Australian Catholic University
Institute for Advancing Community Engagement:
Risk Management: Response to the AUQA Audit Report

Among the affirmations and recommendations of the AUQA Audit Report on Australian Catholic University was a recommendation that the University ensure that a risk management approach is taken when establishing community engagement partnerships. The Institute for Advancing Community Engagement (IACE) responded as a unit by completing the University’s Risk Self-assessment Questionnaire, and producing a formal preliminary response that identified risks, assessed and ranked them according to three levels of severity, and suggested ways of managing them. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic) also brought the matter of AUQA’s recommendations about risk management with IACE staff to a Planning Conference on November 27, 2009, which led to the development of an introduction to IACE’s risk management policy further defining the concept and setting out the Institute’s commitment to adopting a risk management approach and its intended outcomes.

IACE then analysed a case-study — a review of a major community engagement initiative, the Catalyst-Clemente programs operating in several centres in Australia — as a practical way to use its experience to identify potential risks in relations between ACU and community organizations, the operation of IACE within the University itself, and the participation of academic staff and students in community engagement projects. This process provided a wider and more detailed listing entitled Australian Catholic University’s Institute for Advancing Community Engagement: Potential Sources of Risk. (attached). An effective outcome of this listing has been the development of a template for memoranda of understanding with community organizations that has already been put into practice in precincts and projects within Australia to address the risks identified earlier, and also to assist negotiations by setting out such matters as proposed outcomes, roles and responsibilities of the parties involved in projects, the mutual benefits that may flow from them, the term of any agreement, dispute resolution mechanisms, financial arrangements, governance, and the ways in which co-operation enables the parties to achieve results that they could not achieve alone. (An example of a Memorandum of Understanding in the process of negotiation is attached). This process will be further developed and refined with each major community engagement initiative in the light of experience with current projects and precincts.