

# Vaal University Of Technology

## COMMUNITY SERVICE POLICY

### 1. Strategic Intent and Rationale

- 1.1 The mission of the Vaal University of Technology (VUT) embraces the concept of community service. This mission is concomitant with national education policy documents such as the NCHE report that called for increased participation, greater responsiveness and increased cooperation and partnerships.
- 1.2 Within this context the University has made a commitment to growing its community service practice. Evidence of this commitment is found in its mission statement, strategic plan and its financial projections.
- 1.3 The quality of its Community Service (CS) provision is directly linked to the University's reputation. A strong Community Service (CS) component demonstrates to the market this University's commitment to community development and engagement. It also serves to promote its entire educational provision. Community Service provision is an activity that complements the University's core teaching and learning and research activities and adds another dimension to the VUT profile.
- 1.4 The primary goal of VUT in its community service, as stated in its 3 year rolling plan, is to maintain and enhance the University's standing as a significant contributor of intellectual, educational, cultural, and other services to the local, State, national and international communities.
- 1.5 The main rationale for an ongoing VUT commitment to CS arises from its contribution to:
  - The University's profile and mission.
  - Professional and academic contact.
  - Contribution to national imperatives such as sustainable growth.
- 1.6 Because of the contact it creates between the University and its external environment, and because it helps to place the University in the midst of real life, community service (CS) is considered an integral part of the work of VUT, at all levels. Accordingly, community service (CS) is strongly encouraged in all aspects of the University's operations and appropriately recognised in relevant policies.
- 1.7 Through its community service provision the University is exposed to a different group of clients to that of normal University programmes. It also provides a significant opportunity for University staff to interact with the community and the professions.
- 1.8 The following three aspects typify the Community Service (CS) provision:
  - information sharing,
  - consultation, and/or
  - active participation.

## **2. Scope**

The scope of this policy governs all academic and administrative processes and activities that support the University's Community Service (CS) provision. This policy is supported by schedules and annexures that specify various procedures related to CS provision. These schedules and annexures may be subject to revision and/or amendment from time to time.

## **3. Definitions and principles**

3.1 Broadly stated, Community Service – within the context of this policy document and as it applies to VUT – refers to all those activities undertaken by VUT (staff and students) within, with and for communities leading to a mutually (both VUT and the community) beneficial outcomes. This broad definition encompasses concepts such as community development, community engagement and community service learning.

3.2 A more specific definition of CS may be stated as follows: Community service includes those commercial and non-commercial activities, projects and programs, offered by members of the University, which involve interaction with individuals, groups and organisations external to the University at the local, regional, State, national or international levels. Community service can take the form of intellectual, educational, cultural, scientific and other services, and contributes to the social progress, economic growth or cultural development of those individuals, groups or organisations, or the community as a whole.

3.3 Community Service at VUT will include the following activities:

- service through the teaching function;
- service through the research function;
- service through the sharing of expertise;
- service through access to facilities; and
- service through special projects and services

3.4 Principles underpinning VUT CS shall include that CS:

- should be linked to the goals and objectives of the University as set out in the strategic plan of the institution;
- should be conducted proactively, in terms of the active assessment of community needs and the development of programs and projects aimed at meeting those needs, within the broad scope of the University's areas of expertise;
- should be embedded in the teaching and research functions of the institution;
- should be appropriately recognised and rewarded by the University;
- should include the community from inception to completion;
- should take the broad program of action of the government into account.

## **4. Operating Procedures**

4.1 The planning and delivery of community service is based on devolution of responsibility to the faculty/department/centre level. At the same time, a University-wide centralized system will be directed by a Community Service Office (CSO).

4.2 This VUT: CS Policy is supported by a procedures manual, which includes a series of key procedures that describe all the activities that are critical to the maintenance of quality across the University.

## **5. Responsibility**

### **5.1 Policy Development and Implementation**

5.1.1 The Director: CSSC has overall accountability for the development of the VUT: Community Service (CS) Policy and for the monitoring of its implementation and effective operation within the University.

5.1.2 The Deans/Directors are accountable for implementing the VUT: Community Service Policy within the faculty.

5.1.3 The CS Office and faculty committees will assist in respect on Sections 5.1.1 & 5.1.2.

5.1.4 On the advice of the CS Office and faculty committee, the Director: CSSC reports to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic on policy matters and the performance of the CS provision.

### **5.2 Approval of Community Service proposals**

5.2.1 A proposal to run a CS project is approved by the faculty committee on advice from the Dean/Director on recommendation from the faculty committee (FC).

5.2.4 Proposals for CS projects may be considered by a faculty committee for approval at any time. Only approved CS projects may be funded and carried out.

### **5.3 Community Project Plans**

5.3.1 A proposal to conduct a CS project must be submitted to CS Office. The Office will prepare a project plan. At a minimum the plan will consist of a budget that clearly identifies all costs and resources commitments for the conduct of the project.

### **5.4 Operation**

5.4.1 The responsibility and accountability for development, approval, improvement processes and educational performance of community service projects reside at the faculty.

5.4.2 Delivery, marketing and financial performance of CS projects reside at the CS Office level.

5.4.4 To augment and support faculties, the CS office will be available for CS policy development, marketing and project management.

5.4.5 Faculty committees will review all CS projects at agreed to time-frames. At a minimum such review must include relevance, revised financial plan and details of any changes to staff and students involved in such projects.

5.4.6 Permission to run a CS project must be renewed annually i.e. a fresh application must be submitted each year.

### **5.5 Audit and Review**

The TQM department will undertake regular and appropriate internal audits of CS operations. The TQM department will provide the faculty with appropriate assessment and review instruments to ensure continuous improvement of CS provision.

## **5.6. Quality Management**

- 5.6.1 It is the responsibility of the Director: CSSC with the deans/directors to identify, implement and monitor strategies that manage risk and ensure continued improvement in the quality of CS provision.
- 5.6.3 The faculty must demonstrate that there has been appropriate follow-up to evaluate outcomes of all CS projects.

## **6. Partnerships**

- 6.1 As far as it is possible, all CS provision should involve a three-way partnership amongst educational institutions (including VUT), the community and the service sector (which includes the private sector and all spheres of government).
- 6.2 The terms of reference of such a partnership should clearly be outlined and understood by all parties involved.
- 6.3 The CS Office shall constantly work at establishing and maintaining partnerships and networks of organizations, groups and individuals essential to CS provision at VUT. Such partnerships will be aimed at:
- Helping balance competing needs and demands in allocating resources across diverse communities;
  - Increasing accountability and transparency as well as building communities of trust;
  - Creating an enabling environment for community efforts to flourish; and
  - Increasing participation by communities.

## **7. Funding and fundraising**

- 7.1 The CSO will budget annually for operational and capital items necessary for the execution of its CS duties.
- 7.2 Funding for specific CS programmes and projects will be sourced primarily through fundraising activities. Faculties and departments may also budget for/finance known projects run through such faculties/departments.
- 7.3 Both the faculties/departments and the CSO will have the responsibility of raising funds for various CS activities. Such fundraising efforts will also exploit networks and partnerships established in terms of Section 5 of this policy.
- 7.4 Funding acquired for CS activities and resources allocated to such activities cannot be transferred to be used for any other purpose without proper review, justification and authorization. Such conditions will also hold in respect of desired cross-subsidization among projects.
- 7.5 Only the Director: CSSC can, after proper consultation, give authorization for deviations as stated under Section 6.4 above.

## **8. Involvement of staff and students**

- 8.1 CS is a response to identified community needs by VUT through the involvement of staff and students. It is essential that CS activities are not seen as an end in themselves, but that they respond to real community needs properly identified in conjunction with the community.
- 8.2 All staff and students of VUT shall be expected to engage in community service in any of its forms as stated under section 3.3 above. Participation by academic staff is required in terms of the employment contract. Other staff members and students are also required to engage in CS.
- 8.3 CS may be rendered compulsory to certain staff members and/or students should such a need arise.
- 8.4 The CSO will recognize voluntary participation in community projects through certificates of participation.
- 8.5 Staff and students engaging in CS activities will be expected to maintain high moral standards reflective and representative of the culture of the University at all times. Failure to do so will be dealt with in terms of Section 11 of this policy.
- 8.6 No payment for participation in CS provision will be solicited by staff or students from communities. All payments (if any) will be handled through the CSO.

## **9. Indemnity**

- 9.1 The normal procedures and policies of the University indemnifying it against any consequential legalities will apply in all cases of participation in CS provision.

## **10. Exclusions**

- 10.1 The University will not participate in CS activities that may bear negative legal implications and/or consequences or any CS project that may put the name of VUT into disrepute or give the University adverse negative publicity.
- 10.2 Staff and students engaging in CS activities will be expected to maintain high moral standards reflective and representative of the culture of the University at all times.

## **11. Dispute resolution**

- 11.1 Any disputes that arise in relation to the management and provision of CS activities will be resolved consistent with the University's complaints and dispute resolution policies. In the first instance, the Director: CSSC will address disputes. Only in extreme cases will an issue be escalated first to the appropriate Faculty Dean, then to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic and then, if required, to the Vice-Chancellor and Rector for adjudication.
- 11.2 Persons involved in CS who are not VUT staff members or students are not subject to VUT disciplinary procedures. However, the University reserves the right to withdraw approval for involvement on VUT CS provision from any person who brings the University into disrepute.

## **12. Related policies**

This policy must be read in conjunction with related policies, guidelines, laws, regulations and procedure documents, of which the following are most relevant:

- VUT TQM policy
- VUT External work policy
- VUT Skills development policy
- CHE Guidelines on Community Engagement
- Relevant National Education policies, regulations and acts
- Institutional strategic plan
- Annexures and schedules to this policy

**13. Title and commencement**

This policy will be known as the VUT: Community Service Policy and will commence on approval by the Senate of the Vaal University of Technology.

***Revision date: October 2005***

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## **ANNEXURE A: Implementing Structures**

### **A1: Community Service Office**

#### **A1.1 Composition**

The CS Office will be headed by an Assistant Manager. The assistant manager will have practitioners based within faculties reporting to him/her. The assistant manager will report to the Director: CSSC.

#### **A1.2 Roles of the CS Office**

- Provide overall strategic direction regarding community service;
- Handle non-faculty-based CS projects;
- Marketing and fundraising for CS;
- Build networks especially with relevant persons and organizations (eg CBO's, NGO's);
- Conduct relevant surveys and research;
- Deal with procurement processes in conjunction with Finance department;
- Deal with costing, budgets & budgetary control of CS;
- Prepare for institutional audits;
- Conduct performance management of CS staff;
- Deal with policy issues;
- Handle Senate and Academic Board approval of CS projects;
- helping strengthen community service culture across the University;
- building up and sharing information about community service activities;
- facilitating sharing of resources;
- promoting the University's service activities to the community;
- providing clear linkage points between the University and the community;
- assisting with quality assurance;
- Co-ordinating all projects carried out by faculties;
- Helping to fundraise for CS projects;
- Providing leadership in CS principles and practicum of the field of Community Service;
- Perform other functions as may be allocated to it from time to time.

#### **A1.3 Roles of the Practitioner**

- Serve as first line of contact for complaints and queries;
- Help in marketing and fundraising for CS;
- Work closely with faculty representative;
- Scheduling of CS projects;
- Perform post-project activities;
- Schedule meetings of CSFC
- Prepare reports on all projects
- Liaise with the CS office
- Help identify community needs
- Help draw up project plans
- Foster team collaboration

### **A2: Faculty Committees**

To support the implementation of CS within faculties, faculty committees (FCs) will be setup.

## **A2.1 Composition**

The Faculty Committees will be made up as follows:

- Director: CSSC
- Assistant Managers (2)
- Practitioner(s)
- Faculty Representatives
- Resource persons (CID – TQM, Teaching Development & CD)

## **A2.2 Roles of the Faculty Committee**

- The committee will recommend approval of all CS projects in the faculty to the Academic Board and Senate;
- Review all projects on an annual basis;
- Monitor progress, quality, and other aspects of CS provision;
- Assist in fundraising for CS projects;
- Assist in development and implementation of the VUT CS policy;
- Consult with and engage faculty members regarding CS issues;
- Perform other such duties as may be assigned to it from time to time.