2025 WIN/NDCN/EP Engagement Ambassadors

Application FAQ

1. **How do I apply?**

Apply online here: <https://app.onlinesurveys.jisc.ac.uk/s/oxford/2025-engagement-ambassadors-application>

1. **When do applications open?**

Friday 1 November 2024.

1. **When do applications close?**

5pm on Saturday 30 November 2024.

1. **I’m confused about the Ambassador schemes, why is there more than one?**

WIN, NDCN, and EP jointly run an Engagement Ambassadors programme for their members. The same WIN team who runs that programme also runs a Sports Engagement Ambassadors programme (open to researchers across the entire university with sport experience or interest) on behalf of the WIN-based [*Football on the Brain*](https://footballonthebrain.org/) project. You can apply for the Sports Engagement Ambassadors programme [here](https://app.onlinesurveys.jisc.ac.uk/s/oxford/2025-sports-engagement-ambassadors-application). WIN also has an Open Science Ambassadors programme and an EDI Ambassadors programme, which are completely separate.

1. **What is ‘engagement’?**

We define ‘engagement’ as the range of activities through which researchers interact with non-university audiences about topics relating to their work. Three main strands of engagement activity that we currently focus on are:

*Public engagement:* “Public engagement describes the myriad of ways in which the activity and benefits of higher education and research can be shared with the public. Engagement is by definition a two-way process, involving interaction and listening, with the goal of generating mutual benefit." (Definition from the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement)

*Patient & Public Involvement:* Patient and public involvement entails research being carried out ‘with’ or ‘by’ members of the public, rather than ‘to’, ‘about’ or ‘for’ them. This can include collaborating with patients about research on their condition, or consulting members of the public from under-represented groups (not necessarily patients) about ways to increase their involvement in research.

*Policy engagement:* Providing policymakers with clear and understandable scientific research to encourage evidence-based decision making. Often policymakers are people in government and parliament, but they could also be in statutory bodies such as local councils or regulatory authorities.

1. **I’ve never done any engagement activity before, is that a disadvantage?**

No! This is a training scheme. Applicants with absolutely no experience are very welcome (and have been accepted onto the scheme in previous years) - only interest and enthusiasm is required. However, people *with* prior experience will still find this programme beneficial and informative.

1. **What is the time commitment?**

*Training time commitment:* This scheme follows the calendar year, ie you are applying to be a 2025 Engagement Ambassador, from January to December 2025. There are two mandatory training sessions (each ~2.5 hours), one in late January, one in February. For the remainder of the year, training sessions on different more specialised themes (e.g. patient engagement, storytelling training, etc) are offered monthly except during the summer. We encourage Ambassadors to attend as many of the training sessions as possible. There are also optional peer drop-in chats for you to discuss ideas with other Ambassadors, a few times per year.

*Event time commitment:* each Ambassador is required to either support or initiate at least one engagement activity during their year. The scheme convenors regularly send out notices to the Ambassador cohort about existing activities they can support (e.g. speaking to schools, supporting at museum or football engagement events, etc). Ambassadors are fully supported by the scheme convenors if they decide to explore initiating a new activity based on their work.

1. **Where does the training take place?**

Most of the Engagement Ambassador training sessions will take place at the [WIN FMRIB Annexe](https://www.win.ox.ac.uk/contact-us/finding-win-fmrib) on the JR Hospital site. We offer a hybrid (online joining) option for some sessions where possible, but other sessions are in-person only at the request of the trainers (e.g. the ‘Thinking Through Drawing’ workshop is very hands-on so is in-person only).

1. **What is the training and who delivers it?**

Each year, training for the Engagement Ambassadors begins with two mandatory workshops: Introduction to Engagement (delivered by the scheme’s convenors, engagement staff Carinne Piekema and Hanna Smyth), and Generating Ideas (delivered by WIN’s Director of Operations, Stuart Clare).

The remaining monthly training sessions explore more specific engagement themes and tools. The exact offer varies from year to year; the 2024 offer was as follows, delivered by a mix of internal and external specialist trainers:

* Introduction to Policy Engagement
* Thinking Through Drawing (representing scientific concepts visually and through metaphor)
* Introduction to Patient and Public Involvement (PPI)
* Narrative & Storytelling
* Introduction to Museum Engagement
1. **Why does the application form ask for the end date of my course or contract?**

Engagement Ambassadors are selected as a yearly cohort. Please do not apply if your course or contract finishes part way through 2025. However, if your current course or contract ends in the coming year, but you already know you will be staying at WIN or NDCN or EP, then you are welcome to apply as long as you give an explanation in the notes.

1. **Do I have to be a researcher to apply?**

No! This training scheme is open to all members of WIN/NDCN/EP, including core staff / facilities staff. Two members of our 2024 cohort were core/facilities staff.

1. **Is this scheme just for students?**

No! Any member of WIN/NDCN/EP can apply. Our previous cohorts have included everyone from first-year DPhil students to senior researchers and staff. However, the majority of each year’s cohort is usually a mix of DPhil students, postdocs, and research assistants.

1. **I don’t like speaking in front of large groups, does that mean engagement isn’t for me and I shouldn’t apply?**

No! There are so many opportunities to engage different audiences in more informal, 1:1 or small group, laid-back settings. We will never *require* you to do any specific engagement activity, and are happy to work with you to discuss activity options that work best for you.

1. **I have a disability or other condition that affects my ability to participate in engagement activities. What should I do?**

We want this training scheme to be as inclusive as possible, and are confident that we can collaborate with you to come up with options that work best for you. We are happy to discuss your needs at any point, either during the application process or during the training year if you are selected to the scheme.

For any other questions, please contact hanna.smyth@ndcn.ox.ac.uk.