COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH POLICY

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1. PREFACE

The Policy: Community Engagement and Outreach operates within the vision of the University of South Africa (UNISA), as part of its 2015 Agenda for Transformation, namely: "Towards the African university in the service of humanity". This vision encapsulates the University's desire as a higher education institution to connect with society.

Furthermore, the UNISA Strategic Plan 2015 addresses the issue of community engagement and outreach in the objective: 'Utilise the resources and capacities of the University in community development initiatives, and collaborative partnerships'.[1]

The document states:

"Sound community development entails leveraging our knowledge and skills to the benefit of communities and improving our research, teaching and learning for staff and students as a result".[2]

The focus here is clearly on academically-based community engagement: the use of the University's teaching and research competence to build mutually beneficial relationships with various communities in areas of discipline strength and community needs. The goal is service to the community, on the one hand, and student experiential learning, the enrichment of academic discourse and the creation of new knowledge, on the other. The community gains access to University resources, awareness of its needs and assistance in addressing needs. The students learn from experience, apply their knowledge, explore career possibilities, become more aware of community needs and learn how to do research. There is also a social benefit namely, encouraging democratic values and civic and community responsibility.

Community engagement is a "… strategy in the transformation of higher education in relation to community development priorities"[3] by using the expertise of UNISA in the areas of teaching and research to address issues relevant to these priorities to the mutual benefit of the community and the University. The community engagement component of the Community Engagement and Outreach Policy of UNISA is based on the definition of the Council on Higher Education in its Criteria for Institutional Audits[4]:

> Initiatives and processes through which the expertise of the higher education institution in the areas of teaching and research is applied to address issues relevant to its community. Community engagement typically finds expression in a variety of forms, ranging from informal and relatively unstructured activities to formal and structured academic programmes addressed at particular community needs (i.e. service learning programmes).

Community outreach refers to the voluntary outreach to communities by academics, and other University employees, alumni or students in response to the social, economic and political needs of communities. This is a one-way initiative from the University, its students and alumni, to communities.

2. AIMS

The aims of the policy are to:

- Clarify what we mean by community engagement and outreach

- Integrate curriculum-based community engagement within the teaching, learning and research activities of UNISA

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[1] Unisa Strategic Plan 2015, 2005:17
[2] See note 1
[3] CHE 2004b:130
[4] 2004a:24

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- Nurture existing community engagement and outreach activities and promote new ones

- Establish sustainable quality co-operative partnerships with communities

- Raise awareness of the University community regarding community engagement and outreach, and disseminate what is best practice regarding community engagement and outreach

- Promote the recognition of the scholarship of community engagement as a valid pedagogy

- Facilitate collaborative research with communities

- Regulate community engagement and outreach in UNISA

- Establish broad principles for planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating community engagement and outreach activities

- Set up or streamline mechanisms/structures to promote, record and coordinate community engagement and outreach in UNISA.

3. DEFINITIONS

Academic citizenship	refers to the voluntary participation of academic/professional employees in university structures/committees on various levels – centre/institute/bureau/department, school, college and in the University. For example: being a member of the Executive Committee of Senate.
	It also includes contributions relevant to the discipline expertise of the academic/professional employees when the knowledge is used within the University. For instance, someone from the College of Economic and Management Sciences serving on UNISA's Retirement Fund as trustee where his/her financial expertise could be applied when investment decisions must be made.
	It also includes the involvement of employees with professional, national and international boards/bodies related to their discipline expertise.
Community	refers to communities, in terms of community engagement, which are "specific, … collective groups' that are 'partners' with a 'full say' in that they identify their needs, 'participate in defining the service-learning and development outcomes; identify the relevant assets that they have in place; evaluate the impact; and contribute substantially to the mutual search for sustainable solutions to challenges'[5]
	Communities seen in terms of community outreach and services could also include less structured groups that may not be able to identify their needs;
Community engagement	refers to "Initiatives and processes through which the expertise of the institution in the areas of teaching and research are applied to address issues relevant to its community. Community engagement typically finds expression in a variety of forms, ranging from informal and

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[5] CHE 2006:16

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relatively unstructured activities to formal and structured academic programmes addressed at particular community needs… and some projects might be conducive towards the creation of a better environment for community engagement and others might be directly related to teaching and research"[6]

Community engagement is a two-way relationship in which the University forms partnerships with the community that yield beneficial outcomes such as productive research outcomes, human capital development and the development of cultural and intellectual assets for the community[7];

Community outreach	refers to the voluntary outreach to communities by academics, University employees, alumni or students in response to the social, economic and political needs of communities. This is a one-way initiative from the University, its students and alumni to communities;
Community participation	See definition of community engagement
Curriculum-based or curricular community engagement	is the "teaching, learning, and scholarship, which engage academic staff, students, and the community (service sectors) in mutually beneficial and respectful collaboration. Their interactions address community identified goals or needs, deepen students' civic and academic learning, enhance the well-being of the community, and enrich the scholarship of the institution"[8];
Service	In the context of social transformation "service" at a higher education institution can be defined as "social accountability and responsiveness to development challenges through the key functions of teaching and research in close cooperation with communities and the service sector. On the one hand, this encompasses making available the institutions' intellectual competence and infrastructure to improve service delivery. On the other hand, it is a focused modification and contextualisation of what is taught, learnt and researched"[9];
Service-sector	refers to "Any sector responsible for service-delivery in or to a community. This includes the public sector at national, provincial and local level, as well as the private sector. At the community level it can also include Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs), Faith-based Organisations (FBOs) and Community-based Organisations (CBOs)"[10];
Service learning programmes (or community engagement learning programmes)	describe "In service learning programmes students are engaged in activities where both the community, as well as the students are primary beneficiaries. The goals are to provide a service to the community and to enhance student learning. It is characterised by reciprocity, mutual enrichment and integration with scholarly activities"[11] According to

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[6]   Criteria for Institutional Audits, HEQC, 2004:19
[7]   Langworthy 2005
[8]   Policy of Community Engagement, Faculty of Education, 2006:4
[9]   Policy on Community Engagement, Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria 2006:3
[10]   Policy of Community Engagement, Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria 2006:4
[11]   Council for Higher Education 2004b:132

Fourie[12] community service learning takes place when "students learn to address real societal problems by using scientific knowledge gained in their courses".

Lazarus[13] defines service learning as "an experiential teaching methodology that combines community service with student learning in a reciprocal manner";

UNISA communities   refer to UNISA as an international university which has a variety of communities: local, regional, national, African and international; students and alumni; employer bodies; professional organisations; business; science; distance education and open distance learning communities. There are also communities in the social, economical, political and environmental spheres. The term "UNISA communities" thus refers to any group associated with UNISA.

4. PRINCIPLES

4.1 Principles regarding community engagement and outreach

4.1.1 The sustainability of community engagement and outreach programmes is a priority.

4.1.2 Community engagement and outreach projects must be well planned in order to be effective. Transient incursions into communities could be disruptive or they could place a burden on the community or UNISA.

4.1.3 Preference must be given to national issues. However, given the international space the University occupies, the needs of our African and international students and communities must also be attended to.

4.1.4 The initiator of an academic programme, research project or outreach initiative retains ownership after appropriate approval has been obtained.

4.1.5 The Directorate: Community Engagement and Outreach will focus on the management, coordination, facilitation, recognition and record keeping of community engagement and outreach programmes/projects.

4.2 Principles regarding community engagement

4.2.1 Community engagement is a core function of the University, together with teaching and research.

4.2.2 Community engagement must promote the social, environmental, economic and cultural development of communities.

4.2.3 Community engagement must promote the mutually beneficial interaction between UNISA and communities. There should thus be collaboration on the development of academic programmes and research projects by all stakeholders.

4.2.4 Community engagement is an integral part of teaching (formal and non-formal), learning and research.

4.2.5 Community engagement is a scholarly activity that must enrich and contextualise the curriculum and research. "Engagement scholarship is the
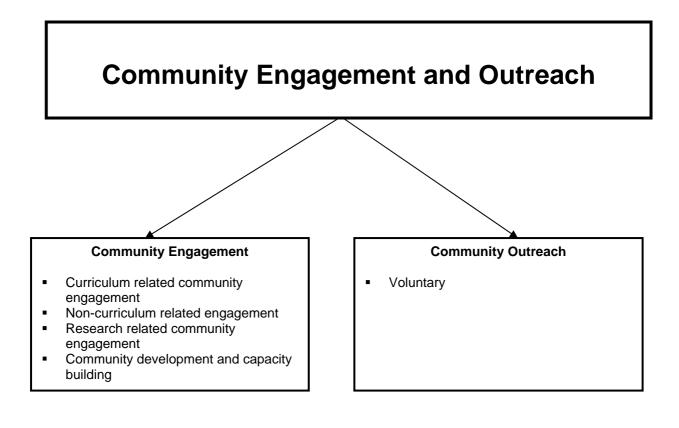
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[12] 2006:10
[13] 2006:1

knowledge, discovery, integration, application, and teaching that results from university-community collaborations" [14]

4.2.6 Community engagement must promote contextualised, relevant teaching and learning.

4.2.7 For community engagement to be an integrated part of tuition, curriculum planning must be undertaken in consultation with the community.

4.2.8 Collaboration and partnerships are the cornerstones of community engagement.

4.2.9 Relationship building is a core principle in all community engagement initiatives. The University must develop relationships with local and regional authorities, governmental and non-governmental agencies, civic/community-based organisations and other UNISA communities.

4.2.10 Planned and resourced community engagement must enhance the relevance of UNISA's curricula and research agenda.

4.2.11 The national funding framework for Higher Education does not make provision for the funding of community engagement separately from teaching and research. This shortfall in the funding framework and a lack of national policy pertaining to community engagement hamper the progress towards the integration of community engagement activities into UNISA's operating systems. UNISA will determine institutional parameters to monitor and evaluate community engagement initiatives. These parameters, once approved, should form the basis of incorporating community engagement into the strategic resource allocation model, as well as the personnel formula to ensure the allocation of adequate resources. This alignment with institutional planning instruments will ensure that UNISA is committed to the establishment of a community engagement regime in the University.

4.2.12 All community engagement projects must be needs-focused/driven. The development priorities of communities must be aligned with the needs of UNISA in terms of teaching, learning and research. Each academic programme or research project will require unique and contextually appropriate actions in terms of needs analysis and asset mapping.

4.2.13 Student learning in community engagement academic programmes must be assessed, especially in terms of the link between theory and practice. Students' critical reflections on their experiences must inform curricula changes.

4.2.14 Community engagement in teaching (formal and non-formal) and its impact must be evaluated every year.

4.2.15 After the completion of a research project that involves community engagement, the effectiveness of community engagement must be evaluated.

4.3 Principles regarding community outreach

4.3.1 Community outreach is not seen as a core function of the University.

4.3.2 The effectiveness of community outreach must be evaluated and reported on by taking into consideration how UNISA's image is enhanced by the outreach initiative as well as its impact on the community.

4.3.3 Services rendered to communities in outreach initiatives must be monitored by the department/centre/institute/region involved.

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[14] Baker 2001:12

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH TYPOLOGY

Community Engagement and Outreach

Community Engagement	**Community Outreach**
▪ Curriculum related community engagement ▪ Non-curriculum related engagement ▪ Research related community engagement ▪ Community development and capacity building	▪ Voluntary

UNISA

Two-way interaction

Community

UNISA

One-way initiative from UNISA

Community

5.1 Community engagement

Community engagement is a two-way interaction between the University and a community in which the University forms partnerships with the community that yield beneficial outcomes for both the community and the University.

Community engagement can be conceptualised as a continuum 'determined by two important distinctions:

(1)   Who the primary beneficiaries of the service are (i.e. community or student); and

(2)   What the primary goal of the service is (i.e. community service or student learning)'[15]

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[15]   CHE 2004b:130

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5.1.1 Curriculum related community engagement

This includes formal, accredited programmes or modules (national certificates, diplomas and degrees), as well as credit bearing short learning programmes of which the purpose is service learning. In service learning programmes, students are engaged in activities where both the community, as well as the students are primary beneficiaries. The goals are to provide a service to the community and to enhance student learning. It is characterised by reciprocity, mutual enrichment and integration with scholarly activities. It enriches the scholarship of academic employees in the institution. Experiential learning, internships and learnerships leading to formal, registered qualifications fall in this category.

5.1.2 Non-curriculum related community engagement

This entails the professional involvement of employees in community engagement initiatives where the community benefits from the engagement, as well as the employees. The community engagement initiatives are not linked to a curriculum, or to research. Employees apply their expertise of their discipline to community development initiatives. Knowledge of employees is enhanced due to their experiences in the community. However, there is no direct financial gain for employees. Being paid an honorarium or reimbursement for expenses should not disqualify an activity as being non-curriculum related community engagement. However, this honorarium or reimbursement should be disclosed.

5.1.3 Research-related community engagement

This is the advancement of scientific knowledge because of community engagement. The community is involved as a partner and the University's research capacity is used to address community problems. Engaged research must result in knowledge transfer and exchange, and/or the improvement of communities. Furthermore, through engaged research significant social and economic benefits could result. Engaged research can be opportunity-driven or demand-driven[16]. Thus research-related community engagement includes research programmes with a community engagement focus.

5.1.4 Community development and capacity building

This entails the development of skills and knowledge of individuals in order to address specific needs of communities, resulting in capacity building. Short learning programmes (credit-bearing and non-credit-bearing) with social developmental or capacity building (skills programmes) aims, fall in this category.

5.2 Community outreach

This is the voluntary outreach to communities by academics, University employees, alumni or students in response to the social, economic and political needs of communities. This is a one-way initiative from the University, its students and alumni to communities.

6. RELEVANT POLICIES

This Policy acknowledges that there are several policies in UNISA already approved by Council, or in the planning stage that are relevant to community engagement and outreach. They are:

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[16] Australian Universities Community Engagement Alliance 2006

- Tuition Policy
- Research Policy
- Policy on Grants from the Research Funds
- Policy: Short Learning Programme (Non- formal Tuition)
- Work-Integrated Learning Policy
- International Relations and Partnerships Policy
- Policy on Research Ethics
- Draft SRC Community Participation Policy
- Draft Learnerships Policy

The aim of this policy is to facilitate links between existing policies, not to duplicate or infringe on them.

7.   QUALITY ASSURANCE

7.1   Quality-related arrangements for community engagement must be formalised and integrated with those of teaching, learning and research.

7.2   The Directorate: Community Engagement and Outreach, in collaboration with Colleges, Directorates, Regions and Departments in UNISA, must develop procedures and mechanisms for the quality assurance of community engagement and outreach initiatives.

7.3   Approval of new formal academic programmes/modules that involve community engagement must follow the approval route of formal academic programmes/modules (School Tuition Committee, College Tuition Committee, College Board) with approval by Senate. After approval, the new programme/module that involves community engagement must be submitted to the Directorate: Community Engagement and Outreach for inclusion in the database.

7.4   Credit bearing short learning programmes involving community engagement must follow the approval route of short learning programmes. Approval is granted by the Executive Committee of Senate (Senex).

Non-credit bearing short learning programmes (workshop and seminars) involving community engagement must follow the approval route of workshops and seminars. They are approved by the Executive Dean of the relevant College. After approval, it must be submitted to the Directorate: Community Engagement and Outreach for inclusion in the database, as well as to the Director: Short Learning Programmes, Learnerships, Centres, Institutes and Bureaus.

7.5   Research proposals involving community engagement must be submitted to the Research Committee/Ethics Review Committee of the appropriate research entity (e.g. Department/ School/College) for approval. After approval, the research proposal must be submitted to the Directorate: Community Engagement and Outreach for inclusion in the database.

7.6   A new community outreach project must be approved by the Head/Chairperson/Director of the Department/Centre/Institute/Bureau. After approval, the outreach project must be submitted to the Directorate: Community Engagement and Outreach for inclusion in the database.

8.   FINANCES

8.1   Community engagement

8.1.1   The finances of short learning programmes that involve curriculum related community engagement and those aimed at community development and

capacity building are governed by the Policy: Short Learning Programme (Non-formal Tuition).

8.1.2 Finances of formal academic programmes and research projects that involve community engagement are governed by the relevant UNISA policies for formal tuition and research.

8.1.3 In non-curriculum related community engagement, employees do not gain financially by their involvement with communities. However, if employees gain financially (e.g. through consultation work) then this activity must not be perceived as non-curriculum related community engagement and cannot be recorded as such.

8.2 Community outreach

Colleges/Regions/Directorates/Departments that plan community outreach initiatives must budget for these. Community outreach initiatives must be funded from the approved budgets.

9. DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH PROGRAMMES

9.1 Conceptualisation phase

The following are some of the processes that are important in the conceptualisation phase:

- Determine community needs using an appropriate methodology or response to expressed needs.

- Work through local agencies, identify partners and build a team from a diverse group in which constituents hold their own values, capacities, power and expectations.

- Develop the curriculum or working document in collaboration with relevant community leaders, local authorities and service agencies to ensure that the programme meets the perceived needs and in so doing, integrate the theory of the discipline with the service provided.

- Structure time for critical reflection on theory and practice to predict whether learning from experiences will be achieved.

- Conduct a feasibility study: finances, resources, logistics, sustainability, etc.

9.2 Implementation phase

The following considerations are important in the implementation phase:

- Prepare students to participate in the programme, for instance by training them in negotiation techniques, appropriate research methods, etc.

- Prepare the community through consultation with community leaders.

- Arrange mentorship, feedback and evaluation of students.

- Align initiatives and community needs.

- Undertake logistical and resource planning and allocation, for example calculate costs to students for travel; take measures to ensure safety of students on site, etc.

10.   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

10.1   All UNISA community engagement and outreach initiatives must be characterised by the spirit of the following ethical principles:

- Respect for the community
- Equal balance of power
- Integrity
- Service-orientation (see UNISA Service Charter)
- Striving towards the common good
- Collaboration

10.2   Professional ethical codes that normally apply to a professional within his/her field of expertise will also apply in community engagement and outreach.

10.3   Students and employees are bound by this policy and other relevant policies as well as a code of conduct for working in communities.

10.4   The Policy on Research Ethics applies to all community engagement and outreach endeavours.

11.   IMPACT

11.1   The impact of community engagement and outreach must be determined and reported on annually by the institution in consultation with relevant internal and external stakeholders. The DCEO must interpret the findings in the reports and take the necessary actions.

11.2   The following are some of the criteria that could be used in the evaluation:

- Partner satisfaction with the process and results
- Number and nature of projects according to the typology (see point 5), as well as the number of students/communities involved and the nature of involvement
- Student satisfaction
- Community satisfaction
- Benefits for UNISA
- Geographic areas impacted
- Number of courses that include work-integrated learning (WIL) and/or service learning
- Number of students in service-learning programmes or WIL and/or service learning
- Number of research projects with a community engagement focus, as well as the nature of the research projects
- Number of students involved in research projects with a community engagement focus, as well as the nature of the research projects
- Number of employees involved in community outreach programmes and the nature of involvement
- Number of employees involved in community engagement programmes according to typology, as well as the nature of involvement
- Number of employees engaged in research with a community engagement focus as well as the nature of involvement
- Number of employees/students voluntarily involved with community outreach
- Changes to the quality of life of communities as a result of community engagement and outreach
- Changes to quality of learning and research.

## 12.	DIRECTORATE: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH (DCEO)

12.1	The Directorate: Community Engagement and Outreach is responsible for:

- coordinating and managing Unisa's community engagement and outreach initiatives.

- promoting and communicating UNISA's community engagement and outreach initiatives.

12.2	The Directorate: Community Engagement and Outreach should assist:

- with networking and liaising with communities where possible.

- in establishing partnerships with stakeholders to enable the linkage of resources with communities where possible.

- Colleges/Departments/Directorates/Regional Centres with community engagement and outreach initiatives where possible.

12.3	The Directorate: Community Engagement and Outreach must maintain a database of all community engagement academic programmes and research projects, as well as community outreach initiatives.

## 13.	REVIEW AND REVISION

The Vice-Principal: Academic and Research is responsible for initiating the review of this policy every third year according to the Policy: Policy Formulation.

## 14.	IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY

Related policies of the former institutions that were in force prior to the commencement of this Policy are replaced with effect from the date on which Council approves this Policy.

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