

# ***Common Core Curriculum for Rural Engagement***



Rural Resilience Indian Excellence

## **National Council of Rural Institutes**

**Department of Higher Education**

Ministry of Human Resource Development

Government of India

# ***Common Core Curriculum for Rural Engagement***

## ***Background***

Rural or Community Engagement in Higher Education is one where sustainable networks, partnerships, communication media, and activities between Higher Education Institutions and communities are fostered at various levels. There is an inevitable and symbiotic relationship that exists between communities and Higher Education Institutions.

Communities help provide human resources that are necessary for higher education systems to foster and carry out their purposes. Higher Education Institutions in turn train students who eventually fill job vacancies and establish businesses of their own in society.

Engagement activities between communities and higher education may be formal or informal. Examples of community engagement initiatives include building relationships through collaboration initiatives, business ventures; meetings & conferences, sports events, research projects, etc.

Vast online repositories through university libraries and other digital media provide a unique ability for Higher Education Institutions to share information with communities in ways that were unimaginable prior to the 1990s.

Thus, meaningful community engagement should bring benefits for communities and continuous academic development to institutions.

## ***Introduction***

University education in India has been adopting several strategies for building the spirit of Community Service in students. Currently, there is no prescribed curriculum for inculcating this spirit among the students. Hence, it is imperative that a Rural Community Engagement curriculum be developed which can be offered as a compulsory course to all the students. In order to bridge the gap between the expectations and actual practices, there is a need to integrate two important aspects in the proposed curriculum viz., Living and Learning.

There is also an impending need for the engagement of the enthusiastic young generation, in the course of their education, about local community issues and challenges prevalent in the rural community. Currently, there is a huge gap between the textual knowledge and evolving contextual practices of rural India. Community engagement by students should also aid disaster mitigation, disaster management and disaster resilience needs of the society.

A draft curriculum on Rural Engagement has been developed based on group discussions held by group of faculty members from across Central and State universities in India.

## ***Characteristics***

The following core characteristics form the basic framework of the community based learning model which are prime factors that are considered while developing the curriculum.

1. **Meaningful Content:** in Community Engagement, learning occurs in relevant places where challenges are experienced. It focuses on issues that involve students through direct engagement with the communities for addressing and responding to these challenges.
2. **Voice and Choice:** In Community Engagement, learning tasks are active processes and they allow students to take an active role in the decision making process while performing these tasks.
3. **Personal and Public Purpose:** In Community Engagement process, the learning goals connect personal achievement to public purpose through community engagement.

4. **Assessment and Feedback:** In transacting a Community Engagement Course, there is an administration of ongoing assessment supported by mentoring that gives students the opportunities to learn from their successes and failures. It also gives them an insight into their prevailing standards and the understanding of the gap between the current and expected standards.
5. **Resources and Relationships:** Community partnerships increase the community resources and community relationships which are utilized by students during learning and action, making it an interactive, real time learning.

## **Curriculum Design**

- Objectives
- Rationale
- Proposed Model of Curriculum
- Practicum Details
- Assessment
- Outcomes

## **Objectives**

The following Objectives have been framed for the proposed curriculum on Rural Engagement:

1. To provide practical opportunities for students for participation in rural community mobilization, service engagement and empowerment activities along with trained resident community volunteers
2. To orient students on Village Development Plans incorporating the aspects of the Village Disaster Management Plan.
3. To promote preparation of strategies for building resilience and community responding system in nutrition including water, food safety and healthcare.
4. To promote preparation and implementation of community resilience development plan for identified, mutually agreed and prioritized aspects for channelizing financial and physical support from Corporate Social Responsibility grants.

## **Rationale**

Community engagement can be a big game changer for rural communities. Though traditional extension and outreach programs are desperately trying to bring in the desired outcomes, they are just not sufficient to heal the rift between higher education and public life. What is required is an approach that extends beyond service and outreach to actual 'engagement'. By this, we mean that there is a need to move from a model of 'public service' where universities do things for 'passive & needy public', to one of 'public work that taps, engages and develops the civic agency, talents and capacities of everyone, inside and outside the academy'. Therefore, the requirement of today is an 'engaged model of university outreach' which is far more collaborative than the customary conventional approach.

Hence, Higher Education which is generally organized into highly specialized disciplines requires a paradigm shift towards a more systemic perspective, emphasizing collaboration, cooperation and partnership (UNESCO Chair, 2015). There is an urgent need to promote rural community-student engagement through the Rural Camps, Village Visits, Village Studies, etc.

The various forms of community engagement are: (PRIA, 2014):

1. *Linking 'formal' learning and the local community*
2. *Researching with the community*
3. *Sharing knowledge with the community*
4. *Designing new curriculum and courses*
5. *Involving local practitioners as trainers*
6. *Social Innovation by students*

## ***Proposed Model of Curriculum***

The curriculum is proposed for two consequent semesters. It is interdisciplinary in nature and more practice oriented.

<b>S.N</b>	<b>Module Title</b>	<b>Module Content</b>	<b>Teaching/ Learning Methodology</b>	<b>Number of Classes</b>
<b>Semester I</b>				
1.	Rural Society	Dynamics of Rural Society : Social, Economic, political and cultural	Group discussion	4
2.	Change	Community Goal Setting: Inner Engineering	Group Exercise	4
3.	Participatory Learning, Social Mapping	Approaches and Methods, Community Project Proposal and Project Management, Concept and Steps, Thematic Maps	Field Visit , Participation	12
4.	Village Development and Disaster Management Plan	Village Development Plan including aspects and process of preparation of Village Disaster Management Plan	Case Study Interview, Participation, Field Visit	6
<b>Semester II</b>				
5.	Resource Mapping	Natural and Human Resource Mapping and Management	Demonstration, Interview, Field Visit Mapping	6
6.	Rural Institutions	Engagement with School/ Street/Health Centre/ Panchayat/ SHGs	Case Study Field Visit, Survey	6
7.	Close to Community	Awareness : Health & Hygiene/ Rights / Policies & Programmes/ Corruption	Lecture, Preparation of Awareness Programme Aids coaching	6
8.	Disaster Management	Disaster Preparedness- Risk Reduction Role and Responsibilities Rehabilitation: Physical and Psychological aspects	Lecture, Demonstration, Training	4
9.	Professional Intervention	Partnership with public , Private and non-governmental organizations	Field Visit, Mentoring Facilitation	6

## ***Practicum Details***

Every Saturday or continuously for a week, students are expected to be engaged in the rural community to take up the following activities for developing field perspective on rural resource management, issue-based work and complex emergencies.

1. Interactive Awareness programs with community experts and village leaders with PRA.
2. Interactive community exercise with community experts and village leaders on Village Development Planning.
3. Involving students in the literacy programmes of selected village.
4. Conducting training programmes with Self-Help Groups and government officials for training in different vocations and developing skills.
5. Conducting information collection, collation and use (Data Management) workshops with the help of school resources of the selected villages and Self Help Groups.
6. Identifying the committees and establishing the committees with the help of village level officers.
7. Establishing village networks with the help of village level officers and district officials.
8. Conducting / facilitating health camps and campaigns.
9. Reporting the health concerns of the villagers, drainage system of the village and health habits of the villagers to the concerned authorities and facilitating address of these concerns.
10. Organizing orientation on preparing a system for community plantation management and community water management.
11. Creating awareness about the climatic change hazards in the villagers and inputs on how to address the same.
12. Organizing awareness programmes relating to water, soil fertility management, energy management.

## ***Assessment***

1. This is a two credit add-on course, with one theory class and one practical class of two hours per week for one semester which is equal to 18 hours of theoretical input and 36 hours of practical input. There are four credits over two semesters.
2. Alternatively, it can be either offered as an elective of 2/5 credits in one semester.
3. Focus will be on engaging in study and capacity building for promoting the rural community development.
4. The emphasis is more on the practical orientation of the student.

## ***Outcomes***

After completion of the course, the students will be able to:

- Understand the social, economic, political and cultural framework of the rural society
- Address the challenges with suitable responses for the identified rural issues
- Engage in the management of the rural community

## ***Career Options***

- Career in Community Development
- Career with links in the Rural India including Entrepreneurship and Facility Management
- Career as a Rural Nodal Officer for Rural Development Programmes