Staff-student collaboration overview

Staff-student collaboration is a main element of the new Education Strategy and is central to the proposed captured content policy. Advantages of staff-student partnerships have been acknowledged across the Higher Education sector (Healey, Flint and Harrington, 2014; Change Agents' Network Conference, JISC, 2018) and are emerging in published literature. A recent systematic literature review of 'Students as Partners in Higher Education' highlighted that collaborations have increased the following:

- 'student engagement/motivation/ownership for learning
- student confidence/self-efficacy
- the understanding of the "other's" experience (e.g. staff understanding student experiences and vice versa)
- the development of new or better teaching or curriculum materials'
  (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017:11)

It is important to note that captured content collaborations can encompass a range of activities. For example, informal discussions with students at the end of a teaching session or during a departmental lunch are a good way of understanding how students currently use captured content and how this can be developed. In addition, surveys, SurreyLearn discussions and even email can be used to gather a range of opinions and ideas. Course Representatives (Reps) can support any of these activities and can develop other approaches to facilitate dialogue. Captured content can be created with/by students for example, in workshops in using a co-design approach (see FEATS example below).

A paper put forward in 2017 to the Student Experience Council by Surrey's Students' Union (SU) urges universities to challenge traditional teaching methods which focus on one-way delivery models. While describing the learning experience, the SU raises key questions:

> 'How can **we rethink this in terms of greater 'student-centeredness'**? How can students explore and inform their curriculum? How can technology really transform learning, beyond making a PowerPoint available online? How can we test knowledge more than memory? What journey do we need our academic and teaching colleagues to make **to deliver a new learning experience**?'

So what are some of the ways in which approaches to learning and teaching can be developed in collaboration with students? In this video, Cathy Bovill talks about curriculum co-creation and gives examples of 'students and staff influencing the content of the curriculum or co-designing marking criteria with staff'. Similarly, Nel (2017) describes a recent co-design project where she has asked her students to design a flipped classroom model. Nel (2017), argues that a new understanding of learning and teaching should be based on 'students as partners and active collaborators in the learning process' (2017:1132), as for more than a decade, she has highlighted the advantages of pedagogical transformation through the learners' voice.

Examples of collaborations from Surrey

Developing undergraduate teaching materials in collaboration with pre-university students - Radu Sporea – Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering

Radu has worked with four summer placement students to create tutorial videos for his first year undergraduate Electrical and Electronic Engineering lab. The students led on the design, scripting and production of the videos (Sporea, Jackson and Lygo-Baker, 2017). In the quote below, Radu highlights one of the main advantages of this approach:

> 'The reason for partnering up with students was **to tap into a resource we normally don't use**, i.e. people who have just learnt a concept explain it to others in completely different ways than "experts" would. I believe this is called the novice trainer situation or something similar, and it **gives a useful perspective on the structuring of information, revealing the areas to focus on.** This perspective is very hard to tap into if the material is prepared and taught only by an expert teacher, which is what we do almost exclusively in HE.'

Surrey's course representatives - Hannah Jones - Course Representative Co-ordinator

Hannah collaborates with hundreds of Reps who gather student ideas and feedback on both specific academic issues and also on topics that apply across disciplines which affect the student experience. From her work with Reps, she hears about achievements emerging out of the partnerships formed between these groups of engaged and active student leaders and the staff who work closely with them. Hannah points out that:

> 'These partnerships are mutually beneficial; Reps can often identify student concerns before staff become aware of them. Meanwhile, staff are invaluable in providing support and insight to enable Reps to develop solutions, and to take action on behalf of students as a result of the feedback they've provided. Staff-student partnerships have already led to a wealth of improvements across the University. Recently, this has also included Reps working to promote wider, more informed use of Panopto in their locales.'

Please see below two recent examples of staff-student collaborations which Hannah has shared with us:

Panopto Student Trainers at the Vet School

The staff and students of the Vet School have been partnering on Panopto in an innovative way that builds both student and staff proficiency with the relevant technology. Since the first cohort of students joined the Vet School, 2-3 students per cohort have volunteered to be trained in the software used to capture content. Trained by a member of academic staff, these students are on hand in the lectures they attend as part of their course to help troubleshoot the software, or to coordinate its use for external lecturing staff. Similarly, any academics who may feel unsure on how best to use Panopto have a friendly student on hand to pass on their training! This collaboration between students and staff has created a mutual learning and teaching environment in which students are partners in their own academic experiences, which is the hallmark of the Course Rep system.

Chemistry students researching the use of captured content

At the start of the 2017/18 academic year, Reps across the different levels of study in Chemistry surveyed their fellow students to find out what students felt about the use of Panopto in the department. Reps found that over 95% were in favour of increased Panopto use, and this feedback was brought to the Board of Studies, where a discussion followed in which students shared how they felt increased use of captured content would enhance their learning experience. As a result, several staff members have now begun to make wider use of captured content in their teaching, including those who may not have previously seen a demand for its use. This is a model example of when Course Reps are able to bring student feedback to staff in a clear, collated format, and also of staff taking on board what their students would find beneficial.

Feedback, engagement and tracking at Surrey – FEATS project

This is an example of a tool that was developed in partnership with students using a co-design methodology (Heron and Reason, 2001). This addressed assessment and feedback, which has been called the sector's "Achilles' Heel" (Knight, 2002, p.107). Students commonly report that the feedback they receive is not useful, often because it is not clear how to apply the advice, and how to synthesise comments across modules. Through a HEFCE-funded project, a team of 36 students and staff from the Department of Higher Education and the Department of Technology Enhanced Learning engaged with students' perspectives on feedback in order to inform the design of a feedback portfolio within our VLE, which supports students to synthesise and act upon their feedback. The project has received a nomination for Teaching Excellence at the Guardian's University Awards, 2018.

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