

**Title:**                   **Capturing the Student Voice: enhancing the student experience**

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### **Session Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- Consider the role of the student voice in enhancing the student experience
- Understand how to better engage students as advocates for educational change
- Assess effective mechanisms for responding to the student voice (eg NSS)

### **Session Outline**

Whether we view students as consumers and stakeholders, or as partners, collaborators or co-producers (Little, 2012), many of the components of student engagement mechanisms are shared across the sector - selection and use of student representatives, student:staff liaison committees (SSLCs), responses to surveys, consultation and monitoring the effectiveness of student engagement. However, the challenge is not only to represent the voices of an increasingly diverse student body, but to use evidence-led approaches to demonstrate the impact of student engagement on the development, delivery, management and enhancement of their overall educational experience (Garwe, 2015). Attempts to improve student engagement takes many forms, from involving students in administering and interpreting student feedback, or acting as change agents through the student union, to University support for activities that seek to improve the educational provision (Gibbs, 2012).

Although the use of student evaluation and feedback is now commonplace, the extent to which this informs or drives changes in practice can be variable and selective (Zhao and Galant, 2012). Therefore, the challenge is to ensure that the voice of students is not only effectively captured, but becomes operationalised in order to improve higher education practice (Blair and Noel, 2014).

In this discussion paper, we will focus on how Kent Union and the University have worked in partnership to develop strategic, governance and operational links, to improve the capture of the student voice from the whole student body that has provided ways of working more effectively with academics and administrators to change the institutional culture and promote innovation and institutional change (Healey et al., 2016).

## **Session Activities and Approximate Timings**

The outline of the workshop is as follows;

### **Introduction – 15 minutes**

### **Discussion – 20 minutes – Group Exercise**

1. What mechanisms are used to gather student feedback? How effective are they?
2. Which contribute most/least to improving the overall student experience?
3. What institution level enhancements/improvements in student experience have arisen directly based on student advocacy or feedback? Can we measure the impact of student voice on educational change?

### **Summary – 10 minutes**

## **References**

- Blair, E. & Noel, K.V. (2014) Improving higher education practice through student evaluation systems: is the student voice being heard? *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 39 (7): 879-894.
- Garwe (2015) Student voice and quality enhancement in higher education, *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education*, 7 (2), 385 – 399.
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- Healey, M., Flint, A., & Harrington, K. (2016). Students as Partners: Reflections on a Conceptual Model. *Teaching & Learning Inquiry*, 4(2), 1-13.
- Little, S (2012) *Staff-Student Partnerships in Higher Education*. Bloomsbury Publishing, London
- Zhao, J. and Gallant, D.J. (2012) Student evaluation of instruction in higher education: exploring the issues of validity and reliability. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* 37 (2): 227-235.