

Title: Partners in Employability: A student-staff collaboration to support student engagement.

Presenter: Maria Maguire, Moira Maguire, Linda Murphy, Catherine Staunton, Nicole Byrne, Brianan Johnson, Angelina Jong, Aisling Munster, Jack Ryan, Peter Toplis, Johanna Young
Dundalk Institute of Technology

Session Learning Outcomes

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

- Identify barriers and enablers to student-staff partnership,
- Explore structures and process that help to support partnership at institutional level.
- Share perspectives on enhancing student-staff partnerships.

Session Outline

This discussion paper focuses on a student-staff collaboration to develop a framework to support student engagement and foster partnership, particularly with quality assurance and learning and teaching. The project, 'Partners in Employability' is a partnership between the Students' Union, Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching and the Careers and Employability Service at an Irish Institute of Technology. An important impetus was the need to develop structures and processes that support partnership and help to provide a framework to develop a partnership approach at the level of the institution (e.g. Healey et al., 2014). Equally important was the need to recognise and celebrate the significant contributions made by students to institute life, particularly as class representatives, student ambassadors and sports and societies officers. While these contributions have the potential to enhance employability there was no structure in place to support students in evidencing these skills and linking them to their disciplinary knowledge. Skill transfer is not automatic and this may be particularly true for soft skills (Botke et al., 2018). To address this gap, 7 student interns worked with staff to develop a process to meet this need; this includes the development of a 10 credit Special Purpose award. The scheme will be launched in the coming academic year.

This discussion paper will focus on the student-staff partnership that developed the scheme. The presentation will provide an overview of the project and situate it within the context of Irish higher education and with respect to comparable schemes elsewhere. It will include reflections by students and staff on the process, progress and next steps, with

particular emphasis on barriers and enablers and offer an opportunity to share perspectives and experiences of supporting engagement and promoting partnership in different contexts

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

Approximate timing	Activity
5 mins	Presentation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background and context, • Project Outline.
10 mins	Activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use post-its to identify key barriers and enablers to partnership. These form the basis of pair discussions.
15 mins	Presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student interns reflect on their experience. • Staff reflect on their experience. • Key learnings and next steps
15 mins	Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we support student engagement in learning and teaching and quality assurance? • How can we build sustainable student-staff partnerships?

References

Botke et al. (2018). Work factors influencing the transfer stages of soft skills training: A literature review. *Educational Research Review*, 24, 10.1016/j.edurev.2018.04.001.

Healey et al. (2014). *Engagement through partnership: students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education*. Higher Education Academy.