4.1 Good practice in sustaining and embedding partnerships based on evaluation of impact


Identify the reason and need for evaluation

» What is the purpose of evaluation and how will it benefit the partnership initiative in practice?

» How can evaluation be used to support sustainability and embedding of student-staff partnership work?

» How can evaluation support stakeholder engagement?
Top tips for developing your approach

- Teams working on student-staff partnership work should establish the purpose of evaluation, how any data and information gathered will be used and the potential benefits of conducting an evaluation.

- Evaluation should be used for identifying impact rather than just focusing on whether an initiative has achieved what it set out to do or has met targets.

- Adopting an action research approach can provide a valuable first step in a broader programme of evaluation and can help teams to reflect on and evaluate their progress.

- Evaluation can play an important accountability role.

- Evaluation can drive the embedding and sustainability agenda eg by identifying long-term goals and ensuring evidence informs, supports and influences institutional policies.

- Evaluation can play an important role in securing wider engagement, in building capacity and in opening up further opportunities.

- Evaluation can provide valuable evidence and resources to promote dialogue around what works, what is effective and possible.

- Evaluation can be used to gain external recognition and to showcase, celebrate and demonstrate student successes.

- Evaluation can support benchmarking and collaborative self-review with other institutions working on student-partnership initiatives.

4.2 Good practice in sustaining and embedding partnerships based on evaluation of impact

Choose appropriate evaluation approaches (qualitative and quantitative)

» How ready is the institution, students and staff to undertake student-staff partnerships (consider availability of time, resources, expertise, senior management support, cultural readiness etc)?

» What will success look like?

» How will impact be defined and measured?


Top tips for developing your approach

☐ Carry out baseline activities to establish the current situation, seek stakeholder engagement and to inform project planning and approaches to evaluation

☐ Develop an evaluation framework that focuses on measures or indicators of success - both for the partnership initiative and to help the institution meet longer term goals eg. embedding effective practice more widely across the institution and sustaining the initiative beyond an initial or pilot phase

☐ Consider using formative action research approaches (research that is conducted by practitioners on their own practice) based on a cyclical model such as ‘implement, pilot, gain feedback, reflect, modify, and implement’

☐ Consider appreciative inquiry approaches such as ‘define, discover, dream, design, destiny and delivery’

☐ Consider a balanced scorecard approach that uses a strategic management tool to help focus on different stakeholder’s perspectives, processes, staff development and finance

☐ Consider use of independent evaluators (external or internal) and critical friends, ensuring their brief encompasses sustainability and embedding

4.3 Good practice in sustaining and embedding partnerships based on evaluation of impact


Adopt a range of data collection techniques to support evaluation

» How can students actively participate in and undertake evaluation?

» What are the best techniques to use to evaluate student-staff partnership work?
Top tips for developing your approach

- When trying to establish the baseline position, take advantage of existing data such as student surveys.
- Students should be given the task of researching and evaluating initiatives as a key feature of their roles, for example as changes agents or as researchers.
- Evidence that students collect as part of their e-portfolios can be used for evaluating student-staff partnership, though permissions must be agreed.
- Consider use of cognitive mapping techniques to aid triangulation of responses from surveys.
- Consider the use of focus groups and informal discussions to explore complex behaviour, clarify results from surveys and add human dimensions to impersonal data.
- Consider use of visual data to help convey complex concepts and seek feedback on these.
- One-to-one interviews enable in-depth investigation of issues and minimise the likelihood of individual interviewees being influenced by others as can happen in a group situation.
- Questionnaires enable large samples to be collected at relative low cost and in a standardised way, though consider survey fatigue and the dangers of incorrect completion.
- Statistics are useful for evaluating usage patterns and tracking trends and changes, but are generally not useful for in-depth analysis.

4.4 Good practice in sustaining and embedding partnerships based on evaluation of impact


Identify impact on a range of stakeholders and the institution

» What areas should the partnership team focus on to identify impact on specific stakeholders such as students, staff and employers?

» What areas should the partnership team focus on to identify impact on the institution?

Top tips for developing your approach

- Student-staff partnership initiatives should seek to evaluate impact on students in the following areas:
  - Personal and professional development using eg the development framework and graduate attributes as well as employability frameworks
  - Satisfaction
  - Success in seeking and gaining employment
  - Academic development (eg scholarship, research, learning)

- Evaluate the impact on staff satisfaction; development eg CPD frameworks; and culture

- Evaluate the impact on employers’ satisfaction; networking, engagement and partnerships; collaboration with alumni

- The impact on institutions should be evaluated in terms of:
  - Contribution towards institutional goals and policies
  - Recruitment and retention
  - Student-staff partnership impact on things like educational innovations, learning, teaching and assessment enhancements and efficiencies
  - Contribution to institutional processes and effectiveness

4.5 Good practice in sustaining and embedding partnerships based on evaluation of impact

Develop case studies for use with stakeholder communications and engagement

» How can case studies best be used to support communication with stakeholders and encourage engagement?

» How can case studies be used to sustain and embed student-staff partnership initiatives?

» What should case studies contain?
Top tips for developing your approach

- Identify the reasons to use case studies and how they will engage stakeholders, promote and help to embed and sustain student-staff partnership work.

- Case studies can provide an overall review of a partnership initiative and individual elements such as specific work strands, programme or faculty implementation and approaches to student and staff development.

- Create a template with core questions that should be asked, for example:
  - What was the purpose of the partnership initiative?
  - What were the aims and objectives?
  - What was undertaken?
  - What was the impact and what are the benefits?
  - What were the issues and challenges?
  - What lessons were learned?
  - What were the unexpected outcomes?

- What are the key points for effective practice?
- Conclusions and recommendations

- Aim to capture detailed 'how to' information to aid other practitioners in planning similar activities in different contexts.

- Multimedia techniques can be used to capture audio or video interviews and testimonials which can also be used for evaluation purposes and in wider stakeholder communications.

- Case study data should be thought of as 'reusable data objects', i.e. case studies should be presented in different ways for different audiences and contexts.

- Collect data early on in the partnership initiative to establish a baseline position and continue throughout a partnership lifecycle.

4.6 Good practice in sustaining and embedding partnerships based on evaluation of impact


Develop recommendations for sustaining student-staff partnerships as part of evaluation

» How can evaluation processes be used to support the sustaining of student-staff partnership work?

» How can the results of evaluation activities be used to influence and gain support from senior managers?
Top tips for developing your approach

- The evaluation processes should aim to produce a clear set of options for sustaining the initiative, outlining the pros and cons of each option and how they support institutional policies.

- Each option should explore how they can be implemented together with challenges and risks as well as time and resource commitments required from those participating.

- Explore with senior management how student-staff partnerships can support, influence and shape institutional policies, respond to changing drivers and needs and how best to take forward these partnerships across the institution.

- Open approaches to exploring opportunities for collaboration should be explored with external stakeholders such as employers, professional and sector bodies, alumni, private sector companies, schools, colleges and universities.

- Sustain and further develop communities of practice, driven by students.

- Students generally remain in an institution for relatively short periods of time - communication between student cohorts should be a key focus as it can aid knowledge transfer and help the ongoing development of any initiative.

4.7 Good practice in sustaining and embedding partnerships based on evaluation of impact


Explore options for institutionally embedding student-staff partnerships

» How can evaluation be used to support the embedding of student-staff partnership initiatives more widely into institutional culture and practice?

» What does embedding mean in the context of our initiative?

» What are the key approaches to institutionally embedding student-staff partnership initiatives?

Top tips for developing your approach

- Evaluation processes should produce a clear set of options for embedding the partnership work, outlining the pros and cons of each option and how they support wider institutional policies
- Consider options for embedding student-staff partnerships in a wide range of institutional activities reflecting different student roles e.g., change agent, researcher, mentor, co-creator, designer, and recruiter
- Consider devolved approaches to student-staff partnerships at a local level to secure senior management ownership at departmental, school, or faculty level
- Review institutional policies, processes and systems to enable them to be more responsive towards, and benefit from student-staff partnerships
- Develop useful guides, resources and toolkits to support other staff and students in setting up partnerships
- Fund staff and students who have engaged with student-staff partnerships to train, induct and support other staff
- Develop an overall sustainability and embedding plan and align it with the stakeholder communications and engagement plan
- Sustain research and evaluation as an ongoing activity, particularly in relation to evaluating impact on staff, students, the institution and other stakeholders