

Overview

All courses will standardly be delivered online and would normally run for 60-90 minutes depending on the available time. Each session is self-contained, with no need for previous experience. Each session consists of a presentation with slides and time for questions and discussion.

Tools of the trade: Communications in practice

This session explores the practice of research communications through the prism of three common tools: the press release, the policy brief, and the humble blog post. What can each of these tell us about how different knowledge users approach research outputs, how best to engage that group, and how to maximise the effectiveness of these or any other communication device. This session will help participants understand how choosing the right medium is just as important as your message and audience.

- The importance of picking the right tool for your message and audience
- How all tools are a compromise between your needs and those of your audience
- How using the rights tools reduces wasted time and resources

Planning and managing research communications

In an age of seemingly endless communication options, planning how a research project should present itself to the world can seem like a daunting task. This session offers PIs and other researchers an overview of which strategies work best for which audiences and topics. Participants will learn about the different roles and challenges presented by social and traditional media, events, film and podcasting, and others. These activities will be set in the context of establishing and maintaining an overall identity for the project and how this can be used to further the project's aims in terms of public engagement, policy reach and impact with key groups.

- Developing a relationship with the media
- Establishing an effective presence online
- Building an overarching framework for communications

Audience and message: developing your strategy

It can be very tempting to start developing a communications strategy by thinking about certain tools - *Will we need a website?, Should we put out press releases?, Is Twitter worth it?* and so on. It is far more useful, however, to start by focussing on your key messages and target audiences. This practical session will focus on identifying these two starting points, balancing the demands of each against the other when choosing communications tools, and the importance of speaking with your audience, rather than to them.

- The critical role of message and audience in developing a strategy
- Thinking about planning, delivery, feedback and discovery
- The importance of flexibility and learning from your audience

Laying the foundations of research impact

Getting an impact strategy right from the outset can save a huge amount of time, stress and frustration later on. This session explores how to hotwire impact into a research project from the outset, the importance of anticipating and addressing the needs of your 'impactee', the critical role of establishing relationships and trust early on, and how to identify the right communication tools to meet your audience halfway.

- Identifying the needs and motivations of non-academic partners
- Focusing on the challenge being addressed rather than the details of the research
- Valuing relationships and networks over interactions and outputs

Writing for Policy Professionals

Writing for a policy audience presents a very particular set of challenges in terms of the tone and content of what you say and how you say it. However, it also requires an understanding of the needs of different policy stakeholders and an appreciation of how their work – and your research – fits into the policymaking process as a whole. This course provides an overview of how to write in ways that will be most useful for officials and politicians.

- Understanding policymakers and policymaking so as to better tailor your outputs to the sector
- Understanding how different types of documents are used by different actors in the world of policy
- Developing the skills to produce documents that enhance your reputation as a favoured source of expertise

