

COMMUNITY FESTIVAL 2024: GUIDELINES FOR RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Background

The University of Reading's [Community Festival](#) is a free family-friendly event for the local community. It brings together local residents, alumni, community groups and small businesses for a programme which includes live music, theatre and performance, community stands, a small craft market, street food, and a programme of research-related activities and talks from a range of disciplines. One of its main aims is to attract a wider audience to engage with our research, including a wider age range and people who have not visited campus or interacted with the University in a meaningful way before.

At our first Community Festival in 2023, the programme included a research exhibition featuring stands with hands-on activities, children's talks, research talks, and a multilingual storytelling activity. The activities were popular and well received by both visitors and participants. [View our 2023 Festival film](#).

The 2024 Festival – on Saturday 18 May – aims to attract new audiences, who might not previously have attended a University event, building on lessons from 2023, as part of a process towards developing a larger Festival for the University's centenary in 2026.

Public engagement aims

Our aims for the research exhibit are to:

- Showcase a wide range of research disciplines and approaches through a variety of hands-on activities, talks and panel discussions, workshops and creative opportunities such as film screenings, art installations or performances.
- Broaden experience of doing public engagement with research (PER) for both researchers and professional services staff
- Encourage early career researchers to get involved with public engagement, and provide a learning opportunity to develop/improve their skills
- Run a meaningful small research activity to demonstrate our commitment to community research and co-creation of research (co-delivered with a community partner or participant, where appropriate).

Activity types

Given the popularity of the research exhibit at the 2023 Festival, we are planning to increase the number and range of activities, and integrate them, where possible, in the same space as stands from community organisations, particularly those who are research partners with the University.

The research activities will be based in or around the Students Union building (main hall, Monterey and Mondial rooms) – so there are some physical constraints (e.g. sound and light level, etc.). We are happy to include activities such as an outdoor talk or audio walk on campus.

Activities can be organised by individual researchers or by pairs/teams, and could include:

- Interactive hands-on research exhibits (approx. 20).
- Short research talks (approx. 6, including by ECRs, **max. 10 mins**), plus up to 3 short talks for children (suitable for ages 8 to 12).
- Debates, film screenings and panel discussions (max. 2 lasting 30 mins).

- Workshops – with a focus on participatory methods/answering a relevant local question (max. 2 lasting 45 mins each). This could include workshops for children and young people.
- An immersive installation, including, for example, video, imagery, performance, posters and audio – suggestions welcome.
- A participatory research activity with Festival visitors – perhaps asking a question such as ‘What is a University for Reading?’. We could involve students in presenting this, and could report the results through the Community Forum.

Expressions of interest

We have already received several enquiries, so expect interest to be high. We are requesting EOIs so that we can ensure a diverse set of activities that showcase the breadth of research at the University.

If you would like to be involved in the 2024 Festival, please [complete this short application form](#) by noon on Wednesday 7 February.

Please ensure your proposal is underpinned by a clear and relevant research idea, and includes an outline idea of the resources needed to deliver your activity.

Note that the form asks whether you have previous experience of doing public engagement. This is not essential – we are just asking to help us with our planning. We will be able to provide support to a small number of researchers with little or no previous experience of PER to develop an activity.

a) Hands-on activities, installations etc.

- Activities should have a clear purpose and research message which is broadly topical or relevant to a public audience
- Please specify a clear target audience
- Activities should be engaging and encourage questions/conversation about your work.

b) Research talks, workshops, discussion panels

- The subject should be of wide public interest, topical or relevant to the local community
- Please specify a clear target audience
- Talks (10 mins max.) should present current research in a lively and engaging way, with clear findings and/or implications of the underpinning research. Please outline this in your application.
- Workshops (45 mins max.) should present a current research question in a lively and engaging way, that elicits active engagement and input from participants. Please outline how you will do this in your application and specify whether intended for adults or children and young people.

Note: Speakers must be ready and prepared to attend a live run-through of their talk a week before the Festival, so that we can record it for sharing on YouTube. Workshop organisers must be ready and prepared to run through timings and facilitation techniques at least two weeks ahead of the Festival.

Timeline

Expressions of interest open	Week beginning 8 January 2024
Expressions of interest close	Weds 7 February, 12 noon
Researchers informed; Activity/programme planning begins	Week beginning 19 February
Final confirmation of activities and resource requirements; Summary for programme/ publicity finalised	Weds 27 March
Activity set up	Friday 17 May (pm)
Community Festival	Saturday 18 May (11am to 4pm)

Contact the Research Communications & Engagement team if you have any questions:
research@reading.ac.uk.