projects either inaccurately or in ways that fail to reflect the value of the programme in its broadest terms (see discussion in Bateson, et al. 2018). For example, in those broadest terms, it is difficult to find means of establishing causation rather than simply correlation when linking, say, participation in outreach programmes to final outcomes, such as progression to selective Higher Education Institutions. Not all forms of evaluation are developed or analysed by academics with methodological expertise. As such, there is the potential for elements to be overlooked in data collection and data itself to be misread or misunderstood. Moreover, Harrison and Waller (2017, 82) note that 'focus on institutionally driven ideas of success' actually distract 'from the wider issues of social justice that outreach is intended to address', arguing that Pawson's (2013) 'realist' focus on the effect of interventions on choice better reflects the transformative capacity of programmes. It may be, at a very basic level, that open-ended qualitative questions reveal more than interval data about the transformative capacity of impact given the radical complexity of factors and relationships at play.

Whether this position is adopted or not, the need to engage in the planning of evaluation at the very outset and to ensure that relevant outcomes are identified is pressing because the outcomes of evaluations are often used as means of determining subsequent funding, particularly at institutional level. Flawed designs can have profound effects on data. As Johnson and Mutton (2018, 137) note, students participating in North East schools WP outreach were not offered household income below £42,600 – the threshold for means-tested benefits in England – as a criterion of WP backgrounds. This meant that the WP rate returned was around 20%, when the teachers who knew the students and their circumstances asserted that it was closer to 90% according to that criterion. Such differences in data can fatally undermine projects and mean that the up-front investment is wasted, compounding the opportunity cost.

Means of creating basic thresholds for evaluation have been produced by Crawford, Dytham and Nayford (2017), who, in working with a range of organisations, advanced standards of evaluation practice. In addition, specific capacity issues have been addressed

through longer-term regional and national collaborative approaches. For example, in terms of WP activity, central tracking databases, such as HEAT (Higher Education Access Tracker 2018) and, regionally, EMWPREP (2018) allow entry of data by subscribing institutions which is then linked annually with data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) on progression of students into Higher Education, enabling evaluation of the impact of WP programmes, albeit in causal terms that Harrison and Waller (2017) find problematic and reductionist. While, this speaks to the need for co-ordination and long-term thinking in project, it need not mean that departments or institutions themselves cannot engage in that evaluation themselves. For example, the ESRC-funded Aspires (see Institute of Education 2018), engages in longitudinal, mixed methods evaluation of the factors that shape young people's science aspirations.

The means by which data can be secured are myriad. While questionnaires are often seen as the most straightforward, the wide array of methods seen in other educational research activities, such as interviews, focus groups and observations (see Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2017), still apply, especially where they make completion of evaluation less onerous for the participants, including by gamifying the experience. Indeed, in terms of accessibility, there are, in general, good reasons for serious user engagement in determining, designing and analysing research questions and approach. This has been modelled in the Sussex Learning Network through the 'Access your Future' peer mentoring project. The same network (Sussex Learning Network 2018b) has produced a series of Open Access resources for evaluating projects. Similarly, the NERUPI framework (Hayton and Bengry-Howell, 2015) can be used by academics and WP practitioners to design and evaluate interventions aimed at fostering cultural capital, agency and a sense of belonging among High School students.

Conclusion

The guidance above is offered collegially in the knowledge that there are serious challenges attendant to advancing academic programmes of outreach in the present climate. There are good reasons for those programmes to be advanced, not least because of their being academic and having subject- and discipline-specific content. The guidance is weaved around examples and illustrations of projects that form precedents from which to work. This should not discourage innovation, but identify obstacles, and responses to those obstacles, around which that innovation can take place. As such, this article serves, potentially, as the first codification of an ever-expanding body of experience to be iterated periodically as academic engagement with outreach evolves. One of the clearest reasons to engage in academic work on and through outreach is precisely because it upholds age old civic responsibilities. In an age in which students, employers, politicians and the general public are beginning to question the value and worth of degrees, it is worth remembering that subject-based academic outreach aimed at fostering and facilitating interest in subjects cannot be criticised on the grounds of misselling: some ideas are valuable in their own right. Because the guidance above is consciously aware of professional contexts, it provides scope for development of seriously challenging approaches that are efficient and justifiable pragmatically to the various institutions capable of determining viability.

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