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1 October 2021



CREATE CHANGE

Energizing institutional assessment activities with students as partners: Assessment Institute 2021



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Abstract

There are many ways students can contribute to and enhance our assessment practices that strengthen outcomes of such work. In this session, we will assume partnering with students is a good thing to do. We will focus our attention on how we do it, what it can look like, how to face up to challenges that arise and recognize the benefits that emerge. Informal yet informative, come along to listen, share and learn together to advance our collective commitment to thinking differently about the role of students in assessment efforts.

This resource was created for faculty and staff members as part of my 2021 Assessment Institute workshop. It is pitched for those new or coming into the conversation about engaging students as partners in learning and teaching. This resource leans into the arena of institutional assessment (evaluation in Australian and UK contexts), and quality enhancement and assurance. For the more experienced, I believe you will gain more insights and have practices to share.

Interaction

This resource prompts you to pause and reflect with the ‘Over to you’ text boxes. In some of these text boxes you will also see a link to a ‘padlet’ which is an online chalkboard that enables public sharing and reflection. In the workshop, we will draw on shared information in the workshop to learn from and with each other. You can start adding to the padlets now or wait until the workshop.

Padlet 1: <https://padletuq.padlet.org/kmatthews118/wi5pyjuqd8z6e0q6>

Padlet 2: <https://padletuq.padlet.org/kmatthews118/esyxafzdbew0uu43>

Over to you: Locating yourself in the partnership conversation

Where are you on the partnership journey? Have you engaged in partnership with students already or are you thinking about it? What have you learned so far or what do you want to learn?

Padlet 1: <https://padletuq.padlet.org/kmatthews118/wi5pyjuqd8z6e0q6>

Acknowledgements

To you – readers and workshop participants who contribute to the assessment community. It is wonderful to return to the Assessment Institute. I am grateful for technology that allows us to engage and interact, but I do miss spending time in Indianapolis in October with my US-based assessment friends.

To Mick Healey for collecting and sharing case studies of practices from across the globe. See <https://www.healeyheconsultants.co.uk/> for resources. Several case studies included here are from him and are used with permission.

To Alison Cook-Sather for her generosity, collaboration, and scholarly vision that has inspired partnership with students in higher education. Her Students as Learners and Teachers (SaLT) program has inspired work at my university (and many others): <https://tli-resources.digital.brynmawr.edu/programs-and-opportunities/salt-program/>. Check out her 2021 Assessment Institute talk and resources and note many parts of this resource are excerpts from co-authored work with Alison.

Partnership

Engaging students as partners covers a wide range of activities, both in and out of the classroom. One of the most cited definitions for teaching and learning partnerships is:

A collaborative, reciprocal process through which all participants have the opportunity to contribute equally, although not necessarily in the same ways, to curricular or pedagogical conceptualization, decision-making, implementation, investigation, or analysis.

This definition comes from Cook-Sather, Felten, and Bovill (2014, p 6-7)¹ and their book is a must read for anyone interested in engaging with students in partnership. They make clear the contributions of students (p. 27):

Students are neither disciplinary nor pedagogical experts. Rather, their experience and expertise typically is in being a student — something that many faculty [staff] have not been for many years. They understand where they and their peers are coming from and, often, where they think they are going.

For many, including myself (Matthews, Cook-Sather & Healey 2018, p.24)², the idea is disruptive to the status quo of higher education:

It is a radical cultural shift from staff making decisions to benefit students toward a mindset where students and staff are working together – as colleagues, as partners, as trusted collaborators – with shared goals.

Over to you: Describing partnership

A faculty member new to the idea of engaging students as partners asks you what it is all about. How would you describe partnership to them?

What questions would you ask them to get a conversation about partnership started?

¹ Cook-Sather, A., Bovill, C., & Felten, P. (2014). *Engaging students as partners in learning and teaching: A guide for faculty*. Jossey Bass.

² Matthews, K. E., Cook-Sather, A., & Healey, M. (2018). Connecting learning, teaching, and research through student–staff partnerships: Toward universities as egalitarian learning communities. In *Shaping higher education with students: Ways to connect research and teaching*. Edited by Tong, Vincent C. H., Standen, Alex, and Sotiriou, Mina. London, United Kingdom: UCL Press.23-29. https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt21c4tcm.7?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents

Partnership values

Partnership is values-driven and relational. Below is a list of values evoked in partnership literature and practices. I use colours to cluster values evoked by different scholars.

1. **Authenticity:** the rationale for all involved to invest in partnership is meaningful and credible.
2. **Honesty:** all involved are honest about what they can contribute to partnership and about where the boundaries of partnership lie.
3. **Inclusivity:** there is equality of opportunity and any barriers (structural or cultural) that prevent engagement are challenged.
4. **Reciprocity:** all involved have an interest in and stand to benefit from working and/or learning in partnership.
5. **Empowerment:** power is distributed appropriately and ways of working and learning promote healthy power dynamics.
6. **Trust:** all involved take time to get to know one-another and can be confident they will be treated with respect and fairness.
7. **Courage:** all involved are encouraged to critique and challenge practices, structures and approaches that undermine partnership, and are enabled to take risks to develop new ways of working and learning.
8. **Plurality:** all involved recognise and value the unique talents, perspectives and experiences that individuals contribute to partnership.
9. **Responsibility:** all involved share collective responsibility for the aims of the partnership, and individual responsibility for the contribution they make.
10. **Mutual respect:** the different views, perspectives and contributions of students and faculty/staff are recognised and taken seriously.
11. **Reciprocity:** an equity in exchanges and interactions with a balance of 'give and take' where different experiences and standpoints are shared.
12. **Shared responsibility:** students and faculty/staff orientations to teaching and learning shifts as more and different responsibility is assumed as students are recognised as active members in the university community.
13. **Agency:** illuminating the power and value of all involved to disrupt hierarchical power dynamics
14. **Accountability:** practice values of partnership, recognise power, and 'tend the space' of co-learning
15. **Affinity:** impacts sense of place and agency toward recentering of learning and shared success as goals of higher education
16. **Affirmation:** Acknowledging the journey of learning together that encourages the process of re-seeing and re-thinking in the partnership relationship
17. **Recognition:** Prioritising human relationships where people are valued (moving beyond 'I see you' and 'I hear you')
18. **Vulnerability:** acknowledging the personal and emotional impact (risk) arising from uncertainty (like a global pandemic)

Over to you: The values that matter to you

What values resonate with you, and why? What values would you add? Which values energize you?

Padlet 1: <https://padletuq.padlet.org/kmatthews118/wi5pyjuqd8z6e0q6>

Good practice principles

Good practice should aspire to:

1. Foster inclusive partnerships

Ideally, institutions will direct attention to the experiences of a diversity of students as the focus of partnership work, while also offering a plethora of partnership opportunities that specifically seek to include students and staff from all backgrounds in meaningful, power-sharing learning partnerships that shape the university.

2. Nurture power-sharing relationships through dialogue and reflection

Power, whether discussed or left unspoken, is always a factor in student-staff partnership interactions. Those in partnership should aspire to share power.

3. Accept partnership as a process with uncertain outcomes

Partnership gives primacy to the co-creation of shared goals and outcomes that are mutually decided during the process of partnership. As such, the outcomes of students and staff engaging as partners are unknown at the beginning of the joint endeavour.

4. Engage in ethical partnerships

Engaging in partnership should be governed by ethical guidelines; conducted in an ethical process and for ethical outcomes.

5. Enact partnership for transformation

Transformation begins through our own active reflection and ongoing dialogue with others about who engages and why in partnership, what it means for higher education, and how we advocate for SaP more widely.

Over to you: Power

There is a power dynamic between students and faculty/staff. Partnership seeks to re-shape that dynamic. What energizes you about re-shaping the power dynamics between yourself and students?

Padlet 1: <https://padletuq.padlet.org/kmatthews118/wi5pyjuqd8z6e0q6>

Benefits

A published literature review on Students as Partners in university teaching and learning (2011 to 2015) reported a range of beneficial outcomes for both students and staff³.

For students:

- increased student engagement/motivation/ownership for learning
- increased student confidence/self-efficacy
- increased understanding of the 'other's' experience (e.g. students understanding staff experiences)
- enhanced relationship or trust between students and staff
- increased student learning about their own learning (metacognitive learning, self-evaluation, self-awareness)
- raised awareness of graduate attributes or employability skills or career development
- increased sense of belonging to university or discipline or community
- improved student content/discipline learning (actual or perceived)
- positively shifted identity as student/learner/person/professional
- enhanced student-student relationships

For faculty/staff:

- enhanced relationship or trust between students and staff
- development of new or better teaching or curriculum materials
- increased understanding of the 'other's' experience (e.g. staff understanding student experiences)
- new beliefs about teaching and learning that change practices for the better
- re-conceptualisation of teaching as a collaborative process to foster learning

Over to you: Leveraging benefits

Which of the listed benefits of engaging students as partners would energize (or grab the attention of) your institutional leadership (or those who fund your assessment work)?

³ Mercer-Mapstone, L., Dvorakova, S.L., Matthews, K.E., Abbot, S., Cheng, B., Felten, P., Knorr, K., Marquis, E., Shamma, R., and Swaim, K. (2017) A Systematic Literature Review of Students as Partners in Higher Education, *International Journal for Students as Partners* 1(1). <https://mulpress.mcmaster.ca/ijasp/issue/view/306>

Challenges

There will be challenges. Knowing some of these challenges before you start can inform your planning and strengthen your resilience for when challenges do arise. Below are five common challenges and how you might reframe them as opportunities (from Cook-Sather & Matthews, 2021⁴).

1. Resistance and reluctance

Some students and staff/faculty question partnership or see it as an imposition.

Reframe: There are good reasons why some people will resist the idea (they don't believe in it, it takes more energy, they see teaching as the lecturer's job or hold fixed beliefs about roles, it can introduce conflict with different perspectives, etc).

Resilience idea: Start small. Communicate your intentions about why you are engaging in partnership to open up dialogue about student concerns, excitement and questions. Give it time and be explicit and transparent.

2. Time

There is not enough time to engage in partnership practices.

Reframe: Investing time up front in developing partnership practices can save you time later, since learning experiences/insights/outcomes will likely be more meaningful and impactful (better).

Resilience idea: Rethink fixed notions of time (schedule) to attend to how you direct your energy and attention.

3. Curriculum constraints

Accreditation or institutional reporting requirements mean you cannot change the institutional assessment framework or metrics.

Reframe: Accept what can't be changed and focus on what you can co-create.

Resilience idea: Invite your students to consider with you how to meet the institutional requirements, and work within the given constraints to engage in co-creation.

4. Inclusivity

Selecting a small number of students to partner as co-designers, consultants or co-inquirers necessarily means other students are being excluded.

Reframe: Embrace equity as a guiding principle, which might mean including all students or it might mean inviting traditionally underrepresented and underserved students into partnership.

Resilience idea: Open a dialogue with students about what inclusivity might mean in any given context where their input and choice contribute to criteria for selection.

5. Resources and support

Your institution or department does not have programs to support partnership practices.

Reframe: Sometimes you can do more, at least initially, within and between the existing structures than within new ones.

Resilience idea: Consider how you might use existing institutional structures (e.g. independent studies) and redeploy existing resources (e.g. departmental budget lines for teaching assistants, curricular innovation funds).

⁴ Cook-Sather, A., & Matthews, K.E., (2021). Pedagogical partnership: engaging with students as co-creators of curriculum, assessment, and knowledge. In (eds) *University Teaching in Focus: A learning-centred approach* [pps. 243-259], Routledge

Over to you: Reaching out

Challenges will always surface in partnership. Who can you reach out to discuss and seek support in navigating challenges?

*Want to stay connected with an international community
committed to partnership?*

*Join the 'Students as Partners Network':
[https://itali.uq.edu.au/advancing-teaching/initiatives/students-
partners](https://itali.uq.edu.au/advancing-teaching/initiatives/students-partners)*

Real examples

All the below case studies were sourced from Mick Healey's website⁵, see resources section for the handout: *Students as partners and change agents*.

1. Students act as pedagogical consultants (Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges, Pennsylvania, US)

Most models of new faculty orientation and academic development assume that faculty learning is the purview of faculty colleagues or teaching and learning centre staff. *Students as Learners and Teachers (SaLT)*, the signature program of the Teaching and Learning Institute (TLI) at Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges, challenges that assumption by inviting undergraduate students to work as pedagogical consultants to new and continuing faculty members. Between 2006 and 2021, over 300 faculty members and 200 student consultants have participated in over 400 pedagogical partnerships: semester-long (or yearlong) collaborations focused on pedagogical or curricular affirmation and revision.

For partnerships focused on classroom practice, students are not enrolled in the courses for which they serve as consultants and often have no experience in the subject matter of the courses. Each student consultant establishes with the faculty member a focus for their collaboration, which typically shifts over time as the partnership unfolds; visits one class session each week and takes detailed observation notes on particularly pedagogical goals or challenge(s) the faculty member has identified; surveys or interviews students in the class (if the faculty member wishes), either for mid-course feedback or at another point in the semester; meets weekly with the faculty member to discuss observation notes, the student and faculty partners' different perspectives on classroom practice, and other feedback and implications; and participates in weekly meetings with one another and with the director of SaLT. For partnerships focused on course design and redesign, faculty work with individual or groups of students who have taken the course to develop or revise course content, assignments, and methods of assessment. For full-semester partnerships, student consultants work approximately six hours per week at \$10.75 per hour.

Feedback from participants suggests that these collaborations build confidence in both partners, deepen partners' learning experiences and meta-cognitive awareness, recast the responsibility for education as one that is shared by faculty and students, and contribute to more inclusive and responsive curricula and practices.

Further information: Cook-Sather (2011; 2014; 2016; 2018b); Cook-Sather & Abbot (2016); Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felten (2014); www.brynmawr.edu/tli/; Personal correspondence with Alison Cook-Sather (acooksat@brynmawr.edu)

2. Students consulting on teaching (SCoT) (Brigham Young University, US)

Like the Student Observer Program at Carleton, SCOTs are trained students interested in making a contribution to the Brigham Young University (BYU) learning experience. They have been taught to serve as excellent feedback resources to instructors, supplementing student evaluations and peer reviews. SCOTs, who come from different departments, can serve in any of the following roles:

1. *Recorder/Observer.* The SCOT records, in writing, what went on in the classroom and gives the record to the instructor.
2. *Faux Student.* The SCOT takes notes as if he or she were a student in the class and returns the notes to the instructor.

⁵ see <https://www.healeyheconsultants.co.uk/>

3. *Filmmaker.* The SCOT films the class for the instructor. The instructor may invite the SCOT to watch and discuss the video.
4. *Interviewer.* The instructor leaves the classroom for fifteen minutes while the SCOT conducts an interview with the class. The SCOT asks the students to respond verbally and in writing to questions: What helps your learning? What hinders your learning? What suggestions do you have?
5. *Primed Student.* The SCOT meets with the professor prior to class to receive instructions on what to watch for (e.g., How often are students getting involved in the discussion? Which activities are most engaging?)
6. *Student Consultant.* The instructor asks the SCOT for feedback and suggestions about classroom activities or particular areas of interest.
7. *Other.* The SCOT can assist with classroom research, reflective teaching, action research, etc.

Further information: <http://ctl.byu.edu/services/students-consulting-teaching-scot>

3. Implementing a Student Consultant Program (Lingnan University, Hong Kong)

“To enhance teaching and learning, Lingnan University's Teaching and Learning Center partnered with the Teaching and Learning Initiative at Ursinus College (USA) to develop faculty-student partnerships in the form of pedagogical "student consultants." Through regular classroom observations, consultation, dialogue, discussion, and critical reflection, student consultants provide faculty across disciplines with feedback from the perspective of trained students who are not enrolled in their courses. Partnerships allow faculty insight into how their teaching practices and assignments are perceived and received by their students. Through partnership, a new forum is created where students and teachers can collaborate on how they both function as teachers and learners. As the program is not formally evaluative and strictly confidential, faculty are challenged to take risks in their pedagogy and reassess the traditional roles of student and teacher. At the same time, this program offers students opportunities to participate in and take ownership of their education. This program emphasizes interactions between students and teachers in the exploration, discussion and solving of pedagogical issues and, as a result, better teachers and better students will emerge.

To implement the Student Consultant Program at Lingnan, two Ursinus College students trained four Lingnan University students to participate in the observation process. Over three days, Lingnan students formally observed various classes across disciplines and engaged in reflective discussions with faculty in the analysis of their classroom practices and experiences. The results were immediately transformative: organizers saw newly empowered students transforming the classroom and taking ownership of their education. At the same time, faculty were empowered by the affirmation of what works in their classrooms and received feedback on what could be improved. As we continue to refine a four-year curriculum that will prepare students to become global citizens, the Student Consultant Program is an innovative way of enhancing teaching excellence through dialogue and collaboration between faculty and students” (Ho *et al.*, 2014). A consultant observes at least one class a week for one term (Pounder *et al.*, 2015).

Further information: Ho *et al.* (2014) <http://conference.herdsa.org.au/2014/s339.php>;
<http://study.ln.edu.hk/tdg/projects/tg14a3>; Pounder *et al.* (2015)


4. Partnership pedagogy shapes curriculum transformation (University of Western Sydney, Australia)

Partnership Pedagogy is the co-creation of curriculum by our staff with our students and our external partners. It is a signature concept in the shaping of curriculum transformation at Western, enabling the University and its students to remain critically engaged with emerging social challenges and complex future

work environments. Western's pedagogy involves any (or all) of these overlapping aspects of curriculum co-creation done via a genuine partnership between staff and students and external partners:

- Co-designing curriculum – where to the overall conception of the curriculum is thought through and consolidated between all partners. The course goals, purpose or curriculum elements are formulated via ongoing dialogue between partners. This includes but is not limited to selecting pedagogy, considering outcomes, devising content, conceptualising learning activities or assessment strategies.
- Co-developing curriculum resources – collaboration between all partners in the production of any of a range of tasks, resources or artefacts to be used in the teaching and learning activities specified by the curriculum. This includes but is not limited to developing classroom activities, audio, video resources, apps or computer simulations, text or image-based resources. It may include re-purposing professional materials so as to provide students with access to contemporary tools and authentic resources during their studies.
- Co-delivering curriculum – delivering curriculum as a collaboration with all partners either on or off campus. This includes but is not limited to workplace placements, guest lectures, mentoring students, participating in simulations, acting as clients for student consulting teams, participating in student conferences, or collaborating in cooperative research projects.
- Co-credentialing and co-assessing curriculum – a collaboration between all partners to design assessment tasks and standards both on and off campus. This includes but is not limited to setting questions, determining criteria, marking or supervising assessment activities. The co-credentialing aspect may also embed certification or accredited activities within the curriculum to enable students to attain external certification within a unit or course.

The 21C project is working towards the implementation of Partnership Pedagogy through

- the implementation of a set of [course design principles](#)  that will enable the University to articulate measures of impact for Partnership Pedagogy;
- a revitalised Course Design and Approvals policy;
- a set of Professional Learning modules – one focused on Partnership Pedagogy and the other, co-created by the 21C Student Curriculum Partners #partnerUp: co-creating curriculum with students [available soon]
- a suite of resources to showcase how Partnership Pedagogy is expressed in existing Western curricula; and
- participation in relevant University committees dedicated to Partnership.

Further information:

https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/learning_futures/home/21st_century_curriculum_project2/21C_project/partnership_pedagogy; Barrie & Pizzica (2019); See also Western Sydney University 21 Century SaP Project <https://sites.google.com/view/wsu21c-saps>

5. Institutional model to enable student partnership (University of Queensland, Australia)

The Student-Staff Partnership (SSP) Projects model fosters partnership through a project-driven approach to enable students and staff/faculty to engage to enhance the 1) [teaching and learning](#), 2) [governance and strategy](#), and 3) [student experience](#) environments at the University. Students or staff can submit project proposals to request student partner funding for grants of up to 50 hours in a semester. Students can then apply and are selected to engage in a project.

The projects are designed iteratively and collaboratively between student and staff partners, with project aims co-created tentatively during induction sessions and refined as the partnership progresses, as illustrated in the Figure:



1,100+ students and 600+ staff members have collaborated on 500+ projects since 2018. The projects range in focus and include partnerships on institutional assessment activities and learning analytic efforts to visualise data in meaningful ways for students.

Further information: <https://employability.uq.edu.au/student-staff-partnerships>; Coombe et al (2018); Dwyer (2018); Khouri et al (2017); Matthews (2017). Contact Kelly Matthews (k.matthews1@uq.edu.au)

6. Engaging student voices in institutional assessment and inquiry (North Carolina A&T, US)

The Wabash-Provost Scholars Program was initially developed as a way to "dig deeper" into Wabash National Study results through student-based focus groups. The Program trains undergraduate students to conduct focus group sessions with their peers, obtain and analyze qualitative and quantitative data, develop written summary reports, and lead scholarly presentations on their work and experiences. Wabash-Provost Scholars directly contribute to the knowledge base regarding the student learning environment at NC A&T State University, while developing valuable research and presentation skills. Comprised of students from a wide variety of majors, the program illustrates how 'high impact practices', such as undergraduate research experiences can be made available to *all* students, regardless of discipline, while also providing valuable service to the university. The students work alongside faculty and administrators in guided campus inquiry. Since 2007, a total of 49 Scholars have been trained. Scholars earn service hours for their work, which can be used to satisfy NC A&T State University service hour graduation requirements. The Wabash-Provost Scholars regularly develop written reports and make presentations on their institutional assessment activities.

Further information: Hornsby and Simkin (2011); <http://www.ncat.edu/~atl/wabash-provost-scholars/>

7. Students are engaged in institutional research (Western Carolina University, US)

Western Carolina University's Human Services Department includes an undergraduate minor in Leadership. Selected Leadership students (primarily second and third year) participated in a class entitled Leadership, Research, and Social Change, a course based on the Wabash Provost Scholars program and related work at North Carolina A&T State University. This model is reliant upon the concept of "institutional scholarship of teaching and learning or SoTL" wherein, "institutional assessment efforts are reframed as a communal inquiry process grounded in ... SoTL ... instead of focusing directly on improving retention and graduation rates – common institutional goals – what if institutional assessment was instead undertaken as a discovery process that involved faculty members, students, and administrators?" (Hornsby, Simkins, Brown, & Hampton, 2010, p. 1). This focus was used to address the institutional SoTL question of, "why do students stay at Western Carolina University?" Students used their leadership skills and worked as a research team to address their question. They developed a focus group study, collected and analyzed focus group interview data, and offered suggestions to university administrators, faculty, and staff in a public forum based on research results. Upon reflection, students felt that "it was so exciting to be a part of this study in helping to better our university." They also described that research and recommendations were "present[ed] to those who can fix the problem." Another student explained, "In the beginning of this process, I did not think that this research was actually going to make a difference in the things that happened at WCU and I did not think we were actually going to find some solutions. My opinion about this was changed drastically when we actually started doing the focus groups... I feel that the research we are doing will have a great effect ..."

Further information: Freya Kinner (fkinner@email.wcu.edu)

8. Black and minority ethnic (BME) students advise senior managers (Kingston University, UK)

The Academic Development Student Advisory Panel (ADSAP) was established in 2011 at Kingston University to advise senior managers within the Academic Development Centre (ADC) on strategies to understand and improve the experience of BME students. Approximately 8 – 10 students are involved with membership altering at the end of the academic year. The work is unpaid.

Since its inception ADSAP has engaged in a number of areas including:

- Advising the senior manager responsible for the development and implementation of the university's Review of the Academic Framework
- Participating in a study tour to one of the university's partner institutions in the US (University of North Carolina at Charlotte) to learn about and exchange views and experiences on: BME student attainment in higher education; academic mentoring for ethnic minorities; student engagement; and student societies
- Advising the staff team responsible for developing and implementing a new university wide pre-entry summer school scheme aimed at widening participation cohorts;
- Advising the staff team responsible for development and implementation of a new university wide first year academic mentoring scheme
- Providing ten hours of talking head footage (HD quality) of student perceptions and advice for staff and students on: staff-student relationships; transition into first year; final year and post graduate programmes; assessment and feedback; plagiarism; and academic skills centres.

The students have given joint conference presentations and engaged in formal meetings with members of university senior staff including Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellor and Chair of Governors.

Further information: Michael Hill (R.Hill@kingston.ac.uk)

9. Institutional research in the degree program (University of Tuebingen, Germany)

Since 2007 students from across the University of Tuebingen have been able to take an 8-week, 40 in class hours, course for credit entitled 'Data collection, analysis and strategic planning' in which they learn about institutional research and undertake projects to enhance practices in the university. Project partners, usually a university service provider, have included enrolment services, university libraries, the Language Centre, the Computing Centre, dining services, and sports services. This outcome presents a win-win situation for the institution, students and instructors alike.

Further information: Buettner (2014) <http://www.heirnetwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Buettner.pdf>

Over to you: Imagining possibilities

After reading a selection of examples, what possibilities can you imagine for engaging students as partners to advance quality assurance and enhancement in your university/assessment office?

Padlet 2: <https://padletuq.padlet.org/kmatthews118/esyxfzdbew0uu43>

Have you got a great example? Why not contribute a short case study to Mick Healey's collection? Contact details at <https://www.healeyheconsultants.co.uk/>

My Story: From students as data to students as partners

We all have our learning journeys. I came into higher education research and development to make a difference for students and teachers. The role of students is crucial. My perspective on the role of students has evolved from valuing students as a source of data to working with students in partnership. I share my journey now (excerpt from a 2018 article⁶).

Data from students: Student learning outcomes in a science degree

In 2008 I developed a survey tool, the *Science Students Skills Inventory* (SSSI), to capture students' perceptions of their learning outcomes across a science degree program. Academic staff (faculty) espoused what they believed students were learning and this was being debated as part of a curriculum review process at The University of Queensland (UQ) in Australia (large, comprehensive research-intensive institution typically ranked in the top 50 of global university league tables). This coincided with a national government-funded project that sought to articulate the discipline-specific learning outcomes of students from differing undergraduate degree programs, called the "Learning and Teaching Academic Standards" (LTAS) project, which produced a statement of "Science Threshold Learning Outcomes" based on an extensive consultation period (with university academics, industry, alumni) intended to⁷:

provide a foundation for articulating and developing the higher education science curriculum, and for improving learning and teaching in science at the university level.

In other words, the university staff in the sciences and the national scientific community were developing statements of learning outcomes expected of students graduating with a bachelor's degree in science that ultimately emphasized disciplinary content knowledge (and applying that knowledge) along with several skills (e.g. teamwork, oral communication, written communication, ethical thinking, and quantitative). The rationale for developing the SSSI was predicated on the value of students' perceptions as one key source of evidence to inform curriculum development and design, with the instrument being published because of interest beyond UQ (see Matthews and Hodgson⁸ for initial instrument and early comparative study of results across two Australian research-intensive universities). Importantly, the underlying assumption of the SSSI was a valuing of students' perceptions to signal that what students think about their learning is relevant, it matters, and such views should be informing curriculum design and development.

Since its development, the SSSI has been used consistently at UQ to inform curriculum development (see Faculty of Science⁹ for formal review submission featuring trend data from the SSSI in 2008, 2011, 2014) and in research published in the top science and higher education journals: comparative analysis of a traditional and interdisciplinary curriculum¹⁰; comparison of student and academic perceptions¹¹; analysis of dual or double degree science students with single degree students¹²; focused analysis of a specific

⁶ Matthews, K. E. (2018). Engaging students as participants and partners: An argument for partnership with students in higher education research on student success. *International Journal of Chinese Education*, 7(1), 42-64.

⁷ Yates, Brian, Sue Jones, and Jo Kelder. "Learning and Teaching Academic Standards Project: Science.". *Sydney: Office for Learning and Teaching*. <http://www.olt.gov.au/resource-learning-and-teaching-academic-standards-science-2011>, 2011: 16.

⁸ Matthews, Kelly E., and Yvonne Hodgson. "The Science Students Skills Inventory: Capturing graduate perceptions of their learning outcomes." *International Journal of Innovation in Science and Mathematics Education* 20, no. 1 (2012).

⁹ Faculty of Science. "Bachelor of Science Curriculum Review Submission." *Brisbane: The University of Queensland*. <http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:715983>, 2015.

¹⁰ Matthews, Kelly E., Jennifer Firn, Susanne Schmidt, and Karen Whelan. "A comparative study on student perceptions of their learning outcomes in undergraduate science degree programmes with differing curriculum models." *International Journal of Science Education* 39, no. 6 (2017): 742-760.

¹¹ Matthews, Kelly E., and Lucy D. Mercer-Mapstone. "Toward curriculum convergence for graduate learning outcomes: academic intentions and student experiences." *Studies in Higher Education* 43, no. 4 (2018): 644-659.

¹² Dvorakova, Lucie S., and Kelly E. Matthews. "Graduate learning outcomes in science: variation in perceptions of single-and dual-degree students." *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 42, no. 6 (2017): 900-913.

outcome¹³; comparison of assessed outcomes with perceptions¹⁴; comparison across research intensive universities¹⁵; and the SSSI has recently been adapted for use in Mathematics¹⁶.

In exploring science-specific graduate learning outcomes at the whole of degree program level (e.g. scientific content knowledge; writing skills; oral communication; teamwork skills; quantitative skills; ethical thinking) across various indicators (e.g. importance; assessed; included; improvement; future use), my intention was to guide curriculum development. The results were visualised and used in disciplinary meetings to indicate how students were perceiving the outcomes espoused by the disciplinary community. They sparked conversation, debate, reflection, action, and target measures for the BSc Review.

In this example of drawing on the SSSI in a relatively simple yet compelling manner, students' views in a quantitative sense impacted on curriculum planning and development at UQ. Because scientist come from a tradition of understanding knowledge and truth as objective, this approach to bring in the "student voice" (as frequently discussed by institutional leaders) with students as participants in research -- as research subjects -- was powerful. When I started using the SSSI in 2008, I spent a great deal of time rationalising why I was drawing on students as a source of data to inform curriculum planning and development and debating the merits of students' perceptions versus performance data from learning assessment instruments. By 2014 the sense that students' views offered insights and were generative was more accepted and as such, I needed to have fewer of these conversations at UQ. Nationally, I was invited in 2016 to keynote at the *Australian Council of Deans of Science* annual meeting of national teaching and learning leaders on the topics of "Student voice in science curriculum review" where academics understood that students were one source of data being drawn on to inform teaching, learning, and curriculum work, and this peak body for university science education wanted to better understand how to capture and action evidence from students¹⁷.

Partnering with students: Making sense together and taking action

In 2015 I was awarded an *Australian Learning and Teaching Fellowship* on "engaging students as partners in curriculum development". Building on my applied research that captured students' perspectives as a source of data to inform academic curricular decision-making, the Fellowship allowed me to think of students as more active, ongoing contributors and collaborators in my research that acknowledged the unique expertise that students could bring to bear on understanding how students experience learning. The key here is that I was working with students in a shared learning process that allowed students to gain research and analytic skills while learning about how the university makes sense of student generated data and offered me fresh insights into the experiences of students to better inform research conclusions and draw more grounded implications for curriculum development in practice. In other words, working in partnership was a reciprocal learning process of mutual benefit for students and myself¹⁸.

During the analysis phase of the BSc Review, I partnered with a BSc honours student to make sense of the SSSI data and draw implications for academics involved in the review to consider. When looking over the student SSSI results, the student was able to offer her student-insider perspective on the curriculum to

¹³ Matthews, Kelly E., Peter Adams, and Merrilyn Goos. "The influence of undergraduate science curriculum reform on students' perceptions of their quantitative skills." *International Journal of Science Education* 37, no. 16 (2015): 2619-2636; Mercer-Mapstone, Lucy D., and Kelly E. Matthews. "Student perceptions of communication skills in undergraduate science at an Australian research-intensive university." *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 42, no. 1 (2017): 98-114.

¹⁴ Matthews, Kelly E., Peter Adams, and Merrilyn Goos. "Quantitative skills as a graduate learning outcome: exploring students' evaluative expertise." *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 42, no. 4 (2017): 564-579.

¹⁵ Matthews, Kelly E., Yvonne Hodgson, and Cristina Varsavsky. "Factors influencing students' perceptions of their quantitative skills." *International Journal of Mathematical Education in Science and Technology* 44, no. 6 (2013): 782-795; Varsavsky, Cristina, Kelly E. Matthews, and Yvonne Hodgson. "Perceptions of science graduating students on their learning gains." *International Journal of Science Education* 36, no. 6 (2014): 929-951.

¹⁶ King, Deborah, Cristina Varsavsky, Shaun Belward, and Kelly E Matthews. "Investigating students' perceptions of graduate learning outcomes in mathematics." *International Journal of Mathematical Education in Science and Technology* 48, no. sup1 (2017): S67-S80.

¹⁷ Matthews, Kelly E. "Student Voice in Curriculum Review: Students as Partners." In *Australian Council of Deans of Science Education Conference*. 2016b.

¹⁸ Cook-Sather, Alison, Catherine Bovill, and Peter Felten. *Engaging students as partners in learning and teaching: A guide for faculty*, (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, 2014); Healey, M., A. Flint, and K. Harrington. *Students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education*, (York: Higher Education Academy, 2014).

explain particular patterns or trends. Because I was not a student in the BSc, I could not understand how certain learning outcomes were being developed or assessed across courses or year levels. While doing this work, the student identified her particular interest in scientific communication skills, which she wanted to explore in further depth. We worked together to publish a paper¹⁹, which contributed to the literature while value adding to the student's academic experience with a tangible publication for her CV and supporting my own academic progression dependent on high quality publications. We also worked together as co-inquirers and collaborators on another paper that compared student and academic perceptions of learning outcomes from a science degree program²⁰ published in one of the highest ranked journals in the field of higher education. Through this process, we discussed, debated, and wrote as colleagues who brought differing, yet important insights to the work being published in an enjoyable process of collaboration that resulted in high quality outputs.

In the meantime, I partnered with another undergraduate student in the BSc. As a dual or double degree student, she felt her science degree and her arts degree were not well aligned and she wanted to explore the extent of this issue with other dual degree students. While this was not a topic of particular interest to me, I appreciated her concern. Following a literature review, she found similar issues raised in differing contexts but little about the experience of students that drew on student-sourced research. We drew on the BSc review SSSI data analysis of single versus dual degree students and found some striking patterns that signalled dual degree students were not attaining learning outcomes to the same extent as single degree students reported²¹. Not only did we publish this work in a high-rated journal, but the student was also empowered by what she had learned and presented her views to the formal BSc Review Committee panel of high-powered international leaders. She drew on data and shared her story in ways that influenced the panel, who made a direct recommendation about dual degree students in their formal report following their visit. By partnering with this student, she got an insider view that students rarely get and was able to draw on her new knowledge to influence curriculum policy in ways that few students and most academics could.

Over to you: Role of students

How do you see the role of students in higher education? And how has that perspective about students shaped how you interact with students?

Padlet 2: <https://padletuq.padlet.org/kmatthews118/wi5pyjuqd8z6e0q6>

¹⁹ Mercer-Mapstone, Lucy D., and Kelly E. Matthews. "Student perceptions of communication skills in undergraduate science at an Australian research-intensive university." *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 42, no. 1 (2017): 98-114.

²⁰ Matthews, Kelly E., and Lucy D. Mercer-Mapstone. "Toward curriculum convergence for graduate learning outcomes: academic intentions and student experiences." *Studies in Higher Education* 43, no. 4 (2018): 644-659.

²¹ Dvorakova, Lucie S., and Kelly E. Matthews. "Graduate learning outcomes in science: variation in perceptions of single-and dual-degree students." *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 42, no. 6 (2017): 900-913.

10 steps for getting started

From an individual perspective, getting started in partnership means forming relationships with a shared purpose or goal. In terms of institutional assessment or research (or scholarship of teaching and learning), the below 10 steps offer guidance²².

1. Start on a small scale by working with two or three students where there is a specific yet meaningful contribution for students to make to the research endeavour. (A small group of students might build student confidence to contribute more actively)
2. Start the partnership by explicitly discussing the idea of working in partnership and the values underpinning how the collaboration will work, while establishing through dialogue appropriate boundaries and expectations.
3. Decide on personal learning goals, ways of working, and timelines together at the beginning of the partnership, and revisit and revise together as needed.
4. Discuss the idea of expertise and acknowledge the expertise students possess by nature of being a student in contrast to the different, yet equally valuable expertise that researchers possess—emphasis the mutual learning process.
5. Listen more than talk. Pose open questions often and invite questions. Establish earlier on that dialogue is essential. Be okay with silence and listen.
6. Create time to nurture the learning relationship that pays attention to the *process* of collaborating.
7. Be flexible to change focus or outcomes based on student contributions so the collaborative process can become co-owned as a powerful way to build student agency.
8. Celebrate effective processes of working together along with achievement of research outcomes or outputs.
9. Take seriously what students say through ongoing negotiation and dialogue while also sharing your thinking based on your expertise.
10. Create space for reflection about the partnership as a learning process for yourself and students.

Over to you: Your first step

What is the next action you will take to advance your partnership practice with students? For example, if you are new, will you read more or reach to colleagues?

²² These are from: Matthews, K. E. (2018). Engaging students as participants and partners: An argument for partnership with students in higher education research on student success. *International Journal of Chinese Education*, 7(1), 42-64.

5 resources to grow your knowledge

Here is a list of 5 selected resources. Not an exhaustive list but rather a joining the conversation list with some seminal and thoughtful resources on the practice of partnership with students.

- [Engagement through partnership: Students as Partners in learning and teaching in higher education](#): Report with case studies, models, and values for partnership in context of student engagement
- [Students as Partners: Engaged Learning Resources](#): Blog post with overview of student partnerships
- [Mick Healey on Student as Partners](#): Video (7 mins) discussing on partnership in higher education
- [Peter Felten on engaging students as partners in learning and teaching](#): Video (5 mins) on key ideas from must read Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten 2014 book
- [Pedagogical Partnerships: a how-to guide](#): Open access book with practical resources co-authored by students and faculty members.

The [International Journal for Students as Partners](#) (IJSaP) is open access publication with case studies, reflective essays, research articles and more that all illuminate partnership. It is co-edited by students and faculty/staff with submissions led by students and faculty/staff.

Over to you: Your resources

Share any resources (from your work or others) on engaging students as partners in institutional assessment.

Padlet 2: <https://padletuq.padlet.org/kmatthews118/esyxafzdbew0uu43>

About me

I am currently an Associate Professor of Higher Education and an elected member of the Academic Board at The University of Queensland in Australia. My attention is focused on nurturing learner-teacher relationships that foster meaningful learning opportunities in higher education. I am internationally known for my scholarship on engaging students as partners and collaborative leadership that creates learning communities advancing a shared goal for more human-centred and relational curriculum, pedagogy and assessment practices in universities.

Recognised for teaching practices with both individual and team awards, I teach undergraduate students and university lecturers in the areas of pedagogy and curriculum. I have collaborated on 25+ projects worth \$2.7 million and [publish extensively](#) across a range of academic genres and outlets. I am an Australian Learning and Teaching Fellow, and an inaugural co-editor for the [International Journal for Students as Partners](#). As an elected Vice-President for the [International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning](#) (2016-19), I co-authored the society's first strategic plan. My new, open-access book with Mick Healey and Alison Cook-Sather, [Writing about Learning and Teaching in Higher Education](#), is now available + a new Guidebook (also open-access), [Student Partnerships in Assessment](#), with Catherine Bovill and Tim Hinchcliffe.

Connect with me on Twitter ([@kellymatthewsUQ](#)) or [LinkedIn](#). Learn more about my research in this [podcast conversation](#).

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CRICOS Provider Number 00025B