



RHODES UNIVERSITY
Grahamstown • 6140 • South Africa

Rhodes University Policy on Community Engagement

Policy Volume	Academic Faculty & Students
Policy Chapter	Community Engagement
Responsible Committee/Unit/Division/Faculty	Community Engagement Division
Responsible Chairperson/Director/Manager	Director: Community Engagement
Dates of First and Subsequent Council Approvals	2005
Revision History: Approved Reviews	-
Review Cycle (e.g. every 2/5/7 years etc)	5
Next Review Date	2026

1. POLICY PARTICULARS

1.1. Policy Title	Rhodes University Community Engagement Policy
1.2. Policy Statement	<p>The mission statement of Rhodes University (hereafter the university) is to strive through community engagement to contribute to the development of the Eastern Cape and South Africa. Accordingly, the university undertakes where appropriate, to assist in the development of the Eastern Cape Province by making available the university's expertise, resources and facilities. As an institution driven by the pursuit of knowledge, the university aims to realise its vision of being a socially responsive institution through community engagement and the scholarship of engagement. The university encourages staff and students to build community partnerships when conducting teaching and research activities to address development and sustainability challenges at local, national and global levels.</p>
1.3. Reason for Policy	<p>This policy ensures alignment between community engagement at the university and national government policy frameworks. The purpose of this policy is to guide all community engagement activities at the University, as well as to provide guidelines for the institutionalisation of community engagement as a core function alongside teaching & learning and research, at the university, reflecting the university's values of being contextually responsive and working for the public good. The aim of the policy is fourfold:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to clearly define community engagement (see 4..2 of Section 4 of this policy) so that all divisions and departments at the university operate on the basis of a similar understanding of community engagement; ● to clarify the role of the Community Engagement Division (hereafter RUCE) in establishing and maintaining partnerships between Rhodes University and community-based organisations/individuals involved in community engagement activities; ● to outline the role that is to be played by RUCE and all (Academic and Support) departments in furthering the goals of community engagement, as well as the institutionalisation of community engagement, at the university; ● to ensure ethical standards and best practice principles governing community engagement are observed in activities undertaken by the university;
1.4. Policy Objective/s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide a clear and informative/practicable definition of community engagement which the entire University can consult. See 4.2. of Section 4 of this policy. ● Promote an integral and holistic relationship between the three core functions of higher education: teaching & learning, research and community engagement. ● The promotion of community engagement as a form of higher education transformation, both in relation to working with communities to overcome inequality, racism, and oppression, as well as in relation to the university's goal of producing graduates who are critically aware of their context and who have an enhanced sense of social and civic responsibility.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The promotion of volunteerism, service-learning and engaged research programs in order to advance development goals identified with communities, as well as providing staff and students with the opportunity to apply the theory and practice of their discipline to local, regional and national development issues. • The ongoing transformation of institutional culture at Rhodes University. • The communication of ongoing community engagement activities to staff, students and the wider community. • The funding of community engagement activities at the university. • Provide an ethical framework that community engagement practitioners at Rhodes can follow (aligned with RUESC and statutory DHET and HEQC requirements)
1.5 Policy informed by RU IDP Pillars	<p>As per the RU IDP, reimagining of our University, rests on four pillars:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sustainability – we need to ensure that sustainability principles permeate every aspect of our academic endeavour and every decision taken by our university. In the process, we want to produce graduates with an elevated sense of awareness of and responsibility for building sustainable communities 2. Simultaneous local responsiveness and global engagement – our academic endeavour should seek to respond to the pressing and urgent local challenges while simultaneously contributing to our accumulated global stock of knowledge. This will allow us to enter the global knowledge system from our position of strength. 3. Advancing social justice – given the painful past of our country characterized by exclusion and denial of opportunities for a significant segment of our society, it is vitally important that we do all we can to restore the dignity and humanity of those who were mistreated by the previous dispensation. 4. Advancing the public good purpose of higher education – our university does not exist in a vacuum. It exists within social, cultural and economic milieu and has an important role to play in lifting the quality of life of our local community (RU IDP plan).
1.6. People affected by this Policy	All university staff, students and communities working with the university
1.7 Who should read this Policy	All staff and students, and communities working for or with the university
1.8 Implementers of this Policy	RUCE – in partnership with all divisions, units, institutes, departments, staff, students and communities working with the university to ensure implementation of the various forms of community engagement
1.9 Website address/link for this Policy	https://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/institutionalplanning/documents/Community_Engagement_Policy.pdf

2. RELATED DOCUMENTS FORMS AND TOOLS

(University Policies, Protocols, and Documents (such as rules/policies/protocols/guidelines related to this policy)

<p>Relevant Legislation and Documents (Legislation/Regulatory requirements/Organisational Reports – name these)</p> <p>Rhodes University Institutional Development Plan https://www.ru.ac.za/media/RHODES_UNIVERSITY_IDP.pdf</p> <p>Rhodes University Institutional Transformation Plan https://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/equityampinstitutionalculture/documents/ITP_Final_Draft_(004).pdf</p> <p>White Paper on the Transformation of Higher Education 1997 https://www.justice.gov.za/commissions/feeshet/docs/1997-WhitePaper-HE-Tranformation.pdf</p> <p>HEQC Service-Learning in the Curriculum: A Resource for Higher Education Institutions 2006</p> <p>CE in South African Higher Education January 2010. Kagisano No 6 http://www.education.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/image_tool/images/104/engagements.pdf</p> <p>HEQF https://www.dhet.gov.za</p> <p>2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf</p> <p>National Development Plan (RSA) https://www.gov.za/issues/national-development-plan-2030#</p>
<p>Related Policies</p> <p>Donor Recognition & Stewardship Policy https://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/institutionalplanning/documents/Donor_Recognition_and_Stewardship_Policy.pdf</p> <p>Environmental Sustainability Policy https://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/environment/documents/RU_Environmental_Sustainability_Policy_dd_2015-09-08_APPROVED.pdf</p> <p>Fundraising Policy https://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/institutionalplanning/documents/Donor_Recognition_and_Stewardship_Policy.pdf</p> <p>Language Policy https://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/institutionalplanning/documents/Language_Policy_2019.pdf</p> <p>Personal Promotion of Academic Staff Policy & Procedures https://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/institutionalplanning/documents/POLICY_AND_PROCEDURES_FOR_THE_PERSONAL_PROMOTION_OF_ACADEMIC_STAFF_2019.pdf</p> <p>Research Ethics Policy https://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/institutionalplanning/documents/Research_Ethics_Policy.pdf</p> <p>SRC Constitution https://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/institutionalplanning/documents/students_constitution.pdf</p> <p>SRC Societies Policy https://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/institutionalplanning/documents/SRC_Societies_Policy.pdf</p> <p>Teaching and Learning Policy https://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/institutionalplanning/documents/The_Rhodes_University_Policy_on_Teaching_and_Learning_June_2019.pdf</p>
<p>Related Protocols</p> <p>RU Vision and Mission Statement https://www.ru.ac.za/introducingrhodes/visionandmission/</p>
<p>Forms and Tools</p> <p>Best Practice and Ethical Guidelines for Community Engagement https://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/institutionalplanning/documents/Community_Engagement_Policy.pdf</p>

3. ACRONYMS USED IN THIS POLICY DOCUMENT

CE	Community Engagement	NGO	Non Government Organisation
CHERTL	Centre for Higher Education Research, Teaching and Learning	QR CODE	Quick Response Code
DHET	Department Higher Education & Training	RUCE	Rhodes University Community Engagement
DSA	Department of Student Affairs	RUESC	Rhodes University Ethical Standards Committee
HEI	Higher Education Institution	SRC	Student Representative Council
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee	SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
IDP	Institutional Development Plan		

4. POLICY DEFINITIONS

(Technical or Conceptual terms used in the policy)

No	TERM	DEFINITION
4.1	Community	<p>Group or body of people living in one place or district or country (geographic location); fellowship (community of interest); state of being shared or held in common, joint ownership or liability. It is important to note that a community is not homogenous, as inequalities and power relations exist in various spaces, including in those spaces where it is ordinarily assumed not to exist. Therefore, CE initiatives will mirror these heterogeneities and the demands that these bring to our societies.</p> <p>For the purposes of community engagement, the university aims to work with communities external to the university community. In this policy, community partner refers to those communities or individuals outside of the university community with whom the university enters into a defined, sustained partnership relationship for the purposes of community engagement.</p>
4.2	Community Engagement	<p>The Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) (2004:26) defines community engagement as:</p> <p><i>initiatives and processes through which the expertise of the higher education institution in the areas of teaching and learning and research are applied to address issues relevant to its community.</i></p> <p>Community engagement is defined in this policy as activities conducted by university staff or students with community partners through which knowledge is jointly discovered, and in which there is a reciprocal exchange of teaching and learning. In this policy, community engagement is understood as a means for the academic community to contribute to the local, national and global development agenda through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing university student/staff participation in mutually beneficial activities for the advancement of community partners.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing the processes of knowledge production and dissemination at the university which addresses the realities of the local, national and international development context. • Promoting critical self-awareness and citizenship through active citizenry and volunteerism. • Enhancing activities which work to build collective identities in South Africa, and promote core social goals of social cohesion and solidarity. • Enhancing the value attached to engaged research or the co-production of knowledge within the scholarship of engagement • Since the university is 'of' and 'for' Makhanda, mutually beneficial local partnerships are encouraged to respond to the pressing and urgent local challenges.
4.3	Volunteerism	Voluntary-based community engagement without evaluation for curricular purposes or monetary compensation, which engages students and staff in organised activities with community partners. The primary goal of volunteerism activities is to promote relationship building, critical self-awareness and engaged citizenship and learning through participating in shared projects. Volunteerism encourages students, staff and community partners to open themselves up to learning and unlearning; thereby recognising that everyone has something to teach and something to learn.
4.4	Service Learning	Service-learning is the credit-bearing form of community engagement. In service-learning, community engagement activities are integrated within academic course work, accompanied by reflections on the relationship between the service activity and the course content or discipline, and carry some form of formal recognition such as course credit or research credit. The service-learning activity must be transformational, where all participating members understand that they are members of the educational community and that their input and active participation is important, not only for the benefit of the course, but also for knowledge production, the advancement of communities, and more broadly, the betterment of society.
4.5	Engaged research	Engaged research encompasses a range of methodologies and research approaches with a shared core principle of collaborative engagement / participation with communities aiming to understand and improve development and sustainable challenges. Engaged research is a responsive, reciprocal and respectful way for research to be conducted in partnership with communities. The research partnership aspires to be transformational, where all participating members understand that they are members of the research community and that their input and active participation is important, not only for the benefit of the research project, but also for knowledge production, the advancement of communities, and more broadly, the advancement of society. In this context, engaged research helps us to grapple with contemporary transformational challenges that confront us as a country, as communities, as higher education institutes, and as scholars. Ethical principles governing research relationships with communities are governed by the university policy for research ethics.

4.6	The Scholarship of engagement	The Scholarship of engagement refers to growing the body of knowledge on community engagement theory and practice. The scholarship of engagement also refers to the growing body of knowledge in which academics and members of the community are able to work in partnerships to find original ways to communicate with public audiences and co-produce knowledge with community which further enhances our understanding of engagement practice.
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5. PRINCIPLES GOVERNING THIS POLICY

OVERVIEW
Rhodes University strives to carry out the following, as far as is reasonably practicable:
<p>a. ENGAGED TEACHING & LEARNING AND RESEARCH PRACTICES</p> <p>To develop and enhance teaching & learning and research community engagement initiatives that allow university staff and students to participate in activities in partnership with communities that sensitise them to critical development and sustainability issues within Makhanda broader South African, and global development contexts.</p>
<p>b. TRANSFORMATION</p> <p>To raise awareness and sensitivity in staff and students to the problems created by the legacy of apartheid and colonialism, and to inspire institutional and individual community engagement activities aimed at addressing past imbalances and the continuous qualitative improvement of community well being and human life.</p>
<p>c. MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL AND RECIPROCAL KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE</p> <p>To promote a reciprocal process of knowledge construction and dissemination through various community engagement activities which challenge epistemic prejudices and injustices and promote a knowledge democracy.</p>
<p>d. SOCIALLY RESPONSIVE INSTITUTION WORKING FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD</p> <p>To make available to communities the university's expertise, resources, and facilities where appropriate; and in turn to open up the university to community expertise in order to make the university a more tolerant, accessible and socially responsive public institution aimed at addressing development and sustainability challenges through planned and strategic interventions.</p>
<p>e. INSTITUTIONALISING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PROMOTING STUDENT SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY</p> <p>To develop critical, capable and well-rounded academics and graduates who are aware of their social responsibilities through their involvement in community engagement activities which are embedded in teaching & learning and research endeavours. To support, recognise and celebrate community engagement initiatives undertaken by the university.</p>
<p>f. ADVANCING THE SCHOLARSHIP OF ENGAGEMENT</p> <p>To increase the profile and output of publications in the scholarship of engagement emanating from the university.</p>

6. DIRECTIVES FOR IMPLEMENTING THIS POLICY

a. **ENGAGED TEACHING & LEARNING AND RESEARCH PRACTICES**

- The university, through RUCE, will maintain a co-ordinated and strategic volunteerism program for staff and students.
- Students, staff, and communities will be supported in establishing and maintaining community engagement initiatives for service-learning and engaged research. The roles and responsibilities of support to be provided are outlined in Section 6 of this policy.

b. **TRANSFORMATION**

- Students, staff, and communities will be supported in the process of critical reflection throughout community engagement activities to enhance their reflexivity, the development of critical citizenship, and the development of mutually beneficial partnerships.

c. **MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL AND RECIPROCAL KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE**

- Staff and students are expected to follow the best practice and ethical guidelines for community engagement in order to ensure mutually beneficial and respectful partnerships are established and maintained in community engagement activities.
- Where possible, formal partnerships between the university and community partners should be established to ensure expectations and risks are managed.
- All university engagement activities should have clearly articulated outcomes and an exit strategy that has been negotiated with the community partner.

d. **SOCIALLY RESPONSIVE INSTITUTION WORKING FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD**

- The university aims where possible and appropriate to make available resources and expertise for activities which further developmental and sustainable goals.
- All university engagement activities should be registered on the institutional database with RUCE for community engagement. The registration of projects allows for inter-institutional collaboration and prevents unnecessary duplication or community saturation/burden.
- It is the duty of faculties and departments to allocate sufficient funds from their departmental budgets for community engagement projects which have a clear teaching/learning aspect on a continuing basis. RUCE is responsible for the administration of limited University Funds to assist in the establishment of new service-learning or engaged research programs.
- Where possible, RUCE and the Alumni and Development Division will assist staff and students to apply to various donors for funding to allow for the development and sustainability of any community engagement activities at the university.

e. **INSTITUTIONALISING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PROMOTING STUDENT AND ACADEMIC SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

- The university will continue to encourage and acknowledge community engagement initiatives across academic departments, support divisions, and student groupings (including residences, halls, societies, and sports clubs).
- Initiatives that affirm excellent practice, such as the Vice Chancellor's Distinguished Award for Community Engagement and the Student Community Engagement Awards, will be supported and further initiatives of this kind will be developed.

f. **ADVANCING THE SCHOLARSHIP OF ENGAGEMENT**

- Through RUCE, the university will continue to employ and support dedicated community engagement scholars who can conduct their own research, supervise postgraduate students and collaborate with engaged academics across the university to improve the contribution to community engagement scholarship generated by the university.

7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

(Roles and responsibilities of Key personal/Divisions/Faculties/Departments)

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY
<p>ROLE 1 The Community Engagement Division</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Work with academics, the research office, and CHERTL to facilitate service-learning curriculum development and engaged research support. Develop and implement tools for monitoring and evaluation, as well as the quality assurance of community engagement projects. ● Facilitate and coordinate institutional student volunteerism programmes. ● Develop and maintain relationships with community-based organisations, NGOs, local government, CE forums, HEI's and other development agencies. ● Identify opportunities for partnerships between university departments and community organisations. ● Work with Community Engagement Faculty Representatives to develop and maintain a community engagement database in which all community engagement activities at the university are recorded with the purpose of ensuring a coordinated and cohesive approach to community engagement. ● Work in partnership with the SRC and the Director of Student Affairs to support the community engagement activities of residences, student societies and sports clubs. Manage institutional level community engagement activities. ● Promote community engagement in and outside the university through public recognition of community engagement activities within the university and through the media. ● Contribute to the scholarship of engagement and promote the publication of community engagement work. ● Organising conferences\seminars with the purpose of enhancing community engagement and community development knowledge ● Promotion of social innovation through the integration of a variety of innovative solutions developed collaboratively with the various role players to address some of the problems\issues encountered by the community of Makhanda ● Establishing CE as a discipline by developing and offering relevant academic programmes and promoting post graduate research with the focus on community based participatory research
<p>ROLE 2 University Departments, Divisions, Institutes, Centres and Units</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Actively promote and create opportunities for staff and student involvement in all forms of community engagement activities (service learning, engaged research and volunteerism). ● To involve students in the department in community engagement activities that enhance their discipline-specific learning, their social responsiveness, and their sense of social and civic responsibility. To involve students in the department in community engagement activities which bring the research and application of discipline-specific knowledge to bear on community development. ● Adhere to the guidelines of best practice and ethical standards for community engagement. ● Communicate the guidelines and ethical standards for community engagement to staff and students. ● Allocate sufficient funds from their departmental budgets for community engagement projects which have a clear teaching/learning aspect within their department on a continuing basis. ● Through the Faculty Representative system, communicate with the RUCS about

	community engagement activities, and to cooperate with RUCE in the processes of monitoring and evaluation, as well as quality assurance, of these initiatives.
ROLE 3 The Director of Student Affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure community engagement activities and training are included in the Student Orientation Program. ● Support community engagement in the SRC, Societies, Sports Clubs and Residence system. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Create opportunities for RUCE to train community engagement student and staff representatives in the SRC, Societies, Sports Clubs and Residence system. ○ Ensure election of and support community engagement representatives through the SRC, Societies, Sports Clubs and Residence system. ○ Ensure community engagement representatives that are elected to serve on the SRC and in Residences have previous volunteer experience at the university. ○ Oversee reporting by Hall Wardens on their Hall’s community engagement projects in their Hall biannual reports to the DSA and record CE activities on Protea ensuring an accurate record for students transcripts (new QR code system 2021)
ROLE 4 The SRC, University Residences, Societies and Sports Clubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Attend all relevant training workshops hosted by RUCE. ● Encourage staff and students to register and participate in meaningful, mutually beneficial volunteer programs. ● Ensure strategic and robust programs for volunteerism are established in partnership with RUCE in residences. ● Communicate Information from RUCE to Community Engagement Representatives of Societies and Sports Clubs. ● Adhere to the guidelines of best practice and ethical standards for community engagement. ● All student engagement programs are required to submit a project proposal detailing planned community engagement activities to RUCE for approval. ● Ensure ongoing communication with RUCE in relation to community engagement programs.
ROLE 5: Internationalisation office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Work with RUCE to support international students to actively participate in community engagement opportunities available to them at the university.

8. CONTACTS

Area of Concern	Division/Faculty/Department	Telephone	Email
Institutional community engagement oversight	DVC: Academic & Student Affairs	+27 (0) 46 603 8148/9	dvc.academic@ru.ac.za
Policy directives	Community Engagement Division	+27 (0) 46 603 7229	d.hornby@ru.ac.za
Policy reviews processes	Division of Institutional Research, Planning & Quality Promotion	+27 (0) 46 603 7364	r.nnadozie@ru.ac.za

9. POLICY REVIEW PROCEDURE

(Actions and processes by which the policy will be reviewed)

The Community Engagement Management Committee will, at the time of review, set up a sub-committee (Community Engagement Policy Review Committee) to reconsider the effectiveness and relevance of the Rhodes University Community Engagement Policy every 5 years.

The recommendations for the amendment of the policy should be submitted to

1. The Community Engagement Committee
2. Faculty meetings
3. Sennex
4. Senate
5. Council

for consideration.

Communication of the review process

Tabled at Faculties Meetings as a common item by the CE Director. If revisions are approved, a copy of the new policy must be distributed by the Community Engagement Division and Community Engagement Faculty Representatives to relevant stakeholders. The new version of the policy document must be made available via the Rhodes University website must be updated to reflect the new policy. The Community Engagement Policy will be communicated within the University via the Communications and Marketing Division, to departments through the Community Engagement Faculty representatives, to the student body, societies, and sports clubs through the SRC Community Engagement representative.