

Title: **Students as partners for the enhancement of assessment strategies.**

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Session Learning Outcomes

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

- Compare the staff experience and the student experience.
- Assess the purpose, opportunities and supports needed for students to meaningfully collaborate in developing assessment for learning.
- Facilitate and support students in enacting change within their degree course.

Session Outline

In recent years, educational developers and lecturers have focussed much more on trying to make the student experience more engaging based on the premise that engagement leads to better persistence, learning, and achievement (Bryson, 2016). However, many studies promote partnership from a moral standpoint; encompassing arguments as to why students should be partners in their education in the name of democracy, and educational activism, but lack any concrete evidential base to substantiate claims of its benefits for staff and students. If a convincing case is to be made to promote the use of partnership in education, then we need more evidence, from staff and students, of the benefits it brings. Queen's hopes to address this deficit in the literature by running an evaluative study alongside the Partnership Project to ascertain the benefits, and indeed, difficulties associated with partnership directly from the staff and students involved. This will be achieved by running focus groups with staff and students to gauge the quality of the relationships built through partnership; reflecting upon the group processes and dynamics involved in such a project and; evaluating the pedagogic value of such a project in informing assessment practices.

It is our desire to make sure the partnership process not only reaps rewards for students but also for staff; in relation to personal development, professional development, engagement and also in informing good practice which can be applied institution-wide.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

- We will provide a brief introduction into what we have been doing with our respective schools, the improvements made here and how the overall project has progressed thus far (10 minutes).
- Then we will discuss why it is important to go beyond listening to students and instead position them as equal and knowledgeable partners in structuring the assessment and learning experience (10 minutes).
- Informal discussion (15 minutes)

Potential discussion questions:

- The Queen's University Student Partnership Project aims to embed a culture of proactive student engagement, what are the practical implications of fostering a partnership?
- Do you think a partnership project such as ours is of equal benefit to staff and students or is it imbalanced?
- Is an egalitarian relationship achievable, or is one parties view given primacy? Who is the ultimate driving force?
- Are educators receptive to change? Can they see the value in student input?
- How do we ensure student engagement in this process is meaningful and not tokenistic?
- How is success measured; increased student engagement; improved student satisfaction; improved assessment scores?
- Feedback from delegates, closing statements (10 minutes).

References

Bryson, C. (2016). Engagement through partnership: students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 21(1), pp.84-86.