

Guide to considering engagement in the community as a university student

The following worksheet can help you reflect on your readiness to engage in/with the community before you start your journey.

STEP 1: Reflection

To begin, ask yourself these questions:	Purpose of question:	Your responses:
1. Why are you considering engaging in the community?	Understanding your motivation for engagement can help you sort through whether you are prioritizing your needs or the community's. How might some motivations be beneficial while others might be harmful to the community?	
2. What are the learning objectives or outcomes that you hope to gain out of this experience? What skills would you like to develop?	This is to help you make the link between your learning objectives and the experience you will embark on to ensure that there is a good fit with the needs of the community. It is also important to remember that you are a part of the bigger picture and that expertise come in many shapes.	
3. What type of experiences are you looking for? (What is the topic? Who is the community?)		
4. What skills, experiences, and knowledge do you bring to this opportunity? What does the community bring?		

<p>5. What do you know about the community you hope to engage with? What do you know about their expectations of you and of this opportunity?</p>		
<p>6. What interests, values, beliefs, and biases do you hold that might be relevant to this opportunity?</p>	<p>Everyone is informed by their pasts, experiences, and communities. These questions will help you in sorting through information, thoughts, feelings, and perspectives that you will bring with you as you engage in this work.</p>	
<p>7. What assumptions are you making about this opportunity/community and your self/role/skills? What assumptions might the community make of you?</p>		
<p>8. What are your timelines for community engagement?</p>	<p>It is important that you are honest and realistic with yourself and the community partner about how much time you can offer.</p>	
<p>9. What resources will you need to engage in/with the community? (Think beyond monetary and physical resources, what do you need to prepare mentally and psychologically? What do you need to educate yourself about?)</p>	<p>This is to help you anticipate the resources you may need. However, remember that flexibility is important, and other needs may arise that you might not have anticipated.</p>	

<p>10. What are the benefits, risks, and ethical considerations for all parties involved?</p>	<p>Consider if your involvement will provide any benefit or cause harm to the community. Are you perpetuating any power imbalances? Are you engaging with a vulnerable population? Is your engagement with the community sustainable? It is important your plans amplify the benefits, mitigate any harms, and fulfil ethical standards.</p>	
<p>11. How will you embody McMaster's Principles of Community Engagement (i.e. Respectful Relationships, Reciprocity, Equity, Continuity, Openness to Learning, and Commitment to Act?)</p>	<p>Reflect on your answers to the questions above and try to link your answers to the principles. Why are these principles important to keep in mind as you navigate your community engagement experience?</p>	

STEP 2: Consultation

After you have spent the time reflecting on the questions in step 1, book a meeting with a staff member at the Office of Community Engagement to talk through your plans and create concrete next steps.

Person to contact	Contact information
Shahad Al-Saqqar	Email: alsaqqs@mcmaster.ca

STEP 3: Resources

You may wish to access additional resources to help in your planning and processes. Here are a few to help you get started:

General information about community engagement:

- [Office of Community Engagement](#) and [Resources](#)
- [McMaster's CE Toolkit](#)
- [Community Engagement and Research Library Guide](#)
- [The Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans \(TCPS 2\)](#)
- [Community Resource Handbook: A Guide to Community-Engaged Research](#)
- [A Guide to Inclusive and Meaningful Research with Hamilton Newcomers](#)

The reflection questions in this document were inspired by and adapted from:

- [Fundamentals of Community Engagement: A Sourcebook for Students](#)
- [Who am I, and what does that have to do with research? A critical self-reflection guide for students.](#)
- [Community-Engaged Education: Questions to Consider – Worksheet](#)
- [Campus Engage \(A Student Guide to Community Engagement\)](#)
- [Ensuring Community Comes First: Actions for CCE Practitioners](#)