

Universities
Policy
Engagement
Network



UPEN 2023 IMPACT REPORT

Universities Policy Engagement Network An Overview



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newsletter

The Universities Policy Engagement Network (UPEN) was set up in 2018 by a small group of universities. It now has more than 100 UK university and policy relevant organisations as members. Our membership comprises knowledge brokers, impact officers and academics who are interesting in strengthening academic-policy engagement. The network is entirely voluntary.

UPEN's founding purpose was to make it easier for UK governments and legislatures to communicate their needs and opportunities with researchers by providing a 'one stop shop' through which opportunities can be shared more easily.

UPEN's activities include a weekly UPEN newsletter, strategic projects led by Vice-Chairs and Sub-Committees, an events programme, and a regular blog, as well as members' meetings and our annual conference.

Our co-chairs for UPEN currently are Andy Brown (University of Leeds), Sarah Chaytor (UCL), and Chris Hewson (University of York). Previous chairs are Matt Flinders (University of Sheffield), Stephen Meek (University of Nottingham) and Gavin Costigan (University of Southampton)



Foreword

This has been a year of geopolitical and domestic turmoil, leading to an ever more turbulent public policy landscape. This has significant implications for universities and policy stakeholders. Notwithstanding, it has also been a year where the case can be made that academic-policy engagement is an increasingly important agenda for policymakers, research funders, and universities.

In that spirit, we are delighted to be publishing UPEN's first full annual impact report. This document provides a snapshot of the breadth and variety of UPEN's activity and impact as well as a summary of our financial situation, in order to provide greater transparency regarding how we are deploying our resources. At its heart, the report shows how UPEN is working to strengthen practice, share learning, and streamline engagement with policymakers. Moreover, from engaging with legislatures across the UK, convening our community through our annual conference, our diverse events programme, or shining a light on particular elements of academic-policy engagement, the dynamism and enthusiasm of our community is evident.

We have achieved a lot, with very little in terms of cash and staff resources. This is due in no small part to significant contributions of time, energy, expertise, and enthusiasm from individual members of the UPEN network. As 2024 progresses, we will continue to implement the recommendations of the [Sealey report](#) in order to embed a new governance structure for UPEN, as well as exploring opportunities to ensure greater financial sustainability. Throughout this process we will continue to work closely with key policy partners, in order to cement our role as a proactive knowledge broker and convener on key policy challenges.

Finally, we need to say a very important set of thank-yous. Firstly, to all UPEN members for joining the network, engaging with activities, and being part of our extended communities of practice. Secondly, to members of UPEN's executive committee: our co-chairs and vice-chairs, who give so much time and energy to UPEN's work and help steer our strategic direction. Thirdly, to our policy partners and collaborators for their support and for sharing our commitment to strengthening academic-policy engagement. And finally, to Laura Bea for her tireless efficiency and dynamism, and quite simply, for making UPEN work!

We look forward to working with you all over the course of 2024 and progressing UPEN's development to further embed our network across the academic-policy engagement ecosystem.



Sarah Chaytor,
UPEN Co-Chair, Director
of Research Policy &
Strategy, University
College London (UCL)



Dr Chris Hewson,
UPEN Co-Chair, Faculty Research
Impact Manager (Social Sciences)
University of York



Professor Andrew Brown,
UPEN Co-Chair, University
of Leeds

**Universities
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WHO WE ARE

Co-Chairs



Sarah Chaytor,
UPEN Co-Chair, Director
of Research Policy &
Strategy, University
College London (UCL)



Dr Chris Hewson,
UPEN Co-Chair, Faculty Research
Impact Manager (Social Sciences)
University of York



Professor Andrew Brown,
UPEN Co-Chair, University
of Leeds

Secretariat



Laura Bea, Network
Manager, Co-Chair
Arts and Humanities &
Equity, Diversity and
Inclusion Sub-
Committees



Eleonora Piga,
Communications and
Membership Officer,
UCL

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Executive Committee

The Executive Committee is made up of each co-chair of our sub-committees, and our vice-chairs.



Andy Mycock, Chief Policy Fellow, Y-PERN, Futures Sub-Committee



Dr Camelia Dijkstra, co-chair Devolved and Regional Sub-Committee, Leeds Beckett University



Rebecca Riley, co-chair Devolved and Regional Sub-Committee, Birmingham University



Prof Scott Cunningham, co-chair Devolved and Regional, Strathclyde University



Dr Hannah Durrant, Vice-Chair Devolved and Regional, Wales Centre for Public Policy



Gareth Giles, co-chair ARI Sub-Committee, UPEN Vice-Chair, University of Southampton



Lenny Rolles, co-chair ARI Sub-Committee, University of Sussex



Neil Heckels, co-chair Professional Development Sub-Committee, University of Durham



Nicola Buckley, UPEN Vice-Chair, University of Cambridge

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee is made up of each co-chair of our sub-committees, and our vice-chairs.



Dr Olivia Stevenson,
Equity, Diversity and
Inclusion Sub-
Committee, UCL



Dave Blackbell, co-chair Equity,
Diversity and Inclusion Sub-
Committee, SPRE



Marina Altoè, Arts and
Humanities Sub-Committee,
University of Exeter



Rebecca di Corpo, Arts
and Humanities Sub-
Committee, Bath Spa
University



Prof Arlene Holmes-Henderson
MBE, UPEN Vice-Chair, University of
Durham



Stephen Evans, International
Sub-Committee, University
of Durham



Yaryna Basystuk,
International Sub-
Committee, University of
Southampton



Will Pryor, International Sub-
Committee, University of
Oxford



Des McNulty, UPEN Vice-
Chair International,
University of Glasgow



Kayleigh Renberg-Fawcett,
UPEN Vice-Chair, University
of Leeds



**UPEN AT A
GLANCE**



2023 AT A GLANCE

200+

Opportunities
advertised

100+

Attendees at our 2023
UPEN Conference

545

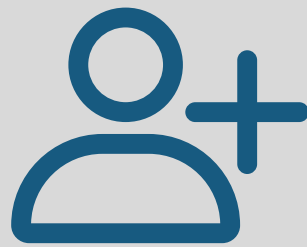
New
Newsletter
Subscribers
(total: 1368)

3

Partnerships
with FLFDN,
IfG & ESRC*

2

UPEN
Reports



New UPEN
Members

5

Blogs
published,
including
THE Campus
Articles

39

15

Events

with

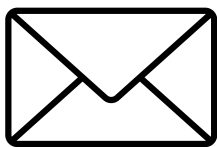
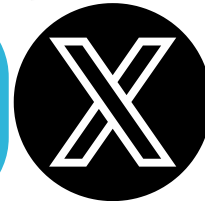
850

Attendees

UPEN Online

Click the
buttons to
follow us!

Our twitter followers have increased by
220, from 4017 to 4237



Our newsletter subscribers have
increased by 545, from 823 to 1368

We also refreshed our LinkedIn page,
increasing our followers by 410



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POLICY COLLABORATIONS

Engagement with Policy

UK PARLIAMENT

UPEN and Vice-Chair, Nicky Buckley, has worked with **UK Parliament POST KEU** team to deliver events on Cross Cutting Policy Issues, Navigating Parliamentary ARIs, Giving evidence to select committees, and Parliamentary Scrutiny, joined by over **450+ attendees**.

The POST KEU Team delivered and facilitated a workshop on Parliamentary methods of engagement for the UPEN 2023 Conference.

UPEN Co-Chair Sarah Chaytor contributed to a training workshop for the **UK Parliament** effective scrutiny programme for select committee staff.

GOVERNMENT

UPEN worked with **DCMS** to deliver an event on Areas of Research Interest, with 210 attendees.

UPEN delivered an event jointly with **Institute for Government** on obesity as a cross-cutting challenge with colleagues from **DHSC**.

UPEN co-chair Sarah Chaytor delivered a seminar for the **Welsh Government** on engaging with universities.

UPEN a seminar on 'advising under pressure' with colleagues from **Ministry of Justice**.

UPEN Continued developing strong relationships with Government Departments through the ARI Sub-Committee.

Key Collaborations 2023



Department
for Culture
Media & Sport

Fund of the
President
of Ukraine



UK Parliament
POST



Government
Office for Science



Policy
Profession

THE
ROYAL
SOCIETY

SPRE 



Economic
and Social
Research Council



Ministry
of Justice



The
British
Academy



Arts and
Humanities
Research Council



Capabilities in Academic
Policy Engagement



Future Leaders Fellows Development Network





MEMBER & SUBCOMMITTEE HIGHLIGHTS

Vice-Chair Spotlights



Prof Arlene Holmes-Henderson, Vice-Chair for Arts and Humanities

This year, Arlene has supported the UPEN Arts and Humanities Sub-Committee and facilitated, delivered, and collaborated with a huge number of policy and academic stakeholders...

- Delivered training for Arts and Humanities researchers on engaging with policy impact to UPEN members, with **100 attendees**.
- Convened and chaired a **Policy Profession** Festival Session for civil servants in September 2023 'Working with academics: widening the evidence base for policy' with **Prof Pascale Aebischer (Exeter), Dr James Canton (ESRC) and Dr Kristine Zaidi (AHRC)**
- Ran a conference for **70 Early Career Researchers in Humanities and Social Sciences** and 30 policy professionals in collaboration with the **British Academy's Early Career Network**
- Represented UPEN at the **Building Collaborations between Academics and Policymakers** event, organised by the **Institute for Languages, Cultures and Societies and the Cross-Government Languages Group at the School of Advanced Study**
- Collaborated with the **Learned Society of Wales**, the Wales Centre for Public Policy and the Academia Europaea to discuss strengthening academic-policy collaborations between the UK and EU.
- Collaborated with the **Institute for Government** to deliver a session at the AHRC-funded Engaging with Government course for early career researchers. This collaboration will continue into 2024.
- Wrote four blogs for the Policy Profession, **read by up to 30,000 civil servants**. Working with an academic on your policy - Policy Profession (civilservice.gov.uk)
- Ran a training session at the **Department for Business and Trade on effective communication between researchers**, senior civil servants and ministers.

UPEN Sub-Committee Highlights

Areas of Research Interest

Co-chairs: Gareth Giles (Southampton), Lenny Rolles (Sussex)

The Areas of Research Interest Sub-Committee in 2023 focused on building and brokering relationships and working with policy partners to extend the reach of newly published Areas of Research Interest publications. This included:

- Connecting Sports England and DCMS ARI Development Group
- Hosting the soft launch of the DCMS ARIs alongside the CSA
- Working with DSIT to develop and launch ARIs (in 2024)
- Regularly connecting with the CSA's network, leading to new connections with HMT
- Building relationships with the Office of the Police Chief Scientific Officer and National Police Chiefs' Council

UPEN Sub-Committee SPOTLIGHT

Professional Development Mentoring Scheme

Chair: Neil Heckels (Durham), Chris Hewson (previous chair, York)

In 2022-23, the UPEN Professional Development Sub-Committee launched its first mentorship programme dedicated to supporting and deepening activity in the knowledge brokerage space. This scheme represented an initial step towards formalising peer learning within the UPEN network, and strengthening the network itself.

The programme was open to all professional services staff (or those in allied roles in UPEN member organisations and have policy engagement as a substantive part of their remit).

The scheme received 8 mentor applications, and 19 mentee applications. In the feedback, participants of the scheme found it a helpful way to receive support and foster closer relationships, and receive practical advice around complex ideas and challenges. Some of the challenges or ways to improve the scheme included having more structured and facilitated conversations at the beginning, making the scheme more visible, and building a wider peer support network within the scheme itself. There was also a call to train mentors beforehand.

For one of the participants of the scheme found it useful in entering the academic-policy space...

UPEN Sub-Committee SPOTLIGHT

Case Study

Dr Hannah Dalglish (she/her)
Knowledge Exchange Fellow
University of Southampton
Mentee



In March 2023, I signed up to the UPEN newsletter. This was a huge help, because I was applying for policy-related jobs at the time. Given my academic background, I was especially interested in a role that combined academia and policy together. Almost immediately, a job landed in my inbox that caught my eye – with only two days before the deadline – but you can say that the rest is history!

I signed up for the mentorship scheme in Spring 2022, while I was an Oxford Policy Engagement Fellow working on a project in Armagh on light pollution. I signed up because I wanted to receive some guidance from someone working in the policy space, as it was a career that I was thinking of considering pursuing but wasn't really sure of how to get there or of what steps I should take. My mentor was amazing in every way and even mentored me long after the programme ended. She was constantly supportive while giving constructive criticism, and believed in me and gave me the confidence I needed to keep going (even after more than 20 unsuccessful job applications!).

One of the best things about working in academic-policy engagement is that everyone comes from all sorts of backgrounds, there's no one path (see: squiggly careers). This can have its advantages and disadvantages. For example, the community offers a wealth of experiences and perspectives, which results in an incredibly welcoming, diverse, and open environment. On the other hand, policy engagement roles take on many different shapes and forms, and for someone new to this space it can be difficult to navigate. And when networks are at the heart of policy work, it can be hard to find the door, let alone open it. **This is why mentorship is so important, it opens up the door to those who have a keen interest and valuable offering regardless of who they are or where they come from.**

UPEN Sub-Committee Highlights

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Co-Chairs: Olivia Stevenson (UCL), Dave Blackbell (SPRE), Laura Bea (UPEN/Southampton)

The Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Sub-Committee in 2023 has focused its activities around responding to the recommendations set out in the 2021 Surfacing EDI Report and strengthen its external partnership network. This includes:

- **Building connections** across the sector including with the newly formed UKRI EDI Caucus, Government Office for Science, SPRE, CAPE
- **Reframing EDI** debates: Responding to sector wide consultations, including the UKRI EDI Strategy Consultation, applying a WPR (What's the Problem Represented to be) approach by Carol Bacchi
- **Sustaining discussion:** Turning this consultation response into a paper presented at a WPR Critical Policy Studies Symposium in Karlstad, Sweden
- **Building knowledge:** Supporting two research studies on EDI within academic- policy engagement, surfacing lived experiences of marginalised academics, and knowledge brokers (forthcoming).
- **Providing Insight:** Supporting the UPEN Co-Chairs and feeding into key governance and strategy with an EDI lens

UPEN Sub-Committee Highlights

Arts and Humanities

Co-Chairs: Rebecca DiCorpo (Bath Spa), Marina Altoe (Exeter), Laura Bea (UPEN/Southampton)

Having been set up in October 2022, the Arts and Humanities Sub-Committee focused on establishing its mission, membership and direction. This included:

- Convening a roundtable discussion with colleagues across the A&H Policy engagement space, including NESTA (PEC), AHRC, British Academy, DCMS, KEU, IfG and Policy Lab to discuss collaborations and actions working together to support capacity building and opportunities for A&H research in policy on a national and strategic level
- Agreeing on work matrix and have started work on two of our workstreams, with a suite of mini-reports being drafted and multiple capacity building documents to be hosted on the UPEN website.
- Recruiting 80 members across 60 institutions for our membership from across HEI and non-academic institutions. Together with our members, we have published a statement in solidarity with colleagues affected by cuts in Arts & Humanities departments across the UK.

UPEN Sub-Committee SPOTLIGHT

International Policy Engagement

Co-Chairs: Yaryna Basystyuk (Southampton), Will Pryor (Oxford), Stephen Evans (Durham)

On 15 – 16 May 2023, in partnership with the Royal Society and together with the Fund of the President of Ukraine for Education, Science and Sports, and the Embassy of Ukraine, UPEN co-organised the ***Ukraine’s recovery: Rebuilding with Research*** two-day conference. This brought together ministers, scientific advisers, and other officials from the UK and Ukraine, along with a range of researchers with diverse expertise from UK universities.

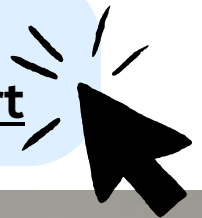
The conference provided a platform to highlight the potential role that research evidence could play in the post-war reconstruction process, and enabled participants to contribute to intense bilateral discussions around specific policy priorities and potential initiatives for collaboration that might facilitate or accelerate recovery.

“This partnership project helps demonstrate how UPEN member institutions can improve the availability and use of research evidence in public policy in an international as well as in a national context.”, Des McNulty, UPEN Vice-Chair International (Glasgow).

UPEN Sub-Committee SPOTLIGHT International Policy Engagement

Proceedings highlighted the value to policymakers inside and outside Ukraine of a broad spectrum of research evidence and expertise in shaping Ukraine's reconstruction and recovery, and international support for both. Conference participants also noted the importance of an effective science advice system and mechanisms to link experts with policy makers both in policy development and in effective policy implementation.

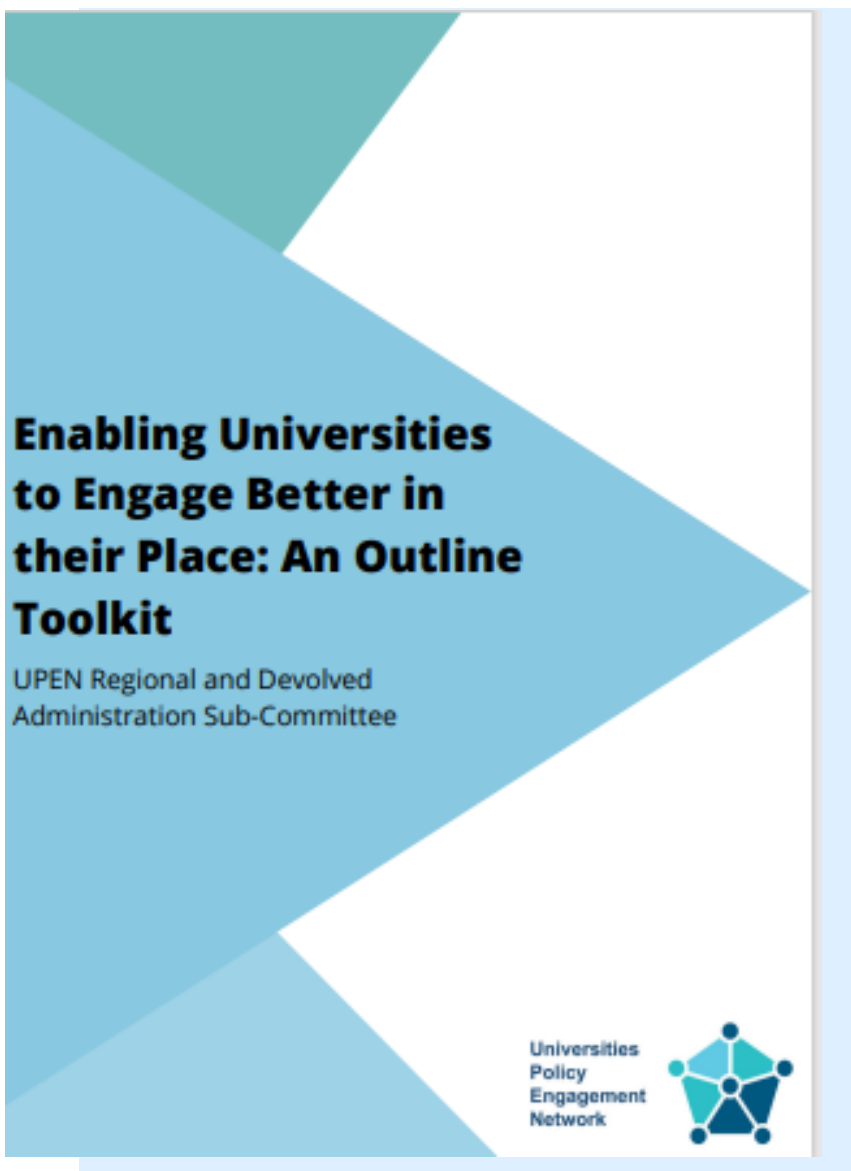
[Click here to
read the report](#)



UPEN Sub-Committee Highlights

Devolved & Regional Policy Engagement

Co-Chairs: Camelia Dijkstra (Leeds Beckett), Scott Cunningham (Strathclyde), Rebecca Riley (Birmingham)



The devolved and regional sub-committee facilitated a panel event at the UPEN 2023 Conference in Birmingham, discussing funding for initiatives, policy opportunities and conceptualising 'local', 'regional' and 'devolved'. In early 2023, the Sub-Committee wrote and published a report on *Enabling Universities to Engage Better in their Place: An Outline Toolkit*, which surveyed UPEN members and provided a resource to support Universities 'optimise their relationship with Place'.

UPEN across the UK

This year, we visited colleagues in the Knowledge Exchange Team in **Northern Ireland Assembly**, colleagues from the **Senedd Cymru** and **Wales Centre for Public Policy**, and the **Scottish Policy and Research Exchange**. These all included discussions around research on academic-policy engagement, Areas of Research Interest development and use, equitable and diverse policy engagement, and strengthening collaborations and partnerships across the devolved nations.

The UPEN Devolved and Regional Sub-Committee produced a report on ‘Enabling Universities to Engage Better with Place: An Outline Toolkit’ in early 2023 and have been championing this work.



Working across and with all devolved nations and policy bodies is central to UPEN’s ethos and work as a network organisation. **As Dave Blackbell, Co-Director of SPRE reflects**

“UPEN is a unique and crucial space for convening the academic-policy engagement community across the UK, and SPRE has benefitted greatly from relationships, collaborations and learning through its membership and leadership roles in the EDI Subcommittee and Executive Committee. The recent and ongoing organisational changes and ambitions are a welcome move for ensuring that UPEN remains well-placed to support the diverse needs of the dynamic and complex UK research ecosystem.”

Northern Ireland Assembly, August 2023, Laura Bea

UPEN Spotlight

2023 Conference: The Future of Knowledge Mobilisation

The UPEN 2023 Conference was themed around the ‘Future of Knowledge Mobilisation’. We saw keynote speakers from the Policy Profession, the House of Commons Library, and a panel with two Chief Scientific Advisors (CSAs). Other panels saw discussions and facilitated workshops around devolved and regional policy engagement, Areas of Research Interest (ARIs), Policy-Public dynamics, and working with Parliament.

We saw 100+ attendees including speakers from 50+ member institutions, with one key request in the feedback. More opportunity for networking! We are now planning for our 2024 Conference, which will be hosted at the **University of York**.

As the UPEN Co-Chairs said, *‘our conference discussions show that we broadly know what needs to be done - but undertaking the necessary steps, in the right order, and that work across different scales, is an altogether different matter’*.

We look forward to exploring this conversation further.





UPEN FINANCIAL REPORT APRIL- DECEMBER 2023

Financial Report Summary

As of 31 December 2023, the UPEN account, hosted by UCL, sits at **£75,186.11**.

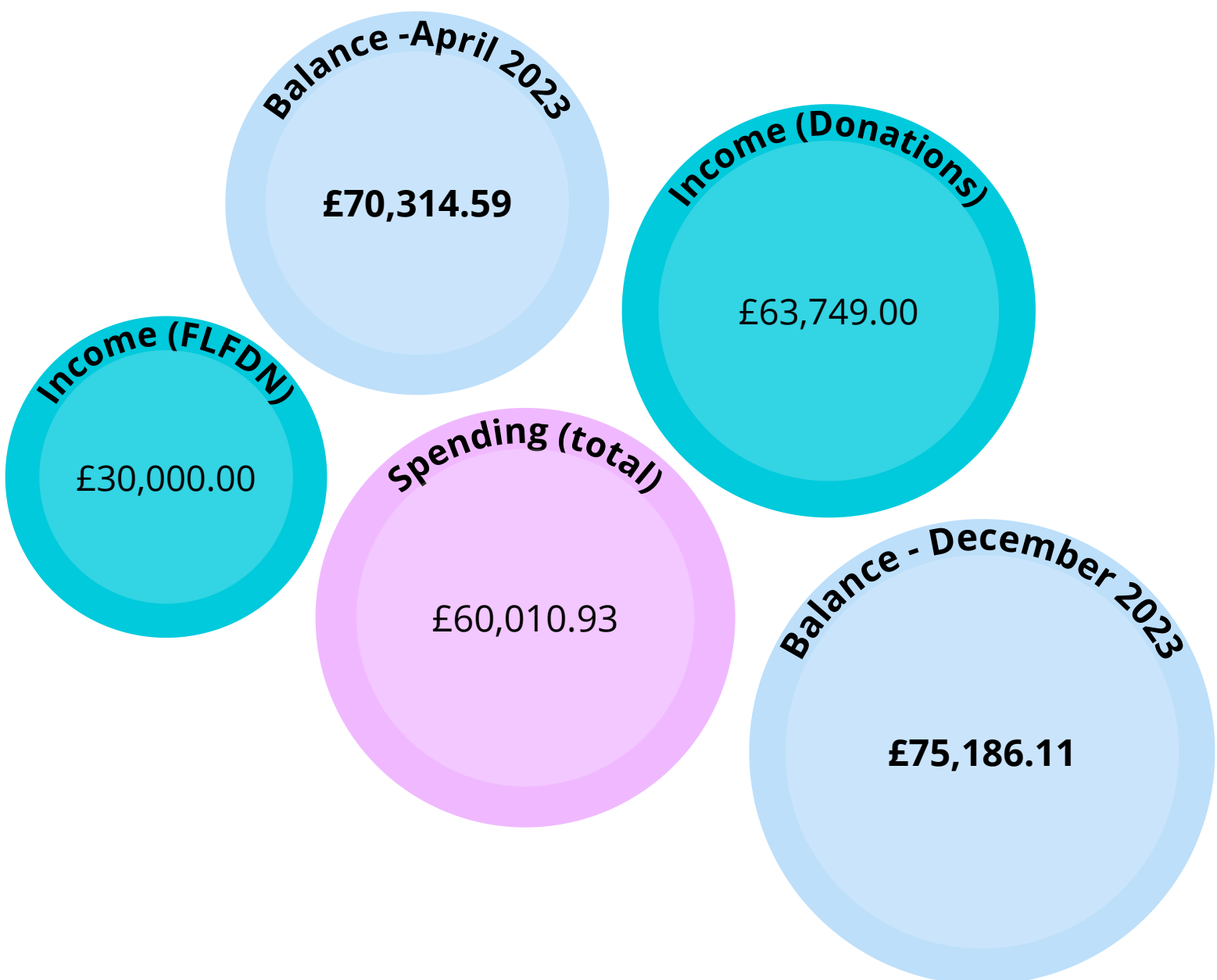
Our minimum operating budget is **£40,000** which covers the UPEN Network Manager, basic marketing costs, and expenses.

We received **£63,749** in donations from **27** UPEN Members in **2023***.

Financial Report Overview

In April, we moved the budget from **Sheffield University** to **UCL**, with a balance of **£70,462.06**. We also entered a partnership with the Future Leader Fellow Development Network to deliver a series of masterclasses for **£30,000**. We received **£63,749** in donations from 27 Universities.

Our current balance (December, 2023) stands at **£75,186.11** (not including income from FLFDN).



*figures correct on December 31, 2023

Financial Report

Expenditure

TOTAL SPENDING:
£60,010.93*

Staffing covers the salaries of the Network Manager at 18 hours per week, and one intern at 30 hours per week.

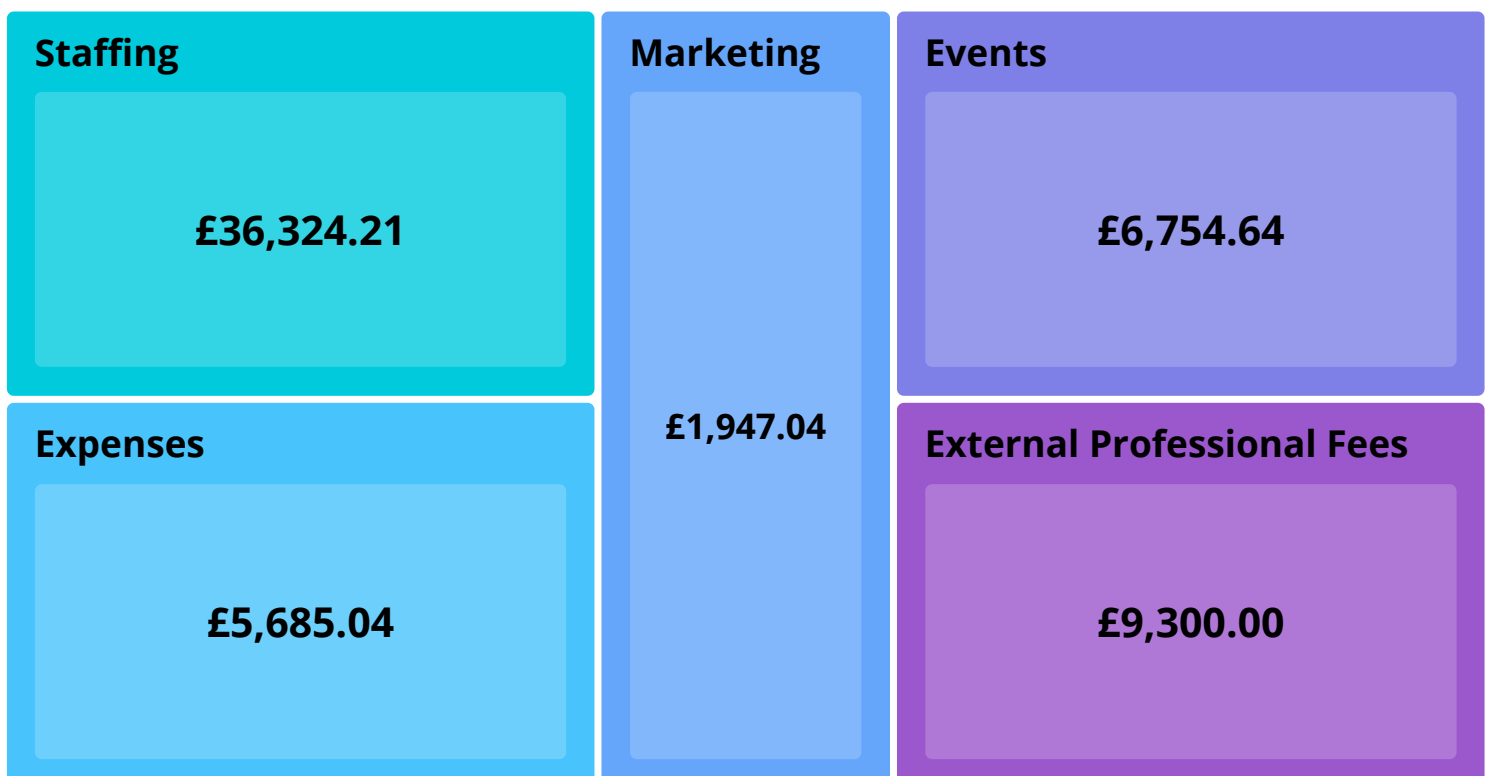
Marketing covers the cost of the UPEN newsletter and events software.

Expenses are those incurred internally and externally, covering travel and subsistence and office equipment.

Events are the costs to cover the UPEN conference in June 2023, and other UPEN event costs.

Professional Fees are costs related to events (e.g, speaker costs) and consultation costs for UPEN.

Committed: We have committed £10,000 to UPEN's website development alongside a contribution of £34,000 from CAPE.

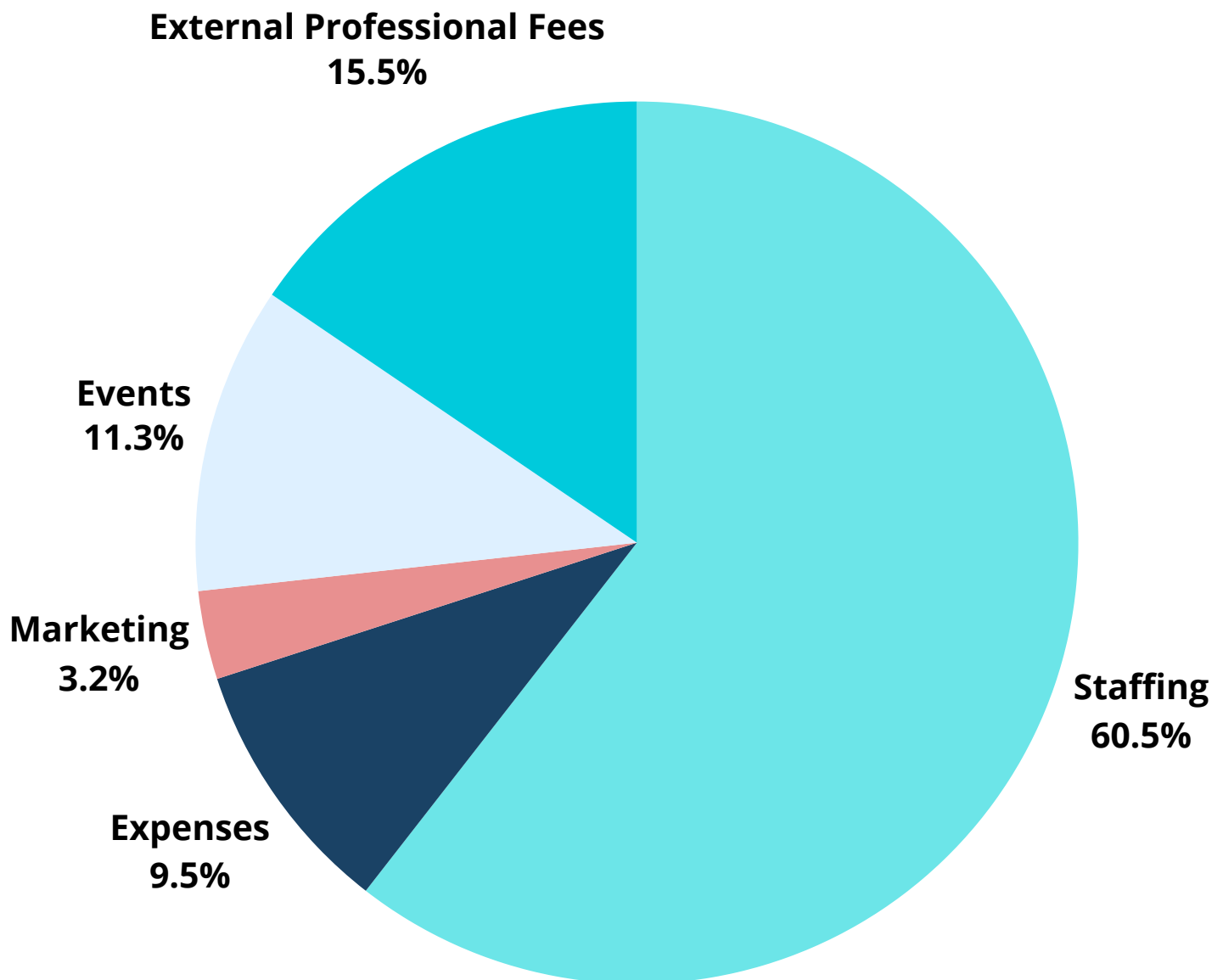


*figures correct from April to December 2023 and includes VAT; does not include committed funds

Financial Report Expenditure

TOTAL SPENDING: £60,010.93*

Staffing takes up the majority of our expense, with **external professional fees and events** being the second largest.

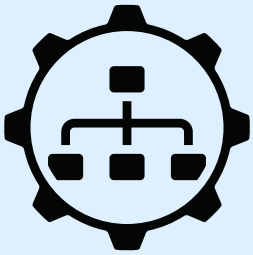


*figures correct from April to December 2023 and includes VAT; does not include committed funds



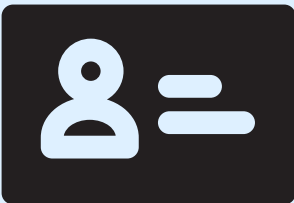
What's next?

Governance, Sustainability, and Identity



We have been working with Briana Pegado, Consultant on the governance of UPEN, exploring our **values and mission** and options for our organisational structure going forward .

Alongside this, we are exploring key questions around **UPEN's role** as a network of networks and a membership organisation. Our membership is the bedrock of UPEN and we are considering how best to harness our collective strength and enhance our membership offer.



This work forms part of the implementation of the **Sealey report** exploring options for the future **financial and organisational sustainability of UPEN**. We are also exploring external funding for UPEN as well as the optimum approach to membership contributions.



We are working with a creative agency to refresh our brand identity and rebuild our website. This is being done in partnership with CAPE (Capabilities in Academic-Policy Engagement). This will see improved communications assets and an improved website with enhanced curation, including a **resources hub** to share outputs and materials from CAPE, UPEN members and wider stakeholders in order to strengthen knowledge sharing and best practice within academic-policy engagement work.

Acknowledgements

Member Financial Contributions*

Brunel University
Cardiff University
De Montfort University
Edge Hill University
Keele University
Lancaster University
Manchester Metropolitan University
Newcastle University
Northumbria University
Sheffield Hallam University
Staffordshire University
University College London
University of Bath
University of Bristol
University of Cambridge
University of East Anglia
University of Essex
University of Exeter
University of Leeds
University of Leicester
University of Lincoln
University of Manchester
University of Nottingham
University of Oxford
University of Plymouth
University of Southampton
University of Sussex
University of York

*Donations may come from HEIF or Policy Support Fund (PSF)

External

University of Southampton
Geodata Team
Briana Pegado, Consultant
Huw Edwards

UPEN Executive Committee & Vice-Chairs

Sarah Chaytor (Co-Chair)
Chris Hewson (Co-Chair)
Andrew Brown (Co-Chair)
Andy Mycock
Camelia Dijkstra
Chris Wyatt
Dave Blackbell
Lenny Rolles
Marina Altoe
Neil Heckels
Olivia Stevenson
Rebecca DiCorpo
Rebecca Riley
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Gareth Giles (Vice-Chair)
Hannah Durrant (Vice-Chair)
Des McNulty (Vice-Chair)
Nicky Buckley (Vice-Chair)
Kayleigh Renberg-Fawcett (Vice-Chair)

& All UPEN Sub-Committee Members

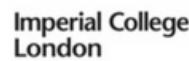
UPEN Staff

Laura Bea
Eleonora Piga
Grace Muchoki

Membership

Our membership currently sits at over 100 institutional and non HEI members*

Our members are the powerhouse and heart of UPEN, we would like to thank all of them for driving another year of UPEN.



*some members not currently on website due to development

Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

LONDON
METROPOLITAN
UNIVERSITY



Middlesex
University
London



The University of
Law

**MODERN SLAVERY
& HUMAN RIGHTS** POLICY &
EVIDENCE CENTRE
Led by the Brighton Centre



University of
East London



Loughborough
University



Newcastle
University



PML | Plymouth Marine
Laboratory



UCEM
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
OF ESTATE MANAGEMENT



SPRE 
SCOTTISH POLICY & RESEARCH EXCHANGE



Sheffield
Hallam
University



UNIVERSITY OF
Southampton



UNIVERSITY OF
STIRLING 



University
of Suffolk



Swansea University
Prifysgol
Abertawe **Academi
Morgan**
Academy



UWS UNIVERSITY OF THE
WEST OF SCOTLAND

UNIVERSITY OF
WESTMINSTER 



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GET IN TOUCH

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