

Job Description

Job title	Head of Public Engagement & Dialogue	Grade	A
Department	Public Engagement		
Responsible to	Director of Advocacy		
Revision Date	March 2026		

<p>Organisation Context</p> <p>The Institute of Physics (IOP) is the national society for the discipline of physics in the UK and Ireland. As well as being a learned society, we are also the professional body for members based in the UK, Ireland, and overseas.</p> <p>We are a professional, modern, and ambitious organisation seeking to unlock the potential of physics and physicists nationally and internationally. Our purpose is to promote the advancement and dissemination of knowledge and learning in pure and applied physics for the benefit of all. We do this by building a thriving and diverse physics workforce, raising standards, supporting careers, and addressing barriers.</p> <p>We demonstrate the importance, relevance, and impact of physics in everyday life and the role it plays in addressing society’s major societal, economic, and environmental challenges. We influence change, actively engage in public and government dialogue, improving the quality of debate, informing policy, and influencing funding strategies. Above all, we are pioneering. We foster a sense of community amongst employees, members, volunteers, and people with an interest in physics, providing a platform and a voice for ideas to be heard and creating an environment which enables game-changing innovation.</p> <p>Our organisational values are at the heart of IOP and provide the foundations to empower us all to lead cultural change, deliver high performance across the organisation, and enable us to promote advancements and learning in pure and applied physics for the benefit of all.</p> <p>Our 2024–2029 strategy, titled "Physics for our Future," focuses on three key priorities: addressing the skills shortage and expanding opportunities in physics education and careers; strengthening physics across science, research, innovation, and technology; and exploring and communicating the social and economic benefits of physics to ensure they are widely understood. The strategy emphasises collaboration within the physics community, inclusivity, and diversity, aiming to make physics accessible and welcoming to all. It also highlights the central role of IOP Publishing in supporting the organization's mission, with profits directed towards public benefit and scientific advancement.</p>
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Purpose of the role and accountabilities

The Head of Public Engagement and Dialogue is responsible for designing, commissioning, and delivering the IOP's public engagement strategy. This role will focus on reaching diverse public audiences across the UK and Ireland, strengthening public understanding and appreciation of physics through strategic, impactful, and inclusive engagement activities. The post holder will work closely with colleagues in departments such as campaigns, EDI including with the Limit Less initiative, policy and public affairs, science and innovation, communications and marketing, campaigns and national offices, ensuring alignment across initiatives.

The role will be responsible across UK & Ireland for:

- Shaping and overseeing IOP's public engagement and dialogue UK and Ireland programme, with annual public engagement themes ensuring alignment with societal challenges (e.g., climate change, health)
- Equipping members with the tools and resources to engage the public effectively through a member-led approach to public engagement
- Working with other leads in Science & Business, Education & Workforce, Policy & Public Affairs, Communications and Marketing to identify high impact Public Dialogue Projects in partnership with IOP stakeholders; and playing a lead role in the successful delivery of these projects
- Representing the IOP externally with national stakeholders, ensuring activities are rooted in evidence and best practice
- Building the IOP's reputation and influence by fostering partnerships outside STEM disciplines to co-create diverse and inclusive content
- Providing expertise in commissioning high-quality, impactful engagement content
- Ensuring public attitudes and perceptions are well-understood and reflected in all engagement activities
- Supporting the design and delivery of engagement content that reaches diverse societal audiences
- Working across IOP teams (policy, communications, membership, national offices, campaigns) to ensure cohesive public engagement strategies
- Leading fundraising to support the IOP's public engagement and public dialogue work and working closely with the IOP's Business Development Group to help shape the IOP's overall approach to fundraising
- To attend the Society and Advocacy Board bringing appropriate expertise and leadership as needed

Contribution to governance

The Head of Public Engagement and Dialogue will play a key role in IOP's governance structures by:

- Developing and implementing new initiatives, serving as a key collaborator to ensure they are high quality and align with broader organisational priorities
- Ensuring all proposed public engagement and public dialogue activities are aligned to IOP priorities and performance metrics, using standardised evaluation frameworks
- Ensure execution of agreed and prioritised activities and initiatives is delivered in line with the intent, measurables, key resource boundaries and activity plans, and identify / escalate adjustments when appropriate
- Preparing clear, evidence-based board submissions for new project proposals, ensuring alignment with IOP's governance processes
- Acting as a liaison between the public engagement team and governance forums, ensuring timely delivery of relevant insights, updates, and proposals
- Upholding organisational values and ensure all activities adhere to ethical, legal, and regulatory standards

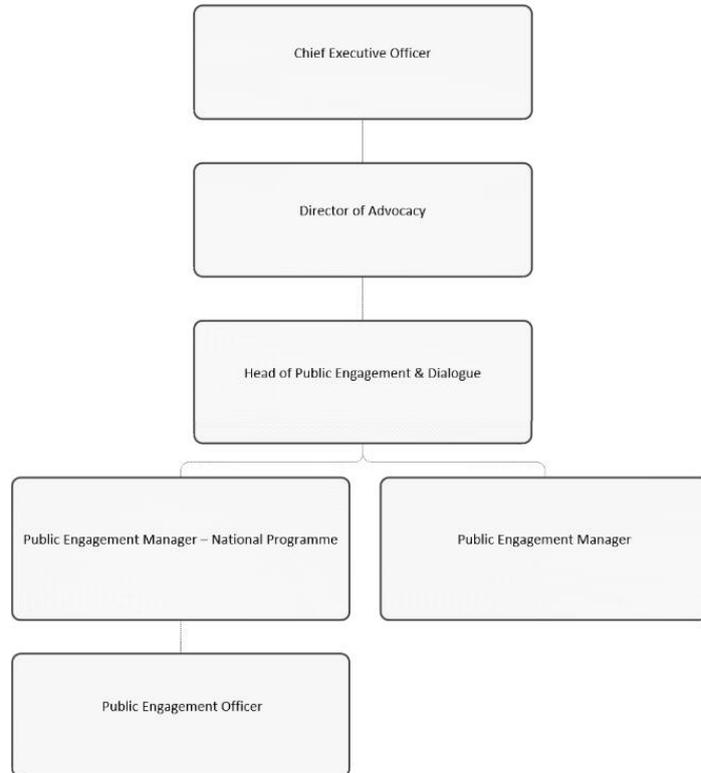
Ways of working

The Head of Public Engagement and Dialogue will demonstrate collaborative, evidence-led, and impactful ways of working to achieve organisational objectives by:

- Working collaboratively across multiple teams, including EDI, policy and public affairs, communications and marketing, membership and national offices
- Driving high-quality content design and delivery, ensuring diverse and effective public engagement
- Leading partnerships with organisations to enhance IOP's reputation and impact beyond STEM
- Fostering a culture of innovation, inclusivity, and excellence in public engagement
- Monitoring and evaluating public engagement initiatives to ensure they meet defined KPIs and organisational objectives
- Representing IOP's public engagement work externally, acting as an advocate and spokesperson when needed

Organisational chart

The Institute of Physics is an open and inclusive organisation that welcomes and celebrates diversity.



Main responsibilities of the role

	Collaborating with other IOP colleagues to define and drive the shift to a member led approach to public engagement, ensuring members are supported and enabled to deliver appropriate activities
	Develop and deliver a high quality, high impact public engagement strategy across the UK and Ireland, ensuring that all risks are identified and managed
	Building the IOP’s reputation and influence by fostering partnerships outside STEM disciplines to co-create diverse and inclusive content
	Ensure that the diversity of public audiences and their understanding of the role physics has in society is well understood and articulated, resulting in content that resonates especially with under-represented audiences
	Lead the Public Engagement Grants Scheme (PEGS), ensuring robust awards process is followed and all recipients of grants provide post activity evaluation
	Support the commissioning of public engagement content – through different media and in person
	Ensure the output of all content and in person events are evaluated
	Develop fundraising opportunities for public engagement & dialogue and contribute to the Business Development Group in identifying fundraising prospects across the IOP

	Identify, assess and manage risks and threats to the IOP, its programmes and projects within their specialism
	Follow and promote best practice in managing diversity and inclusion across all aspects of their work

Person Specification

We are looking for someone who...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a drive for results, who can be counted on to meet or exceed goals successfully • Can manage and measure work effectively, taking responsibility for tasks and decisions. • Is customer focussed and dedicated to meeting the expectations and requirements of internal and external customers / partners. • Has great functional/technical knowledge and skills to do the job at a high level of accomplishment. • Is committed to their personal learning, picking up on the need to change personal, interpersonal, and where applicable managerial behaviour quickly.
Experience this person should have is...
<p><u>Role-specific experience</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of delivering high quality, impactful public engagement (ideally within a membership organisation) • Designing and delivering high quality and wide-reaching public engagement in partnership with other organisations and with a track record of reaching different public audiences • Experience of managing high performing teams and collaborating with peers • Experience of demonstrating sound judgement in leadership and managing and in decision making • Experience with and in depth understanding of audience research and acting on it to ensure diversity of reach • Experience of budgeting and performance management of programmes • Well-developed analytical skills and a strong understanding of organisational development and business planning • Innovative and creative, able to work under high pressure to deliver new engagement methods • A proven ability to take a complex issue and work with experts find a way to communicate this issue simply, which then act as entry points for people to engage in more aspects of the subject. These messages will need to have the support of the experts but also to resonate with the target audiences

- Able to express a good understanding of the UK and Irish public audiences' perceptions of the role of science and specifically physics

General criteria

- Proven experience in a leadership role, demonstrating the ability to effectively lead and manage teams, budgets, and strategic initiatives
- Expertise in building and maintaining relationships with internal and external stakeholders to drive organizational success
- Strong track record of designing and implementing strategies, frameworks, or initiatives that align with organizational objectives and deliver measurable outcomes
- Experience of identifying risks associated with projects and activities and implementing effective mitigation plans.

- Skilled in overseeing multiple projects and ensuring quality assurance through evaluation and monitoring processes
- Experience in influencing decision-making at senior levels and providing strategic advice based on sound analysis and judgment
- Familiarity with cross-functional collaboration, fostering alignment across diverse teams and disciplines

Skills this person requires are...

- Creative – innovative ways to bring about change in public understanding through public engagement and dialogue.
- Interpersonal – ability to communicate positively with others and the confidence to listen, understand and where necessary adapt ways of working.

In addition to:

Planning

Scopes out length and difficulty of tasks and projects; sets objectives and goals; develops schedules and task/people assignments; anticipates and adjusts for problems and roadblocks; measures performance against goals and evaluates results and impact.

Delegation

Able to delegate clearly and with ease, both routine and important tasks and decisions; understands and shares responsibility and accountability; trusts others to perform and lets direct reports and others complete work. Able to influence senior stakeholders and teams outside of direct line management.

Managing and Measuring work

Is clear in the assignment of responsibility for tasks and decisions; sets clear objectives and measures, monitors regularly for progress and results and

ensures feedback is used to inform future work.

Priority Setting

Ability to work independently and prioritise ruthlessly. Understands and uses time well to spend on what's important; understands what will help or hinder progress and eliminates roadblocks and creates focus.

Motivating Others

Creates a climate for success; understands individual team members' strengths and weaknesses, empowers others, by inviting input and sharing ownership; pushes tasks and decisions down; values individual contribution and creates a positive environment for individuals to work in.

Developing Direct Reports

Provides challenging and stretching work and projects; holds regular development discussions and understands individuals career goals; agrees structured development plans and is happy to work with people who have development goals and needs; applies and supports IOP's performance and development policies.

Customer Focus

Understands and is committed to meeting the requirements of customers, both internally and externally; uses customer feedback to inform improvements in services.

Qualifications this person requires are...

- Educated to a Level 6 qualification or equivalent level of experience gained through employment and/or training (essential)