

# COMMUNITY FESTIVAL 2025: GUIDELINES FOR RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

## Background

The University of Reading Community Festival is a free family-friendly event for the local community to get to know the University and to showcase the work of staff and students alongside local community groups. 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 from a range of disciplines.

The research programme includes a research 'exhibition' featuring c.20 stands with hands-on activities, a programme of children's talks and research talks (15 minutes plus questions), and some workshops or panel discussions. As well as showcasing our research in an accessible way, this is also an opportunity for researchers to gain experience of public engagement with research (PER) in a festival setting. The research activities are popular and have been well received by both visitors and participants (view our films from the [2023 Festival](#) and the [2024 Festival](#)).

The 2025 Festival will build on lessons from the past two years as we work towards a larger Festival for the University's centenary in 2026. It will aim to attract new audiences, who might not previously have attended a University event, from areas where the University already has some presence (positive or negative), including Battle ward, Central Reading and Oxford Road; Whitley, Whitley Wood and Church ward; Arborfield and Shinfield; plus Park and Redlands wards as immediate neighbours to campus. We will aim to build towards a schools outreach programme ahead of the Festival for 2026 and beyond.

The research activities will be coordinated by a small working group consisting of members of the Research Communications Team, the Outreach Team, our two Academic Champions for Public Engagement with Research, and a member of the Events Team.

## Aims

One of the main aims of the Community Festival is to attract a wider audience to engage with our research, including people who have not visited campus or interacted with the University in a meaningful way before, and a wider age range.

Our aims for the research activities 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 or art installations.
- To broaden experience of doing public engagement for both research and professional services staff.
- To encourage early career researchers to get involved with public engagement, and provide a learning opportunity to develop/improve their skills.

## **Activity types**

We are looking for a range of hands-on activities including:

- Interactive hands-on research exhibits from research teams (up to 20). This can include research being carried out with local community organisations, giving those organisations the opportunity to reflect on working with the University as well as to showcase their own work.
- Short research talks, including from early career researchers, plus short talks for children (age 8 to 12).
- Debates, panel discussions or film screenings (max. 3 lasting 45 mins each)
- Workshops – with a focus on participatory methods/answering a relevant local question (max. 3 lasting 45 mins each).

## **Criteria for selection**

A Call for Expressions of Interest will be circulate in early January 2025. We have already received several enquiries, so we expect interest to be high. We may therefore have to prioritise which activities to accept to ensure wide participation and equitable coverage. We will only do this if absolutely necessary, so please do not be discouraged from applying again if you were involved in either 2023 or 2024.

### ***a) Interactive activities, installations etc.***

- Activities should have a clear purpose and research message which is topical, or relevant to the local community
- Activities should be hands-on and interactive
- Clear target audience
- Equal representation/spread across research disciplines
- Previous experience of public engagement (not essential; we need the info for planning purposes)
- 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. These proposals must have a clear and compelling research idea underpinning them, that is relevant to the local community, plus an outline idea of the resources needed.

### ***b) Research talks and workshops***

- The subject should be of wide public interest, topical or relevant to the local community
- Talks (15 mins max.) should present current research in a lively and engaging way, with clear findings and/or implications of research
- Workshops (45 mins max.) should present a current research question in a lively and engaging way, that elicits active engagement and input from workshop participants
- Clarity of audience for the talk/workshop
- Equal representation/spread across research disciplines
- Any previous experience of giving a public lecture/workshop to a non-academic audience on this topic or any other?
- Speakers must be ready and prepared to attend a 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.

## **Outline application form and process**

We will ask researchers to submit expressions of interest on an application form which sets out our criteria for selection and deadlines for submission and planning.

The form will include the following questions:

1. Your name
2. Your email address
3. Department
4. Title of proposed activity
5. What category does your activity best relate to?
  - Interactive hands-on research stall
  - Research talk (for adults – 15 mins max.)
  - Children's talk – (children age 8 to 12 – 15 mins max.)
  - Workshop
  - Debate, film screening or panel discussion
  - Installation or participatory research activity
6. Does your proposed activity have a minimum or maximum number of participants
7. What is your proposed activity/talk? Please give a one-line description of what the activity will involve, suitable for inclusion in the event programme (i.e. clear and attractive to a non-University audience) (max. 40 words).
8. Please provide a longer description of your activity or content of your talk, being clear about the purpose and research message of your activity (max. 250 words).
9. Who is the proposed audience for your activity?
  - Children below age 5
  - Children age 6 to 11
  - Young people age 11-16
  - Adults
  - Everyone
10. Will you be working on your own or as part of a Team for this? (Please give the name of the team and who else is likely to be involved)
11. What support will you need to develop your activity? This could include support developing your activity idea, financial support, print services etc. If you need financial support, please include an estimate budget.
12. We will supply a table (180cm) and 2 chairs. Please say if you will need power and what for.
13. Do you have any previous experience of public engagement (briefly, where, when and what)?
14. Were you an exhibitor at the 2023 or 2024 Community Festival? Yes/No If yes, please give the name of your stand.
15. Please use this space to provide any further information.

### Timeline

Expressions of interest open	Week beginning 13 January 2025
Expressions of interest close	Sunday 9 February 2025
Selected researchers/teams informed; Programme planning begins	Week beginning 17 February 2025
Confirmed plan of activities and resource requirements from selected researchers/teams; Summary for programme/publicity finalised	Weds 15 March <b>TBC</b>
Deadline for CPS/design – all requirements specified	Monday 31 March <b>TBC</b>
Run-through of workshop facilitation	Week beginning 28 April
Run-through of all research talks	Week beginning 5 May
Set up	Friday 16 May (afternoon)
Community Festival	Saturday 17 May 2025 (12noon to 6pm)