McMaster University | Office of Community Engagement

Guide to incorporating a community-engaged education component to your course(s)

The following worksheet can help assess your readiness to build community-engaged (CE) components into your curriculum and get started on your planning.

STEP 1: ASSESSING READINESS FOR COMMUNITY-ENGAGED INTEGRATION

To begin, ask yourself these questions:	Your responses:
1. Why are you considering adding a CE component to your course?	
2. What are the learning objectives or outcomes of the course you want to add the CE component to?	
3. How will the CE activity substitute for an activity you traditionally provide in the course?	
4. What are your timelines for adapting your course to include a CE component?	
5. Will you have time to plan and facilitate CE during the course?	

6. What resources will you need to integrate CE into the course? (i.e., budget for honoraria, parking passes for guests, tech, space, time, staff/admin, etc.)	

STEP 2: ASSESSING ALIGNMENT WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This next section will help you explore how the CE course component aligns with McMaster's principles of community engagement (relationships, reciprocity, continuity, equity, openness to learning, and commitment to act).

Principle of community engagement	Things to consider	Potential implementation strategies	Your answers/notes
Relationships Relationship building can take time. Trust and transparency are key.	Are you currently connected with community partners or aware of potential community partners for the topic?	• Connect with the Office of Community Engagement to identify possible community partners to fit with your course topic or learning objectives. • Reach out to partners who you already have connections with to assess their needs and capacity to support the CE education ask.	
	Are you able to dedicate time to the relationship building with community partners?	• Consider drafting a partnership agreement that outlines the shared goals, key contacts, clear timelines and objectives to keep the	

	Will the proposed CE activity achieve an established, shared goal with your community partner?	partnership on track. The Office of Community Engagement can assist.	
Reciprocity Working towards for mutual benefit of groups involved	Are you meeting a need that has been identified by the community you wish to engage with?	• Ensure that the need you are addressing via the CE course component is a current priority with your community partner – where possible, let the community partner determine the topic to be addressed.	
	If you plan to involve community stakeholders, what will you offer in return?	• Offer honorariums for guest speakers or community consultations. • Explore release of work options to allow community partners access to student-developed proposals or outputs that will benefit their work.	
	Is the community partner responsive to mutual problem solving and open to meeting student needs?	• Be transparent with your community partner about what the expectations are regarding student support. • Explore options for student support based on community partner capacity (i.e., guest speaker to outline the issue to all students at once, written brief on the topic for students to refer to, video recording, website/readings on the topic, etc.) • Consider setting up a dedicated communication plan - do not assume that all partners have capacity to respond to one-on-one student questions. Plan to facilitate Q&A	

		between the students and partner as needed. • Establish a troubleshooting and problem-solving strategy with your community partner at the outset of the course/partnership	
Continuity Supporting student learning and partners beyond term timelines	Are clear timelines established to ensure the completion of the CE component in term? Has consideration been given to how University timelines may differ from community timelines?	• Plan the CE component to be achievable in the length of the course – considering the time to introduce the component, allow students to familiarize themselves with the ask and topic, community input, etc. • Work with your community partner to establish clear timelines for all activities related to the component and the outputs before the term begins. Be transparent about University timelines and expectations.	
	Is there an option for integration of the CE component into future courses/additional courses across your	• Explore feasibility for cross-program continuation of the work with the community partner where possible • Connect with the Office of Community Engagement to see if	

	faculty? (i.e., is there a transition plan in place for the community partner for when the course ends?)	there are additional programs, faculty, student opportunities, etc. that might support progression of the work after the term	
Equity Campus partners are aware of intersectionality and the existence of barriers creating power imbalances in society. Campus partners strive to remove systemic, structural, and societal barriers of participation.	What barriers exist and how are they being address?	• Familiarize yourself with the current local context for the community partner and the topic you are hoping to address • Explore and utilize resources available from the Equity and Inclusion Office. • Discuss barriers with the community partner on the course. Adapt your CE component as needed based on their input.	
	What power imbalances may impact the partnership? (i.e., is the research going to be community-led; will data be owned by community or campus?)	• Be aware of the power imbalance that can come with a partnership with the University. • Be aware of the power imbalances that students may feel in engaging with community partners • Establish clear roles and responsibilities of all partners in a Partnership Agreement (Office of Community Engagement can assist with drafting this). • Co-develop a response plan for if/when a power imbalance is flagged by any partners.	

	Has consideration and acknowledgement been given to the community partner strengths? (i.e., traditional ways of knowing)	• Recognize and respect the expertise of your community partner by asking	
Openness to learning Embracing new and different perspectives	How are community partners involved throughout?	• Outline a plan for community partner engagement and feedback before the term begins (this will overlap with your timeline planning above). • Co-develop a response plan for if/when a change in involvement may occur (i.e., community partner capacity or resources changes)	
	How will you use their feedback (i.e., is there room to adapt your component based on feedback?)?	• Plan to check in with community partner at milestones throughout the partnership – after a guest speaker, after initial project meetings, etc. • Where possible, build in a responsiveness component to your planning to adapt based on milestone check-ins (i.e., adapt how students communicate with the partner if you're hearing they are receiving too many one-on-one messages).	
	Have you explored what historical context exists for the community issue?	• Where possible, aim to reduce the burden on your community partner to provide context by reviewing the history of this topic and the actions already taken in the community to address it.	

		• Ask questions of your community partner for clarity when needed.	
Commitment to Act Sharing or acting on knowledge gained	What are the next steps? How will you use the knowledge gained through this partnership/CE learning component?	• Build sharing the knowledge gained through the partnership into the CE component from the outset (i.e., a student showcase) • Explore opportunities for action based on the outcome of the CE component and overall partnership (i.e., are there campus-community connections that can further the work?) • Tailor the CE deliverables to the needs identified by the community partner	
	What could/would you do differently in the future to mitigate some of experienced challenges?	• Reflect on the partnership and the CE teaching and learning experience at the end of the course and make adjustments where necessary	
	Do you intend to evaluate the partnership to help improve or adapt the partnership?	• The Office of Community Engagement can assist with resources to help you develop a partnership evaluation plan	

Resources to support you:

Office of Community Engagement and Resources

McMaster's CE Toolkit

Community Engagement and Research Library Guide

McMaster's Equity and Inclusion Office

Health, Safety, and Risk Management

MacPherson Teaching Remotely Website