



# **GULU UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY**



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## FOREWARD

Gulu University's (GU) existence is epitomized in its obligation to champion community transformation in all spheres of life through functional engagement with society while at the same time influencing policy. In order to achieve this obligation, it incumbent upon the University to design a well-defined, structured and coordinated policy to engage with the community to satisfy the academic, research and community development interests. Therefore, GU has developed a University Community Engagement (GUCE) policy document to guide its stakeholders by articulating desired standards and principles of engagement that facilitate meaningful and mutual partnerships in the quest for community transformation.

This document comprises a deliberate institutional policy to guide, inform and standardize, as far as possible, how GU would wish to engage with the communities with a reasonable degree of uniformity and consistency. However, this policy document is not an end in itself but is a living document, which should be responsive to Gulu University's engagement with communities by providing critical self-reflection of the engagement. It is further hoped that the policy can inspire and be inspired by best practices learned from experience. In summary, the purpose of this document is to:

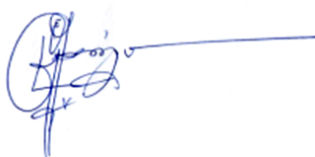
1. Guide navigation of engagements between community and GU
2. Guide provision of space for joint learning and change for community, students, university staff and GU partners

3. Highlight the critical areas for training, research and community development interventions
4. Guide provision of feedback for development and adaptation of relevant curricula, learning approaches and research processes

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Special thanks go to the Policy Drafting Committee, composed of Dr. Walter Odongo (Member/Faculty of Agriculture and Environment), Mr. David Clave Waiswa (Secretary/Faculty of Agriculture and Environment) and Sr. Rosalba Aciro (Chairperson/Academic Registrar's Department).



**Prof. G.L. Openjuru**

*Vice Chancellor*

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## 1.1 Preamble

Globally, there is a realisation that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) should engage more closely with the communities within which they are situated. By establishment, Gulu University (GU) has three core mandates, i.e. i) Teaching and Learning ii) Research iii) Community Engagement.

Gulu University Community Engagement (GUCE) Policy falls within the vision of Gulu University i.e. *‘To be a leading academic institution for the promotion of rural transformation and industrialization for sustainable development’*. As part of its Agenda for Community Transformation, this vision encapsulates the University’s desire as a higher education institution to be relevant to society. Coordinating and providing outreach activities is therefore among the core mission of GU.

Gulu University is a community-oriented university and as such views a community in its broadest sense while ensuring local relevance. As such, 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.

The GUCE reflects a joint effort in which members of the community work together with University staff and students to identify needs and solutions for the community. This policy is riveted on the fact that community development entails the

knowledge and skills which benefit communities by improving research, teaching and learning and service.

Gulu University is therefore committed to be an engaged institution to enhance the internal and external visibility of its programmes for fulfilling its motto; '*For Community Transformation*'. This engagement on one hand is to provide 'service to community' towards its transformation and on the other hand, to facilitate 'student experiential learning and creation of new knowledge'.

## 1.2 Definition of Key Words

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

### 1.2.1 University Community Engagement

This refers to the voluntary initiatives and processes by university personnel, particularly academic and/or non-academic staff, alumni or students deigned to respond to existing or perceived social, economic and political needs of communities.

### 1.2.2 Community

A community in this context refers to specific, collective interest groups, conjoined in search for sustainable solutions to development challenges and, who participate or could potentially participate as partners in similar inclined activities. It may be the immediate community around the locality of the university or within the municipality, district, country, or wider world.

### 1.2.3 Community Engagement

Community engagement refers to continuously negotiated collaborations and partnerships between GU and the community with the aim of building and exchanging knowledge, skills, expertise and resources required to develop and sustain society. In this policy, it implies employing the scholarly expertise and resources of Gulu University to render mutually beneficial services to communities within a context of reciprocal engagement and collaborative partnerships. Community includes, but not limited to the following key stakeholders:

- GU staff, students, faculty, and alumni;
- Local, state and civic government;
- Industry, including enterprises, consortia and industry associations;
- Community groups and associations;
- Non-Governmental and Non-profit Organizations;
- Educational institutions; including schools and other institutions
- Professional bodies and discipline-based communities; and
- Funding bodies.

### 1.2.4 Community Outreach

Outreach is an activity that provides services to a community who might not otherwise have access to those services. In this policy, outreach means a community service using knowledge, technology, products or services by the University. Outreach

increases availability and utilization of services and knowledge through mutuality in participation with a society.

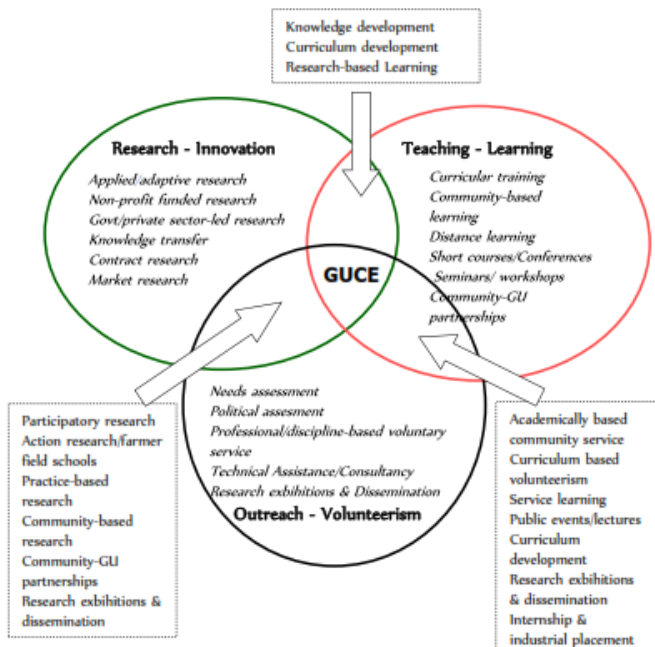
This type of engagement is primarily focused on benefiting the community through delivering a particular service, but is generally initiated from within the institution, department or faculty and linked to a form of recognition, such as academic credit or research.

### **1.2.5 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.

### **1.2.6 An Integrated Model for University Community Engagement**

As a core function of teaching, 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. The policy is cognizant of cross-cutting community concerns on environment, gender, HIV/Aids and disability.



*An Integrated Model for University Community Engagement (Modified from Glass et. al., 2010)*

### 1.2.7 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.

### 1.2.8 Internship/Field Attachment/Clerkship

These engage students in activities where the student is the primary beneficiary and the goal is on student learning. They provide practical experience for students in their area of study;

assists in achieving learning outcomes; and provide vocational experience. These activities are generally fully integrated within students' curricula.

### 1.2.9 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. This form of community engagement is also referred to as 'academic service learning'; 'academic community service' and 'community-based learning'.

## 2.0 Purpose of the Policy

The primary purpose of this policy is to guide the practice and promotion of GUCE as a core institutional function integrated with teaching, learning and research. Therefore the policy envisages that GUCE:

- a) Acts as an interface between research and training thus making Gulu University relevant and responsive to societal needs and national development issues.
- b) Highlights the critical areas for training, research and development interventions through feedback for adaptation and review of curricula, learning approaches and research methodologies for relevance.

- c) Creates space for joint learning and attitude change for students, academic staff, community, university and its partners.

## **2.1 Policy Objectives**

The Policy has the following objectives:

- a) To coordinate and integrate activities of GUCE with the teaching, learning and research at GU;
- b) To nurture existing and promote new community engagement initiatives.
- c) To ensure that community engagement is managed, coordinated and facilitated effectively at all academic and support services of the University.
- d) To promote mutual collaboration, partnership and networking with local and international stakeholders in engagement activities.
- e) To ensure that all university staff, students and alumni interacting with the broader community in the university's name do so within the context of the vision and mission of GU.

## **3.0 Scope of the Policy**

This Policy will apply to all constituent colleges, faculties, institutes and departments at Gulu University.

The following activities are identified to fall under GUCE Policy:

- a) Internships, clinical practice and work-based education in community settings and other community-based forms of professional training;
- b) Community service-learning modules (core, elective and foundation);
- c) Community attachment/placement/internship
- d) Compulsory practical field work and mandatory community service as required by specific programs
- e) Research projects (such as community action research) with and in communities;
- f) Consultancy services within a community context;
- g) The initiation and management of community development projects by GU staff and students; and
- h) Short courses and workshops for community members.

Different units of the University (Colleges, Faculties, Schools or Institutes), where necessary, shall design individual community engagement guidelines specific to their own situations, but falling within the umbrella of this policy.

#### **4.0 Policy Principles**

The policy is espoused in the University's vision and mission and endeavours to innovatively influence development through training, research, outreach and delivery of social services to the community. This can be achieved by transferring innovations to potential beneficiaries and sharing mutual beneficial

knowledge and experiences. The Policy will serve as a guide to the University on all matters pertaining to outreach activities.

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

- a) The promotion of integration of community engagement activities in all teaching, learning and research in all faculties of the GU;
- 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 functions within GU.
- d) The GU commitment to community engagement and outreach is reflected in the strategic planning, policies and procedures at all levels within the management;
- e) Community engagement and outreach is co-ordinated and facilitated through a central management structure from the office of the DVC (Academic Affairs) to all academic and support service levels of GU;
- f) All community engagement activities are registered on a central institutional database managed by the co-ordinating structure mentioned above;
- g) Institutional support is made available for the development and implementation of knowledge production, application and dissemination through community engagement;

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

## 5.0 Ethos Embodying Community Engagement

- a) The focus of community engagement is on the promotion of health and well-being, the values of caring and compassion, respect for diversity and human dignity, community participation, community empowerment, good citizenship and social justice;
- b) The organization and management of community engagement projects ensure that activities are conducted professionally and orientated towards the improvement of community life in ways that are democratic, equitable, liberating and life enhancing;
- c) The goals of community engagement projects reflect the public good, and are directed towards actions that contribute to sustainable positive transformation in the lives of the participants/community and or existing programmes or services;
- d) The values and practices of engagement connect knowledge produced inside and outside of academic institutions. The public good is best served when knowledge is collaboratively made and research findings are made known

to the community concerned to the mutual benefit of all participating parties;

- e) Where relevant, the national and institutional code of ethics entrenched in respective provisions for engagements constitute an integral part of the ethos of community engagement;
- f) All service-learning and all community-based research projects are compliant with the relevant GU and National Code of Academic and Research Ethics bodies.

## **6.0 Management of the Policy**

### **6.1 Administration and Management**

- a) Overall administration, management and quality assurance of this policy will lie with the office of the DVC responsible for Academics;
- b) The management, administration and quality assurance of curricula on community engagement and/or community-based research initiatives are the responsibility of the administrative units and academic departments concerned, in compliance with related University policies and regulations;
- c) Academic departments shall implement, monitor, evaluate and review credit-bearing academic programme-related community engagement initiatives;
- d) Administrative units shall inform the Department of GUCE of all curricular community engagement and/or

community-based research initiatives for recording purposes.

## **6.2 Senate Oversight of University Community Engagement**

- a) The Senate Sub-Committee for Strategic Partnerships and Institutional Advancement shall oversee the management and implementation of service learning in the curricula of academic programmes on behalf of Senate;
- b) The University's Board of Research, Graduate Studies and Staff Development in conjunction with the Senate Higher Degrees Committee shall oversee institutional community-based research activities in the various academic units.

## **6.3 Community Engagement Advisory Board**

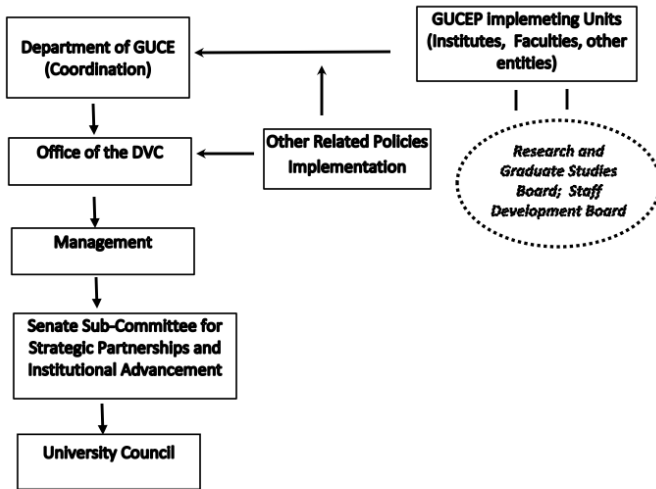
The Community Engagement Advisory Board shall provide advice and reports to Management on all institutional GUCE activities and projects. Its composition and functions shall be determined by Management.

## **6.4 Department of University Community Engagement**

This department derives terms of reference from The Senate Sub-Committee for Strategic Partnerships and Institutional Advancement and shall have the responsibility to:

- a) Identify, promote and coordinate GUCE initiatives (where required);

- b) Collate and record institutional community engagement information;
- c) Facilitate sustainable partnerships with communities;
- d) Raise internal and external awareness of GUCE;
- e) Periodically evaluate the need for revision of the Policy
- f) Assist in identifying funding opportunities, actively support and raise funds both internally and externally for GUCE projects/activities.
- g) Facilitate training in service-learning, community-based research and organized outreach;
- h) Establish broad principles for planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating GUCE, including specifying activities that require clearance based on prescribed risk-assessment criteria for specific engagement environments;
- i) Develop guidelines for the establishment of sustainable partnerships with local government, communities and relevant community service providers.



**Reporting and Accountability Framework for GUCEP**

## 6.5 Support for and Recognition of Staff and Students Involved in GUCE

- a) Within the context of particular challenges associated with the implementation of community engagement, sustainable support for and recognition of the achievements of staff are regarded as priorities.
- b) Appropriate recognition of and credit for staff involved in community engagement shall be integrated into performance management system of GU to promote growth of GUCE in line with teaching and research.
- c) The Department of GUCE shall design modalities to reward GU students for demonstrating exemplary performance and contribution to GUCE.

## 6.6 Monitoring and Evaluation

The Department of GUCE in consultation with the implementing units of the policy shall design a framework for regular monitoring and evaluation of the GUCE.

## 7.0 General Rules of Engagement

- a) All research-innovation and teaching-learning activities for GUCE must be registered on the GU Institutional Database for community engagement.
- b) All Gulu University-branded volunteer activities must be registered with clear outcomes and an exit strategy that must have been negotiated before the interventions occur.
- c) Engagement activities must preferably be set up as a formal partnership in order to regulate expectations, manage risks and ensure role clarification. Informed consent forms shall be used to cover some of these regulatory steps and understanding on an individual level.
- d) Formal partnerships must be cleared by and submitted to the Institutional Legal Office and must be signed in accordance with the institutional guidelines on Delegations and Authorization.
- e) Evidence of shared planning and ensuring that the partnership is mutually beneficial is essential. Regular feedback must be provided to all stakeholders involved to ensure that recognition is given to participants and that the principles of reciprocity are adhered to.

- f) Engagement activities must be evaluated by community partners and evidence of feedback is important as part of the reciprocity principle.
- g) Quality assessment, risk management and impact assessment must be conducted by relevant management structures.
- h) Fundraising for community engagement will be done in compliance with the GU Institutional rules regulating the specific aspect of community engagement fundraising.

## 8.0 Quality Management

Through the Senate and the Department of GUCE, the University will ensure the provision of effective, efficient and equitable support for community engagement through the community engagement support structures.

The institutional audit requirements, including the management of the quality of the planning, design, development, resourcing, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and review of community engagement programmes/projects to assure quality and continuous improvement, is the responsibility of the relevant faculty and academic department, or unit concerned.

## 9.0 Risk Management

All risks involved with regard to GUCE activities shall be managed in accordance with the risk management provisions for GU.

## 10.0 Enabling Mechanisms for the Policy

In order to facilitate the proper functioning and implementation of GUCE Policy, the following should be taken into account:

- a) Establishing a University presence through a Department of GUCE.
- b) Appointment of senior and support staff for operationalizing GUCE.
- c) Establishing institution wide and faculty-based committees responsible for GUCE
- d) Including participation in GUCE activities in staff promotion and reward systems.
- e) Resourcing and capacity building for GUCE initiatives at GU.

**Gulu University Council, DO HEREBY enact the University Community Engagement Policy this 16<sup>th</sup> day of May 2019**



**CHAIRMAN GULU UNIVERSITY COUNCIL**



SPHEIR  
Strategic Partnerships  
for Higher Education  
Innovation and Reform



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**Transforming Employability  
for Social Change in East  
Africa (TESCEA)**

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**TAGDev**



**BUILDING STRONGER UNIVERSITIES  
IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**



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**Caritas-Gulu Archdiocese**

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