

Indicators of interconnectedness¹

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‘Interconnectedness’ was operationalised along two dimensions: ‘articulation’ and ‘strengthening the academic core’.

‘Articulation’ which has a number of characteristics. First, articulation includes the extent to which the aims and outcomes of engagement activities articulate with the university’s strategic objectives. Second, articulation includes the linkages engagement activities have with external stakeholders such as government, industry, small businesses, NGOs and others. Another link is the extent to which there are connections with an ‘implementation agency’ (that is, an external body which takes up the knowledge and/or its products generated or applied through research or training). Third, articulation takes into account linkages generated through sources of funding in three respects: whether the engagement activity has obtained external funding, the number of funding sources secured and the extent to which the project has developed a relationship with its funders over time.

‘Strengthening the academic core’ refers to the extent to which the university’s engagement activities serve to strengthen the knowledge production activities of the university. This includes the extent to which the engagement activity generates new knowledge (versus applying existing knowledge); feeds into teaching and/or curriculum development; is linked to the formal training of students; provides an opportunity for academics to disseminate their research; and is linked to international academic networks.

The various characteristics relating to ‘articulation’ and ‘strengthening the academic core’ were converted into a set of eight indicators. Each dimension can score a maximum of 9.0 (see Table 1).

On the basis of the indicator score totals for articulation and for the academic core, the projects were plotted on a graph depicting the intersection between ‘articulation’ and ‘strengthening the academic core’ in order to provide a graphic representation of the extent of each project’s interconnectedness. An interconnectedness score is shown by inserting a third axis which bisects the articulation and academic core quadrants and which ranges from disconnected (-9) to interconnected (9). A score for interconnectedness is calculated by halving the sum of the articulation and the academic core values for each engagement activity. See Figure 1 for an example of the resulting graphic showing the interconnectedness of university engagement activities, as well the interconnectedness scores (*i*) for two fictitious engagement activities.

¹ For more detail on the concept of ‘interconnectedness’ as it pertains to university-community engagement, refer to Van Schalkwyk F (2015) University Engagement as Interconnectedness: Indicators and insights. In: Cloete N, Maassen P & Bailey T, *Knowledge Production and Contradictory Functions in African Higher Education*. Cape Town: African Minds. P. 203-229. Available at http://www.africanminds.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/9781920677855_txt1.pdf

Figure 1: Representing interconnectedness

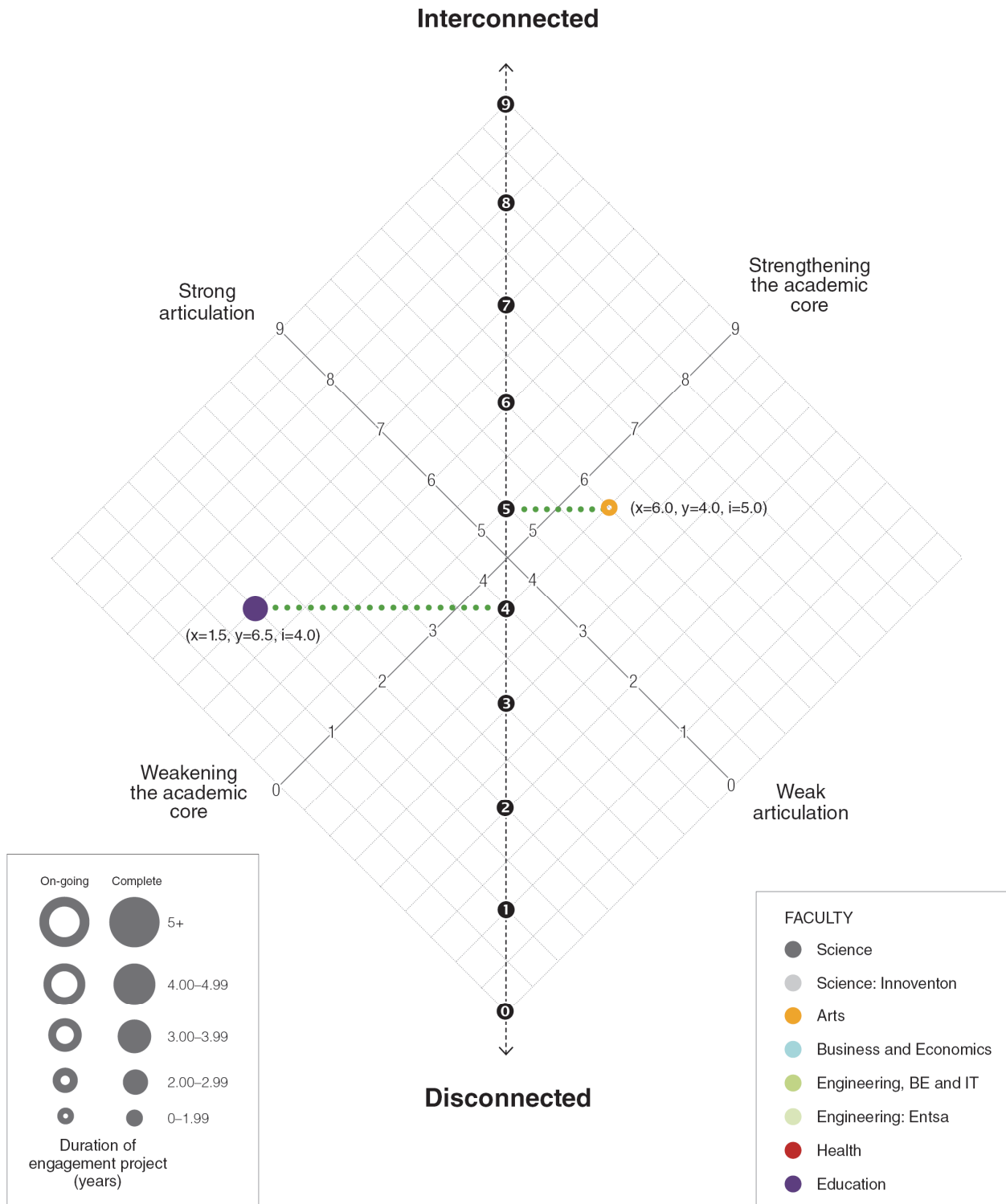


Table 1 provides a full list of indicators, a brief description of each indicator and the score assigned to each of the indicators.

Table 1: Indicators of interconnectedness and scores per indicator

	Articulation Indicators	Score	Max score
A1	Alignment between project and university strategic objectives	For each project objective in alignment with university mission/vision = 0.25	1.0
A2	Initiation/agenda-setting	Self-initiated = 1	1.0
		Proposal more than one author = 0.5	0.5
		Project plan / TOR flexible = 1	1.0
		Advisory group <i>and</i> meets at least once p.a. = 0.5	0.5
A3	Links to <i>external</i> stakeholders (non-academic) and to implementation agencies	For each link to an external stakeholder = 0.25 (max = 1)	1.0
		Direct link to implementation agency = 2 OR Indirect link to implementation agency = 1 OR Self-implemented = 1	2.0
A4	Funding	For each source of funding = 0.25 (max = 1)	1.0
		Long-term funding (more than 3 years) = 0.5	0.5
		Renewable funding (at least one source) = 0.5	0.5

	Academic Core Indicators	Score	Max score
C1	Generates new knowledge or product	New knowledge or product = 1.25 OR New data = 0.5	1.25
		Publicly available = 0.25	0.25
		PhDs linked to project = 0.5	0.5
C2	Dissemination	For each publication/presentation listed = 0.25	2.0
C3a	Teaching/curriculum development	Changes to courses/modules = 1 OR New courses/modules/programmes = 2	2.0
C3b	Formal teaching/learning of students	Students involved = 0.5	0.5
		Participation in project is course requirement = 1	1.0
		Other roles for students in project = 0.25 per role	0.5
C4	Links to academic networks	Links to academics from other universities = 1	1.0