

Title: Student partnership and learning gain: evaluating the impact of 'students as partners' projects

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Session Learning Outcomes

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

- Evaluate a particular model of student partnership working
- Explore the principles, purposes and pedagogy of partnership
- Consider the challenges of measuring or capturing broad learning gain
- Discuss the value of partnership working for student and University learning gain

Session Outline

'Engaging students and staff effectively as partners in learning and teaching is arguably one of the most important issues facing HE in the twenty-first century.' (Healey *et al* 2014, 7) Work on 'students as partners' has quickly generated its own cannon, including a special edition of the *International Journal for Academic Development*. (Nygaard et al 2013, Cook-Sather et al 2014, Bovill and Felten 2016) It is timely, therefore, to consider the theoretical underpinnings of partnership working and whether, or to what extent, particular partnership practices deliver on the claims made for them.

Newman University's Students as Academic Partners projects aim to foster ongoing collaboration between students and staff across multi-disciplinary or multi-professional teams. Co-ordinated by the university's Academic Practice Unit, which is committed to the pedagogy of partnership, the projects are designed to enhance engagement and generate collaborative scholarly enquiry. (GuildHE 2015, 23). An evaluation of the projects, gathering data through focus groups of project participants and analysing project evaluation documentation from across the two year period of their operation, informs this session.

This paper will examine the contribution these projects have made to the development of learning gain at Newman, while considering the challenges of embedding the cultural and pedagogic shifts of the approach. It will explore the lessons learned, and their implications for practice at other institutions. The session will:

- facilitate reflective debate about the value of student partnership working, in terms of broad student learning gain and the development of teaching excellence.
- encourage colleagues to debate the principle of partnership pedagogy

- promote discussion that identifies discreet points of learning for our colleagues so that they might identify potential models for partnership working that could be employed elsewhere.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

10 minutes: outlining the principles and model of student partnership

5 minutes discussion: What does Newman's pedagogy of partnership seek to achieve in terms of learning gain?

Is proving funding for student partnership projects the best means of achieving this?

15 minutes: student reported learning gain from partnership working

5 minutes discussion: How can the broad learning gains made by students through such democratic and developmental engagements with the University be captured and described?

10 minutes discussion: Can we use this model, or the principle of partnership, more broadly in educational development?

References

Bovill, C. and Felten, P, (2016) Cultivating student-staff partnerships through research and practice, *IJAD*, 21,1,1-3.

Cook-Sather, A. Bovill, C. and Felten, P (2014) *Engaging students as partners in learning and teaching: a guide for faculty*, San Francisco, Jossey Bass.

GuildHE (2015) *Making student engagement a reality: turning theory into practice*, London, GuildHE

Healey, M. Flint, A and Harrington, K (2014) *Students as partners in learning and teaching in HE*, York, HEA.

Nygaard, C. Brand, S. Bartholomew, P. and Millard, L. (2013) *Student engagement: identity, motivation and community*, Faringdon, Libri.