

ANNEXURE A: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

(Approved by the University Management Committee on 20 November 2024)

ACRONYMS

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| CBR | Community-Based Research |
| CE | Community Engagement |
| CHE | Council on Higher Education |
| CTL | Centre for Teaching and Learning |
| DHET | Department of Higher Education and Training |
| ER | Engaged Research |
| HEI | Higher Education Institution |
| HEQC | Higher Education Quality Committee |
| M&E | Monitoring and Evaluation |
| NWU | North-West University |
| PAR | Participatory Action Research |
| REC | Research Ethics Committees |
| SCI | Sustainability and Community Impact |
| SL | Service-Learning |
| SOE | Scholarship of Engagement |
| T&L | Teaching and Learning |
| WIL | Work-Integrated Learning |

1. Rules
1.1 General rules of engagement

- 1.1.1 All research/innovation must obtain ethical clearance from the NWU's official RECs (Research Ethics Committees) based on a risk-benefit analysis to be determined within faculties according to the requirements and guidelines of the specific environments.

Teaching-Learning activities and low risk engagement activities can be done via the committee that handles the CE activities within faculties, these can utilise a checklist that can be circulated via a round-robin to members of the CE risk analysis sub-committee. All projects that have obtained ethical clearance from any of the committees, must inform the CE support unit for recordkeeping purposes.

- 1.1.2 Research/Innovation must add relevant Sustainable Development Goals that align with their research activities, ensuring a coherent and impactful contribution to global sustainability objectives.

- 1.1.3 All research engagement activities must preferably be published in open access accredited journals, thereby ensuring equitable access to knowledge and maximising the benefits for the broader community.
- 1.1.4 Executive Deans are responsible for embedding CE within the Faculty.
- 1.1.5 Executive Deans must appoint a Faculty Co-ordinator or Deputy Dean for CE activities.
- 1.1.6 All student engagement and organised volunteer activities must subscribe to the principles of CE. It is recommended that there is an academic reflection itinerary linked to the volunteering process. This would include preparation to plan learning activities and interventions prior to the development of the service and where possible gaining the necessary background knowledge; the processing and debriefing for participants of the experience; linking the reflections to evaluation of the outcomes; recording and systemisation of relevant data for reporting.
- 1.2 University community engagement activities must be registered on the University database for CE as follows:
- Engaged research
 - Engaged Teaching and Learning
 - Outreach/volunteerism/philanthropic activity – University branded volunteer activities must be registered as NWU projects with clear aims/outcomes
 - Sharing of expertise
- 1.3 Community Engagement activities must preferably be set up as a formal partnership in order to regulate expectations, manage risks and ensure role clarification. Informed consent forms are used to cover some of these regulatory steps and understanding on an individual level, however, such forms must be available for verification by the RECs for engaged research and the CE committees for ethical clearance at Faculty level.
- Formal partnerships must be cleared by and submitted to the Legal Services department and must be signed in accordance with the Policy on Delegations and Schedule of Authorisation Levels and aligned with Faculty Management rules.
- Evidence of shared planning and ensuring that the partnership is mutually beneficial is essential. Regular feedback must be provided to all stakeholders involved to ensure that recognition is given to participants and that the principles of reciprocity are adhered to, this can be regulated by the Faculty CE committees (provision is made on the data base for this).
- 1.4 Engagement activities should be evaluated by community partners and evidence of feedback is important as part of the reciprocity principle.
- 1.5 Quality assessment, risk management and impact assessment should be conducted by relevant management structures at the CE committee in conjunctions with the support unit for CE.
- 1.6 Fundraising for CE activities will be done in compliance with the rules regulating the specific aspect of CE fundraising in the Development and Fundraising Policy and in collaboration with the Fundraising Committee of the University.
- 1.7 For the purpose of promotions, applicants' CE activities must reflect of the Faculty's CE database and be informed by portfolios of evidence.
- 1.8 To facilitate science communication efforts aimed at disseminating research findings to broader society when conducting research, faculties must compile participants

contact information, encompassing email addresses, phone numbers and other communication channels such as LinkedIn profiles, Facebook, Instagram and X (Twitter) handles. Membership of community partners to the CE Stakeholder's relations forum is encouraged to facilitate this process.

2. Reporting processes

- 2.1 Each Faculty/Department has a Deputy Dean or Co-ordinator responsible for CE. Faculties has a committee that is headed by the Executive Dean/Deputy Dean/delegated staff member for CE (this may be linked to additional tasks depending on the size of the Faculty and the name of the committee will be unique to the role it has been designated within the faculty)
- 2.2 This committee determines terms of reference as for the Faculty, with the purpose of regulating and reporting on all activities as describes above as CE. The committees consist of representatives within the Faculty that can report on both engaged research/innovation and engaged teaching and learning activities and services in the faculties (although there may be other tasks depending on its designated role). While outreach/philanthropic/volunteerism can be appropriate for specific circumstances, this is not encouraged as it does not stimulate scholarship engagement, as it is usually uni-directional, and we are trying to pursue a mutually beneficial relationship wherein both parties benefit. If the circumstances are such that such activities is the intention, the implementation of project management, governance and the debriefing of students and staff using reflection methodologies is recommended.
- 2.3 Faculty CE Committees will have oversight over the implementation of a CE strategy as determined by the Faculty Management Committee and aligned with the APP and the relevant CE goal.
- 2.4 All new CE projects are signed off by the School/Unit CE committee and recorded to a central NWU CE database.
- 2.5 During this process each project will be allocated a unique number and will be required to report to the Faculty CE Committee in terms of progress at least twice a year
- 2.6 The Chairperson of the CE Committee will be responsible to report on all CE activities per Faculty and manage the strategy for CE as aligned to the Faculty's overall strategy.
- 2.7 The general data base for CE will be maintained by the support unit – Sustainability and Community Impact (SCI) and will be updated according to reports received from faculties.
- 2.8 SCI will also in collaboration with faculties do impact measurement annually.
- 2.9 SCI should oversee the implementation of the engagement strategy by faculties, and provide the necessary links with other University units/departments, which are implementing the strategy. (See service level agreement with SCI on web).
- 2.10 Community Engagement Meetings take place according to the terms of reference (TOR) approved at SCRI and Senate.
- 2.11 Community engagement activities are reported via SCRI to Senate.
- 2.12 The Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) and Faculty Teaching & Learning Support would support academics who wish to include engagement principles in the curriculum and develop SL and WIL as engagement curriculum strategies.

3. Supplementary background to NWU's CE approach

3.1 Introduction

The North-West University is keenly aware of its social responsibility and the need for social justice. It endeavours to engage with all the relevant communities or stakeholders within the ambit of its activities; but does this primarily through that which emanates from its core business, thereby bringing the results stemming from the process of research and innovation and teaching-learning to the engaged communities in a more direct manner, thus benefiting society through knowledge gathering and facilitation.

The term community service or outreach suggests acts of philanthropy and a paternalistic attitude, CHE and HEQC decided to use the term knowledge-based community service to refer to CE, including service learning, (3,4). In 2004 CHE defined CE or "service in higher education as an overarching strategy..." in relation to community development priorities," (3, 8 and 9). Note that CHE refers to the expectation that HEIs, first, contribute to the reconstruction and development of civil society and, second, promote scholarly activity.

Through the 'scholarship of engagement', the University strives to attain the status of an 'engaged institution' and, in so doing, to emanate the model as proposed by Boyer in 1990, (2). During an Indaba held in 2014 it was decided that the principle of integrating CE into core business is essential and should not be considered a third activity and henceforth academic staff will be expected to principally do engaged teaching and engaged research. The NWU's "success model for 2025" articulates the need to ensure interdependence and the integration of the three core functions of the University, i.e. teaching and learning, research and community engagement. This policy is purposed to ensure alignment with national government policy frameworks as articulated in the criteria set out by the Council on Higher Education (CHE) in order to maintain its accreditation and registration, and the CHE evaluates HEIs on three activities, namely: (i) teaching and learning; (ii) research; (iii) and engagement. Criterion 18 of the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) requires the integration of service/engagement with the curriculum and the provision of sufficient resources to execute this mandate.

3.2 National policies and the higher education sector

The Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC) Founding Document (3), the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training, 2013, (4), the National Development Plan 2030, (5) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, (6) and the African Union's Agenda 2063, (7) vision promote the idea that engagement in various forms has become an integral part of the work of universities in South Africa.

4. Engaged Research and/Innovation

4.1 Research/Innovation-related forms of engagement (mostly for-profit)

Some of the University's engagement activities are 'for-profit', while many services are 'not-for-profit'. Research/innovation-related forms of engagement (mostly for-profit) encompass consultations, contract research/innovations, internal corporate ventures, associate/subsidiary companies and technology licencing. There should be a clear distinction between CE activities and business development and commercialisation, if business development and commercialisation possibilities develop within CE it will adhere to CE principles and can be identified as such, it must be compared with the requirements as set-out in the Research and Innovation Policy. Engaged Research (ER) is defined as a collaborative process between the researcher and community partner that creates and disseminates knowledge and innovation with the goal of contributing to a discipline and strengthening the well-being of the community.

4.2 **Mostly, ‘for-non-profit’ research activities are conducted in collaboration with external community partners.**

Focus by and large on addressing broader needs in society and barely succeeding in recovering costs. The relevance of research to the broader society must contribute to social justice. (CE cannot always be provided ‘free of charge’ as the mutually beneficial principle must be applied). In this type of research, the inputs of the community are participatory on nature and must be negotiated and valued – a methodology which is supported by an array of techniques aimed at ensuring reciprocity and partnerships. New knowledge is generated collaboratively and shared widely in the public domains. To ensure sustainability in CE activities the relationships should be mutually beneficial and planned with all parties contributing to the process. The ‘sustainable livelihood approach’ provides a framework to enable this. Partners can contribute time and other resources and not necessarily funding. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) and Impact measurement enhances the quality of activities and generates new knowledge.

4.2.1 This form of Engaged Research ‘ER’, sometimes also referred to (but not limited to) as Participatory Action Research (PAR) (there are many established research methodologies that can be used to ensure fair participation and recognition of community contributions in the literature), falls well within the ambit of CE and has the potential to feed back into the curriculum as well as to be linked directly to aspects of a student’s training.

4.2.2 In some instances, ER could be one phenomenon often found within communities, when the research is done on a particular challenge or phenomenon and is then termed community-based research (CBR). Here, too, the principle of respectful and ethical access to and inclusion of communities with feedback is essential. Even though the use of participatory methods to conduct this type of research is not a required premise, researchers nevertheless often resort to these techniques. Before communities can be included in any type of CBR, though, access to such communities must be negotiated in line with validated ethical principles. These principles will be governed by the policy and guidelines for ethics.

Special provision must be made to ensure feedback to broader society of the knowledge generated, not only through formal scientific channels but also through professional community service and popular (public) communication. It is advised to utilise planned M&E for the management of contingencies where possible and measure impact in order to facilitate sustainable interventions that supports growth and development. (See key definitions below).

5. **Engaged teaching and learning**

Teaching and Learning-related CE activities, all of which are mostly not-for-profit, include professional community services and outreach, as well as developmental activities with a recruitment focus. It is essential to supplement T&L via subsidised development engagement which involves Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) and Service-Learning (SL).

5.1 **Professional community services and discipline-based outreach** include advice and sharing of expertise as well as similar but voluntary and uncompensated activities provided under the auspices of the University.

It encompasses those activities where the institution places its resources, services and expertise at the disposal of the public outside the context of the institution’s teaching and learning and research programmes and that are generally sponsored and controlled by the institution itself. These include activities organised and carried out to provide general community services, excluding instructional activities. Examples are discipline-based general advisory services or extension, members serving on advisory boards and editorial committees, consultation services offered free of charge; testing

services offered free of charge (e.g. soil testing, carbon dating, structural testing, etc); sport outreach programmes; putting the institution's facilities/equipment or services at the disposal of external bodies or individuals free of charge for formal instruction purposes of students).

Developmental recruitment falls under this rubric and is aimed more directly at learners with a view to attracting them to the University. The impact is wide-ranging, though, and not restricted to potential students but study opportunities and subject selection at school level which are also included within the marketing activities of the NWU. This includes activities in the field of sports development, teacher- development and science and engineering weeks (mostly funded by the University) as well as leadership development programmes for professionals sponsored but free of charge for participants and at low or no cost to the University.

5.2 **Subsidised Developmental CE** refers to the priority that is afforded to the transfer of knowledge to and enhancing the learning experiences of students, in this regard, processes that encourage civil responsibility amongst students by exposing them to the realities of society in preparation for their participation in a democratic society are important. Subsidised developmental CE aims, therefore, to add value to the development of students' critical thinking skills and other soft skills in synergy with teaching and research, thus contributing to their preparation for active participation as South African citizens in their future careers. The term encompasses the somewhat limited notion of SL, while simultaneously taking other service-oriented academic and non-academic community interactions into account. An example would be the prescribed practical experience as is sometimes required by professional councils such as WIL in the community or at private sector institutions, it also allows the University to give expression to alternative forms of social responsiveness through curricular activities in the form of service to the community which go beyond standard practical courses and which, in some cases, include WIL taking place in communities, the word "subsidised" is used to indicate that some of the costs incurred are recovered from class fees. (Refer to Work-Integrated Learning and Service- Learning Guidelines).

5.3 **Voluntary skills transfer** is where a skill is shared or transfers without any instruction from the University, but where this transfer takes place in the name of the University – for example students or staff who volunteer to train learners in after-school maths classes at their church. (another example would be extra classes that are run by "the University's students or staff"). If there is no academic oversight, it is volunteerism. If it is regulated by academic oversight and students are evaluated for curricular purposes, it is Service-Learning. (See the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy of the NWU and the Service-Learning Guidelines).

6. Volunteerism/Outreach/Philanthropic activities

These are additional services by staff and students to assist communities in need, especially, the local communities in which the University's campuses are based and are also a form of engagement, this includes voluntary-based 'enablement/ empowerment/ development/discipline and non-discipline-based outreach' activities such as services that are short-term, repetitive and mostly philanthropic in nature and that are not always regulated by the University. Such activities are guided by the needs of the society and not the university. Any formal linkage with the NWU will require adherence to general rules of engagement.

Responsibilities of the Student Volunteer: Student volunteers are expected to abide by the University policies and procedures and external regulations that govern their actions, including but not limited to those relating to ethical behaviour, safety, confidentiality, protected

health information, computer use, financial responsibility, and drug use. Volunteering activities can easily be changed into Service-Learning experiences if a process of reflection is included into the activities.

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7. Definitions of key terms and concepts

7.1 Community Engagement (CE)

CE is defined as activities performed by the staff and students, primarily aimed at uplifting or supporting society and or individuals in need of assistance or engagement. Community Engagement is a process, function or programme used by the University which integrates teaching and learning, research, innovation, outreach/volunteerism in partnership with communities to advance social responsiveness and an ethic of care.

CE as a core function of the University exists to nurture and manage partnerships with communities, the intention being to facilitate cooperation between various communities and the University, as well as to provide the means whereby both parties can actively discover knowledge, teach and learn from one another in a reciprocal, mutual beneficial manner.

It is envisaged that this will continue towards creating an environment in which student learning and research relevance will be enriched. In this way, the institution's commitment to reciprocate, redress, develop and transform will be supported.

Clearly, interactions where the University is contracted to do research or provide services where there is no evidence of reciprocity – do not satisfy the above definition of CE. To aid the distinction between a CE activity and any other activity that purely relates to teaching, learning and research, the following criteria ought to be applied to determine whether an activity meets the prerequisites for true CE:

- The activity should be linked interactively to an identifiable group in a community outside/inside the institutions.
- Interaction should be actively linked to identifiable needs of both the University and the community; in other words, a clear benefit for both the community and the University must have been identified.
- The interaction should be a sustained activity conducted within a mutually defined relationship/partnership.
- The interaction is not designed to exclusively create an income for the University.

Based on the above criteria, clearly, exclusive teaching and research activities that do not include a reciprocal community component cannot be regarded as CE. Consequently, to satisfy these criteria, those learning activities where students in a module are required to conduct community-based research should involve activities where the students or academics actually engage with the community by undertaking activities in conjunctions with and within the very midst of the community.

7.1 Communities

Communities range from the University's internal community, such as its staff and students, to an array of external communities (e.g. "communities of interest" and/or "communities of practice") in the public and private sectors and can be found either locally, nationally or internationally.

Definition: The term “community” signifies a social grouping of society involved in an interaction at any given moment.

Community therefore refers to groups of people united by a common location, or to groups of people who are linked intellectually, professionally and/or politically. In other words, they could be geographic communities, communities of interest and/or communities of practice. This broad definition allows the University to focus on marginalised groupings in society without having to exclude other community formations and their activities. The community is therefore any group within society that will benefit from the sharing of the knowledge vested within the NWU academic staff and the research produced by the University in any way possible and the provision of access to this knowledge and its relevance will contribute to social justice.

The integration of CE into the core business shows all forms of engagement, although some activities are “for-profit” and some for “non-profit”. We encourage engagement in all forms but wish to build our ‘not-for-profit’ sharing of expertise encompassing the principles of reciprocity in order to ensure that we comply to the development imperatives of government as stated within the National Development Plan and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and in that way becoming an Engaged University.

7.2 Scholarship of Engagement (SOE)

The term redefines Faculty scholarly work from application of academic expertise to community engaged scholarship that involves the Faculty member in a reciprocal partnership with the community, is interdisciplinary, and integrates Faculty roles of teaching, research and service. While there is a variation in current terminology (public scholarship, scholarship of engagement, community-engaged scholarship), engaged scholarship is defined by the collaboration between academics and individuals outside the academy – knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.

“The scholarship of engagement includes explicitly democratic dimensions of encouraging the participation of non-academics in ways that enhance and broaden engagement and deliberation about major social issues inside and outside the University. It seeks to facilitate a more active and engaged democracy by bringing affected publics into the problem-solving work in ways that advance the public good with and not merely for the public,”

<https://gov.viu.ca/sites/default/files/definitiionsofscholarship.pdf>

The Engaged University

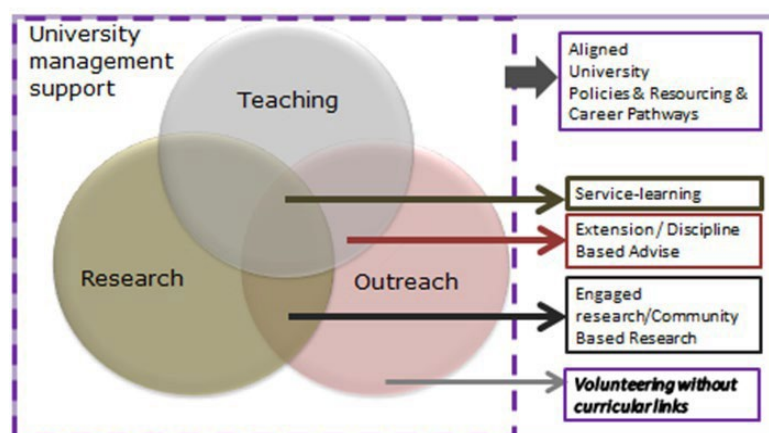


Figure 1: A simplified depiction of activities conducive to becoming an engaged University.

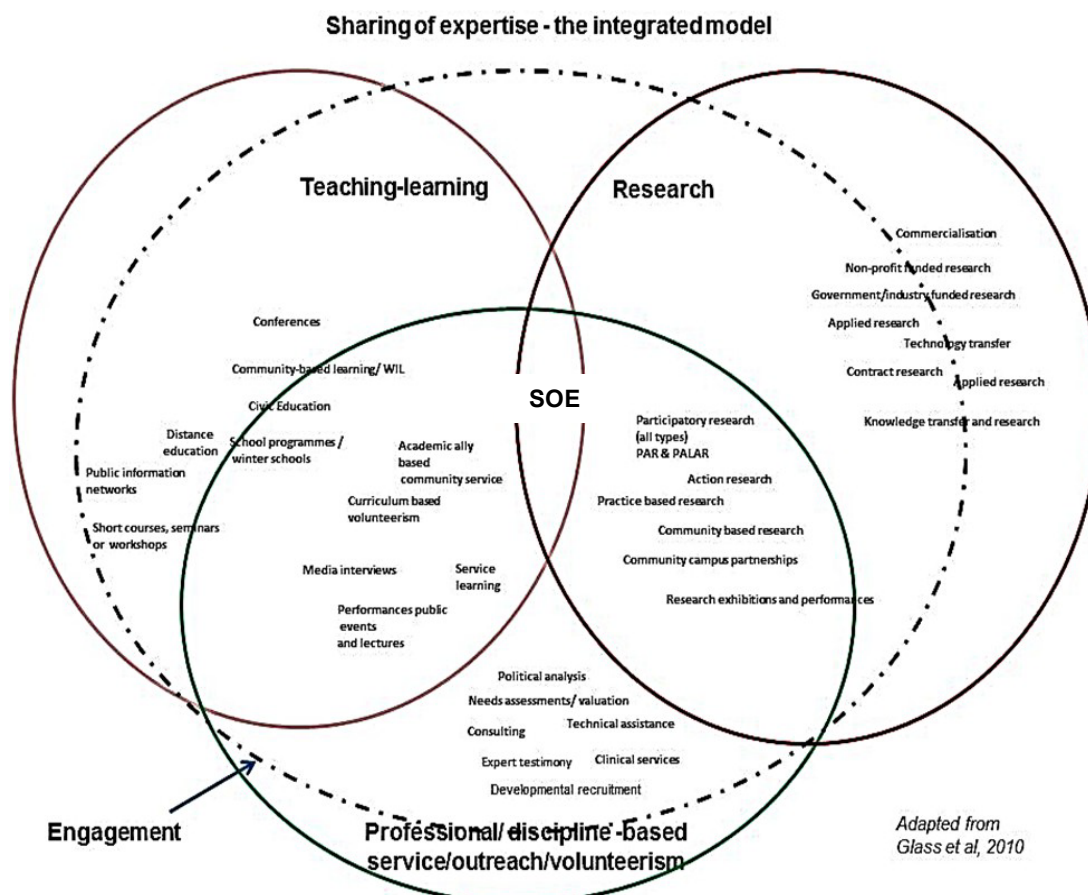


Figure 2: Sharing of expertise - the integrated model.

*SOE = Scholarship of Engagement

Figure 2 explains the various categories of sharing of expertise found within the context of the University and levels of integration with CE. It is important to note from this figure, that there may be ‘outreach-type or service’ activities done for the advancement of the University exclusively or ‘for-profit’ which is bordering on CE, if this is unclear apply the Principle of Reciprocity. This means that the University can advance its core business outcomes and serve its community in obtaining social justice.

7.3 Monitoring and Evaluation

The development of a theory of change (clearly stating the final goals that all the partners wish to achieve) against which impacts (change) should be measured, and a log frame model report activities against (e.g. inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes/impact) to monitor the implementation/execution of the theory of change and manage contingencies. Intended and unintended outcomes or impacts must also be reported.

7.4 Impact evaluation

Impact evaluation is an assessment of if and how the intervention being evaluated affects the outcomes and if these effects are intended or unintended.

7.5 Social Justice

“Social justice is a concept of fair and just relations between the individual and society, as measures by the distribution of wealth, opportunities for personal activity, and social privileges”.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_justice

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