



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
IYUNIVESITHI YASEKAPA • UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD

Social Responsiveness Policy Framework

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1. Background

For the past few decades, growing numbers of leading universities throughout the world have embraced socially responsive academic engagement as a core element of their role in society. Increasingly, higher education institutions are making discussions of their commitment to the ‘public good’ more deliberate. These discussions are being prompted also by their engagement with a range of external constituencies (excluding academic constituencies). Out of this engagement, specific questions are arising for universities about the nature of their civic mission, the kinds of academic cultures and practices they should be encouraging and also about what it is that they teach. At the same time, these discussions around an ‘external’ engagement or what is sometimes referred to as a university ‘third mission’ – of engagement with the wider society in terms of socio-economic-cultural development challenges – has often led to a renewal of commitment to high quality university ‘internal’ teaching (‘first mission’) and research (‘second mission’). This is not least because attainment of external engagement goals in relation to society depends significantly on strong and innovative teaching and research within a university.

South African higher education has followed similar lines of development. In the White Paper for the Transformation of Higher Education (1997), the type of academic engagement outlined above, termed “responsiveness to societal interests and needs” in the White Paper is considered as one of the three roles of a university, and one which should be fully integrated with mainstream teaching and research. The notion of social responsiveness embodies the following goals articulated in the National Plan for Higher Education:

- to meet national development needs through well planned teaching, learning and research programmes, including the challenges presented by a growing economy, operating in a global environment;
 - to support a democratic ethos and culture of human rights through educational programmes and practices conducive to critical discourse and creative thinking;
 - to contribute to the advancement of knowledge and scholarship, in particular, addressing diverse problems and demands of local, national, southern African and African contexts.
- (Department of Education, 2001)

UCT’s Mission of becoming a premier academic meeting point between South Africa, the rest of Africa and the world commits the university through innovative research and scholarship, to grapple with the key issues of our natural and social environments. The university aims to produce graduates whose qualifications are internationally recognized and locally applicable, underpinned by values of engaged citizenship and social justice (UCT, 2008). This mission reflects the university’s commitment to utilising the resources of the university to contribute to addressing major development challenges facing the country and the continent more broadly. Some, but clearly not all, of these challenges relate to issues of poverty and social disadvantage within our South African and wider continental context: our UCT approach to ‘Social Responsiveness’ policy has, since its early formulations almost a decade ago, always sought to encourage academic engagement with such specific socio-economic-cultural challenges.

1.1 *Rationale for an institutional policy on Social Responsiveness (SR)*

The purposes of this policy framework are to:

- provide a conceptual framework for defining and enhancing socially responsive practice;
- provide an **enabling institutional environment** for SR;
- promote activities and initiatives undertaken by staff and students of UCT related to social responsiveness;
- put in place mechanisms to elevate the status of social responsiveness and enhance practices associated with social responsiveness.

2. Conceptual Framework for Social Responsiveness

2.1 Scope of Social Responsiveness

In 2006 UCT's Senate adopted a definition of social responsiveness reflecting the view that UCT should not seek to define the concept of Social Responsiveness in a narrow or exclusionary fashion, but should rather adopt broad parameters for its conceptualisation encompassing contributions to economic, cultural, environmental, and social development. The term 'social responsiveness' has been chosen given the emphasis in the mission on engaging with key development issues facing the country through its research and teaching. This approach was formally endorsed in 2006 when the university Senate approved a definition of social responsiveness that stipulated that social responsiveness must have an intentional public purpose or benefit (UCT, 2006).

The term 'social responsiveness' is used as an umbrella term to refer to all forms of engagement with external non-academic constituencies. The umbrella term embraces engaged scholarship involving academic staff, civic engagement involving students' community service, and professional engagement involving PASS staff using their professional expertise. It does **not** cover civic and outreach activities of staff that are not linked to their disciplinary or professional expertise (see definition below). **Nor** does it encompass work with academic constituencies such as external examining, editing of peer-reviewed journals etc. This is not to devalue the importance of academic engagement with other academic staff and academic peers – something which provides some of the lifeblood of an institution defined as a 'university'. Rather, the concern with engagement (based on solid disciplinary or professional expertise) with non-academic constituencies is meant to provide a sound complement to the activities of engagement with academic constituencies.

2.1.1 Engaged scholarship (ES)

Within these broad parameters the policy adopts a view that academic engagement with external constituencies should be based on scholarship. Scholarship is "the thoughtful creation, interpretation, communication, or use of knowledge that is based in the ideas of the disciplines, professions, and interdisciplinary fields. What qualifies an activity as 'scholarship' is that it should be deeply informed by (the activity of) accumulating knowledge in some field, that the knowledge is skilfully interpreted and deployed, and that the activity is carried out with intelligent openness to new information, debate, and criticism"¹

ES as a form of SR refers to the utilisation of an academic's scholarly and/or professional expertise, with an **intentional public purpose or benefit** (which) demonstrates engagement with *external (non-academic) constituencies*. It can help to generate new knowledge, promote knowledge integration, the application of knowledge, or the dissemination of knowledge.

In terms of this approach, for example, if an academic in a transport studies department provides workshops for external audiences on how to facilitate more efficient city transport networks or helps to shape policies for strengthening public transport, he/she would be drawing from his/her scholarly expertise. This meets the requirements of engaged scholarship. If that very same academic serves as a treasurer of a school governing body, s/he would not be involved in ES, as the expertise required to perform the duties of a treasurer do not relate directly to his/her discipline or research and teaching field. The latter activity can be described as civic engagement and the academic may not use this activity for reporting on social responsiveness activities at the university for promotion or other academic award purposes. Consultancy work undertaken as part of the activities of a unit/centre/grouping' by an academic based on his/her scholarly expertise, is classified under this policy as 'social responsiveness' for purposes of UCT promotion or other academic awards.

If the activities are carried out as paid private work they will not be considered as meeting SR criteria for the purposes of promotion or other academic awards.

¹ This is based on the Michigan State University (1993:2) definition of scholarship; see also UCT (2010:29).

2.1.2 Civic engagement

Students engage with external constituencies in three different ways:

- i. compulsory community service due performance (DP) requirements;
- ii. student voluntary community service;
- iii. As part of the formal curriculum e.g. as part of service learning.

All three forms are encouraged by the university as they provide students with opportunities to engage around real life problems and thereby potentially help nurture a commitment to critical and active citizenship.

2.1.3 Social Responsiveness for Pass staff

This covers activities where PASS staff engages with external constituencies using their professional expertise.

2.2 Forms of Engaged Scholarship

Some examples of engaged scholarship are provided below for illustrative purposes:

Research forms of engaged scholarship

- Strategic research: government funded research, corporate funded research, non-profit funded research
- Applied/ action research
- Cultural performances
- Knowledge application/transfer e.g. the development of products or patents
- Production of popular materials
- Maps, plans, artefacts

Professional forms of engaged scholarship

- Policy development/engagement/systems development
- Public commentary/lectures
- Organisation of conferences or workshops (for **non-academic** audiences)
- Expert advice/support/assistance/evidence/ service for public benefit
- Involvement in external (non-academic) structures
- Clinical service or community outreach

Teaching forms of engaged scholarship

- Organisation of Service Learning/community based education programmes as part of the formal curriculum
- Continuing Education/Continuing Professional Development courses

2.3 Enhancing SR practices

In line with UCT's commitment to being research-led, including ongoing investigation into the scholarship of engagement (i.e. research on the practices of engaged scholarship), the University Social Responsiveness Committee will facilitate ongoing debate about how SR practices can be improved.

The university moreover seeks to engage with external constituencies on the basis of the following principles:

- all involved parties are encouraged to articulate their vision and objectives related to the collaborative activities;

- mutual respect and recognition for the different contributions that parties from various constituencies make to the partnership;
- operating on the basis of trust aimed at benefiting all constituencies involved in the activities;
- recognising that knowledge is transferred in more than one direction from more than one source;
- the creation of transactional spaces² can empower constituencies and help to minimise the effects of unequal power relations;
- where part of student engagement is with communities, it is facilitated through structured opportunities to reflect on practice and experiences.

3. Implementation

3.1 Management and coordination of SR

3.1.1 Executive Accountability

Strong leadership is critical to promoting an institutional commitment across the university to social responsiveness. The VC will delegate accountability for university-wide leadership of Social Responsiveness to a DVC, who will also chair the University Social Responsiveness Committee.

Deans are encouraged to facilitate that their faculties serve the full breadth of the university missions: research, teaching and learning and social responsiveness. In terms of existing policy, faculties can ensure that staff performance is assessed in the four broad categories of research, teaching and learning, leadership-management-administration, and social responsiveness. Deans should seek to report annually on the social responsiveness activities happening in their faculties; while Executive Directors, Directors and HODs should seek, in their areas of competence, to ensure that an enabling environment is created for promoting social responsiveness

3.1.2 University Social Responsiveness Committee

The University Social Responsiveness Committee (USRC), reporting to Senate, is responsible for promoting and strengthening social responsiveness through carrying out the following functions:

- provision of advice about policy related to social responsiveness;
- promotion of awareness of socially responsive activities within the university and externally;
- profiling examples of good practices originating from UCT and other institutions;
- facilitating the consolidation and coordination of effort, resources and activities in the area of social responsiveness and support for university wide SR strategic initiatives;
- generating guidelines for the assessment of the contributions of staff, students and external partners to social responsiveness;
- making recommendations to Senate on annual social responsiveness awards;
- overseeing the production of annual reports to be submitted to the Senate and Council;
- facilitating discussion on, and participation in, multi-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary collaboration in respect of social responsiveness;
- promoting debate about social responsiveness including issues of SR ethics in relation to the broader university debate about research ethics;
- providing advice on how SR is appropriately recognised and rewarded in promotion and tenure reviews, annual performance reviews, salary increases, campus celebrations;
- providing development opportunities for staff and students.

² Gibbons (2006:14) has described a transactional space as the space where people who inhabit different worlds interact effectively in transforming an issue or problem into a set of research activities.

Although the promotion and tenure guidelines are under the purview of faculties, the USRC has a responsibility to ensure that guidelines are fair and consistent with the university mission and core values of the institution.

The Committee membership will comprise:

- a member of the University Executive who will chair the committee (the VC and DVCs are members *ex officio*)
- four representatives from Senate
- a representative from each Faculty
- representatives from the Institutional Planning Department, the Research Office, and the Department of Student Affairs
- 3 representatives from student bodies (2 chosen from student societies engaged in voluntary community service and 1 SRC nomination)

The USRC will be serviced by the Institutional Planning Department.

The roles of departments and units supporting and facilitating social responsiveness are outlined below.

3.1.3 Institutional Planning Department (IPD)

The IPD's Social Responsiveness Unit will carry out the following functions:

- enhancing the mechanisms by means of which the University communicates its social responsiveness activities internally and externally through a website;
- collating and uploading information on social responsiveness activities made available in annual reports and other sources by means of which information is voluntarily made available;
- facilitating networking between internal and external stakeholders and helping develop an infrastructure for support of social responsiveness in research and teaching;
- promoting and enabling the harnessing of scholarly expertise within the university in support of development initiatives in the wider society;
- facilitating the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Provincial Government of the Western Cape and the agreement with the City of Cape Town;
- fostering collaborative thinking and dialogue between the university and external stakeholders and better alignment between the needs of external constituencies and the identification of the university's strategic objectives;
- organising an annual colloquium, to foster debate and provide a platform for members of the university and external communities to reflect on SR activities and objectives within the university and to identify future opportunities for collaborative activities;
- producing an Annual Social Responsiveness Report;
- servicing the University Social Responsiveness Committee;
- auditing the interactions between the university and external communities and agencies.

Furthermore, to promote collaboration between staff and student initiatives, IPD undertakes to assist students as follows:

- Identifying academics or professional staff to assist with community work undertaken by students.

3.1.4 Centre for Higher Education Development (CHED)

CHED, through its Higher and Adult Education Studies and Development Unit, carries out the following functions related to SR:

- assisting in capacity building for staff to implement student service learning/community based education programmes;
- facilitating development of new forms of pedagogy and curriculum arrangements that could be conducive to expanding student service learning;
- engaging with faculties about ways of promoting critical citizenship among students through participation in social responsiveness activities; assisting in promoting the formal integration of student volunteer activities as credit-bearing components of the curriculum, where appropriate.

3.1.5 *Research and Research Contracts &, Intellectual Property Services (RCIPS) Offices*

The Research Office and RCIPS carry out the following functions related to SR:

- staff development, especially of new academics, and support related to promoting research innovation at national, local and sectoral levels;
- engendering commitment to research related to social responsiveness and teaching and learning;
- promoting research in all disciplines and fields with an intentional public benefit including policy research;
- implementing research quality assurance reviews that highlight contributions to the public good;
- implementing the signature theme policy which requires demonstrated social responsiveness and evidence of impact on the curriculum; promoting debate about different types of scholarly outputs and recognition thereof.

3.1.6 *The Department of Student Affairs*

The Department of Student Affairs carries out the following functions related to SR in supporting student clubs, student societies and student development agencies:

- providing administrative support, guidance and advocacy for student-driven projects;
- facilitating the coordination of development projects by student clubs, student societies and student development agencies;
- promoting the development of student leadership skills and student volunteerism through the initiatives undertaken by student clubs, student societies and student development agencies;
- implementing an appropriate reward and recognition system as part of promoting student leadership and student volunteerism initiatives that benefit internal and external communities, through the contributions made by student clubs, student societies and student development agencies via recognition of individual and/or collective student leadership.

4. **Evaluation**

This policy framework recognises that conventional ways of evaluating the quality of academic work may not always be appropriate for evaluating the quality of the wide range of outputs/outcomes/impacts associated with externally applied or oriented scholarly activities. It is neither possible nor desirable to adopt a uniform approach to an evaluation of the quality or impact of socially responsive activities, as these are governed by multiple factors and variables. Nor is it always possible or desirable, for example, to distinguish clearly 'socially responsive' application-oriented research activities from other activities normally classified by some UCT faculties under the category of 'research'. Moreover the objectives and contexts of activities differ enormously and any methods of evaluation would need to be appropriate for the context.³

³ Hence this SR Policy respects the variation across UCT faculties, for example, of the specific nomenclature used for the four categories as applied to criteria for promotion, and whether for example applicants are required to score in all four categories or only three etc.

However, given that the criteria for the Standard Academic Salary Package (SASP) and *ad hominem* promotions accommodate SR activities, evidence of SR activities and their value is desirable in this process. Qualitative and quantitative methods may be used for this purpose, accommodating input and evidence from the university as well as from external partners and/or members of the community in which social responsiveness activities are carried out. Possible models to be used for evaluation might include:

- the expansion of the notion of peer review to include both university and practitioner based persons knowledgeable in the field, in order to assess whether the outcome is positive and of high quality (see Community-Campus Partnerships for Health, 2005);
- evaluations based on a framework of the value chain of evaluation events which involves assessing the need for the programme, the programme theory, programme delivery and programme outcomes.
- impact assessments which are defined as an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policies or services, health, the environment or quality of life beyond the academy (see MSU, 1996 and Church et al, 2003).

Examples of impact are:

impacts on environment e.g. through policy debates on climate change, or how the environment has been influenced by research; how environmental policy decisions have been influenced by research evidence (or workshops/lecture/presentations etc.); and how planning decisions have been influenced by research;

impacts on production e.g. production yields or quality have increased or level of waste has been reduced; decisions by regulatory authorities have been influenced by research; management practices in production businesses have changed or husbandry methods have changed; forms of work organisation have been restructured through research.

impacts on practitioners and services e.g. professional standards, guidelines or training have been influenced by research; practitioners/professionals have used research findings in conducting their work; the quality or efficiency of a professional service has improved;

impacts on international development e.g. international policy development has been influenced by research; international agencies or institutions have been influenced by research; quality of life in a developing country has improved;

impact on health and welfare e.g. how the control of disease has changed; how healthcare, clinical and dietary guidelines have changed; how animal health and welfare have been enhanced by research or lectures.

At the institutional level, the annual Social Responsiveness Report provides qualitative information with a view to showcasing, promoting debate and discussion about different forms of social responsiveness, profiling good practices, supporting these activities through increasing awareness and thereby strengthening their sustainability and the extent of their contributions to the public good.

5. Incentives

5.1 Institutional award

To complement awards issued to staff by the university in recognition of achievements in teaching and research, the Vice Chancellor has accordingly established a 'Distinguished Social Responsiveness Award' alongside a similar award for teaching and also other awards for research. This provides an institutional signal to members of the University that social responsiveness is an important institutional priority.

The recipient(s) of the award will be selected on the basis of the following criteria:

- Activities that have resulted in demonstrable mutual benefit to the academic enterprise and an external non-academic constituency ;
- Evidence of shared planning and decision-making practices in the initiative;
- Contribution to brokering and facilitating relationships which have enhanced the University's engagement with local, regional, national or continental development challenges;
- Evidence of the way in which the initiative has enhanced teaching/learning or research processes;
- Documented excellence in extending knowledge production (including indigenous knowledge), and/or dissemination, integration and application of knowledge through social responsiveness;
- Evidence of sustainability of the initiative;
- Commitment to social justice,
- Contribution to new notions of professional practice designed to meet the needs of the South African context.

5.2 Staff recognition

For academic staff, the policy framework recognises the inter-connectedness of engaged scholarship with the other core activities of the university. However, given that the main purpose of this policy is to provide an enabling environment for enhancing and expanding social responsiveness, it is recommended that activities associated with SR be reported on separately (but within the broad variations across UCT faculties with regard to the four categories for promotion, as noted in Sections 3.1.1 and 4 above). This will enable UCT to develop more robust methods of evaluating the quality of SR.

For PASS staff evidence of SR activities related to their professional expertise can be used in the performance reviews.

5.2.1 Ad hominem promotions

As noted in Section 4 above, 'Social Responsiveness' is included in the key performance categories of academic activities to which points may be awarded in support of submissions by academic staff applying for *ad hominem* promotions. For academics wanting to use SR for ad hominem promotion, their engaged scholarship work should be grounded in quality scholarship (as defined by 'scholarship' in Section 2.1.1 above). Decisions are made in accordance with faculty approved criteria and practices.

5.2.2 Standard Academic Salary Package (SASP)

For assessment of academics with regard to the SASP review, the same faculty approved criteria and practices apply as per Ad Hominem Promotions in Section 5.2.1

5.3 Student recognition

Consistent with the UCT mission of utilising the resources of the university to contribute to addressing major development challenges and of producing graduates underpinned by values of engaged citizenship and social justice faculties are encouraged to facilitate opportunities for community service and also explore ways of recognising student contributions to socially engaged service and learning initiatives that form part of the curriculum or for outstanding voluntary community service.

5.4 *Seed funding*

The university is committed to providing seed funding to support new initiatives in the area of social responsiveness through special funding, such as the Vice Chancellor's Strategic fund.

6. **Policy Review**

This policy framework shall be subject to review within five years from the date of Senate approval to evaluate the impact of the policy and any implications arising from a constantly changing internal and external environment.

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