



making physics matter

## Ogden Outreach Officers Programme Summary 2019-20

### Introduction

The Ogden Outreach Officers (OOOs) programme gives up to 50% FTE funding to individuals based predominantly in physics departments in UK universities. Their role is to provide physics support and university access to local schools. This must be matched with professional outreach time, the focus of which is decided by the universities and can consist of anything, including widening participation, impact for the REF and more. There is usually overlap between both sides of the role, and they are hard to separate. As a result, OOOs have been asked to report on their whole roles, as well as the work they are aware of taking place by other members of their departments (whether or not the Officer was involved). Please note, a more detailed version of the report is available on the Ogden Trust website and can be requested from the Programme Officer.

The programme has run since 2008, although significant changes were made to the programme from September 2018 with the implementation of three core strands. Under these strands, we recorded the following numbers this year (last year's numbers are recorded in brackets for comparison):

<b>School children</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>University students</b>
Events: 585 (566)	Events: 86 (43)	Events: 181 (77)
Schools: 911 (13,518*)	Teachers: 1,042 (830)	Students: 2,292 (1,635)
Pupils: 53,406 (42,943)	Schools/Colleges: 492 (331)	

*\*This number is not reflective of the different schools reached, rather the number of times schools attended events.*

20 universities had active OOOs in the academic year 2019-20, all of which have reported. The onset of lockdown enforced by COVID19 hit outreach events markedly this year, particularly from March onwards, which is historically the busiest time of year for the Officers. At least 205 events which had been initially scheduled were forced to be cancelled.

Despite the numerous cancellations, the Outreach Officer network was able to run 789 events (an increase of 30 from last year), reaching 56,740 people (an increase of 3,412 from last year). Overall, despite COVID affecting outreach activities for almost half of the year, the total number of activities remained comparable to last year.

## Summary of events

OOOs have great coverage and reach in the UK, running activities that reach many schools and pupils. These activities give pupils and teachers greater insight into physics, an understanding of what university life is like, and an idea of what you can do with physics, hopefully inspiring more students to continue studying physics to A-level.

The bulk of students involved fall into the 7-14 age range that has been shown by the SPIRES research to be a key age group to engage with, as young people have often made decisions about a particular career direction by age 14, with many young people identifying science as 'not for me' by then. The number of longer events and repeat interventions with the same groups of students has also been increasing, which are likely to leave a greater impression on the pupils (one-off events have not been proven to have an impact on increasing the numbers of young people choosing to take up physics post-16).

In addition to increasing the focus on targeting younger age groups, we are encouraging Officers to work with schools with higher proportions of pupils on free school meals (FSM), as this is a strong indicator of whether the students in a particular area are more or less likely to study physics post-16.

From activities where Officers carried out some form of evaluation, we were able to gauge that students enjoyed the activities: *"I wish all our science lessons were like this!"*, and that both their teachers and parents were overwhelming positive about the activities: *"They have spoken about university in the days since our visit and how excited they are to go."*

The fact that the number of outreach engagements overall were comparably high, despite the enforced cancellations of so many events, points to the value and flexibility offered by the Officers and of outreach, and the important role they play in engaging with their communities.

## Departmental involvement

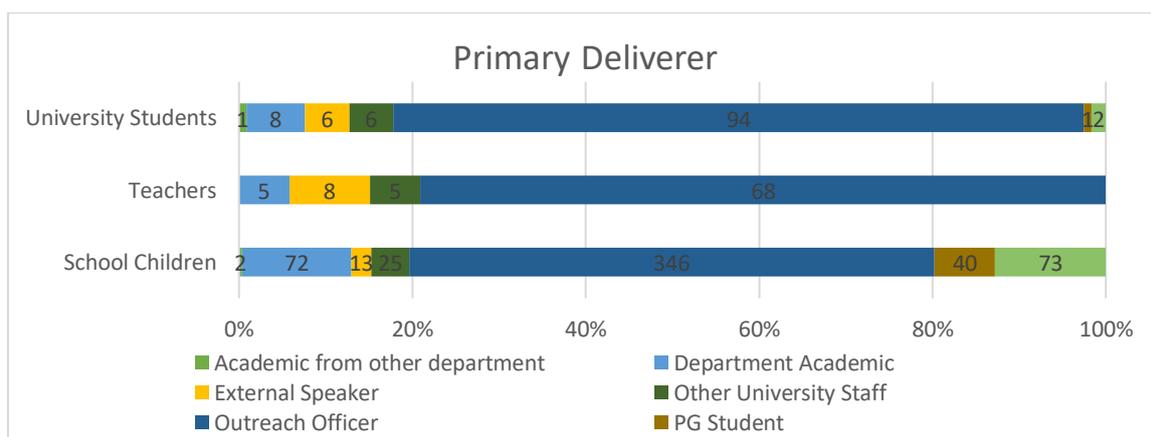


Chart 1: Proportion of events that different types of people have led

Chart 1 shows that we are still seeing that the majority of activities that are reported on are overwhelmingly led by the OOs, but department academics and students made a significant contribution too. It is great to see this participation across departments.

## **Working groups and online partnerships**

As soon as it was indicated the country would be going into lockdown around March, it was anticipated that the majority of outreach events would be cancelled or be forced to move online. As such, we decided to set up working groups to address key concerns and questions of Officers. The working groups addressed departmental strategy, evaluation, public engagement opportunities for undergraduates, science communication modules, online summer schools and the Y13 mentoring programme. They were successful in enabling the sharing of best practice and useful resources, and each working group was able to put together some form of 'Top Tips' document.

We also had monthly meetings which were an opportunity for all the Officers to discuss university and personal updates, with the intention of reducing the feeling of working in isolation as well as allowing everyone to discuss potential collaborations. We were pleased that several formerly funded Officers were also able to join several of these sessions.

Whilst we have now wrapped the online working groups, we will continue to have regular monthly meetings where Officers will lead on training sessions and discussions, continuing to build upon our successful partnerships.

A notable example of a successful online partnership was the collaboration between the universities of Leeds, Sheffield and York, where they worked together to run an online work experience week. We hope that this will inspire other universities to run joint events, making use of the opportunities brought about by online technology.

## **Celebrating outreach**

Whilst most departments regularly speak highly of the value of outreach, Officers often feel that they and their work is not necessarily recognised or appreciated. However, this seems to be improving and many Officers are finding varying opportunities to talk about and share their work.

Good examples of sharing include regularly speaking at departmental meetings, joining committees where they are able to share their work, videos and posters for public display and reporting in department newsletters or similar platforms.

## **Conclusions**

The Trust continues to look to support departments to achieve their goals in outreach. Having carried out a short piece of research this year to get a better understanding of how outreach leadership fits in with the roles of the Head of Department and academic leads, we will now be putting together a programme of support for the departments, covering their main concerns.

We will continue to focus on supporting the evaluation of the officers' activities to get a better understanding of what works, and the sharing of best practice. In addition, we will look to work closely with those departments entering their final year of funding, to encourage them to think longer term and, hopefully, recognising the importance of the Outreach Officer, ensure their permanence.