CampusEngage

A HOW TO GUIDE

ENGAGED RESEARCH PRINCIPLES & GOOD PRACTICES

2022

Engaged Research

Engaged research describes a wide range of research approaches and methodologies that share a common interest in collaboration with societal partners. Engaged research aims to improve, understand, or investigate an issue of public interest or concern, including societal challenges and sustainable development goals. It is advanced *with* societal partners rather than *for* them.

Societal partners include service users, product users, policymakers, civil and civic society organisations, industry partners, members of the public, and other relevant stakeholders.

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'. Engaged research is not about the recruitment of research study participants, or simply raising awareness of research through online or print media, publications of research findings, and outreach activities. For engaged research to be authentic and ethical, all members of the research team should meaningfully and actively collaborate across the stages of a research life cycle. Given differences in terminologies across sectors and disciplines, the following definitions have been developed by Campus Engage:

- **Engagement:** Refers to building relationships, raising awareness, empowering societal partners in and through research, and other activities focused on mobilising knowledge. Engagement activities are required for both participation and involvement in the research process.

- **Involvement:** Refers to co-production of activities across all stages of the research and innovation process — and within all levels of project activities and governance — from agenda setting, to design, implementation, dissemination, and evaluation activities.

- **Participation:** Refers to the recruitment of study participants and their collaboration in a research project.

About this Guide

This Guide was informed by a literature review and year-long national and international consultation with over 350 researchers, policy makers, funding agency personnel and societal partners (Campus Engage, 2017). The consultation led to the development of a national report, Engaged Research – Society & Higher Education Working Together to Address Grand Societal Challenges (2018) which offered initial how-to guidance to research teams.

In 2022, Campus Engage, the Irish Universities Association, the Higher Education Authority, and the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning partnered to advance training and resources on engaged research and innovation for societal impact. Content was informed by the latest European and Irish policy for research innovation, including Horizon Europe and national policies and funding strategies. The Project Advisory Group included representation from Enterprise Ireland, the Irish Research Council, Science Foundation Ireland, the Health Research Board, Health Research Charities Ireland, the Royal Irish Academy, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Technological Higher Education Association, as well as researchers, academic and professional services staff from Trinity College Dublin, University of Limerick, University College Dublin, National University of Ireland Galway, Maynooth University, Waterford Institute of Technology, Dublin City University, Technological University Dublin, and University College Cork.

Based on this update, the following six key good practices were added to the 2022 update, in order to further enhance good practice:

1. Integrate transdisciplinary and cross-sectoral partnerships
2. Clearly identify pathways that maximise research impact
3. Advance open science / open scholarship
4. Deliver solutions through open innovation
5. Promote equality, diversity, inclusion, and belonging
6. Lead responsible research and innovation

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 recognises that the knowledge, insight and expertise required to realise research impact comes from a variety of sources, both from professional researchers and those with lived experiences. The ***The Engaged Research Framework: A How to Guide*** lists key considerations and guidelines for engaged action at every stage of the research Process.

Understanding the Benefits of Engaged Research

Engaged research is a 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 to deliver timely and relevant applications of science and scholarship. Engaged research maximises impact by:

- Delivering more diverse and inclusive teams, appropriate to the goals and objectives of the research;
- Ensuring meaningful engagement and involvement to deliver applications of science and scholarship;
- Requiring knowledge exchange to address societal challenges and advance sustainable development goals;

- Stimulating a stronger demand for innovative policies, practices, products and services;
- Increasing reuse of data and infrastructure, decreasing duplication of effort;
- Maximising the value of research investment and providing a return on investment;

- Creating better public support and understanding on the importance of research in our everyday lives;
- Encouraging scrutiny and informed dialogue on research efforts; and
- Allowing for greater public accountability.

Recommendations for Advancing Good Practices in Engaged Research:

The case studies and consultations that underpinned the original report and 2022 update indicate the extent and diversity of engaged research in Ireland and illustrate a strong desire to co-create, co-produce and mobilise knowledge for positive societal change. In order to support this, research teams require enabling policies, practices and structures to build capacity for engaged research, so that prospective project partners can form productive and sustainable relationships. The following good practices should be integrated into research activities:

1. **Integrate transdisciplinary and cross sectoral partnerships:** Ensuring effective integration of transdisciplinary and cross sectoral partnerships means acknowledging the complexity of multi-stakeholder collaborations – such as personnel, resource, and information management – and the unique opportunities that emerge from appreciating epistemological and methodological differences.

2. **Clearly identify pathways that maximise research impact:** By developing a clear vision and identifying the necessary steps for how research can benefit the economy, society, culture, public policy, products, services, health, the environment, or quality of life, research teams can commit to making a difference, including beyond the immediate scope and duration of the project. See the Campus Engage Planning for Impact: How To Guide for more information.

3. **Advance open science and open scholarship:** By extending the principles of openness to the whole research cycle and removing barriers to accessing outputs, resources, methods, tools, and data, research teams can improve the excellence, rigor and reproducibility of research. This drives local and global scientific discovery and innovation, grows collaborations and research networks, and encourages informed dialogue and debate.
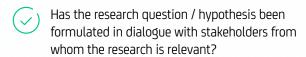
4. **Deliver solutions through open innovation:** Engaged research may advance innovations, meeting societal needs through the development of new ideas, products, methods, and services, and creating new relationships or collaborations. An open innovation ecosystem encourages access to research, researchers, and infrastructure.

5. **Promote equality, diversity, inclusion, and belonging:** Research teams should create a culture where diverse ideas, knowledge, and people can enrich the research and enlarge opportunities for knowledge mobilisation. This includes delivering an inclusive team; identifying procedures, practices and structural barriers to meaningful inclusion; implementing innovative strategies to correct identified bias; and setting targets to monitor progress via indicators.

6. **Lead responsible research and innovation:** Researchers lead responsible research and innovation by building a diverse and inclusive team, appropriate to the research. Team members understand their responsibilities and are fairly compensated and acknowledged for their time and expertise. Responsible researchers deliver open, transparent and ethical activities across the research and innovation life cycle, responding to feedback from those who have been engaged and involved.

Engaged Research Checklist

As you refine your research plan to develop a clear and thoughtful approach to engagement and involvement, ask the following questions to see whether you might have overlooked opportunities:

- ✓ Has the research question / hypothesis been formulated in dialogue with stakeholders from whom the research is relevant?

- ✓ If the research is addressing a societal challenge or issue of public concern, has the research team engaged and involved those stakeholders most affected?

- ✓ Does the proposed research tap the expertise and lived experiences of both researchers and collaborators, delivering a robust and diverse research team?

- ✓ Is the research team engaging and involving others in an ethical way through inclusive, participatory methodologies in all stages of the research and innovation process, from agenda setting and funding applications, to design, implementation, dissemination and evaluation activities?

- ✓ Has the research team considered equality, diversity, inclusion and cultivating a sense of belonging throughout all stages of the research cycle, in order to reduce bias?

- ✓ Does the design of the research ensure that all members of the research team 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 and equitable for the roles and responsibilities assigned to each teammate, and is the research team cognisant of the power and resource differentials between partners?

- ✓ Can the research data, instruments, and/or findings be openly accessed and utilised by researchers and other stakeholders in order to further investigate or address the societal challenge or issue of public concern?

- ✓ Has the research team taken appropriate actions to encourage collaboration and establish effective working relationships, acknowledging and actively integrating different sectoral, disciplinary, and demographic perspectives?

- ✓ Will the entire research team be recognised and acknowledged in research activities and outputs?

- ✓ Will this research result in positive steps towards addressing the issue of public concern or societal challenge?

- ✓ Does this research increase the relevance, acceptance and uptake of innovation or help foster lasting changes in social practices, therefore, acting as a system changer?