

# QA and Societal Engagement (SE)

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# What Are Universities Good For?

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Universities historically have had a strong relationship with the communities in which they are borne and hosted;

Over the centuries, they have served society well.

- Supporting people to achieve their personal development goals, providing the basis for a society rich in culture and social capital and providing the skills needed to serve our economies and maintain and enhance our living standards;

However, today's societal challenges require collective and co-ordinated engagement.

- Universities asked to rethink their role and responsibilities with respect to enhancing the competitive advantage of nations and regions as well as underpinning societal democratic values and active citizenship.

Current debate asks: ***what are universities good for – not what they are good at.***



# Why Societal Engagement?

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## Anchor Institutions and Regional Development

- Universities play key role as place-based actors; generating local innovation environment, along with other education providers, industries/business and civil society, for social, cultural and economic sustainability;

## Equality of Access

- Widening access to people of all abilities, ages, ethnicities and talents, especially as people live longer, and change jobs & careers more frequently;

## Public Trust

- Trust in public institutions, and HE, is under scrutiny arising from unequal access to societal public goods and opportunities as well as concerns as to whether the system is providing what is required.



# Definition

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“Engaging in learning beyond the campus walls, discovery which is useful beyond the academic community, and service that directly benefits the public.”

Mutually beneficial engagement that promotes and embeds partnerships *with* the community, industry and government, in co-production of knowledge, because complex problems require collaborative solutions



# Understanding Engagement

	<b>Social Justice</b>	<b>Economic Development</b>	<b>Public Good</b>
HE Model	Community-Engaged	Entrepreneurial	Regional/Civic
Influencers	Distributive justice; focus on community and democratic society	HE as a driver of social and economic growth	Knowledge as output – linked holistically with research and teaching
Characteristics	Collaboration between HEI and community for mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources	“Third mission” focus on research and innovation, enterprise and business development, human capital development	Engagement embedded across the whole institution – as horizontal link between teaching and research.
Descriptive Concepts	Public engagement, Civic engagement and Democratic engagement	Regional engagement; Corporate Partnerships	Academically-based engagement; institutionalized engagement

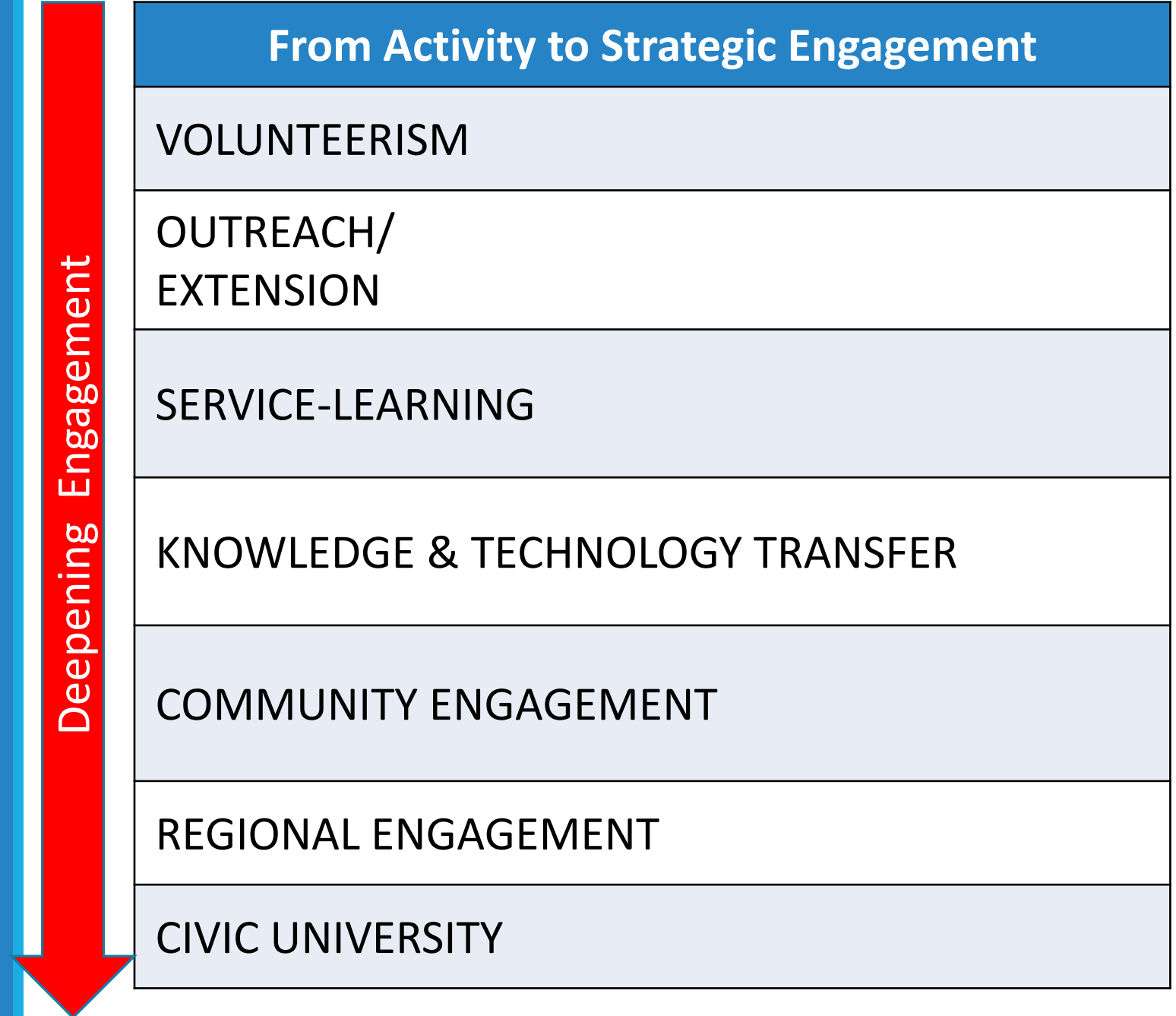
# Examples of Engagement

	Social Justice	Economic Development	Public Good
Activities	Faculty & students working with community partners to research social problems and form a community development council to work on comprehensive revitalisation plans and offer solutions to the problems.	Faculty & students working closely with industry and business to establish science parks, innovation parks and enterprise centres, including start-up companies.	Joint planning of urban/regional environment, shared initiatives for health and/or innovation, formal governance arrangements to oversee and monitor developments, city-university-enterprise initiatives, etc.
Assessment	Student volunteer activity; Students learning with community; graduates employed locally; continuing education training programmes; total credits for engaged learning courses; student internships in local/regional community employments; faculty involvement	Number of licences, options & assignments; Total budget from commercialisation; Start-ups/spin-offs, etc.; R&D sponsored agreements; Contracts & collaborative projects with non-academic partners; Graduate students/Postdoc. Directly/co-funded by stakeholders; Co-funded facilities or	Evidence of bi-lateral activity; Joint and sustainable initiatives in regional/city-building, incl. strategic planning; Research and publications with industry, public bodies and civil society; Patents, start-ups and social innovations; Exchanges and placements in

Universities often undertake a wide range of activities, but “mere activity in a community does not constitute engagement.”

(Saltmarsh, Hartley, and Clayton, 2009, 6)

What do we mean by societal engagement? What are the levels of engagement?



# What are the Implications for QA?

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HE has responsibility to foster excellence, drive innovation and ensure graduates have the knowledge and skills to prepare them for future careers and role as active citizens;

This requires HEIs to engage with internal/external stakeholders, and partner with industry actors, their local and regional environment, and other higher education institutions;

So – how can QA processes help HEIs meet expectations and needs of all stakeholders and demonstrate their value to society?





# Issues to Consider/Questions to Ask

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*Governance:* How is SE embedded holistically across the HEI? How does the HEI align its policies and interests with those of society? Has the HEI embrace SE as a strategic objective or does it simply promote spontaneous ad hoc actions?

*Curriculum, Learning Outcomes:* How does the curriculum prepare graduates to be global citizens, who can have a positive impact locally and globally? To what extent is SE supported by innovative pedagogies, with emphasis on multi-disciplinarity and challenge-based learning?

*Widening Participation and Learning Support Systems:* How does T&L support access and successful completion? Has the HEI re-organised its provision to facilitate diverse learners, shifting from time-served to just-in-time, recognise competency-based education and/or offer online, open and flexible learning?



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*Research:* How is the societal impact and relevance of research supported, undertaken and evaluated? To what extent are participatory approaches endorsed where end-users are part of research design, as co-producers?

*Faculty:* To what extent is SE a criteria for appointment and promotion? How are faculty supported?

*Collaboration and Partnership:* To what extent does the HEI collaborate with other partners in the quadruple helix? How does the HEI balance local/regional, national and global aspirations or is pursuit of “world-classness” its primary ambition?



