Community Engaged Learning Policy

Section 1 - Purpose and Scope

(1) This document guides the implementation and administration of Community Engaged Learning as an integral component of the curriculum at Southern Cross University. The Policy covers all course based Community Engaged Learning including both work integrated and service learning alternatives. All undergraduate degree programs are expected to provide opportunity for students to undertake an element of Community Engaged Learning.

(2) Southern Cross University is committed to enhancing engagement with its communities.

(3) Community Engaged Learning opportunities are expected to build mutually beneficial and long-term outcomes for the student, the University and the participating communities.

(4) This Policy defines the nature and scope of a key set of Community Engaged Learning experiences at Southern Cross University and is intended to ensure that the University has an appropriate policy and criteria for the selection and approval of Community Engaged Learning activities and sites and to ensure the implementation of appropriate arrangements for the participation, supervision and assessment of students undertaking Community Engaged Learning. It is intended that the Head of each School or College, or their nominee, will ensure that this Policy is implemented for all Community Engaged Learning activities undertaken by the School.

Scope

(5) The policy applies to both onshore and offshore program delivery. It may also apply to relevant Postgraduate courses or one-year Honours programs. International students may be exempt from the requirement to participate in Community Engaged Learning unless it is a mandatory requirement of their course.

Section 2 - Definitions

(6) For the purpose of this Policy refer to the Academic Board's Definitions Policy.

Section 3 - Principles of Community Engaged Learning

Community Engaged Learning

(7) Community Engaged Learning is the term used at Southern Cross University to describe contextualised learning experiences for students across a range of communities. The activity is structured, intentional and recognised by the University in order to secure directed learning outcomes for the student that are both transferable and relevant.

Learning Support

(8) Learning support for Community Engaged Learning includes the following:

a. interaction with the student, which may include site visits;

b. facilitation of student placements or project ideas;

c. ongoing monitoring of student work and progress; and

d. assessment of student learning and performance during the learning activity.

(9) Any instances of student work experience where the University does not provide for learning performance to be supported are not covered by this policy and will not be eligible for credit to an Award course.

Characteristics

(10) Community Engaged Learning at Southern Cross University will exhibit the following types of characteristics:

a. the activity will be directed by a staff member of the University;

b. the activity must meet the requirements of the Research Ethics Protocols of the University, where relevant;

c. clear agreement with a community representative or workplace about the conditions of the activity must be reached prior to commencement of placement;

d. assessment is linked to Community Engaged Learning activities;

e. sufficient preparation by student to undertake the relevant activity (this includes the need for international students to receive internship information in their marketing material prior to enrolment);

f. a whole-of-course approach which integrates the activity into the curriculum;

g. compliance with Education Services for Overseas Students Act and Higher Education Support Act requirements and other relevant legislation according to the activity

h. linked to the development of specific graduate attributes as defined in the course; and

i. appropriately resourced by the University.

Activity Elements

(11) The activity may also encompass the following elements:

a. involves a direct encounter with the phenomena being studied;

b. can include learning that occurs as a direct participation in the events of life;

c. may involve paid or volunteer activity;

d. the students could be funded through scholarship programs;

e. recognition of Community Engaged Learning experiences within workplace experience or concurrent paid work;

f. deliver social/economic/cultural or other value or definable benefit to the community of interest; and

g. undertaken within or outside the teaching period as negotiated with the relevant member of staff.

Course Specific Activities

(12) Community Engaged Learning at Southern Cross University encompasses diverse activities relevant to the range of courses available. It may include any of the following:

a. practicum;

b. professional practice;

    i. internship, workplace learning or work experience;

    ii. industry-based learning;

    iii. project-based learning;

    iv. fieldwork education;

c. service learning; and/or

d. placements; clinical and professional.

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Section 4 - Classification of Community Engaged Learning

(13) This section describes the roles and responsibilities of staff and students when the Community Engaged Learning occurs in an off-campus setting.

University

(14) The University, through the Head of School or College, Pro Vice Chancellor, Work Placement Coordinator and/or Unit Assessor, is responsible for:

    a. ensuring students are appropriately informed of all requirements for the unit including assessment, through unit statements and information guides and induction programs where appropriate;

    b. ensuring students are aware of any additional costs associated with undertaking placements, as made clear in marketing materials;

    c. establishing suitable induction and debriefing programs for students;

    d. establishing appropriate policies and procedures and quality assurance mechanisms;

    e. ensuring placement sites provide suitable learning opportunities for students;

    f. providing adequate briefing, training, and resources for on-site supervisors (this also encompasses the ability for international students to return to their home country to undertake internships);

    g. ensuring appropriate resourcing for Community Engaged Learning units and activities;

    h. maintaining contact with placement sites where students are placed;

    i. maintaining contact with students on placements and dealing with any issues that might arise;

    j. ensuring that all relevant SCU staff, workplace supervisors, and the students understand the assessment requirements and the role of each person in the assessment process.

Unit Assessor

(15) The Unit Assessor for the unit in which the Community Engaged Learning activities take place, is responsible for:

    a. participating in student induction and debriefing programs as required;

    b. liaising with the on-site supervisor;

    c. maintaining contact with students on such placements, including site visits as appropriate; and

    d. undertaking assessment of student progress in consultation with the on-site supervisor as required.

On-Site Supervisor

(16) An on-site supervisor should normally be assigned to each student, and would be responsible for the following as required:

    a. provision of a positive learning environment with opportunities for varied learning experiences in keeping with the placement requirements;

    b. provision of suitable induction and training, and acting as a role model in introducing students to acceptable professional behaviour;

    c. provision of adequate work space, access to required equipment, and a safe working environment;

    d. ensuring the student is aware of any on-site policies and procedures, including health and safety requirements and ethical guidelines;

    e. provision of guidance and mentoring;

f. consultation with SCU regarding the student's performance;

g. participation in the evaluation of student progress and supplying written assessments of the student's performance as required; and/or

h. signing and returning Community Engaged Learning agreements.

Students

(17) Students undertaking Community Engaged Learning in a unit or as a form of assessment are responsible for:

a. ensuring they meet all pre-conditions for the unit (for example, special clothing, appropriate certification, attending induction / orientation programs and reading all materials provided) and that these conditions are understood prior to enrolment;

b. ensuring they are enrolled in the unit;

c. completing the Community Engaged Learning agreement and other specified documents;

d. complying with their responsibilities as outlined in the Community Engaged Learning agreement, University Rules and Code of Conduct and the Student Rights and Responsibilities Charter;

e. complying with all requirements, policies and procedures of the placement location, including attending at the required hours and dressing appropriately for the workplace;

f. complying with health and safety requirements;

g. acting according to the University's ethical guidelines, respecting confidentiality and intellectual property issues in the workplace, and complying with any other relevant workplace or professional ethical guidelines;

h. taking responsibility for their learning by participating fully in the learning process and undertaking all learning opportunities provided; and

i. communicating with supervisors during the work placement, and notifying the University Unit Assessor of any changes or problems that arise.

Section 5 - Insurance

(18) A student undertaking unpaid Community Engaged Learning as defined by this policy is covered by the University's Travel, Personal Accident, Public Liability and Professional Indemnity Insurance provided they are approved to start their placement by the University and will be enrolled in the relevant CEL unit/s.

(19) Students are also covered by the University's (limited) Personal Accident insurance policy whilst on campus and/or engaged in campus /course/sport related activities and/or approved community engaged placement activities related to their course of study.

Section 6 - Requirements and Obligations

Placement Requirements

(20) Students must be made aware of specific requirements for their chosen Community Engaged Learning (CEL) setting through course and unit information setting prior to commencement of their placement. It is the responsibility of students to confirm all requirements before commencement of the placement. Requirements, including the time taken to meet them, may include the student having to:

a. obtain a driver's licence, first aid certificate or Working with Children Check (this may need to occur in the student's home country);

b. provide documentary evidence of immunisation; and/or

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c. complete an orientation package.

(21) Students must disclose true and accurate information when fulfilling the documentary requirements of CEL. Where misleading or fraudulent information is detected, students may be prevented from commencing CEL or have their participation withdrawn under the Community Engaged Learning At-Risk Procedures.

(22) Where a Community Engaged Learning unit is compulsory for the completion of a course (such as Education placements), this must be clearly stated in the materials and information provided to students at the commencement of the course. For international students where a Community Engaged Learning unit is compulsory for the completion of a course this information must be provided to students prior to the student accepting a place at Southern Cross University. This information includes all course related marketing material made available to students in their home country prior to accepting an offer to study.

Working with Children

(23) All students who will be working with children or young people during their placement must be made aware of the requirement to be in possession of a Working with Children Check before they begin their placement. This requirement must be included in unit documentation. Students must also be advised of the likely time frame between lodgement of the application and completion of the check and that this needs to be completed in their home country.

Student Induction

(24) All students must be provided with appropriate preparation before they enter the placement. This may include:

a. the rights and responsibilities of the student, the workplace and the University
b. the University's ethics requirements
c. any relevant workplace or professional codes of ethics.

Conflict of Interest

(25) Students should not normally be placed in a setting where there is a possible conflict of interest (for example, where a family member might be responsible for supervising and assessing a student, or in a field placement in a school where the student might be responsible for teaching and assessing a family member). Students are responsible for informing the School or College if such a situation arises. Schools and Colleges are responsible for ensuring that processes are in place to deal with such situations.

At Risk Situations and Fit for Practice Considerations

(26) The University's Community Engaged Learning At-Risk Procedures prescribe the University's process for dealing with any at risk situations. Such situations may include:

a. where the University has reasonable grounds to believe the student's performance at a particular setting will be detrimental to the workplace, customers, and/or other members of the public, the student, and the University;
b. where the student has been identified as being at risk of failing the unit; and/or
c. where the student has indicated problems with the setting or the on-site supervisor.

(27) Subject to the provisions of the Community Engaged Leaning At-Risk Procedures, the University may:

a. prevent a student from beginning CEL;
b. withdraw a student from CEL;
c. place conditions on the student's participation in CEL.

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(28) The relevant SCU decision maker will provide notification of a student's at-risk behaviour to any third party as required by law, regulation, or code.

Agreements

(29) Any formal agreement made between SCU and a workplace should be referred to the Southern Cross University Legal Office for approval or advice.

Sound Engagement Principles

(30) Staff seeking to identify and establish Community Engaged Learning opportunities are expected to consider and apply sound engagement principles and practices, particularly to seek mutually beneficial and long term outcomes for both the University and the collaborating communities.

Section 7 - Learning Outcomes and Assessment

(31) Community Engaged Learning units should be designed so that the learning experiences are integrated within the course and relevant to the learning outcomes of the overall course.

(32) Community Engaged Learning should form a structured and directed learning activity that:

a. enables the student to apply theoretical knowledge to practical, community setting related issues/needs, further developing skills and knowledge that is related to the industry or activity and applicable to other similar activities
b. encourages reflective practice
c. allows the student's skills, knowledge and values to be broadened and become context related
d. allows the student to be socialised into the community setting.

(33) Community Engaged Learning may be incorporated throughout the course in a range of locations.

(34) It may be a single service learning unit or a suite of activities throughout the course, commencing with opportunities to observe professional environments, and developing through to final year internships as 'capstone' experiences where the student has an opportunity to work on more complex projects.

(35) All Community Engaged Learning units should have a clearly defined set of objectives, which take into account Southern Cross University Graduate Attributes.

Section 8 - Quality Assurance

(36) All Community Engaged Learning that constitutes a formal component of a course should comply with the University's policies for quality assurance of courses and units, including the following:

a. the purpose and processes of Community Engaged Learning, including expected learning objectives and assessment practices, should be clearly documented through the Unit Statement;
b. all stakeholders involved should understand their roles and responsibilities;
c. the University's policy on the review of courses, unit reports, teaching and student experience would normally be applied to all Community Engaged Learning; and
d. opportunities for improvement should be identified and operationalised through a variety of mechanisms including student evaluations and survey instruments, and feedback on improvements should be provided to students.

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