

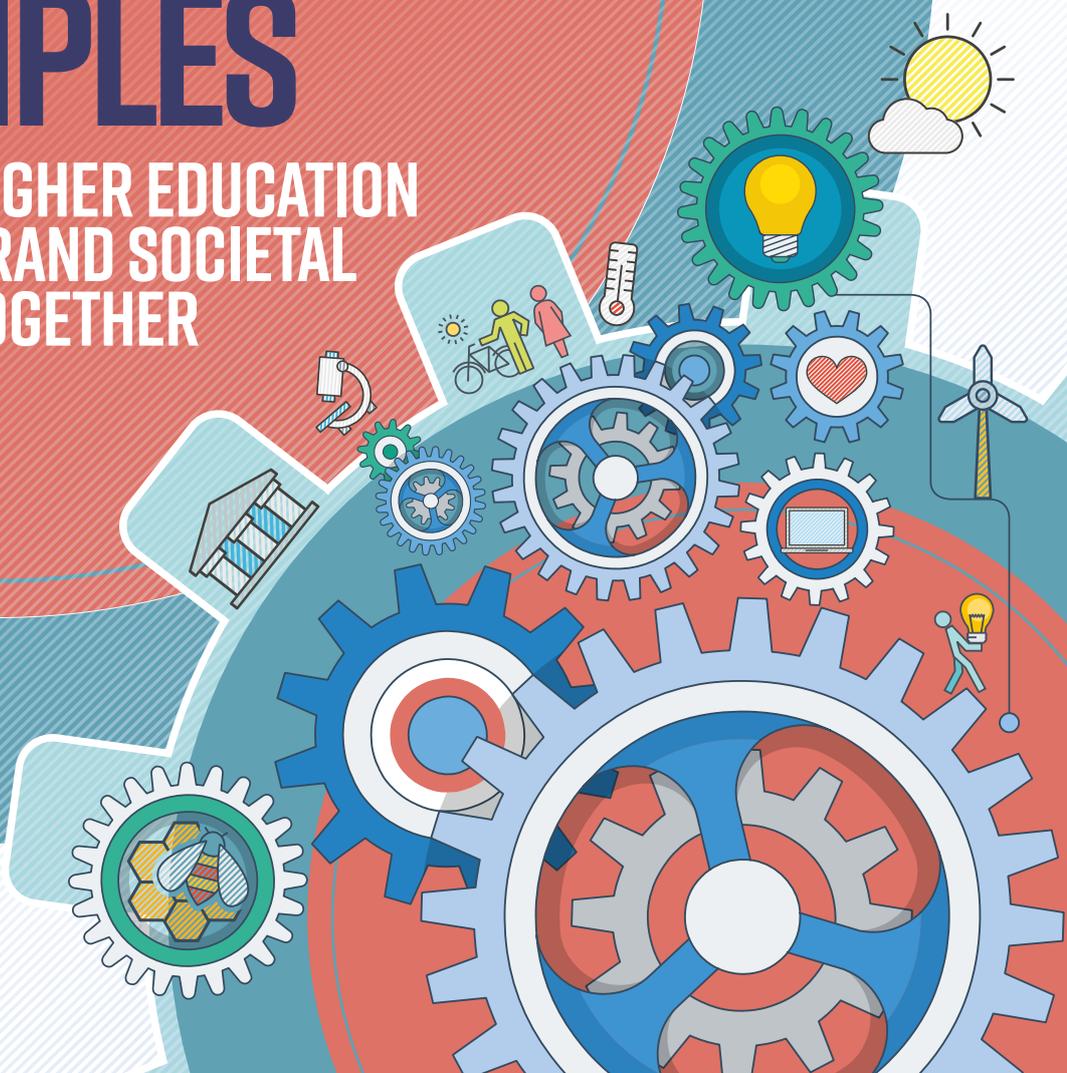


CampusEngage

A HOW TO
GUIDE

ENGAGED RESEARCH PRACTICE AND PRINCIPLES

SOCIETY AND HIGHER EDUCATION
ADDRESSING GRAND SOCIETAL
CHALLENGES TOGETHER



Engaged research

Describes a wide range of rigorous research approaches and methodologies that share a common interest in collaborative engagement with the community and aim to improve, understand or investigate an issue of public interest or concern, including societal challenges. Engaged research is advanced *with* community partners rather than *for* or *about* them.

A great deal of engaged research literature refers to 'community' engagement. In the context of this document, 'community' refers to a range of public research stakeholders, including public or professional service and product users, policy makers, members of the public, civil and civic society organisations (CSOs) and others actors.

This Guide is informed by an international literature review and a Campus Engage facilitated year-long national and international consultation with over 350 researchers, policy makers, funding agency personnel and community partners. The consultation led to the development of a national report, *Engaged Research – Society & Higher Education Working Together to Address Grand Societal Challenges*. This report can be downloaded from www.campusengage.ie.

What is Engaged Research in Practice?

There are numerous discipline-specific terms used to describe engaged research. For example, some researchers use the terms 'applied' or 'real world', whilst others prefer the term 'community-based' or 'participatory'. For the purpose of this Guide, the term 'engaged research' describes a wide range of non-discipline-specific rigorous research approaches and methodologies that share a common interest in collaborative engagement to address an issue of public interest or concern.

Engaged research is not about the recruitment of research study participants; or simply raising awareness of research through online, print media, publications of research findings, and outreach activities. For engaged research to be authentic, the relevant research stakeholders should meaningfully and actively collaborate across the stages of a research life cycle.

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More information on the work of Campus Engage can be found at www.campusengage.ie or contact kate.morris@iua.ie



Whatever the method or approach, engaged research can be identified by answering positively to the following engaged research checklist:

- ✓ Has the research question / hypothesis been formulated in dialogue with community stakeholders from whom the research is relevant?
- ✓ If your research is addressing a societal challenge or issue of public concern, have you engaged those stakeholders most affected?
- ✓ Does the proposed research tap the expertise and tacit knowledge of both researchers and community members?
- ✓ Does the design of the research ensure that stakeholders and researchers are clear about the extent of their collaboration, their respective roles and responsibilities, what they can expect to gain from the research, and what they will be expected to contribute?
- ✓ Is the allocation of funds appropriate for the roles and responsibilities assigned to each teammate?
- ✓ Can the research findings be utilised by researchers and stakeholders in order to address the societal challenge or issue of public concern?
- ✓ How will community members be recognised and acknowledged in research outputs?
- ✓ How will this research result in positive steps towards addressing the issue of public concern or societal challenge.

How to lead Engaged Research

Engaged researchers typically proceed upon the assumption that a full understanding of the research problem cannot be achieved independent of the context in which the 'problem' is found. Engaged research thus represents a more collaborative form of research association than is the norm in more traditional forms of research. In other words, it is based upon the assumption that knowledge, insight and expertise, to realise research impact, comes from a variety of sources, both from professional researchers and those without professional research experience. The **Campus Engage Engaged Research Framework** lists key considerations and guidelines for engaged action at every stage of the research process (Please see An Engaged Research Framework: A How to Guide).

Understanding the benefits of engaged research collaboration

For some, the goal of engaged research is social action (broadly defined) for the purpose of achieving social change and social justice either directly or indirectly. For others, engaged research is the logical response to socio-technical, political and other research drivers to support equitable, sustainable, evidence-informed innovation and entrepreneurship. It is a means to incorporate 'public user' insights into production, design and technology for maximum impact. Engaged research maximises impact by:

- Allowing for greater public accountability;
- Requiring tacit knowledge exchange to address societal challenges;
- Setting evidence-informed research impact performance indicators;
- Stimulating a stronger external demand for innovative policy, practice, products and services;
- Increasing reuse of data and decreasing duplication of effort;
- Maximising the value of research investment and providing a better return on investment;
- Creating better public support and understanding of the importance of research in our everyday lives.

Enablers of Engaged Research

The case studies and consultations that underpin the original report indicate the extent and diversity of engaged research in Ireland and illustrate a strong desire to co-create and share knowledge for positive societal change. In order to support this, we need enabling policies and structures to build capacity for engaged research, so that prospective project partners can form productive and sustainable partnerships. While there is a great deal of engaged research activity amongst academics in Ireland, and a growing interest from the public, civil and civic society organisations, to date there has been little coordinated infrastructure put in place or strategic thinking about how the aims of national and EU policy relating to engaged research might best be delivered. The following lists high level recommendations for higher education institutions, policy makers, and funding agencies that will enable engaged research to flourish.

Recommendations for Higher Education Institutions:

- Provide training, in partnership with civic and civil society partners, on good practice for engaged research;
- Assign dedicated staff within HEIs to support institution-community partnerships on all aspects of engaged research;
- Put in place simplified payment/reimbursement systems and processes that facilitate easier partnering and that accommodate non-university staff;
- Develop local communication and information systems which link all HEI departments, disciplines and colleges to capture past and ongoing engaged research projects to promote mutual learning and avoid duplication;
- Provide networking opportunities for CSOs and HEI staff interested in working together;
- Provide institutional reward and recognition for engaged research and reflect this in academic workloads and promotions procedures;
- Embed a commitment to engaged research in research and innovation, teaching and learning, strategic plans, undergraduate curricula and post-graduate and doctoral training;
- Accommodate flexible scheduling and timetabling of workloads to facilitate engaged research.

Recommendations for Policy Making Bodies:

- Publish a national strategy for engaged research in Ireland to position Ireland as a European and international leader in this area;
- Assign leadership to strategically implement engaged research policies and with responsibility for advancing the enabling infrastructure to promote engaged research at a national level;
- Adopt a nationally-agreed definition of engaged research;
- Promote nationally agreed guidelines for best practice in engaged research;
- Create nationally agreed metrics that characterise engaged research practice with high societal impact;
- Resource a national hub to inform, fund and offer capacity building to support societal innovation through engaged research;
- Develop a national 'clearing house of expertise' for engaged research that could contribute to the development of engaged research networks and expertise within Ireland and attract international researchers to Ireland;
- Create an inter-institutional/organisational national database of engaged researcher case studies, researchers and support staff;
- Create a national engaged research 'methods toolbox' as a resource centre for transdisciplinary and interinstitutional collaborations;
- Publish a data management protocol for engaged research;
- Publish an intellectual property protocol for societal innovation.

Recommendations for Funding Organisations:

- Align funding calls to societal needs articulated by public or professional service and product users, policymakers, civil and civic society organisations (CSOs) and researchers;
- Allow longer project timelines for engaged research projects;
- Include funding for pre-proposal design and consultation and post-project impact assessment;
- Earmark funding for existing programme or service evaluation research;
- Offer societal innovation vouchers for engaged research;
- Fund project management for larger-scale engaged research projects;
- Fund support staff to sustain engagement between HEIs and CSO partners between and during funded research projects;
- Fund national inter-institutional collaborations to provide leverage for smaller-scale projects to develop into impactful larger-scale projects that address issues of public concern across Ireland.