

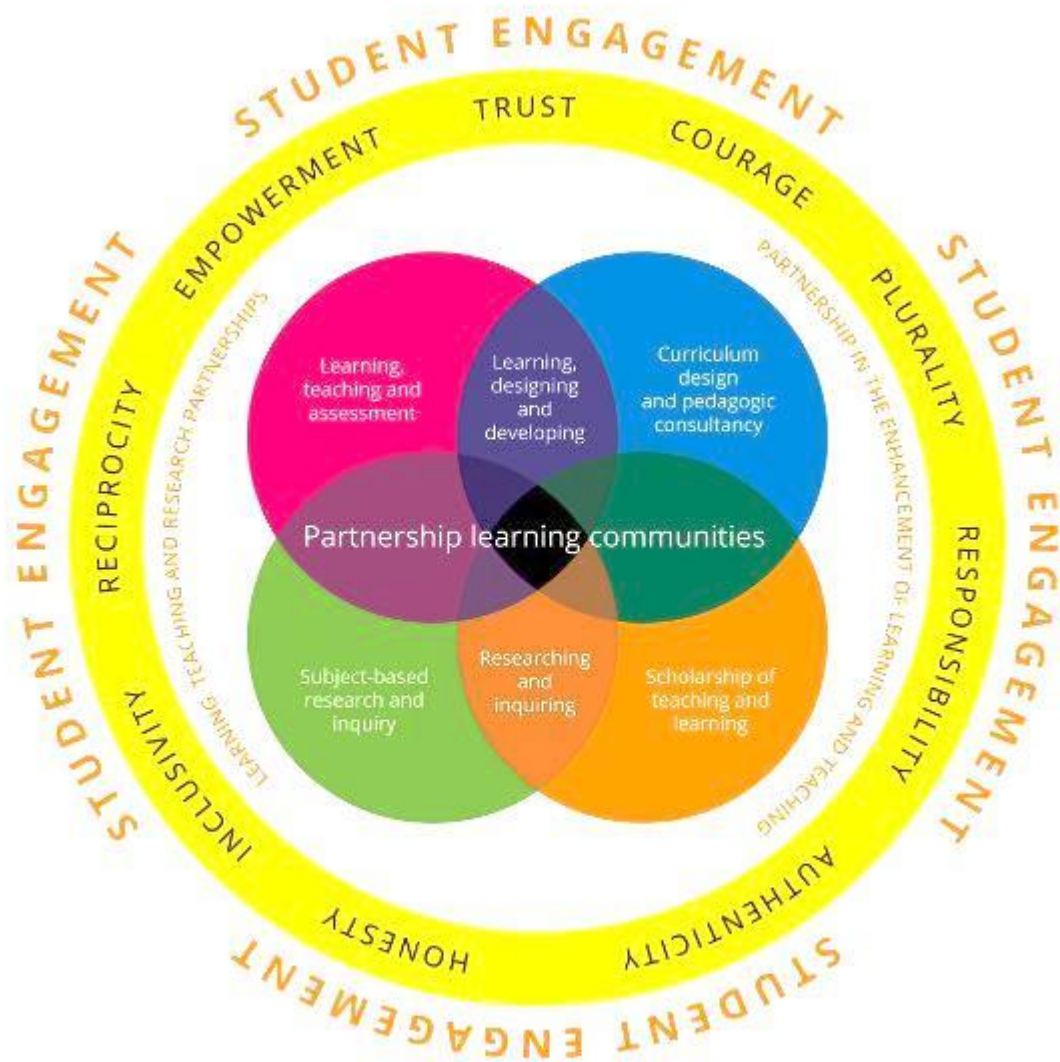


Student Engagement through Partnership

A Guide and Update to the Advance HE Framework (04)

2019

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This framework is informed by a 2014 Advance HE (formerly the Higher Education Academy) publication, 'Engagement Through Partnership: Students as Partners in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education'. Advance HE are grateful to the authors of that report (Mick Healey, Abbi Flint and Kathy Harrington) for the scholarly underpinning and development of the conceptual model adapted in this framework, and to colleagues across the sector who contributed to a summit and/or gave feedback on early drafts of the framework. This framework focuses specifically on student engagement through partnership in learning and teaching. Advance HE acknowledges the complementary work on student engagement by other sector bodies and agencies.

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1. Definitions and language

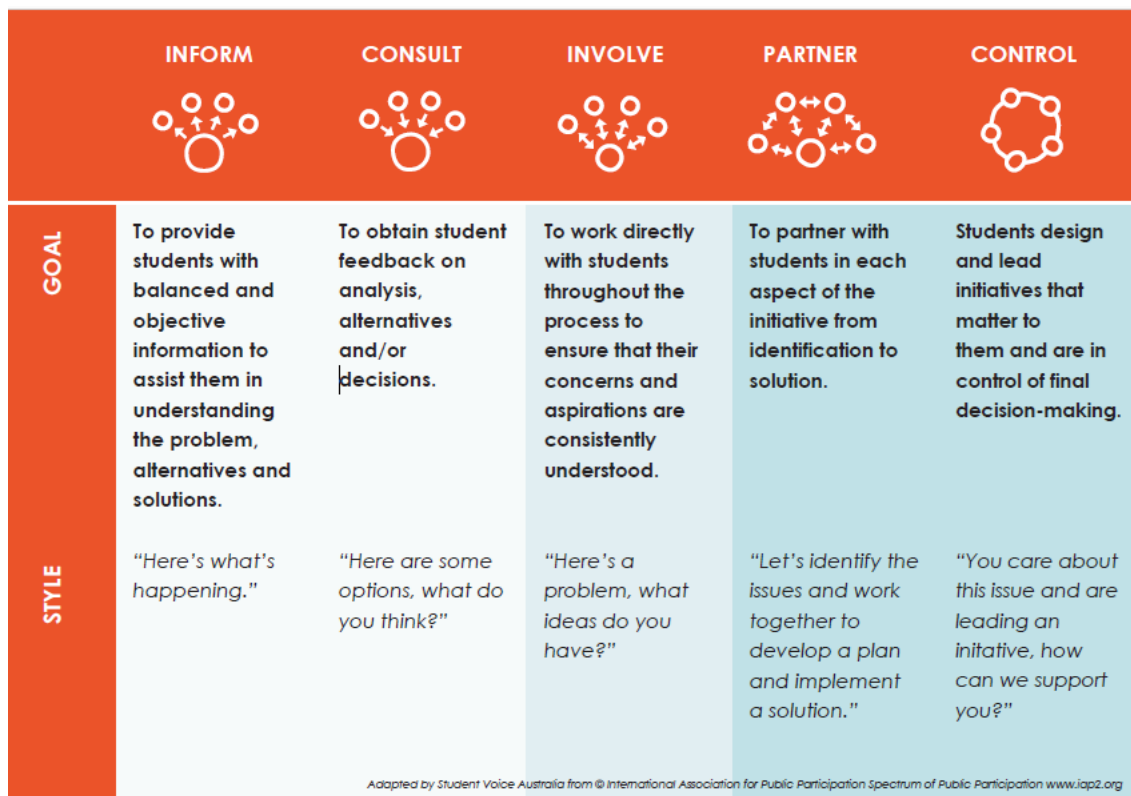
Several terms have emerged to capture the work of student-staff collaboration in higher education, including ‘co-creation’, ‘students as partners’, and ‘pedagogical partnership’. A widely cited definition of such partnership is:

“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 conceptualisation, decision making, implementation, investigation, or analysis”

(Cook-Sather, Bovill & Felten 2014, pp. 6-7).

Partnership is understood not as an outcome but rather as a process by which student engagement is developed through the practice of student-staff collaboration. Partnership is a form of student engagement, but whilst all partnership is student engagement, not all student engagement is partnership (Healey, Flint & Harrington 2014). As Figure 1 illustrates, engagement is experienced in a range of different forms of collaboration, with partnership as a specific way of students and students, or students and staff, working together. Yet within any given partnership project or initiative, partners may find themselves working at various points along this continuum during different stages. For example, staff may need to inform students about how the university or wider higher education system is structured and operates, such as the quality assurance processes, and how these may constrain what is possible. Yet at another point in the same project the students may be entirely in control, such as designing student engagement activities.

+ Figure 1: Student Engagement (Source: Student Voice Australia)



The Cook-Sather et al definition of partnership provides a useful starting point in helping you clarify your own understanding of partnership. Student-staff partnerships mean treating students as ‘more than customers’ (Gravett, Kinchin & Winstone 2019). Clarifying what is being meant by partnership in your context is important to lay the foundations for the building of partnership relationships.

2. Importance of partnership

In the UK context, engaging students through partnership offers a range of opportunities to develop practices which may have a positive impact on the outcomes of the National Student Survey (NSS) and the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF). For example, whilst effective partnership practices have the potential to enhance teaching and learning as interpreted through all of the NSS questions, partnership schemes may have a specific affirmative impact on the responses to three statements from the ‘student voice’ section of the survey, an area that currently receives low scores across the sector:

23. I have had the right opportunities to provide feedback on my course
24. Staff value students’ views and opinions about the course
25. It is clear how students’ feedback on the course has been acted on.

3. Exemplifying partnership through the framework

Drawing on the work of Healey, Flint & Harrington (2014), the Student Engagement through Partnership Framework identifies four different, but overlapping, areas of partnership:

- Learning, teaching and assessment
- Subject-based research and inquiry
- Scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL)
- Curriculum design & pedagogic consultancy

A growing number of institutions around the world have developed practices in these areas in the last decade (Ahmad et al 2017; Healey, Flint & Harrington 2016).

Learning, teaching and assessment: Peer learning and assessment, mentoring, co-teaching and other forms of active learning are increasingly common forms of partnership. For example, Bournemouth has a well-developed [Peer Assisted Learning scheme](#), Nottingham Trent is a UK leader in [Student-Centred Active Learning Environment with Upside-down Pedagogies \(Scale-Up\)](#), and Bradford is experimenting with [Team Based Learning](#).

Subject based research and inquiry: Many institutions have explored ways of engaging students through embedding research and inquiry in the curriculum. For example, research-based education is at the centre of UCL's [Connected Curriculum](#); while [Student as Producer](#) was a cross-institution curriculum development initiative at Lincoln.

Scholarship of teaching and learning: There has been a rapid growth in the involvement of students in SoTL projects in which students undertake projects designed to improve the University learning experience for themselves and their peers. Many have drawn on the [Students as Change Agents](#) programme at Exeter and the [Students as Academic Partners](#) scheme at Birmingham City. These models have since been adapted in a variety of formats at several other universities in the UK, such as Imperial ([StudentShapers](#)), Nottingham ([Students as Change Agents](#)), UCL ([ChangeMakers](#)), Westminster ([Students as Co-creators](#)), and Winchester ([Student Fellows Scheme](#)).

Curriculum design and pedagogic consultancy: Engaging students in curriculum design and pedagogic consultancy is perhaps the least developed of the four areas, though there are plenty of examples of students producing pedagogic resources. In the [Student Curriculum Consultant Programme](#) at Kingston students work as *Curriculum Consultants* to collaborate with staff to create more accessible, meaningful and globally-relevant curricula at all levels of the institution. In the [Students as Learners and Teachers \(SaLT\)](#) program at Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges, USA, undergraduate students work as pedagogical consultants to new and continuing faculty members, normally over a full semester. Variations on this approach have since been developed at over 20 institutions in eight different countries. In the [Students as Colleagues](#) initiative at Edinburgh Napier, they engage students as peer-reviewers of teaching.

Integrated schemes: A recent trend among some institutions is to develop strategic, cross-institutional initiatives that cover more than one of these partnership areas and sometimes include others as well, such as governance. For example, at Queensland, Australia, their [Student-Staff Partnership Projects](#) seek to foster partnership to enable students and staff to enhance the 1) [teaching and learning](#), 2) [governance and strategy](#), and 3) [student experience](#) environments at the University. It is projected that 800 student partner grants will be awarded in 2020. The [Students Partners Program](#) at McMaster, Canada, has three streams partnering students and staff: 1) as co-inquirers on SoTL research projects; 2) to (re)design courses faculty partners are teaching, or to analyse and refine one of the faculty partner's courses as it is being taught; and 3) to engage in curriculum review and enhancement processes.

4. Process of partnership

In any partnership project or initiative, it is imperative to obtain a balance between the *process* of working in partnership and the planned *outcomes*. However, both require time and, depending on the purpose of the partnership, members may make the choice, consciously or otherwise, to focus more on one or the other. Understandably, many projects are primarily focused on delivery of the planned outcomes, and working in partnership is simply seen as a desirable means to achieve these outcomes. In such circumstances, it is nevertheless important that explicit attention is given to the values which underpin partnership and the development of partnership learning communities (Healey R L 2019a).

5. Partnership values

Developing the process of partnership requires recognition that working in partnership is an experience which may take both student and staff participants outside their comfort zone. It may require staff to relinquish significant control and power to students, and for students to accept this and share responsibility for the outcomes. Accepting this shift in control and power requires courage on behalf of the students as well as the staff. The *Advance HE Framework* identifies nine values which underpin successful student engagement through partnership: authenticity, honesty, inclusivity, reciprocity, empowerment, trust, courage, plurality, and responsibility. Understanding and applying these values is critical in supporting the formation and development of partnerships (Healey et al 2019a).

These values may be articulated in different ways. For example, Matthews (2017) offers five 'propositions' for genuine partnership practice:

1. Foster inclusive partnerships
2. Nurture power-sharing relationships through dialogue and reflection
3. Accept partnership as a process with uncertain outcomes
4. Engage in ethical partnerships
5. Enact partnership for transformation.

These five elements complement the nine values but emphasise different points. The participants in a partnership need to work together to develop trust in one another, be open to new ideas, and learn together to be comfortable in the uncertainty that working in their partnership may bring. Some people may be hesitant here, as they think this may mean that a student-staff partnership team would have to go along with any ideas the students offer. However, partnership is about recognising that everyone has something to contribute and people bring different things to the table. The practice of partnership aims to break down the barriers between staff and students so that everybody's ideas are given consideration, no matter whether they are offered by a staff member or a student. Both staff and students are experts in different ways. Teaching staff, for example, have expertise in the courses they teach, while students are experts in the experience of being students and having an overview of their programmes. The challenge is to stop thinking of each other only in terms of their roles, and value their ideas and experiences in relation to the potential benefits for the project or initiative.

6. Developing partnership learning communities

Partnership is messy – how the partners build a relationship will vary every time you start a project, depending on who is involved, how they are engaged and the different contexts in which the work takes place (Healey & Healey 2018; Marquis et al 2019). One way of recognising and making explicit the values of partnership is to develop a *partnership agreement*. This document is a way of

articulating and exploring different members’ perceptions of partnership, and their expectations and assumptions about the way in which the partnership will operate. Such an agreement might be an evolving document that is revisited during the project and amended as appropriate in light of the experience of working together.

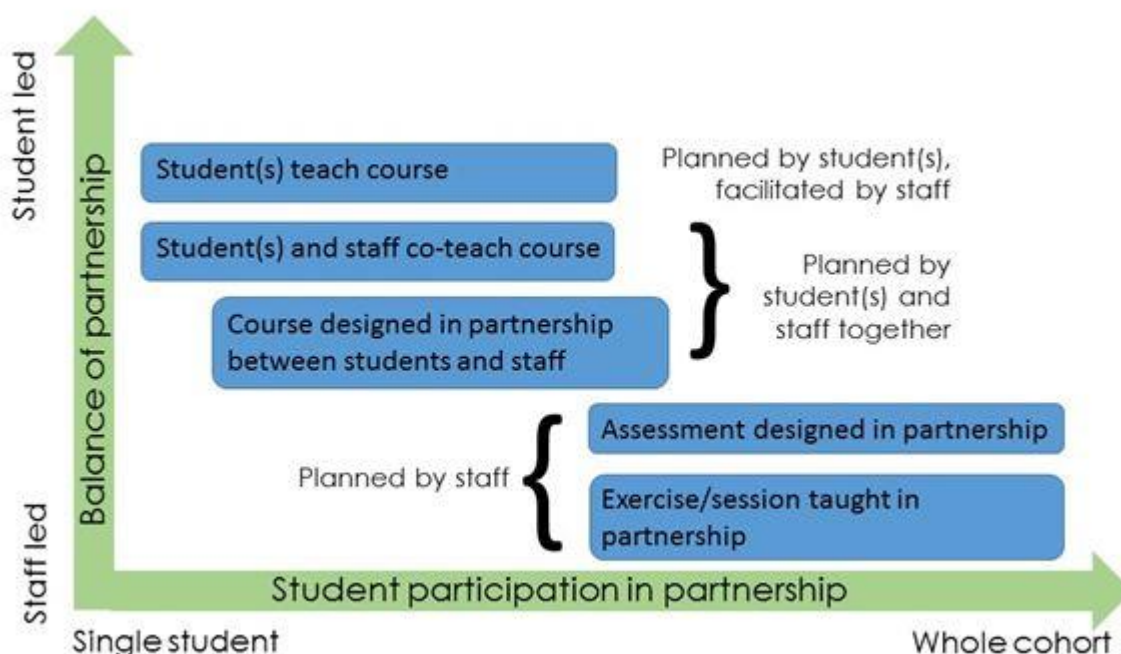
At all stages of partnership it is important that attention is given to inclusivity and that we are aware not only of opportunities for access but also inequalities of outcomes (e.g. Bovill et al 2016; Mercer-Mapstone, Islam & Reid 2019; Moore-Cherry et al 2018). Moreover, partnerships are relationships, and therefore, like all relationships, they are underpinned by emotions (Felten 2017). Partnership teams should recognise this from the beginning of their work and consider putting in place appropriate support practices, such as, mentoring, peer support or reflective writing.

7. Scaling up partnership activities

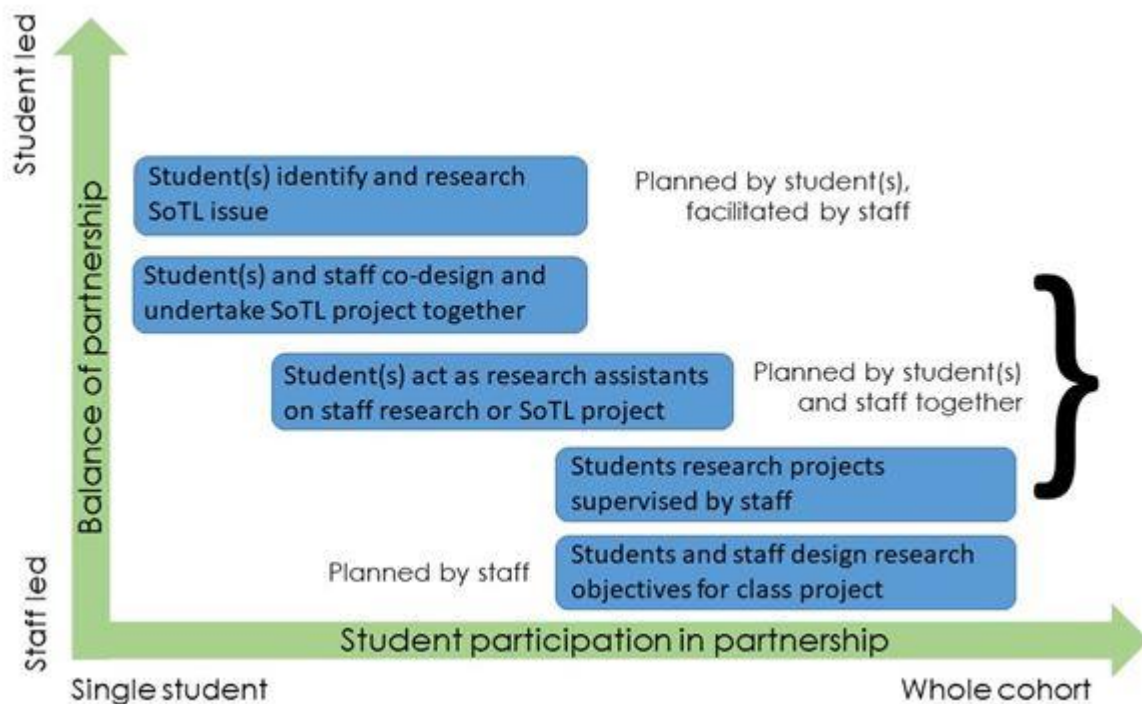
Practicing partnership, particularly in a context with limited partnership experience, may be more effective if you focus on your own practice, where you have significant control (e.g. at unit, programme or department levels), rather than trying to implement practice across an institution from the start. Once you establish experience, knowledge and understanding, partnership activities may be scaled up, and staff and students who are less convinced about the value of this way of working may be introduced to the benefits (Bovill & Woolmer 2019).

Figures 2 and 3 provide illustrations of how partnership practice might be scaled up, referring to the top half of the model in the Student Engagement through Partnership Framework in Figure 2, and the bottom half of the model in the Framework in Figure 3. Both figures illustrate how the number of students who might participate in student-staff partnership activities relates to the nature of the activity in which they are involved and the extent to which the partnership is led by staff or students. Figure 2 provides examples of different types of student-staff partnerships in relation to designing, teaching and assessing the curriculum, while Figure 3 provides examples of different types of student-staff partnerships in relation to SoTL and discipline-based research.

+ Figure 2: Student-staff partnerships in designing, teaching and assessing the curriculum: Healey, R (2019b)



+ Figure 3: Student-staff partnerships in SoTL and discipline-based research: Healey, R (2019b)



8. Student-staff partnership comes of age

As the field of partnership matures, we are seeing more critically reflective and theoretically informed approaches being taken to the practice of partnership that explore not only the benefits of working in partnership but also the challenges (e.g. Healey R L 2019a; Healey et al 2019; Matthews et al 2019a, 2019b). We are also seeing significant contributions to our thinking about partnership coming directly from students and student unions (e.g. Daviduke 2018; Dwyer 2018; NUS 2012). These are valuable developments that should help support practitioners to have realistic expectations as to what is possible for partnership practice within their varying contexts. This includes recognising that working in partnership may not be for everyone.

Undertaking partnership is messy and no single approach will be effective in all cases (Healey & Healey 2018). We therefore need to be flexible about how we approach partnership and allow time for upfront discussion between the participants about how they are going to work in partnership. As you and your institution gain experience, knowledge and understanding, it will be possible to embed support and reward structures into partnership practice and include partnership working as part of professional development opportunities for both students and staff.

9. Reflective questions

9.1 Partnership practice in your context:

- What forms of student-staff partnership have been developed in your area to date, and what forms might you develop in the future and how?
- Looking at the four areas of focus in the Framework, which areas do you want to focus partnership(s) on, and why?
- Who will be involved in the partnership(s) and what are their reasons for doing so?
- In the UK, how might partnership approaches in your context enhance student responses to the 'student voice' questions from the National Student Survey?

9.2 Values:

- To what extent, and how, do you encourage and enable open and honest dialogue between student and staff partners?
- What are the overt and covert power relationships within your partnership team, and how do you plan to distribute and share power in your partnership?
- How do you demonstrate respect and fairness in your interactions with other partners?
- What unique experiences, insights and talents does each member of the partnership team bring to the project or initiative, and how are these recognised and supported?

9.3 Designing, teaching and assessing the curriculum:

- To what extent, and how, are active and collaborative learning approaches embedded in the curriculum?
- How might students and staff be involved in co-designing, co-teaching and co-assessing the curriculum?

9.4 SoTL and discipline-based research:

- To what extent, and how, do students and staff act as co-inquirers and co-researchers in the development of knowledge in their subject area or professional field?
- How might students and staff be involved in SoTL and discipline-based research?

9.5 Support and development:

- How is working in partnership between students and staff, and among students, supported and rewarded?
- How do staff and students work together in the design and delivery of staff professional development in learning and teaching?

10. Activities

Look at the programmes highlighted in the section above on 'Exemplifying partnership through the framework'. Which of these examples interest and excite you? How might you adapt them for your context?

Look at the [conceptual frameworks and mini case studies](#) in our collection. Which ones appeal to you? How might you use the conceptual frameworks which interest you? What modifications would you need to make to the mini case studies to fit your situation?

11. Key recent texts and resources

11.1 Introductions

For an introduction to the *key ideas and practices* on student-staff partnership see:

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

Healey, M., Flint, A. & Harrington, K. (2014) *Engagement through partnership: Students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education*, York: Higher Education Academy.

<https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/engagement-through-partnership-students-partners-learning-and-teaching-higher>

For reflections on the *application of the Healey et al (2014) model*, which features in the Advance HE Student Engagement through Partnership Framework, see:

Healey, M., Flint, A. & Harrington, K. (2016) Students as partners: Reflections on a conceptual model. *Teaching and Learning Inquiry* 4(2), 1-13.

<https://journalhosting.ucalgary.ca/index.php/TLI/article/view/57438>

Ahmad, A., Ali, A., Van Maaren, J., Barrington, J., Merritt, O. & Ansilio, K. (2017) Partnership in practice: Implementing Healey's conceptual model, *International Journal for Students as Partners* 1(2) <https://mulpress.mcmaster.ca/ijsap/article/view/3197>

For a well-cited literature review see:

Mercer-Mapstone, L., Dvorakova, S. L., Matthews, K. E., Abbot, S., Cheng, B., Felten, P., Knorr, K., Marquis, E., Shammas, R. & 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/ijsap/issue/view/306>

For reflections on two areas of partnership see:

Cook-Sather, A. (2018) Developing "Students as Learners and Teachers": Lessons from ten years of pedagogical partnership that strives to foster inclusive and responsive practice. *Journal of Educational Innovation, Partnership and Change*, 4, 1.

<https://journals.studentengagement.org.uk/index.php/studentchangeagents/article/view/746>

Healey, M. and Jenkins, A. (2018) The role of academic developers in embedding high-impact undergraduate research and inquiry in mainstream higher education: Twenty years' reflection, *International Journal for Academic Development* 23(1), 52-64.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2017.1412974>

11.2 Concepts and practices

For a discussion of some key issues, benefits and challenges of partnership see:

Bovill, C., Cook-Sather, A., Felten, P., Millard, L. & Moore-Cherry, N. (2016) Addressing potential challenges in co-creating learning and teaching: overcoming resistance, navigating institutional

norms and ensuring inclusivity in student–staff partnerships. *Higher Education*, 71, 195-208. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-015-9896-4>.

Bovill, C. & Woolmer, C. (2019) How conceptualisations of curriculum in higher education influence student-staff co-creation in and of the curriculum. *Higher Education*, 78, 407–422. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-018-0349-8>.

Daviduke, N. (2018) Growing into pedagogical partnerships over time and across disciplines: My experience as a non-STEM student consultant in STEM courses. *International Journal for Students as Partners*, 2(2), 151-156. <https://doi.org/10.15173/ijpsap.v2i2.3443>

Dwyer, A. (2018) Toward the formation of genuine partnership spaces. *International Journal for Students as Partners*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.15173/ijpsap.v2i1.3503>

Felten, P. (2017) Emotion and partnerships. *International Journal for Students as Partners*, 1(2), 1-5. <https://doi.org/10.15173/ijpsap.v1i2.3070>

Gravett, K., Kinchin, I. M. & Winstone, N. E. (2019) ‘More than customers’: conceptions of students as partners held by students, staff, and institutional leaders. *Studies in Higher Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2019.1623769>

Healey, M. & Healey, R. L. (2018) ‘It depends’: Exploring the context-dependent nature of students as partners practices and policies, *International Journal for Students as Partners*, 2(1). <https://mulpress.mcmaster.ca/ijpsap/article/view/3472>

Healey, R. L. (2019a) The benefits of hindsight: Lessons learnt from leading my first cross-department student-staff partnership project. *York Learning and Teaching Forum Magazine*. In press.

Healey, R. L. (2019b) Student-staff partnerships in designing, teaching and assessing the curriculum and in SoTL and discipline-based research. in Healey, M. Students as partners and change agents in learning and teaching in higher education. Howden: Healey HE Consultants. www.mickhealey.co.uk/resources

Healey, R. L., Lerczak, A., Welsh, K. & France, D. (2019) By any other name? The impacts of differing assumptions, expectations and misconceptions about student-staff ‘partnerships’. *International Journal for Students as Partners*, 3(1): 106-122. <https://doi.org/10.15173/ijpsap.v3i1.3550>.

Marquis, E., Jayaratnam, A., Lei, T., & Mishra, A. (2019) Motivators, barriers, and understandings: How students at four universities perceive student-faculty partnership programs. *Higher Education Research and Development*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2019.1638349>

Matthews, K. E. (2017) Five propositions for genuine students as partners practice *International Journal for Students as Partners* 1(2). <https://mulpress.mcmaster.ca/ijpsap/article/view/3315>

Matthews, K. E., Cook-Sather, A., Acai, A., Dvorakova, S. L., Felten, P., Marquis, E., & Mercer-Mapstone, L. (2019a). Toward theories of partnership praxis: an analysis of interpretive framing in literature on students as partners in teaching and learning. *Higher Education Research and Development* 38(2), 28-93 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2018.1530199>

Matthews, K. E., Dvorakova, S. L., Mercer-Mapstone, L., Acai, A., Cook-Sather, A., Felten, P., Healey, M., Healey, R. L. & Marquis, E. (2019b) Enhancing outcomes and reducing inhibitors to the engagement of students and academics in learning and teaching partnerships: Implications for academic development support. *International Journal for Academic Development* 24(3): 246-259. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2018.1545233>

Mercer-Mapstone, L., Islam, M. & Reid, T. (2019) Are we just engaging ‘the usual suspects’? Challenges in and practical strategies for supporting equity and diversity in student–staff partnership initiatives, *Teaching in Higher Education*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2019.1655396>

Moore-Cherry, N., Healey, R. L., Nicholson, T. & Andrews, W. (2016). Inclusive partnership: Enhancing student engagement in geography. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* 40(1), 84-103. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03098265.2015.1066316>

NUS (2012) *A manifesto for partnership*. London: NUS. <http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/a-manifesto-for-partnership>

11.3 Case studies

For a collection of around 150 mini-case studies of practices around the world and in different kinds of institution and across a range of disciplines, including most of the programs discussed above, along with a wide range of conceptual frameworks see:

Healey, M. (2019a) *Students as partners and change agents in learning and teaching in higher education*. Howden: Healey HE Consultants. www.mickhealey.co.uk/resources

11.4 Practical guides

For three useful 'how to' guides see:

Cook-Sather, A., Bahti, M. & Ntem, A. (2019) *Pedagogical partnerships: A how-to guide for faculty, students, and academic developers in higher education*. Elon: [Elon University Center for Engaged Learning Open-Access Books](http://www.elon.edu/engaged-learning) (in press).

Mercer-Mapstone, L. & Marie, J. (2019) *Practical guide: Scaling up student-staff partnerships in higher education*. Institute for Academic Development: University of Edinburgh. <http://bit.ly/2EfUR16>

Taylor, C. (2015) *A guide to ethics and student engagement through partnership*. York: Higher Education Academy. <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/guide-ethics-and-student-engagement-through-partnership>

11.5 Further sources and keeping up to date

See Advance HE Student engagement through partnership web page for details of key projects, resources and ways you can connect with student engagement. <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/guidance/teaching-and-learning/student-engagement-through-partnership>

For an extensive list of over 800 references which is regularly updated see:

Healey, M. (2019) *Students as partners and change agents: A selected bibliography*. Howden: Healey HE Consultants. www.mickhealey.co.uk/resources

To keep up to date with the latest literature be sure to check the latest issues of:

International Journal for Students as Partners (IJSaP). <https://mulpress.mcmaster.ca/ijsap>

Student Engagement in Higher Education Journal.

<https://journals.studentengagement.org.uk/index.php/raise/index>

Teaching and Learning Together in Higher Education.

teachingandlearningtogether.blogs.brynmawr.edu/

The Journal of Educational Innovation, Partnership and Change.

<https://journals.studentengagement.org.uk/index.php/studentchangeagents/>

Also check:

The Researching Advancing Inspiring Student Engagement (RAISE) Network Students as Partners Special Interest Group. <http://www.raise-network.com/get-involved/special-interest-groups-sigs/>

The Annual Meeting of the International Students as Partners Institute (ISaPI).

<https://macblog.mcmaster.ca/summer-institute/>



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