



University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY



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UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

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1. Preamble

Globally there is a realisation that institutions of higher learning should engage more closely with the communities within which they are situated. The Talloires Declaration (2005) adopted by a number of Higher Education institutions states “We pledge to promote shared and universal human values and the engagement by our institutions within our communities and with our global neighbours”.

Higher Education has three core functions as defined by the White Paper on Transformation of Higher Education, 1997. These three functions are:

- i) Teaching and Learning
- ii) Research
- iii) Community Engagement

The white Paper on Transformation of Higher Education clearly states that “one of the goals of higher education is to promote and develop social responsibility and awareness among students of the role of higher education in social and economic development through community service programmes”.

The University of Fort Hare mission and vision undertakes to ensure that teaching and research excellence is at the service not only of its students and scholars but the **wider community**. The university commits itself in its mission statement, to the “advancement of knowledge that is socially and ethically relevant, and applying that knowledge to the scientific, technological and social-economic development of our **nation and the wider world**”.

UFH Vision Statement: “The University of Fort Hare is a vibrant, equitable and sustainable African university committed to teaching and research excellence at the service of its students, scholars and the wider community”.

The university has always seen itself as an institution that builds upon its unique historical leadership role and rural location to provide an attractive and enriching educational service to its graduates and scholars to become meaningful and critical participants in the social, economic and political development of society. *With the incorporation of the East London campus in 2004 the rural location has had an addition of an urban component*

An underlying theme of this raison d’être infers an assertion of UFH’s predominantly rural location as a strategic advantage to focus on programmes responding to local and regional development needs.

The University of Fort Hare views a community in its broadest sense but ensuring local relevance. Therefore, service, partnerships or any form of engagement with stakeholders other than internal university stakeholders will be considered to be community engagement. Global and local interactions will, therefore, be taken to be community interactions. This is based on the fact that knowledge production, generation, application and dissemination for a university, has to have universal dimensions.

2. Definitions

For the purposes of this Policy, the following definition of terms shall be applicable

2.1. Community

A community in the context of this policy is any group or organization of people outside the internal university stakeholders. It may be the immediate community around the locality of the university or local municipality, district, province, the country, continent or wider world as reflected in our mission statement.

2.2. Community Engagement

Community engagement at UFH refers to all negotiated and dynamic partnerships between the university and the community it serves, which is practiced through varied initiatives focused on the interlace of research, teaching and learning aimed at addressing the social, cultural and economic development objectives of society.

2.3. Community Partnerships

These are mutually beneficial university-community relationships where each partner enters on an equal basis and the interaction is guided by institutional choice and strategy together with community developmental imperatives.

2.4. An Integrated Model for Community Engagement

As a core function of teaching and learning and research, this model designates that the three core functions are as much as possible interrelated

and interdependent, each one feeding into the other. However, this will not be mechanically followed and there will be a flexible dynamic approach especially in the early phases of implementing the policy.

2.5. Community Engagement Activities

2.5.1. Volunteerism

This refers to essentially altruistic engagement of students and staff in activities primarily benefiting the recipient community, with service provision as the primary goal. This includes extra-curricular activities for which no academic or other credit is received.

2.5.2. Community outreach

This type of engagement is primarily focused on benefiting the community through delivering a particular service, but is generally initiated from within the institution, department or faculty and linked to a form of recognition, such as academic credit or research.

2.5.3. Internships

Internships engage students in activities where the student is the primary beneficiary and the goal is on student learning. Internships provide practical experience for students in their area of study; assists with achieving learning outcomes; and provide vocational experience. Internships are generally fully integrated with the student's curriculum and are used extensively in professional programs such as Social Work, Medicine, Education and Psychology.

2.5.4. Co-operative education

Co-operative education programs have the student as the primary beneficiary and student learning as the primary goal. These programs provide students with curricular opportunities related to their field of study, which are integrated with the curriculum to some extent. These programs are generally placements within industry during the course of completion of a part of a curriculum.

2.5.5. Service learning

Service-learning engages students in activities where both the community and student are the primary beneficiaries. Herein the primary goals are to provide services to the community and equally to enhance student learning through the rendering of these services. Reciprocity is a central characteristic of this type of learning and an emphasis is placed on integrating community service with scholarly activities; i.e. research teaching and learning. This form of community engagement is also referred to as 'academic service learning'; academic community service' and 'community based learning'.

3. Policy Purpose

This policy aims to guide the practice and promotion of community engagement as a core institutional function integrated with teaching, learning and research.

4. Policy Objectives

The Community Engagement Policy of the UFH has the following objectives:

- i) To integrate community engagement with teaching-learning and research as a key core function in knowledge production, generation, application and dissemination at UFH;
- ii) To ensure even and consistent application of community engagement in the university;
- iii) To ensure the identification and development of measurable performance outcomes for UFH community engagement.

5. Policy Principles

In relation to the policy objectives stated above, the following guiding principles are expressed:

i) Objective (1): To integrate community engagement with teaching and learning; and research as a key core function in knowledge production, generation and dissemination at UFH:

- a) the promotion of integration of community engagement activities in all teaching- learning and research in all faculties of the UFH;
- b) the development and establishment of sustainable and co-operative partnerships with communities that emphasizes the reciprocal benefits and development of both parties;
- c) the sustainable allocation of resources for the delivery of quality community engagement as a core function within UFH.

ii) Objective (2): To ensure even and consistent application of community engagement in the university:

- a) The UFH commitment to CE is reflected in the strategic planning, policies and procedures at all levels within the management;
- b) Community engagement is co-ordinated and facilitated through a central management structure from the office of a DVC to all academic and support service levels of the UFH;
- c) All community engagement activities are registered on a central institutional database managed by the co-ordinating structure mentioned above;
- d) Institutional support is made available for the development and implementation of knowledge production, application and dissemination through community engagement.

iii) Objective (3): To ensure the identification and development of measurable performance outcomes for UFH community engagement:

- a) Performance management criteria for community engagement is developed and included in all relevant HR policies;
- b) The impact and output of community service is monitored and evaluated;
- c) Community engagement activities are reviewed regularly.

6. Scope of Application

This policy will apply throughout all faculties, schools, centers and units of the university.

7. Related policies

This policy takes into account the following existing policies and guiding documents:

- White Paper on Transformation of Higher Education, 1997
- Strategic Plan 2000, UFH
- Institutional Operational Plan, UFH (2004-2009)
- UFH Policies:
 - Charter of Ethical Principles and Values
 - Institutional Quality Policy Framework
 - Human Resources Development Policy
 - Performance Management Policy
 - Academic Promotions Policy
 - Co-operative Education Services

8. Office of Accountability

The accountability for this policy will lie with the Deputy Vice Chancellor responsible for Academic activities. A coordinating unit will be created and funded to assist the DVC in performing this function.