

Inventory Tool for Higher Education Civic Engagement

The original version of this assessment tool appears in the book *Managing Civic and Community Engagement* by David Watson. It was originally designed for the Association of Commonwealth Universities in 2004.

The questionnaire aims to address the following five issues:

- (a) clarifying the institution's historical and mission-based commitments to its host society;
- (b) identifying how engagement informs and influences the institution's range of operations;
- (c) describing how the institution is organised to meet the challenge of civic engagement and social responsibility;
- (d) assessing the contribution of staff, students and external partners to the engagement agenda; and
- (e) monitoring achievements, constraints and future opportunities for civic engagement and social responsibility.

It ends with an invitation to highlight the top two contributions your institution can make to a global inventory of successful practices. These two contributions will in particular be shared with the rest of the Talloires Network membership.

1. Mission and history

The following questions ask you to describe how the origins and development of your institution incorporate commitments to the development of the region and locality.

1.1 What relevant objectives are set for the institution in its founding document (charter or equivalent)?

1.2 What relevant expectations are held by those who fund your work and support it (including politically)?

1.3 Which external groups are represented *ex officio* and *de facto* on the institution's governance or senior management bodies? How are the relevant individuals chosen and how do they see their roles?

1.4 To whom does the institution regard itself as accountable for its civic mission? For example, is there a "stakeholder group" such as a University Court, and if so, how does this work?

1.5 Are civic engagement and social responsibility objectives (as defined by answers to question 1.1 above) specified in the institution's strategic plan? If so, how, and with what indicators of success?

1.6 Have changes over time in the institution's composition or status (e.g. mergers, acquisitions, large scale contracts) affected the engagement agenda? If so, in what manner?

2. *Balance of activities*

The following questions investigate how your institution's pattern of activities reflects a civic engagement and social responsibility agenda.

2.1 Give a brief assessment of the chief economic and social needs of your region and/or locality. Include a description of the main sources of this information.

2.2 How does the institution's *teaching* profile (by subject and level, and including continuous professional development [CPD] and lifelong learning) reflect the needs of the local community and region? To what extent does the curriculum incorporate relevant features of the following:

(a) structured and assessed work experience and/or work-based learning;

(b) "service learning"; and/or

(c) prior or concurrent informal work experience?

2.2.1 How can representatives of the local and regional economy and community influence curriculum and other choices?

2.3 What proportion of the institution's *research* activity is directed towards the needs of the local and regional economy and society?

2.3.1 How can representatives of the local and regional economy and community influence research priorities?

2.4 How would the institution describe its *service* objectives (i.e. its commitments to business and the community)?

2.4.1 How can representatives of the local and regional economy and community influence activities in this area?

2.5 Using as a proxy an estimate of staff time (academic and support), how far is engagement in each of the areas outlined in this section (teaching, research and service) directed towards:

- (a) large business and industrial interest (including global and national organisations present in the region);
- (b) small and medium-sized enterprises;
- (c) other public services (e.g. education, health, social services);
- (d) the voluntary sector, community groups and NGOs; and
- (e) cultural and artistic organisations?

[A matrix, summing to 100% as the total staff effort involved in civic engagement, might be helpful.]

2.6 Does the institution have any other policies (e.g. on environmental responsibility, equality of opportunity, recruitment, procurement of goods and services) which can act positively or negatively on the region and the locality?

3. Organisation

The following questions seek to understand how your institution organises itself and deploys its resources (including human resources) to meet civic objectives.

3.1 Does the institution have specialised services to meet civic and related objectives (e.g. web-based resources, business advisory services, help-desks, formal consultancy and related services)?

3.1.1 If so, do these operate at a central or a devolved level, and if both how do the levels relate?

3.2 Does the institution have either dedicated or shared services which are community-facing (such as libraries, performance or exhibition spaces, and sports facilities)?

3.3 On what terms and with what frequency and volume of uptake are the institution's campus or campuses accessible to the community?

3.4 What arrangements are made for the security of the members, guests, and property of the institution?

4. People

The following questions will help to describe how policies and practice involve members of the institution including staff at various levels, students and formal partners in achieving goals related to civic engagement and social responsibility.

4.1 Who takes primary responsibility for the institution's work in civic engagement and social responsibility as defined in response to question 1.5 (above)?

4.2 Does the institution's policy for student recruitment have a local or a regional dimension? If so, how is this determined and what impact does it have on the make-up of the institution community?

4.3 To what extent are civic engagement and social responsibility objectives built into contractual terms for:

(a) senior managers;

(b) academic staff; and

(c) support staff (including the specialised staff referred to in question 3.1 above)?

4.3.1 Can achievement against such objectives positively influence decisions on promotion and re-grading?

4.4 Reflecting on the answer to question 2.2 (above), how far is the student body engaged in the economic and cultural life of the community through formal requirements?

4.5 What proportion of the student body (for example, postgraduate or post-experience students) is concurrently in full-time local or regionally-based employment?

4.6 What encouragement is there for members of staff to undertake aspects of community service (e.g. service on boards of other organisations, *pro bono* advice, elected political office)?

4.7 What is the extent of student volunteering in the community, and how is this organised? Does it attract:

(a) formal support (e.g. timetable concessions, payment of expenses); and/or

(b) academic credit?

5. *Monitoring, evaluation and communication*

The following questions seek to understand how your institution sets objectives and targets for civic engagement and social responsibility, monitors and evaluates achievement, and communicates both their intentions and related activities.

5.1 Has the institution undertaken any survey research to test internal and/or external interest in and proposals for the civic engagement and social responsibility agenda? If so, please summarise the results.

5.2 What steps does the institution take to consult upon and publicise its civic engagement and social responsibility agenda? [It may be helpful to review such publications as Annual Reports, newsletters and alumni communications.]

5.3 What do you regard as the level of public confidence held at national, regional and local level in the overall performance of your institution? What steps can be taken either to maintain or improve this level?

As a final step, please highlight your institution's top two contributions to the global inventory of higher education civic engagement and social responsibility. These highlights will in particular be shared with the membership of the Talloires Network in an effort to share experiences of successes and create a portfolio of best practices.