



the student engagement partnership

Benchmarking your students' digital experience

Ellie Russell, Student Engagement Partnership
Manager

@TSEPartnership

#digitalstudent

About TSEP

A strategic partnership across the English HE sector agencies and representative bodies.

An NUS-hosted staff unit delivering projects, research and practitioner support.



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Question

Is there a shared understanding of the term 'student engagement' at your institution?

Defining student engagement



No definitions = no shared framework for action and enhancement

Without one you might end up going in opposite directions...
...or round in circles

Student engagement in the UK

Definitions of necessity are set in context of strong students' union tradition and embedded student representation

Traditional definition of student engagement that looks at students' **level of investment in their learning**

A newer, UK-specific definition that focus on the power of students to have an influence in **determining what that learning should look like**

Engagement in learning

- As Trowler shows in 2010 literature review for HEA, student engagement of this sort is associated with positive outcomes particularly in improved performance, persistence and satisfaction.
- Situates student engagement as a kind of investment of intellectual, emotional or time resource on the part of the student, in their learning.
- Much work in this area has led to improvements in teaching and learning practices e.g. high impact pedagogies.



Student voice

- Less clear that there is an evidence based associated with students actually shaping their academic community-principle is often taken on trust.
- Sends positive message about other side of student engagement.
- Civic outcomes like democratic participation and accountability.
- In defining student engagement locally we need to consider values and less tangible outcomes student influence can deliver.



The road to partnership

Student engagement practices are not new, but student engagement as a policy priority is relatively recent.

Moving beyond systems and instead describing concepts e.g. potential of individuals to influence their environment.

The concept of students as partners has gained significant currency

Partnership

Derived from the insight that learning has to be a partnership. Ultimately, it is the effort and engagement of students that leads to learning success.

Giving students greater or equal responsibility in the decisions, policies and activities that make up the wider learning environment or the university as a whole.

Partnership asks students to co-design, co-produce and co-evaluate their environment, moving beyond learning and teaching to encompass the whole institution.

What should partnership produce?

Partnership is best expressed as a culture of a higher education community. "A way of doing things, rather than an outcome in itself".

So you would expect it to produce something other than a warm and fuzzy feeling.





Enhancement through partnership

The infrastructure for teaching and learning does not stand still – partnership can produce changes and enhancements that build a dynamic and inclusive learning community.

Institutions and students' unions mutual accountability for the approach, infrastructure and outcomes of enhancement. Orienting students and staff towards shared ideas of success, but activity delivered at a local level.

Technology Enhanced Learning

How to engage students in ongoing conversations about their needs and expectations?

How to involve students in the design and delivery of interventions to improve or extend the use of technology?

How can technology can be used to support student voice?



Tests of authenticity

There is a strong incentive for institutions and even students' unions to use the word partnership without backing it up with authentic practice.

As such it is worth having some criteria to assess whether the things that are being called partnership are really delivering on the promise of partnership.



Tests of authenticity

- Have students been part of creating the agenda or goals, not just brought in once everything has been decided?
- Are students contributing materially, not just consulting or providing data?
- Has the process or activity been co-designed or are students being asked to buy into an existing project?
- Has thought been given to what support and training students and staff may need to enable the partnership approach?
- Has there been a significant disagreement at some point? (You'd hope so!)

Tests of authenticity

Has thought been given to which cohorts of students are more likely to engage?

Is something going to change as a result of the partnership work?

If students pulled out would the work continue regardless?

Do students feel like their ideas are listened to, constructively challenged and taken seriously?

Do decisions feel mutual or one-sided?

Are the structures accessible to students or are they expected to buy into how things have always been done?