

Public Engagement with Classics Research in the UK: A Survey

by **Emma Bridges**

This report presents the results of a survey carried out by the Institute of Classical Studies (ICS) in 2019. The ICS is one of several humanities research institutes which make up the School of Advanced Study (SAS) at the University of London. Its remit, in keeping with that of other SAS institutes, is to promote and facilitate research in classics and related disciplines in the UK and abroad. A growing focus in recent years for SAS more broadly as well as for the ICS specifically has been on undertaking public engagement activity, and on supporting colleagues elsewhere to do so, in order to share academic research with non-specialist audiences outside universities.

The survey on which this report focuses was designed as a broad scoping exercise and was intended to gain an overall picture of public engagement activities being undertaken by classicists who are based in the UK. It aimed to find out more about who is carrying out public engagement in classics and related subjects, what kinds of activities are taking place and where, and how (or indeed, in some cases, whether) this work is being supported. The survey was conducted via the online site SurveyMonkey over a period of four weeks, from 14th May to 10th June 2019. A link to the survey was circulated to Council of University Classical Departments (CUCD) contacts in departments across the country, as well as being shared on social media (via the ICS's Twitter account @ICSDirector, Emma Bridges' personal Twitter account @emmabridges, and the Facebook group Classics International) and via the 'Liverpool Classicists' email listserv. In addition, individuals who had previously expressed an interest in public engagement (whether by attending an ICS-led training event, applying for one of the ICS's small grants for public engagement, or having approached Emma Bridges, ICS Public Engagement Fellow, for advice on their practice) were mailed the survey directly.¹

In total the survey attracted 83 individual responses. An initial overview of the data gathered is presented in this report; in future we plan also to produce a series of case studies focusing on some of the examples of classics-themed public engagement work which were shared by respondents. We hope that these will be a source of inspiration and practical advice for others who are looking to develop their own public engagement practice.

¹ Thanks are due to Jen Grove and Zena Kamash for their input into the design of the survey, to Greg Woolf for his support and constructive suggestions on the survey report, and to all who were kind enough to share the survey link in order to encourage as many colleagues as possible to participate.

Key findings

- UK-based researchers are currently carrying out public engagement activities which draw on all areas of classics and its sub-disciplines.
- 56% of reported public engagement work in classics is being delivered with a budget of £1500 or less.
- Over two thirds of public engagement activity in classics is carried out by female researchers.
- 22% of respondents reported that their employer allocates time for public engagement activities.
- 42% of classics-related public engagement projects undertaken by UK-based researchers are being delivered in London and the South East of England.
- More than half of the public engagement activities described involve working with a primary or secondary school.
- Researchers affiliated to approximately two thirds of UK classics departments (member institutions of the Council of University Classical Departments) reported on their public engagement work.

Definition of terms and scope of the survey

The term ‘**public engagement**’ can be interpreted in a variety of different ways, and individuals may not always share the same understanding of its meaning. For the avoidance of doubt, the introduction to the ICS’s survey contained the following statement:

For the purposes of this survey we define ‘public engagement’ as any activity which is intended to share your academic research with non-specialist audiences. This might involve, for example, activities including (but not limited to): organising public events; collaborating with external organisations in connection with academic research; working with schools, community groups, creative practitioners etc.; working with print, broadcast and digital media.

The UK’s National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) provides [detailed guidance](#) on the types of activities which might be considered to be public engagement, although the kinds of public engagement work carried out by researchers in different disciplines may vary significantly. The NCCPE defines public engagement as follows: ‘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.’²

² Note too the further clarification given by the NCCPE here: ‘Mutual benefit is an important part of our definition as we are keen to emphasise that high quality public engagement benefits all those involved. Benefits might include learning, developing new skills, gaining new insights or ideas, developing better

Public engagement can be closely interconnected with some of the other ways in which academics communicate with audiences beyond academia, although there is often confusion around the usage and meaning of key terms. The following definitions may therefore be useful:

- **Impact** is defined by the Research Excellence Framework (REF) as ‘an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia’.³ Generally impact in this context refers to the impact of a specific piece of research. Public engagement with research can be a [pathway to impact](#) but is *not* an impact in itself.
- **Outreach** involves working with schools, colleges and lifelong learners to raise awareness of the opportunities offered by universities. It is usually locally focused and is often linked to raising aspirations and recruiting students. Unlike public engagement, the focus of outreach is not usually on sharing current academic research. (It would be classed as public engagement *only if* the academic researchers involved were specifically sharing their own research.)
- **Widening participation (WP)** involves working to reach people with backgrounds which are under-represented in higher education settings and removing the barriers to their accessing teaching in universities. (As is the case with outreach, the focus of WP is not usually on sharing current academic research and again, this activity would be classed as public engagement *only if* the academic researchers involved were sharing their own research.)

Throughout this report, in order to make a distinction between academic researchers and the publics with whom they engage, I use the term ‘non-specialist’ to refer to audiences, publics, collaborators or community partners who, although they may have expertise in other areas, are not specialist researchers in classics or a related subject. I use the term ‘academic researcher’ to refer to individuals who have in-depth knowledge of their specialist subject area within the field; this will usually (although not always) mean that they have undertaken a sustained period of formal study of classics or a related discipline. They need not necessarily be in post in a university to be categorised as an ‘academic researcher’.

Potential respondents to the survey were advised as to who should consider themselves eligible to complete the online questionnaire. In order to gain as broad a picture as possible, it was intended not only for those currently employed as researchers, or studying for a research degree, in universities, but also those who carry out classics-related research in other contexts, whether as independent researchers or as the employees of other organisations (for example, museums or heritage organisations). We acknowledge too that individuals may have been involved in several different projects or activities, but in order to gain a snapshot of the

research, raising aspiration, or being inspired.’ (<https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/about-engagement/what-public-engagement>)

³ REF 2019/01 (January 2019) *Guidance on Submissions* (<https://www.ref.ac.uk/publications/guidance-on-submissions-201901/>), p. 68.

situation in 2019, we asked for a focus on their most recent work. The survey therefore included the following instruction:

If you self-define as a researcher (whether or not you are employed as such) in any aspect of classics (broadly defined), are based in the UK, and have been involved in any form of public engagement, please answer the survey with your most recent/ongoing public engagement project in mind.

The use of the term 'public engagement project' caused some confusion among respondents, with several making direct contact to indicate that they had participated in a standalone activity which might not necessarily be described as an ongoing 'project'. This reflects the fact that some types of public engagement work (for example, organising a one-off event, producing a resource for use by a non-specialist audience, or acting as an advisor to a media organisation) are ad hoc and short term. These individuals were all encouraged to complete the survey with reference to the event or activity which they had in mind.

Survey responses and analysis

Q. 1: 'What is the title of your most recent/current engagement project' and Q. 2: 'Please give a brief description of your engagement project (max 100 words – this can be in note form if you wish)'

These opening questions were intended to encourage respondents to focus on one particular project in which they are currently, or have recently been, involved. As noted above, academic researchers may, however, have participated in more than one type of public engagement in the past, but the survey sought to gain a picture of current/recent activity in classics and related fields in 2019, rather than producing a detailed analysis of past activity by individuals. This focus will also allow the creation of a baseline as a point of comparison from which patterns can be mapped over time should other surveys of this type be conducted in future.

The information gathered from these questions will, with the respondents' permission, also be used in future as the basis for the development of case studies of selected classics-focused public engagement activities. The breadth and scope of the projects described here resists straightforward summary, although a sample which represents something of the different types of activity and the variety of research topics involved includes the following:

- '*. . . a curriculum for the study of Ancient Greece in primary school based on the community curriculum model*'
- '*. . . working with theatre company Punchdrunk on a knowledge exchange partnership regarding tragedy and immersive theatre*'
- '*Designing a game app to be played on smartphones/tablets at Roman Vindolanda*'

- *'Walking tour of Brighton as part of the Fringe festival, focusing on 20 objects with links to Greek mythology'*
- *' . . . graphic novella set at the Roman site of Aeclanum (an ongoing excavation project)'*
- *' . . . presentations and handling sessions with community groups using local ancient Cypriot collections'*
- *'Immersive performance of a play set in ancient Assyria'*
- *'Introducing non-specialists to rare silent films set in ancient Rome through guided performances'*
- *'Re-enactment of an ancient school, with ancient exercises, materials, costumes, and classroom behaviour'*
- *'Us[ing] historical museum artefacts including classical archaeology in sex education and sexual health & wellbeing activities'*
- *'Crafting with heritage to promote mental wellbeing. Develop[ing] a more positive narrative around Iraq, its people and heritage that does not focus on conflict.'*

The answers to these questions gave an insight into the range of possible activities and settings for public engagement, and the researchers' areas of specialism, which covered all areas of classics; these included, among other subdisciplines, archaeology, historical and literary studies, classical reception, ancient science, ancient languages, religion, visual culture, and philosophy. It was clear that the activities described involved differing degrees of active involvement from the public(s) who were being engaged. Where some types of the activities described involve very little, if any, direct input from the non-specialist audience (included in this category might be, for example, a talk open to a public audience, or a piece written for a publication aimed at non-specialists), it was clear that others involved sustained partnerships between academic researchers and external organisations or individuals (for example, community groups, schools or creative practitioners) to develop the engagement through a collaborative and discursive process. The range of partners with whom academic researchers reported having collaborated will be discussed below, under Q. 5 and Q. 6.

A very small number of the answers here mentioned activities which would not ordinarily be classed as public engagement (for example, some referred to organising university seminar series aimed primarily at academics, or writing for academic publications). This may indicate a need for greater awareness among some academic researchers as to the scope and value of public engagement as a way of sharing research with non-specialist audiences.

Q. 3: Please briefly describe your project's target audience (you may wish to give, e.g., demographic info such as age group/gender/ethnicity or details about your target audience's interests/experience/connection with a particular place).

82 of the 83 respondents answered this question, which was intended to gain a sense of the kinds of communities with which academic researchers were sharing their work. Again the open-ended nature of the question meant that answers do not lend themselves well to statistical summary, but some patterns do emerge. By far the largest target audience represented here was related to schools, with 34 respondents mentioning 'school pupils' or 'schoolchildren', and 13 suggesting that their engagement work was with teachers in schools. Not all gave more specific detail, but in those which did so there was a range of ages from primary pupils through to 16-18 year-olds. Some also specifically mentioned that they were working with non-selective or state schools, or in one case schools 'meeting widening participation criteria'. This emphasis on work with schools is doubtless connected more broadly with the emphasis placed by higher education institutions on widening participation (WP) and outreach. More specifically for academic researchers in classical subjects (which have traditionally been far more readily accessible to pupils educated in fee-paying schools), this may also be related to efforts to break down perceptions of these subjects as elitist or inaccessible, and to provide opportunities for school pupils of all backgrounds to encounter the ancient world; some universities serve as local hubs for co-ordinating such activity within classics.⁴ It is important to remember, however, that although there are areas of overlap, public engagement differs from both outreach and WP activities in that public engagement focuses specifically on sharing academic researchers' own research with wider publics, where outreach and WP are concerned more broadly with fostering awareness of the work which takes place in universities.⁵

Other responses to the question concerning target audience represented a wide range of publics, defined by factors such as location, special interests or demographic categories. These included, for example, 'people with an interest in crafts', 'autistic adults', the 'theatre-going public', 'young women', 'retired members of the local community', 'visitors to the British Museum', and 'science fiction fans'. Some reported that they worked with groups who are often under-served or under-represented. For example, four of the answers referred to LGBT+ communities, one referred to the 'Iraqi diaspora living in the UK', and another to 'refugees and war veterans'. One demographic group which was largely overlooked in the responses to this question was the over-65s (only one response mentioned 'retired members of the local community', with the respondent indicating that they connected with this group by way of the

⁴ One notable large-scale project whose activities encompass both outreach and public engagement is [Advocating Classics Education](#), which facilitates links between academic researchers based in partner universities and local state secondary schools/sixth form colleges, in order to encourage the teaching of non-linguistic classical subjects (Classical Civilisation and Ancient History, which do not involve learning Latin or Greek languages) at GCSE and A level. The charity [Classics for All](#) also works to make classical subjects accessible in the state sector from primary school upwards, including providing support for the introduction of ancient Greek and Latin languages; it too has local hubs connected with universities.

⁵ See above (p. 3) for definitions of the terms 'outreach' and 'widening participation'.

[University of the Third Age](#), which runs activities for retired people). With over 18% of the UK population aged 65 and over⁶ this group represents a significant proportion of society; there is scope here for thinking further about how academic researchers in classics may reach this potential audience.

Several of the answers were less clear about a target audience, with 18 respondents referring to the 'general public' or a 'broad audience' as an undifferentiated group. This might reflect a need for greater support in thinking about '[audience segmentation](#)'; that is, defining more clearly potential communities or audiences with whom to work in order to deliver effective public engagement which appeals to the interests and/or meets the needs of those groups.

Q. 4: If applicable, please provide links to your project website/social media, and/or any related links (e.g. press coverage, blogposts etc.).

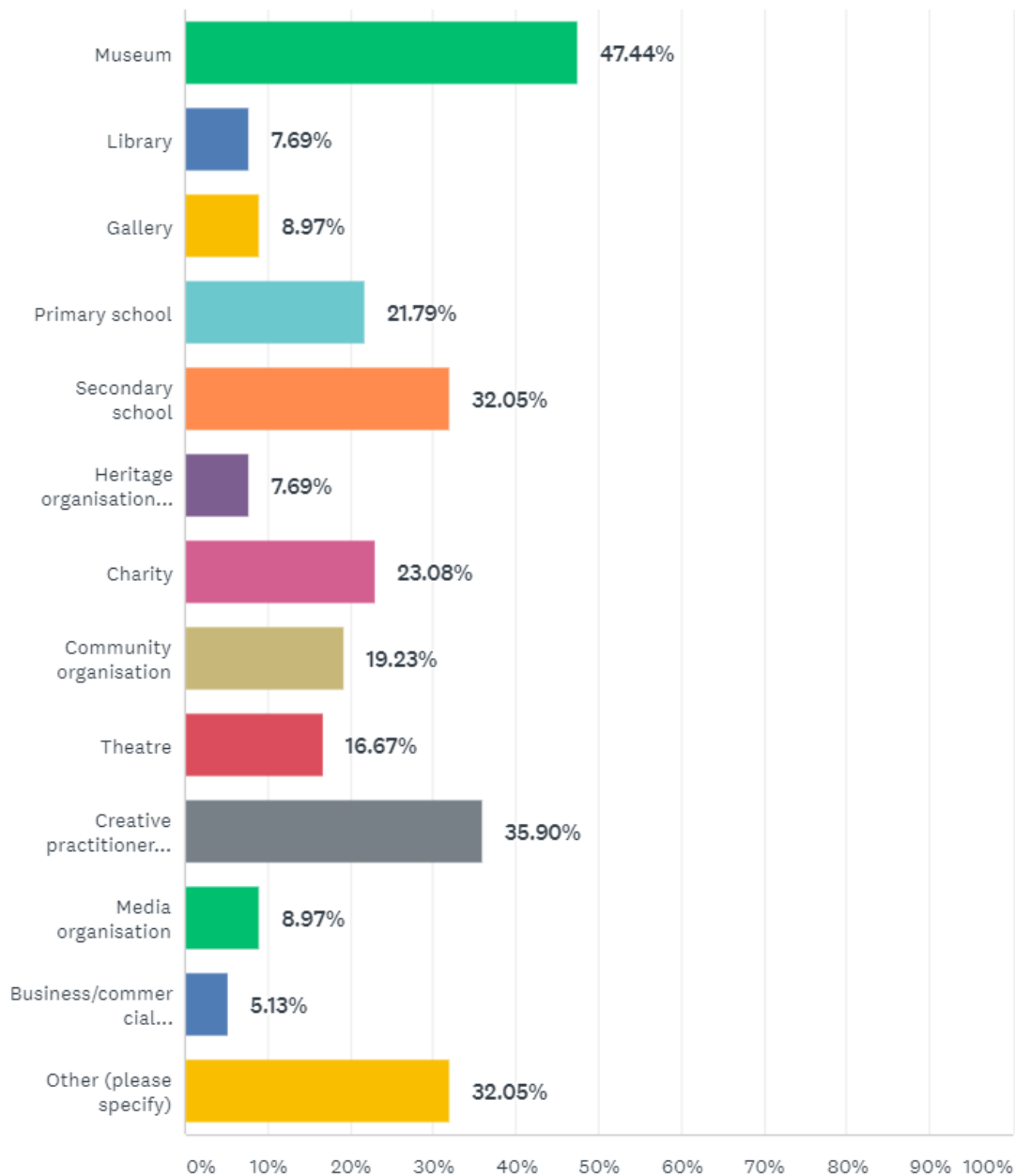
67 of the 83 respondents provided an answer to this question. Resources included publicity sites for events hosted by cultural organisations such as museums and theatres, blogposts written for a range of audiences (some public-facing, others designed to share their experiences with academic colleagues), and individuals' personal websites and social media. Again, these provide a bank of resources which can be used, with permission, to augment classics-themed public engagement case studies which will be produced in future by the ICS.

Q. 5: Does the public engagement work described above involve working in partnership with any of the following? (Select all that apply.)

Total respondents: 78

	% of responses	Number of responses
Museum	47.44%	37
Library	7.69%	6
Gallery	8.97%	7
Primary school	21.79%	17
Secondary school	32.05%	25
Heritage organisation (e.g. the National Trust)	7.69%	6
Charity	23.08%	18
Community organisation	19.23%	15
Theatre	16.67%	13
Creative practitioner (e.g. artist, author, poet)	35.90%	28
Media organisation	8.97%	7
Business/commercial organisation	5.13%	4
Other (please specify)	32.05%	25

⁶ Office for National Statistics, *Overview of the UK Population: August 2019* (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/articles/overviewoftheukpopulation/august2019>).



This question allowed for multiple answers, and several respondents demonstrated that they were working in partnership with more than one external partner or organisation. Of the 78 responses to this question, the largest group (37) reported working with a museum; other cultural organisations (libraries, galleries, theatres) taken together amounted to 26 (6, 7 and 13 respectively). As discussed in relation to Q. 3 above, a high proportion reported working with schools; this question separated these into primary or secondary schools, with 17 projects involving the former and 25 the latter (totalling 42 responses in total, or almost 54% of those who answered the question). A significant number (28) had worked with creative practitioners; community organisations (15) and charities (18) also represented a significant minority of the collaborations reported here. Of those who responded 'Other' (25 in total) and provided further details, answers included 'local government', 'embassies', 'churches', and a range of other

cultural partners not listed in the options originally given (these included, for example, cinemas and opera companies).

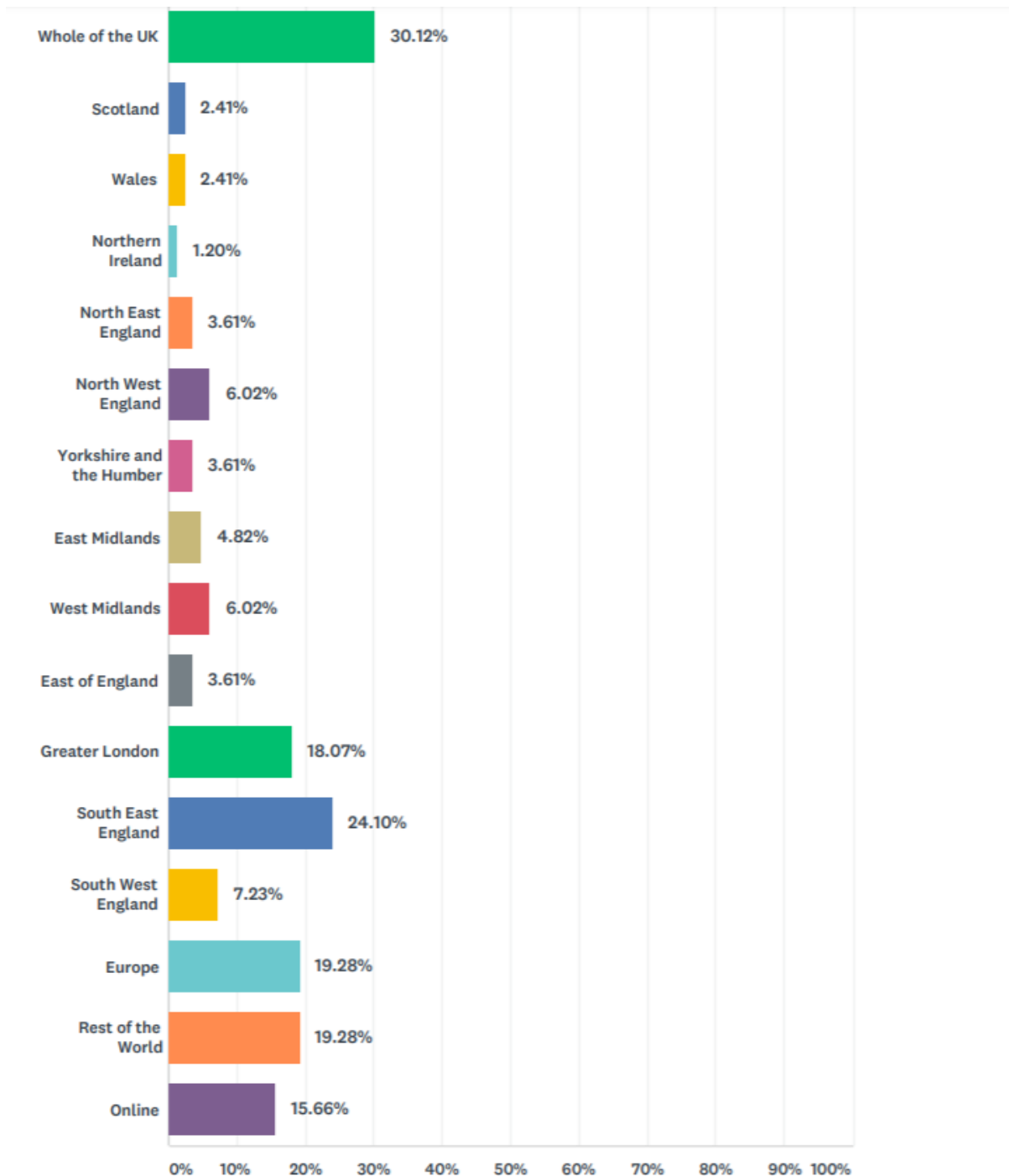
Q. 6: Please give details (names/links to websites etc.) of any partner organisations you referred to in your previous answer.

61 participants responded to this question with the relevant links or names of organisations they had worked with. As indicated earlier, this information will be used to assist with the creation of future case studies showcasing recent classics-themed public engagement and providing practical guidance for those who are interested in embarking on similar projects.

Q. 7: In which geographical area does the project described above take place? (Select all that apply.)

Total respondents: 83

	% of responses	Number of responses
Whole of the UK	30.12%	25
Scotland	2.41%	2
Wales	2.41%	2
Northern Ireland	1.20%	1
North East England	3.61%	3
North West England	6.02%	5
Yorkshire and the Humber	3.61%	3
East Midlands	4.82%	4
West Midlands	6.02%	5
East of England	3.61%	3
Greater London	18.07%	15
South East England	24.10%	20
South West England	7.23%	6
Europe	19.28%	16
Rest of the World	19.28%	16
Project is delivered online	15.66%	13



Since the survey was specifically targeted at UK-based academic researchers, it is unsurprising that the majority of responses related to activities which take place in the UK; of the 83 responses, 25 indicated that their public engagement covered the whole of the UK. Of those who gave more specific locations, there was a high proportion of activity taking place in Greater London (15) and South East England (20). Whilst this can in part be attributed to the concentration of population in these areas, and the relatively high number of higher education institutions there (see also the responses to Q. 15 below), it does indicate that other areas of the UK are less well-served where classics-themed public engagement is concerned, and

perhaps highlights a need for greater support for this work in those geographical locations. 13 respondents reported online modes of delivery for their project; this is one way in which public engagement work can transcend geographical barriers.

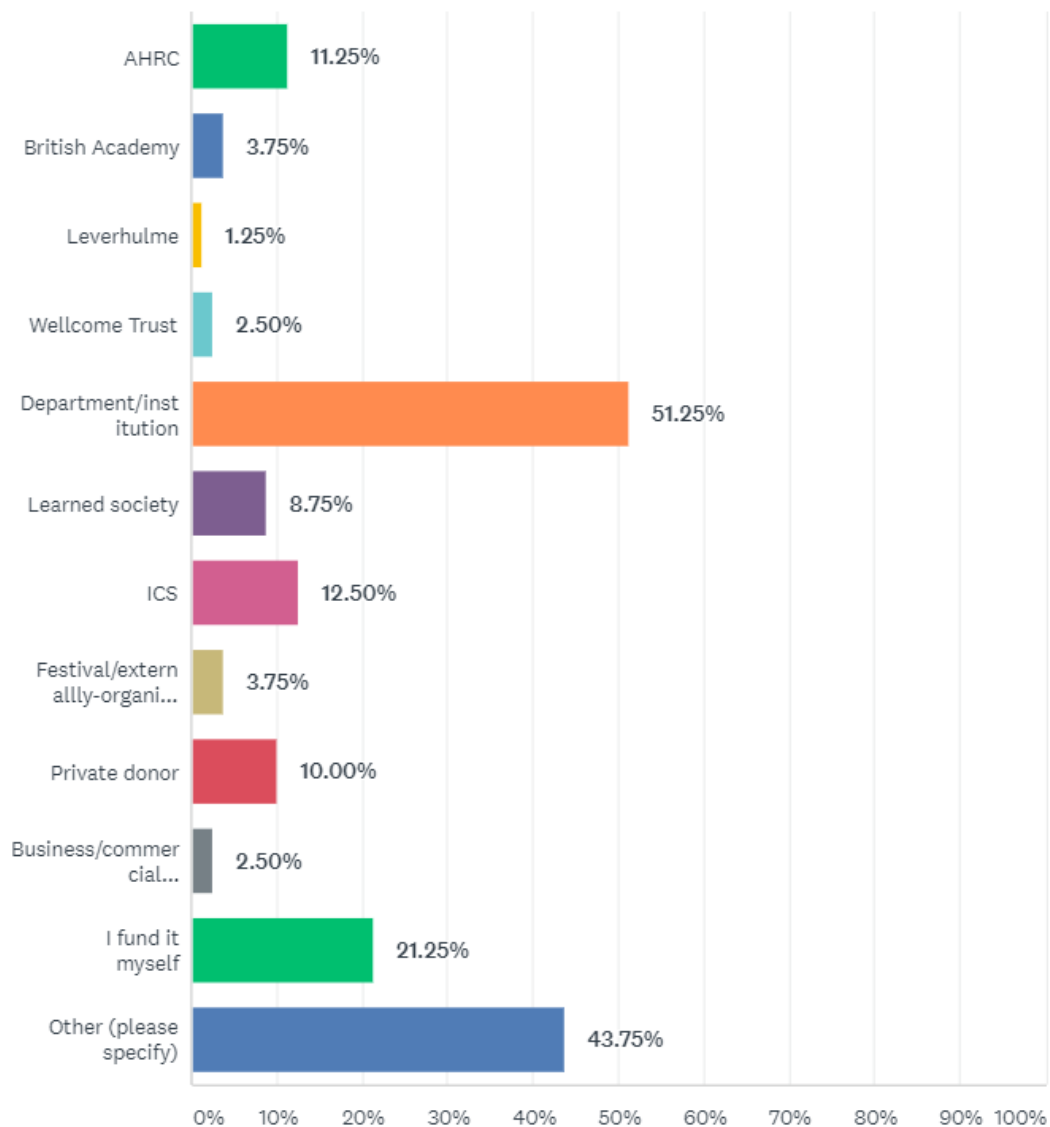
16 respondents reported that their public engagement work was delivered in European countries beyond the UK, and 16 in countries elsewhere in the world. The geographical breakdown of these locations will be given in relation to Q. 8 below.

Q. 8: 'If you answered 'Europe' or 'Rest of the World' to the previous question, in which country/ies does your project take place?

21 people answered this question, with some listing more than one country in their answer. The following locations were mentioned (listed here in alphabetical order for ease of reference): Australia (2); Austria (1); Belgium (2); Canada (1); France (3); Germany (4); Greece (3); Israel (1); Italy (7); the Netherlands (3); Poland (1); Spain (2); Switzerland (3); USA (8); worldwide (2).

Q. 9: How was/is your project funded? (Select all that apply.)

	% of responses	Number of responses
AHRC	11.25%	9
British Academy	3.75%	3
Leverhulme	1.25%	1
Wellcome Trust	2.50%	2
Funding from my department/institution	51.25%	41
Grant from a learned society (e.g. Roman Society, Hellenic Society, Classical Association)	8.75%	7
ICS public engagement grant	12.50%	10
Grant from a festival or other externally-organised event (e.g. Being Human)	3.75%	3
Private donor	10.00%	8
Sponsorship from a business/commercial organisation	2.50%	2
I fund it myself	21.25%	17
Other (please specify)	43.75%	35



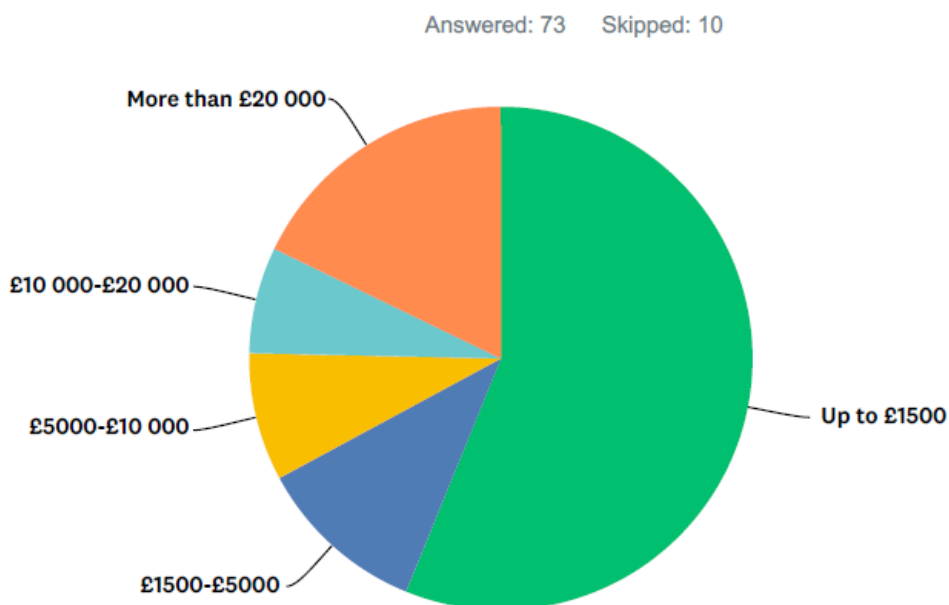
80 participants responded to this question, with just over half of these (41) reporting that their department or institution provided funding for their project. Several respondents were funded by one of the major grant-awarding bodies in the UK: the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) (9); the British Academy (3); the Leverhulme Trust (1); or the Wellcome Trust (2). Grants from learned societies also made up a small proportion of the contributions here (7 in total). Ten of the respondents had been recipients of an ICS public engagement grant; this seed-funding scheme was set up by the ICS in 2017 and is now available on a twice-yearly basis, offering grants of up to £500 for classics-focused public engagement projects. One particularly noteworthy statistic here is the relatively high number of respondents (17 in total; more than 21%) who reported that they funded their activities themselves; this may indicate a lack of access to suitable funding from institutions or grant-awarding bodies.

Of those who reported that they had received funding from other sources and chose to give further details, notable sources included Arts Council England (4), the European Research Council (3), the Mellon Foundation (1), fees or subscriptions paid by attendees at events (6), and funding from partner higher education institutions other than those at which the respondents were employed (3). One reported that they had crowdfunded their project; others mentioned specific interest groups or charities including the Sutton Trust, Classics for All (2), the Vindolanda Trust, the Parian Society, the British Science Fiction Association, the Alexander Institute in Athens, and the A. G. Leventis Foundation. The range of answers here indicates that academic researchers may need to look beyond the more traditional sources of research funding and seek out support from organisations whose values or interests align closely with the aims or subject matter of their public engagement work. It also highlights one way in which a partnership with an interest group or charity can benefit a public engagement project.

Q. 10: What is the total budget for the public engagement element of your project? (NB if your project is part of a longer-term/ongoing initiative, please answer with an estimate of the budget for its most recent phase.)

Total respondents: 73

	% of responses	Number of responses
Up to £1500	56.16%	41
£1500-£5000	10.96%	8
£5000-£10 000	8.22%	5
£10 000-£20 000	6.85%	5
More than £20 000	17.81%	13



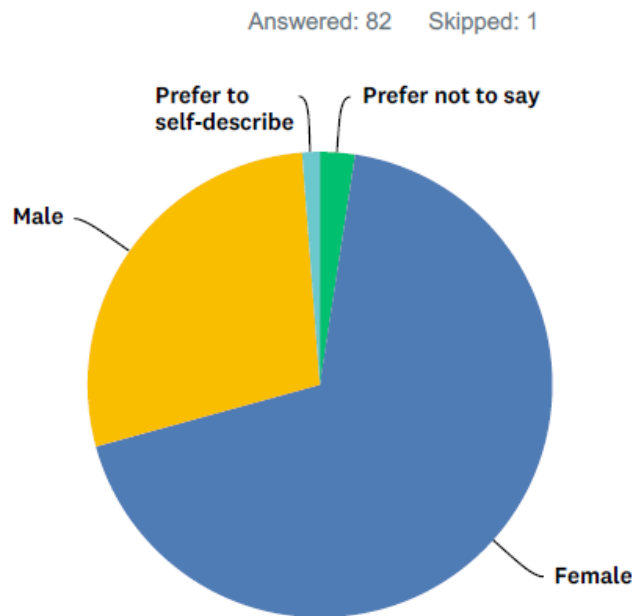
The responses to this question indicate that a significant proportion of public engagement in classics and related subjects is carried out with a relatively small budget; by far the largest group (41, or over 56% of the 73 who answered this question) reported that their work was in the lowest-cost category, with a budget of up to £1500. At the opposite end of the scale, a significant minority (13, just less than 18%) indicated that the budget for their public engagement was more than £20 000. Taken alongside the respondents' answers to other questions in the survey, it is clear that several of the projects which have the highest amount of funding (usually from one of the major UK research funders mentioned in Q. 9, but occasionally from local government or a private donor) are large-scale collaborative projects, sometimes involving colleagues from more than one institution or academic discipline working together. Five of these projects with higher-level funding involved a significant element of digital humanities; three others involved the restoration, investigation or explication of heritage sites; others included a multidisciplinary project focusing on political rhetoric, a project working with an immersive theatre company, and another which uses historical objects from a range of chronological periods to support sex education.

A consideration of the ways in which academic researchers are able to access funds for public engagement, and whether this might hinder or help certain kinds of activity, is useful here. For example, departmental budgets at a local level may be relatively small; this is also the case with the small grants made available by learned societies and organisations like the ICS. Meanwhile some of the major research funding bodies offer substantial sums as part of much larger research grants. In the latter case, however, the application processes are often complex, time-consuming and highly competitive (for example, the most recent [statistics published by the AHRC](#) at the time of writing this report indicated a success rate in 2017-18 of only 17% for standard research grants, and 16% for early career research grants).

Q. 11: With which gender do you identify?

Total respondents: 82

	% of responses	Number of responses
Prefer not to say	2.44%	2
Female	68.29%	56
Male	28.05%	23
Prefer to self-describe	1.22%	1



The responses to this question indicated that the majority of those currently conducting public engagement in classics are female (56, or over 68% of the 82 people who responded to this question). This statistic tallies with anecdotal evidence observed to date by the Public Engagement Fellow at training workshops, and in the demographic of applicants accessing the ICS public engagement grants; workshop attendees and grant applicants have so far been predominantly female.

It is instructive to compare these statistics with the overall figures for staff in UK classics department which are compiled annually by the Council of University Classical Departments (CUCD). CUCD compiles data for staff using three different criteria: academic grade, contract type (fixed term, permanent, zero hours) and role (research and teaching, teaching only, research only), and in each of these divides responses by gender. A quirk of the reporting process used by CUCD member institutions means that the proportions of male/female staff differ slightly according to which of these three criteria is applied, but the data in the latest statistical report suggests that between 46% and 50% of staff in UK classics departments are female.⁷ The proportion of female researchers involved in public engagement would therefore seem to be much higher than the proportion of female staff in UK classics departments.

Wider statistics relating to participation in public engagement by academic researchers are not currently available for the whole of UK Higher Education. In order to consider whether these findings might reflect a wider pattern, rather than merely being discipline-specific, it is perhaps useful to compare the figures with demographic data collected by evaluators for the [Being Human Festival](#). This annual festival, led by colleagues at the School of Advanced Study, is the UK's only national festival of the humanities, and has taken place in locations

⁷ Marshall, Sharon (2018), 'Classics at UK universities, 2017-18: Statistics', *CUCD Bulletin* 47, pp. 8-9 (<https://cucd.blogs.sas.ac.uk/files/2019/02/2017-18-Statistics.pdf>).

across the country every November since 2014; it facilitates the organisation of local events by academic researchers in order to enable them to share their research with non-specialist audiences. The most recent evaluation report, for the 2018 festival, indicates that 61.7% of organisers (of the 82 people in total who completed the festival’s organiser survey)⁸ were female and 34.6% male, and that these are ‘similar proportions to the 2017 and 2016 festivals.’⁹ The responses to our survey, then, indicate a close similarity to these statistics based on a national public engagement programme featuring events across the full range of humanities disciplines.

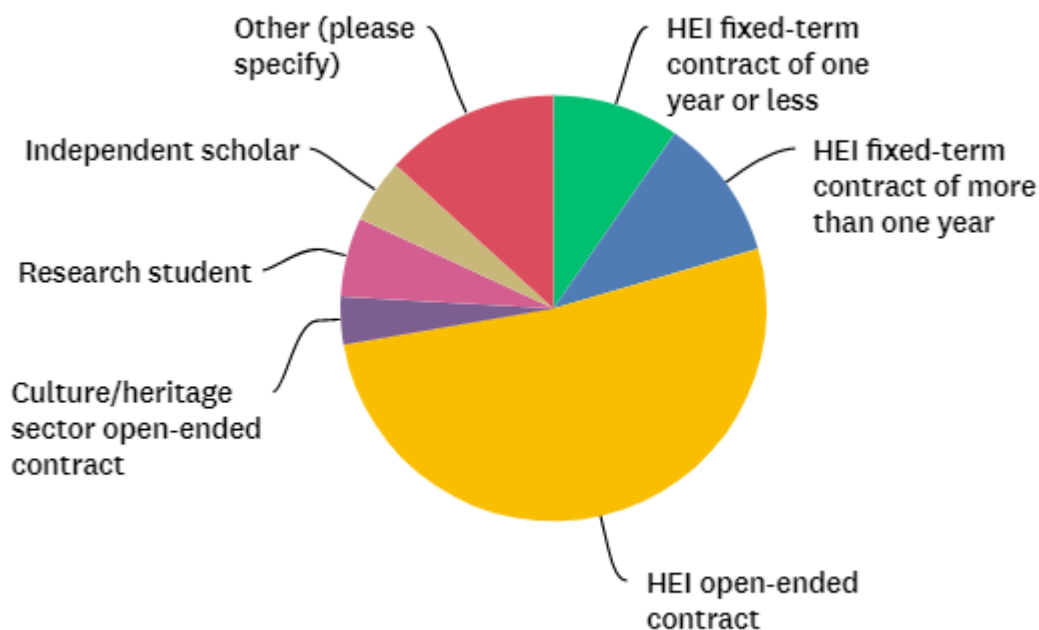
Q. 12: What is your employment status?

Total respondents: 83

	% of responses	Number of responses
Employed by a higher education institution on a fixed-term contract of one year or less	9.64%	8
Employed by a higher education institution on a fixed-term contract of more than one year	10.84%	9
Employed by a higher education institution on an open-ended contract	51.81%	43
Employed in the culture/heritage sector (e.g. by a library/archive/museum/heritage organisation on a fixed-term contract of one year or less	0.00%	0
Employed in the culture/heritage sector (e.g. by a library/archive/museum/heritage organisation on a fixed-term contract of more than one year	0.00%	0
Employed in the culture/heritage sector (e.g. by a library/archive/museum/heritage organisation on an open-ended contract	3.61%	3
Research student	6.02%	5
Independent scholar	4.82%	4
Other (please specify)	13.25%	11

⁸ It is coincidental that exactly the same number of organisers completed the festival survey as answered this question in our survey – this does facilitate the comparison made here, however.

⁹ Jenkins, Sarah, and Liz Jeavans (3rd April 2019), ‘Being Human Festival of the Humanities 2018: Evaluation Report’, p. 27. <https://beinghumanfestival.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Being-Human-2018-Evaluation-Report-FINAL.pdf>, accessed 19th September 2019.



The largest group here (43 in total, or almost 52% of respondents) reported that they are employed on open-ended contracts in higher education institutions. The nature of some forms of public engagement, which necessitate taking time to build partnerships with external organisations and develop projects in the context of a larger research portfolio, means that stable employment is a factor which can enable this work to flourish. Relatedly only 8 respondents reported that they are on very short-term academic contracts of one year or less, with a further 9 on temporary contracts of longer than one year. The conditions of those employed on temporary contracts, and the impact of casualisation on classicists, were explored in detail by Katherine McDonald in a [2017 report for CUCD](#); problems include high teaching workloads and the concomitant lack of time to focus on research outputs, the time-consuming nature of making frequent job applications, and the strains placed on individuals by the need to move to a new location with each new post.¹⁰ These pressures (which usually have the greatest impact on academic researchers at the early stages of their career) undoubtedly affect the priorities of individuals, who may therefore focus on teaching and research rather than on public engagement.

Only 5 respondents were research students; the reason for this is unclear, but it could suggest a lack of support or encouragement for those currently undertaking a research postgraduate degree to undertake public engagement. This may be one area where provision could be developed further, not least as equipping the research leaders of the future in public engagement skills is an important step towards embedding engagement as standard practice

¹⁰ See McDonald, Katherine (2017), 'Employment and Casualisation in Classics Departments in UK Universities', *CUCD Bulletin* 46.

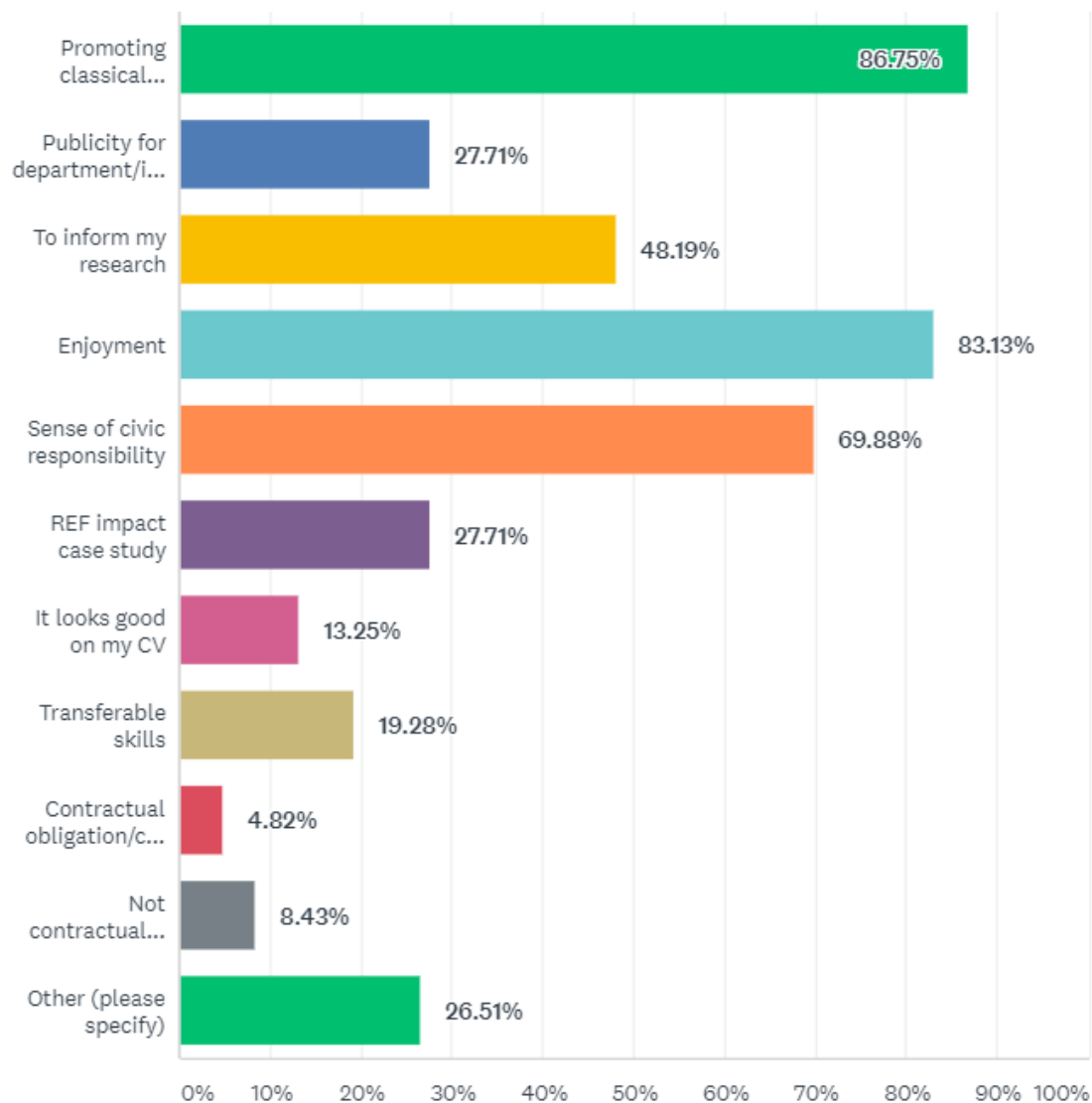
in higher education institutions. Public engagement experience can also help individuals to build valuable transferable skills, which may be useful for research students who go on to seek careers outside academia. (Several of the respondents to Q. 13 below indicated that they viewed public engagement as a way of gaining transferable skills or enhancing their CV.)

Three respondents were employed in the heritage/culture sector; the lack of representation from this category may be a result of the methods by which the survey was circulated – as described above – and a wider awareness that the ICS’s remit is primarily to serve academic researchers in university settings. Four identified as independent scholars. Of those who answered ‘Other’ and specified further, the following categories were identifiable: retired academics (2); freelance workers (2); unpaid visiting/research fellows (2); a secondary school teacher; and 3 people employed in unspecified roles elsewhere.

Q. 13: What are your main reasons for undertaking public engagement work? (Select all that apply.)

Total respondents: 80

	% of responses	Number of responses
As a way of promoting classical subjects	86.5%	72
Publicity for my department/institution (e.g. to improve student recruitment in an HEI or visitor numbers to a museum)	27.71%	23
I use it to inform my research	46.19%	40
Enjoyment	83.13%	69
Sense of civic responsibility	69.88%	58
It is part of a REF impact case study	27.71%	23
It looks good on my CV	13.25%	11
It is a way of developing transferable skills	19.28%	16
It is a contractual obligation/condition of my employment	4.82%	4
It is not a contractual obligation but my employer expects me to do it	8.43%	7
Other (please specify)	26.51%	22



Most of the respondents to this question gave multiple answers. By far the most popular answer (given by 72 of the 80 respondents, almost 87%) was 'As a way of promoting classical subjects'. That 69 of the respondents (more than 83%) stated that public engagement was a source of enjoyment indicates the sense of fulfilment which can be gained from this kind of work. A sense of civic responsibility was also a key driver for many respondents (58 in total, or almost 70%).

Only 4 in total described public engagement as a contractual obligation or condition of their employment; a further 7 stated that they were expected to undertake public engagement work by their employers, despite having no contractual obligation to do so. A larger group (23, just under 28%) indicated that their public engagement work would be used as part of a REF impact case study; such cases might also reflect employers' expectations about the need for individuals to undertake public engagement. That such a small minority have public

engagement as a formal part of their job role, yet many still undertake this work, could be problematic for individuals; further investigation would be needed to consider the extent to which employers value this kind of work in comparison with research, teaching and administrative roles undertaken by academic researchers. One factor to consider here might be, for example, whether promotion criteria in individual institutions give credit for public engagement. The responses to Q. 14 below are also instructive here.

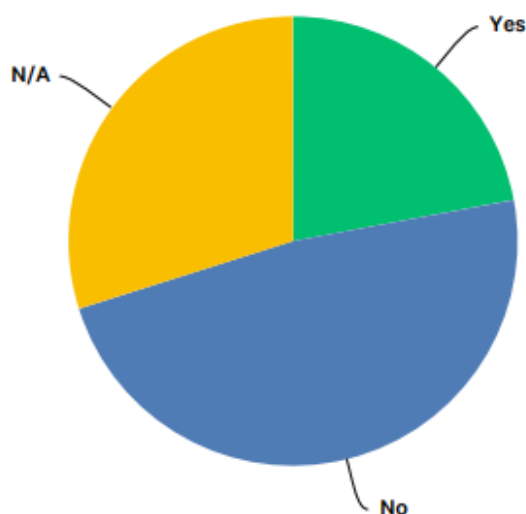
Of those 22 respondents who gave other reasons, and provided more details, the following answers offer a sample of their stated motivations:

- *'To raise awareness of issues that affect society today, e.g. literacy, multiculturalism, migration, language'*
- *'A desperation to make Latin/Greek accessible to a wider audience'*
- *'to help (re)build the subject in Sicily, which is severely under resourced'*
- *'Obligatory part of AHRC grant project'*
- *'I also see my work as a form of activism. It is also deeply personal as it is my way of trying to aid post-conflict recovery in Iraq, where I have family connections.'*
- *'Because I might be able to make a bit of a difference. It matters more than anything else I do.'*
- *'Commitment to sharing LGBTQ history'*

Q. 14: If you are employed by a higher education institution, is the time taken doing public engagement work accounted for in your employer's workload model?

Total respondents: 77

	% of responses	Number of responses
Yes	22.08%	17
No	48.05%	37
N/A	29.87%	23



Of the 77 respondents to this question, by far the largest group (37, or just over 48%) reported that their employer allows no time in their workload model for the time taken to do public engagement activities. 17 were allocated time in their workload specifically for this work; the remaining 23 stated that the question did not apply to them (this latter category contained, for example, research students, independent scholars, retired academics and those employed in sectors other than higher education; it is also important to note here that not all higher education institutions operate a workload model). The [Transparent Approach to Costing \(TRAC\)](#) methodology which is used within the higher education sector to help institutions to cost their activities does not mention public engagement; this may also in part explain why it is overlooked by some employers.¹¹

The fact that a significant proportion of those surveyed had no time allocated for public engagement is clearly problematic; academic researchers need time to devote to developing ideas, gaining the necessary skills and building partnerships with external organisations and communities as well as to running the events and activities which allow them to share their research with non-specialist audiences. The lack of time provided by some employers might indicate that public engagement is undervalued or insufficiently supported; these factors may discourage researchers from spending time on public engagement activities.

¹¹ The most recent (July 2019) version of the TRAC Guidance document (<https://www.trac.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/TRAC-Guidance-v2.4.pdf>) divides activities into 'Teaching', 'Research', 'Other' and 'Support'; a list of assumed activities is given for each of these categories. Outreach is mentioned as part of teaching or 'other' activities; public engagement would naturally sit within the 'research' category but does not feature anywhere in the document. I am grateful to Greg Woolf for the point about the absence of any mention of public engagement in TRAC.

Q.15: Institutional affiliation (if applicable) or county of residence.



Location of UK classics departments where reported public engagement activity is taking place

This question provided an overview of the spread of higher education institutions where public engagement in classics was reported as taking place. The responses here can also be considered alongside those for Q. 7 above, which asked in which geographical area respondents' public engagement activity is focused. 71 of the respondents reported that they have an affiliation with a higher education institution. The single institution with the largest number of individuals who reported on their work in this area was the University of Oxford (10 in total); a further 14 were affiliated to member institutions of the University of London (broken down as follows: King's College London 5; Royal Holloway 4; University College London 3; University of London, institution unspecified 2). In addition, 3 others were affiliated to London-based institutions, one of these at Roehampton and two at the University of Notre Dame (USA) in London. This reinforces the picture of the concentration of activity in Greater London and the South East of England highlighted by Q. 7.

Broken down by UK region, representatives of one university in each of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland reported on their public engagement (with 3 affiliated to the University of St. Andrews, 4 to Cardiff University and one to Queen's University Belfast). Survey participants from universities based in England other than those already mentioned above were affiliated to the following institutions (listed here in alphabetical order for ease of reference): University of Birmingham (3), Bristol University (3), University of Cambridge (4), Durham University (1), University of Exeter (3), University of Kent (4), University of Leeds (2), University of Leicester (2), University of Manchester (2), Newcastle University (1), University of Nottingham (2), The

Open University (4),¹² University of Reading (2), University of Sheffield (1), Warwick University (2).

CUCD currently has [30 member institutions and 7 associate members](#) (institutions where some classical subjects are taught, but within other degrees). Members of 23 of these 37 institutions (just under two thirds) reported on their public engagement activity. It is important to note that the absence of an institution on this list does not necessarily mean that no public engagement activity is taking place in that institution; it merely indicates that no member of the classics department in that institution completed the survey questionnaire. Although every effort was made to reach staff in all departments we recognise that the activity revealed by the survey is therefore likely to be an underestimate of the total amount of classics-related public engagement work which is currently taking place in the UK.

Conclusions

This scoping exercise has presented a picture of UK-wide community of academic researchers which is conducting an impressive range of public engagement activities, using a variety of methods, contexts and settings in order to share their work with non-specialist publics. It is clear from the range of types of activities described, and the research topics on which these draw, that there are many ways in which the whole span of sub-disciplines incorporated within classics can be communicated to audiences outside academia.

The responses to the survey also suggest that public engagement provides an excellent focus for university departments where classical subjects are taught to build collaborative partnerships with organisations and individuals working in other sectors, in particular the cultural, heritage and creative sectors. Such partnerships can bring about mutual benefit both for the academic researchers/institutions involved, and those with whom they collaborate; this mutual benefit is a key outcome of excellent public engagement.

Some publics are better served than others by this public engagement work. The results of the survey indicate that school pupils and their teachers are comparatively well served, for example, and that geographically a much higher proportion of activities take place in Greater London and the South East of England than in other areas of the UK; much of this activity is being conducted by researchers based at University of London institutions, and at other higher educations in the South East, in particular the University of Oxford. A focus for future work to support and facilitate public engagement may therefore be to focus on sectors of the population who are being overlooked, and to consider whether there are ways in which

¹² As a distance learning institution, the Open University has a physical campus based in Milton Keynes (in Buckinghamshire, UK) although a high proportion of academics there are based in locations remote from campus; this may mean that the location of their engagement work is not necessarily connected with the location of their campus.

academic researchers could be better supported and encouraged to reach under-served audiences or geographical areas.¹³

Many of those academic researchers in classical subjects who participate in public engagement do so with very little resource, whether in the form of funding, or of time allocated by their employers to devote to this work. High-quality public engagement in classics may not necessarily need a large budget, but it does take time to develop; in particular those on short-term contracts are less likely to have time to undertake public engagement. The survey also identified a gender imbalance, with a much higher proportion of academic researchers in classics who are female (more than double) than male carrying out public engagement work.

There are also some gaps in the survey's coverage. It did not, for example, consider demographic factors other than the gender of respondents; it may also be valuable to collect data relating to ethnicity and class or educational background of researchers undertaking public engagement. In terms of the reach of activity which was captured here, further questions could be asked, for example concerning numbers of individuals with whom each project has engaged (although high numbers here are not necessarily an indicator of high quality engagement, and very small-scale projects can be equally valuable as those which engage with larger groups), or of demographic data relating to public participants. In addition, it may be helpful to ask those who undertake public engagement work in classics what proportion of their time they spend on this, in comparison to their other responsibilities.

The results of the survey show that there is much room for optimism; the willingness of academic researchers in classics to take their work outside the academy in order to engage with wider audiences, and to share their practice with colleagues,¹⁴ is heartening. Our task (that of the ICS specifically as well as of the academic community more widely) is to ensure that those researchers, and others who have yet to gain experience of public engagement, are provided with the support they need to enable their work to develop and succeed.

About the author

The ICS first appointed a Public Engagement Fellow in September 2017; the author of this report currently occupies that role. A key aspect of the Public Engagement Fellow's remit is to discover and disseminate best practice in classics-related public engagement across the UK. To date this has involved running training workshops (these have so far been held in London and at Manchester Metropolitan University, thanks to the support of April Pudsey), attendance

¹³ A recent review undertaken by the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement examined the wider picture relating to geographical inequities in the UK; the resulting report offers a useful insight into some of the key issues and challenges relating to place-based public engagement. See NCCPE, 'Achieving equity in place-based research, innovation and public engagement' (September 2019), available at https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/achieving_equity_in_place-based_research_summary_report_september_2019_final.pdf.

¹⁴ Of the 83 people who responded to the survey, 76 shared contact details and indicated that they would be happy to be contacted by the ICS to discuss their public engagement work further.

at relevant conferences and events, and discussion with individual colleagues, as well as administering the ICS's new small grant fund for public engagement. The Fellow very much welcomes correspondence from colleagues who would like to learn more about public engagement, to share news of their own projects, or to suggest ways in which the ICS might further support this activity; please feel free to contact her via the email address below.

Further reading

Duncan, Sophie, Paul Manners and Kate Miller (2017), 'Reviewing public engagement in REF 2014: Reflections for shaping the second REF', Bristol: NCCPE.

(https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/reviewing_pe_in_ref_2014_final.pdf)

Duncan, Sophie and Suzanne Spicer (2010), 'The engaging researcher: inspiring people to engage with your research', Cambridge: Vitae.

(<https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/the-engaging-researcher-vitae-2010.pdf>)

Eades, Michael (2016), 'Kindred spirits', *Arts Professional* 10th November 2016.

(<https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/magazine/299/feature/kindred-spirits>)

Hamlyn, Becky, Martin Shanahan, Hannah Lewis, Ellen O'Donoghue, Tim Hanson and Kevin Burchell (2015), 'Factors affecting public engagement by researchers: a study on behalf of a consortium of UK research funders', London: Policy Studies Institute, University of Westminster. (https://wellcome.ac.uk/sites/default/files/wtp060033_0.pdf)

UKRI (September 2019), 'UKRI Vision for Public Engagement'.

(<https://www.ukri.org/files/per/ukri-vision-for-public-engagement-pdf/>)

Case studies of public engagement projects can also be found on the Being Human Festival website (<https://beinghumanfestival.org/apply/case-studies/> - broad humanities focus, with some classically-inspired projects) and the NCCPE website

(<https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/do-engagement/inspire-me/case-studies> - examples from all disciplines, many with a science/social science focus but some derived from arts and humanities research).

The Institute of Classical Studies blog also features (among other articles) examples of recent classics-themed public engagement projects, including those funded by the ICS's small grants scheme: <https://ics.blogs.sas.ac.uk/category/public-engagement/>.

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