2.1 Good practice in student-staff partnership implementation


Establish, implement and monitor a project plan (but keep it agile and flexible)

» To what extent is your proposed partnership initiative working in an uncertain environment?

» What issues and challenges is your initiative likely to encounter?

» How well do the student-staff partnership team members work together?
Top tips for developing your approach

- Develop a project plan and ensure that participants buy in to their roles and responsibilities.
- In early stages, adopt light-touch management approaches but recognise that this may need to change as such partnerships evolve.
- Adopt an agile and flexible approach that allows you to respond to changing issues, contexts and policies.
- Engage the student union, student council or student representatives as key partners.
- Ensure there is enough funding for the initiative and consider seed-funding to encourage others to participate.
- Encourage cross-faculty and -department working to avoid groups working in isolation.
- Adopt and encourage business-like and entrepreneurial approaches.
- Always be aware of the need to build capacity and develop skills in both the student body and with staff.
- Encourage best-practice team-working e.g. team-building exercises.
- Review the partnership on a regular basis.

2.2 Good practice in student-staff partnership implementation

Develop and follow a set of principles of good practice for student-staff partnerships

» How beneficial would a set of good practice principles be in guiding and shaping your partnership initiative?

» How could such principles be shared with stakeholders?

» Could these principles be used to influence institutional policies and curriculum design?

Top tips for developing your approach

- Develop your own set of principles of good practice to follow for establishing student-staff partnerships - aim for about seven key principles

- Aim for principles that are short, are action oriented and use action verbs, point to aspirations, focus on headline arguments and use accessible language

- For each principle, identify why it is important and give evidence to justify it

- Use the principles as the central element of your stakeholder communications and engagement plan

- Develop specific resources to help communicate the principles, for example, printed cards

- Use every opportunity to reinforce the principles in communications and in documents, resources and publications that are created

- Collaboratively develop a set of practice points for each principle that can help give students and staff ideas of how to put the principles into practice

- As student-staff partnerships mature, aim to include the principles in strategies, policies and processes

- Use principles when reviewing, developing or discussing curriculum design

2.3 Good practice in student-staff partnership implementation

Allocate time and resource for stakeholder engagement and communication activities

» Have you considered how much enthusiasm and possibly resistance there might be towards student-staff partnership initiatives?

» Have you investigated the interests and motivations of different stakeholders in relation to student-staff partnerships?

» Have you evaluated how best to engage different stakeholders?

Top tips for developing your approach

- Be realistic about the amount of time and resources needed to engage and communicate with stakeholders.

- Identify those who are likely to be enthusiastic about student-staff partnership working, the groups or communities they influence and how this could be harnessed.

- Identify those who may have anxieties or resist student-staff partnership working and investigate the reasons behind this.

- Develop and put into practice a stakeholder communications and engagement plan, ensuring that key communications and engagement objectives and messages are clearly identified for the different stakeholder groups.

- Celebrate successes and look for opportunities to report these internally and externally.

- Continually highlight the notion of students as equal partners (not assistants) and partnership working as the norm.

- Set high, but achievable expectations and continually check that these are fully understood by all stakeholders.

- Seek support and drive from senior management and ensure they understand how students as partners can help them fulfil their strategic and personal goals.

- Check that you are communicating and engaging with wider student and staff bodies.

2.4 Good practice in student-staff partnership implementation


Look for and acquire existing guides, toolkits and resources or develop your own

» Have you established what best practice in student-staff partnerships means in your context?

» Have the needs of different stakeholders for guides, toolkits and resources been identified?

» Have you researched the availability of third-party guides, toolkits and resources, for example, from other institutions and educational agencies?

Top tips for developing your approach

- Talk to different stakeholders to find out what they need to guide their understanding and participation in student-staff partnerships eg guides, toolkits and resources.

- Adopt the top tips and, if necessary, customise these to meet your institutional needs and contexts.

- Use the ‘Viewpoints for student-staff partnerships’ implementation guidance as part of your planning and team-building exercises.

- Recognise that best practice evolves and develops and that there is no one model of best practice that fits every situation. Join the Change agents’ network to keep up-to-date with new approaches, toolkits and resources.

- Gather evidence and record the development of your student-staff partnership work to share with others, for example as a case study or a webinar session.

- Develop resources and toolkits that clearly and simply describe partnership models, role cards for staff and students.

- Regularly revisit the websites of the key educational agencies and organisations that are involved in research and development relating to students as partners and change agents.

- Use technology to support efficient partnership working, engagement, knowledge sharing and reflection.

2.5 Good practice in student-staff partnership implementation


Be clear about student and staff roles, responsibilities and activities

» Have you evaluated options for different student roles?

» Have you specified what these roles require in terms of activities, time commitments and skills?

» Have you identified whether there are any commercial, contractual or compliance requirements that you need to address?
Top tips for developing your approach

- Define options for student roles together with linked key activities, how the roles will develop students, what students will bring to the roles and logistical information eg time commitments and the training and support offered to students

- Involve students in planning, developing and delivering change in partnership with staff and those involved in supporting services

- Consider employing student intern(s) to support partnership work

- Consider two key staff roles:
  - Partnership lead, focusing on making the partnership succeed eg providing student workplace arrangements, induction and progress review
  - Development lead, focusing on student learning and development eg providing students with learning and support opportunities, reflective activities and feedback, exploring options for accreditation

- Develop a three-way contract between students, development lead and partnership lead to include role descriptions, responsibilities, activities and compliance with institutional procedures and requirements

- Ensure the contracts include information on engagement with induction, dissemination, support, record keeping and team-building as well as progress review and evaluation

- Provide a broad range of student opportunities to work on innovation and change initiatives

2.6 Good practice in student-staff partnership implementation


Identify risks and how to manage them

» Have potential risks been identified and evaluated?

» In particular, how likely is it that some stakeholders react negatively to student partnership initiatives?

» Has the partnership team identified creative ways to address and manage such risks?
Top tips for developing your approach

- Develop a risk management plan – review and update this regularly.

- Be aware of changing institutional policies, goals and other initiatives and adapt appropriately. Considering, for example, how changing priorities might impact on stakeholder workloads.

- Be aware that high expectations need to be balanced with realistic goals and focus on the identified priorities, only accommodating additional things outside of the original scope when this is not to the detriment of the overall scheme.

- Plan for sustainability beyond any agreed funding timescales.

- Identify likely points of resistance by different stakeholders, drawing on the experiences of other sector innovations and similar initiatives to develop strategies to counteract any resistance.

- Be aware of the risk that student partnership initiatives could be perceived by some as undermining institutional professional support staff. Develop win-win approaches to counteract this.

2.7 Good practice in student-staff partnership implementation

Establish or join internal and external communities of practice

> How could students and staff involved in partnership work influence students to take an active role in leading and facilitating a community of practice?

> How could the partnership team learn from participation in external communities of practice?

Top tips for developing your approach

- Encourage students to plan and establish an internal community of practice
- Encourage students to play an active role in leading and facilitating a joint student-staff community of practice in support of partnership working and recognise this as a key part of partnership activities
- Encourage students to join relevant professional and career-related communities of practice
- Monitor the emergence of new external communities of practice in student-staff partnerships and related areas, encouraging links with these
- Advise students and staff to join and engage with the Change agents’ network
- Encourage students and staff to draw out key lessons learnt from their activities and make these available to staff and students both inside and outside of your institution
- Encourage students and staff to read and contribute to the ‘Journal of educational innovation, partnership and change’