Taking down the wall: sharing perspectives

Student-staff partnership projects in learning and teaching
A practical resource for students and staff

University of Hertfordshire

University of Hertfordshire
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Preparation of this resource

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Using the Text

The text is designed so you can select appropriate sections by using the hyperlinks on the Contents page which take you to each part of this document. There is a link back to the contents at the bottom of each page.

Contents

A   About this resource

This practical resource is designed to enable users to develop a student-staff partnership project. It has been developed as a result of a study at the University of Hertfordshire involving partnership between staff and students in learning and teaching, which has been carried out as a staged process since 2010.

This resource:

– Explains what student-staff partnership projects are and gives some reasons for doing them;

– Includes tools for project planning and reporting;

– Suggests approaches to disseminating findings and demonstrating impact;

– Highlights how partnership working can contribute to breaking down barriers between students and staff;

– Identifies potential ethical and sustainability issues and how these could be addressed; and

– Provides ideas that can be developed and adapted by staff and students enquiring and working together in learning and teaching.

B   What are partnership projects?

In this resource we are using the term 'partnership projects' to mean projects carried out by groups of students and academic staff in higher education settings. Partnership projects can be used for: academic staff development; student development; engagement and leadership; and learning and teaching and quality assurance enhancement.

Partnership projects can be designed in many different ways. The projects we have done have involved small-scale enquiries into practice initiated both to enhance learning and teaching and to encourage an enquiry approach to educational practice. All the projects have involved students and members of academic staff working together to design, carry out and evaluate enquiries into aspects of learning and teaching.

In our first partnership project six undergraduate and post-graduate students from the Schools of Humanities, Law and Education were employed as 'student researchers' to work with staff on jointly developed projects involving research and enquiry into aspects of learning and teaching practice. The student researchers collected data from other students; worked with staff to analyse the data; presented findings to staff; led workshops for students; and co-created resources with

members of staff engaged in the project. These resources included a free access *Feedback for Learning Project* report[1] and a video available on YouTube.[2] During this project members of staff in different Schools asked students for help with aspects of learning and teaching development and some asked to engage with student researchers as 'consultants' on learning and teaching.

C   Why do partnership projects?

One of our student partners used the metaphor of a wall to identify the reasons for doing partnership projects. He saw this wall as a barrier between staff and students, which limited learning. The process of building the wall and dismantling it through engaging in partnership working is illustrated below.
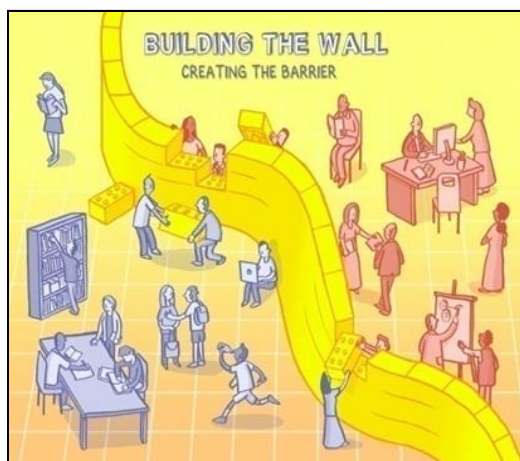
1. Building the wall. The wall is created by power relationships, different roles and responsibilities and perceptions of roles and of academic work and different language and locations.
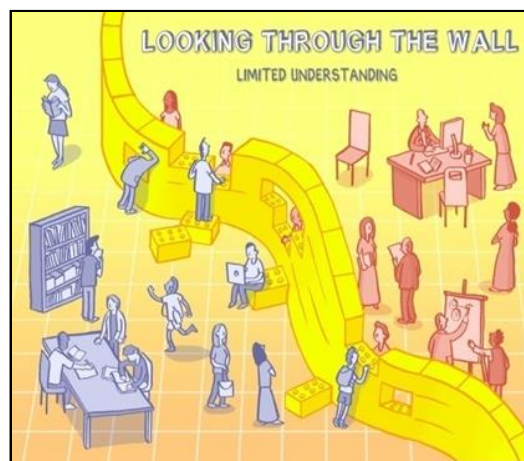
2. Looking through the wall. If staff and students gain insight into each other's worlds they can see some similarities in what they are doing but they still have limited understanding of each other.
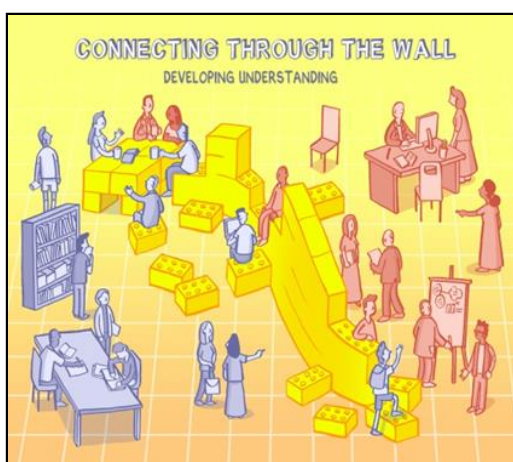
3. Connecting through the wall. As students and staff interact more frequently and start to develop relationships this leads to greater understanding of each other and of academic work.
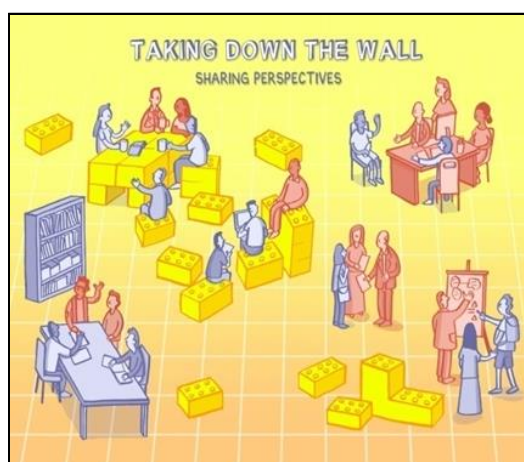
4. Taking down the wall. Through working together as partners on specific projects students and staff gain increased understanding of each other's perspectives and their own roles and responsibilities

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[1] Jarvis, J. (2010) Feedback for Learning Project Report. University of Hertfordshire

[2] University of Hertfordshire (2011) UH Learn from Feedback. Available from: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0HbbCNIr-z4

5. Working without the wall. Working in partnership results in outcomes that are better than the combined effect of each group working alone. It also develops the skills, perceptions and knowledge of all those involved.

Wall illustrations: Copyright Joel Cooper Illustrator
http:/joelcooperartist.blogspot.co.uk/

The value of the partnership approach has been identified in the work at the University (Jarvis et al., 2013; Dickerson et al., 2016).[3] The University of Hertfordshire model involves establishing underpinning principles and carrying out partnership in different ways related to discipline and context. This way of working offers a positive additional approach to current partnership work in the sector. It has been identified internally as effective through impact evaluation and externally, evidenced in work with the Higher Education Academy (HEA). Partnership work in other universities, for example, the University of Exeter and Birmingham City University has also been shown to have a positive impact on student and staff learning and experience.

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[3] Jarvis, J, Dickerson, C & Stockwell, L. 2013 'Staff-student Partnership in Practice in Higher Education: The Impact on Learning and Teaching'. in Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences. vol. 90, Elsevier, pp. 220-225, 6th International Conference on University Learning and Teaching (InCULT 2012), Malaysia, 20-21 November., 10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.07.085

Dickerson, C, Jarvis, J & Stockwell, L 2016, 'Staff–student collaboration: student learning from working together to enhance educational practice in higher education' Teaching in Higher Education., 10.1080/13562517.2015.1136279

Part 1: Leading a partnership project

Overview

This section focuses on aspects of leading a partnership project including identifying its overall purpose, leadership approach, resource requirements and contextual factors that might influence the project.

Sections

A. Leadership

B. Purpose and structure

A. Leadership

A1. Leaders and the leadership approach

Q: Who will lead your project?

Q: What style of leadership will you use?

The project could be led by an individual, a pair, for example, one member of staff and a student or by the group or part of the group depending on the style of leadership. A distributed leadership approach could be used.

> **Resource** on distributed leadership
>
> Leadership is … distributed. A YouTube video on distributed leadership created by Philip Woods and Amanda Roberts
>
> Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J5F0MNrDSpY

Q: How will you align the leadership approach to your project aims?

Whereas a hierarchical leadership approach would be inappropriate in a partnership context, an approach similar to host leadership might be suitable.

> **Resources** on host leadership:
>
> Host leadership website and community: http://hostleadership.com/
>
> An article on host leadership:
>
> Brent, M. and McKergow, M. 2013. Host leadership: Addressing the dilemma of control. The Ashridge Journal PERSPECTIVES
>
> Available from: http://sfwork.com/downloads/Ashridge-HostLeadership.pdf

A2. Change leadership

Q: Is your project part of a wider change initiative?

If this is the case, issues to consider include: the wider social, political and cultural context; other stakeholders; where the project fits within the local organisational structure; and how organisational leaders and managers and institutional resources and procedures can be used to support the project. It might be useful at this stage to refer to relevant organisational and departmental strategies and action plans and to see where the project fits in relation to other priorities. A strategic approach might be helpful. An example from our partnership work is shown below.

> *Resource* on change management:
>
> Available from JiscinfoNet: http://www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/infokits/change-management/

> *Example:* Identifying strategic approaches:
>
>
>
> Identifying Strategic Approaches to Building Wider Impact from Local Student-Staff Projects in Educational Practice
>
> Small projects undertaken in 3 Schools in the *University of Hertfordshire* designed to develop learning and teaching from 2010 onwards
>
> General approaches for all projects:
> - Use a leadership approach that encourages participation e.g. host leadership
> - Use a process that builds relationships and community
> - Articulate the underpinning principles and theoretical base of the work
>
> Lead: Joy Jarvis, Professor of Educational Practice University of Hertfordshire

B. Purpose and structure

Q: What is the overall purpose or aim of the project? (What do you want to have changed by the end of the project?)

Q: What resources are available for your project?

Q: What do you want to learn through carrying out the project?

It is important to identify whether the project is designed to achieve a specific outcome; whether learning from the process of enquiring together is the main purpose; or whether both are equally important. It might also be helpful at this stage to consider whether the project will provide opportunities for individual participants to gain particular skills or experience through undertaking specific roles. These could be planned for at this stage of the project as suggested in our article.

> *Resource:* Dickerson, C, Jarvis, J & Levy, R 2014, 'Learning through projects: identifying opportunities for individual professional learning and development' Professional Development in Education, vol 40, no. 1, pp. 17-35., 10.1080/19415257.2013.794747. Available from: http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/19415257.2013.794747#.U-NM6rFwbIU

It is important to clarify the resources that are available for the project as these will help determine the scale of the project. These 'resources' include the timescale, the project participants, the availability of rooms and equipment, and funding, if required (e.g. for stationery, refreshments and hourly payments or vouchers). The level of funding available will help determine the nature of involvement of staff and student participants.

Q: How will you structure the project?

There are several aspects of structure that could be considered. These include the number of groups of students and staff involved in the project, the number of participants in each group and how members of different groups will connect with each other. The three models we have used are illustrated below.

In the first model (2009-10) there was one staff-student enquiry group and data were collected from students in each of the three Schools.
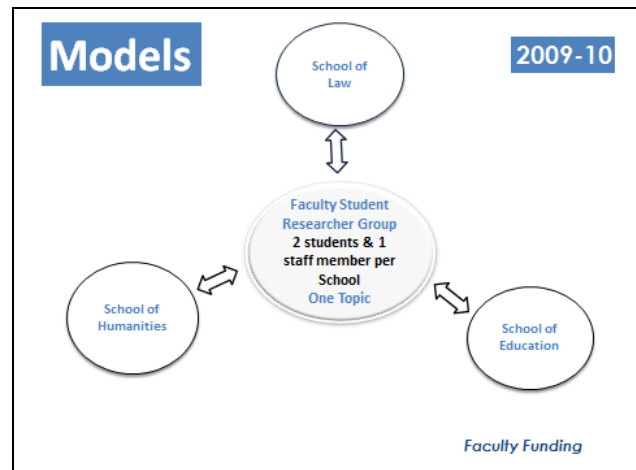
The second design (2010-2011) had a staff group from one School at the centre and each staff member of the central group worked with a group of students.
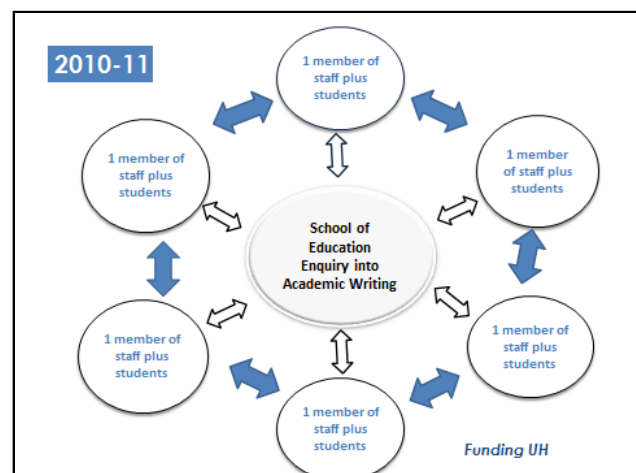
The third approach (2011-2012) involved a staff-student central group meeting on a fortnightly basis and pairs of students going out from this central group into their Schools to undertake an enquiry with another member of staff.
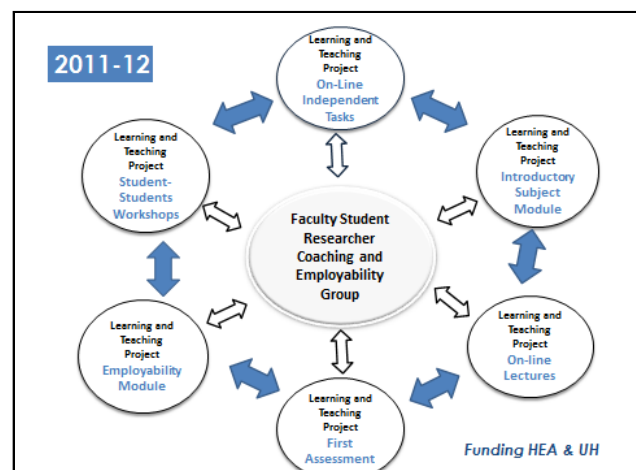
Part 2: Building the team

Overview

This section focuses on aspects of building and developing a project team including identifying team roles and responsibilities and approaches to developing professional working relationships.

Sections

A. Project team

B. Project support and network

C. Processes and principles

D. Agreeing the focus

A. Project team

A1. Project lead

Some questions relating to the selection of the project leader(s) and the leadership approach are available in Part 1.

Q: How will you manage the relationships between team members?

Leaders will need to consider the range of levels of seniority of team members and how the relationships between them will be managed. For example, a member of staff who has a senior leadership and managerial role outside the project might not be a member of the leadership team (see section C below).

Q: Have you considered possibilities for leader mentorship?

The project might provide an opportunity for a staff or student member of the team who is an experienced leader to mentor a colleague who is new to the role.

A2. Staff team members

Q: Which roles and responsibilities could be undertaken by members of staff?

Q: Which members of staff are available to work on your project?

Aspects to consider include the aims of the project, particular skills, disciplinary area, motivation, availability and the range of roles required, for example, core, peripheral and support team.

Academic and research roles and responsibilities: Skills needs might include:

- Coaching and mentoring; educational research and evaluation; learning and teaching and experience of pedagogical approaches that involve enquiry; and experience of or willingness to engage in working with students in conditions that require co-agency and shared responsibility.

Professional, administrative and technical roles and responsibilities: Skills needs might include:

- Financial expertise and budgetary management. Depending on the way the project is funded it might be necessary to have professional support with finances and with employment aspects to ensure institutional requirements are met.

- Technical support. This type of support might be needed for documentation of the project and the development of resources such as photographs and video recordings.

A3. Student team members

Q: Which students or groups of students will be engaged in your project?

Aspects to consider include: the aims of the project; whether the project is curricular or extracurricular; whether students are undergraduate, postgraduate or both; which discipline areas, if relevant; whether remuneration is available (e.g. hourly payments or vouchers) and whether students will receive other sorts of recognition for taking part such as participation certificates or credits.

Q: How will students be recruited to your project?

Aspects to consider include: whether whole cohorts or groups of students will be included or whether volunteers are needed. If students are volunteers (paid or unpaid) the nature and mechanism of application, selection, appointment (and contract and payment if applicable) will need to be managed in adherence to institutional requirements. It might be necessary to record and store personal data and information on issues such as disability, allergies or medical conditions. See Part 4 for further information on assessing and managing these aspects of the project.

B. Project support and network

Q: Who has experience of this type of work or who might support your project at a strategic level?

Q: How will they provide this support?

Consider who else would have an interest in the project or might be impacted by it. For example, the Dean of School or Head of Department, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Students' Union, local colleagues or colleagues from other higher education institutions with expertise in this area.

These colleagues could provide support in one or more ways. For example, they could take part in an advisory or reference group for the project and give feedback at selected stages, they could provide opportunities for the project team to present at senior management meetings or disseminate ideas from the project themselves at strategic local or national meetings.

Q: Will anyone be disadvantaged by your project?

Some students or members of staff who would like to take part might be unable to do so for a variety of reasons. However, it might be possible to include them as part of a wider network and to keep them informed about progress with the project.

Q: Do you need additional expertise or support?

Support or advice might be needed from other colleagues not directly involved in the project.

C. Processes and principles

Q: How will the principles and ways of working be agreed and established?

The process of working together needs to be in line with the principles of the project. It might be helpful to start with a small number of underpinning principles such as confidentiality, respect for each other etc. Ways of working together could focus on including space rather than constant activities to allow for listening and developing professional dialogue. It might be useful to involve staff with expertise in coaching and mentoring when establishing the approaches to working together.

Initial sessions could involve identifying shared hobbies, travel interests and personal connections within the group to encourage project participants to develop equitable personal and professional relationships. Sharing appropriate refreshments, mindful of any religious or medical restrictions, can lead to a more relaxed environment that enables more honest and open discussion of perspectives.

Building a listening, respectful learning space is essential and time is well spent developing this prior to and throughout the project. Useful texts to support this work include those by Nancy Kline.

Encouraging connections within the group

Building student-staff relationships

D. Agreeing the focus

Q: What is the specific focus of your project?

Q: How will you decide on the focus of your project?

Identifying the overall purpose or aim of the project was considered in Part 1. At this stage, when the project team is established it is important to work together to determine a specific focus. Here, issues of power within the team need to be acknowledged, and carefully considered and managed. Try to ensure that the focus of the project is mutually agreed.

Part 3: Managing the project

Overview

This section focuses on issues relating to managing the project and planning for participants' learning and the need to consider impact, and if appropriate, plan for evaluation.

Sections

A. Project management

B. Staff and student development

C. Impact

D. Evaluation

A. Project management

Q: How will the day-to-day activities of your project be agreed and managed?

Q: What 'tools' will you use to support project planning?

Practical issues that need to be agreed and managed might include the timetable and number of team meetings and who will book the rooms and organise refreshments. Having a standard template for an agreed project plan might be helpful. Our template includes a project overview, action plan and record of authorisation.

Resource: Our template included the sections outlined below:

Project Plan - Collaborative Action Research for Learning (CARL)		
Project overview		
Title		
Team members Aims/purpose Brief summary		
Project action plan		
Date/time period	Main activities	Date completed
Project authorisation		
Approved by Project staff lead	Name and signature	Date
Student researchers Associate Dean		
To discuss any aspect of this form please contact: [add contact details]		

Q: How will your project be known (branded) within your organisation?

It can be useful to have an agreed name and visual image that can be used on project files and other stationery and explanatory documents such as post-cards and flyers. This 'branding' can be used as a shared language and can also increase visibility of the project. However, it is important to consider particularly the aims of the project and the context of the organisation when deciding on this and to be aware of sensitivities relating to using particular words and how these words might be interpreted both inside and outside the institution (for example, the term 'partnership' itself has a range of meanings). We used a series of images and resources to present our projects, some of which are illustrated here.

Staff flyer – summary of project findings and implications for practice

Student flyer – approaches to using feedback

Students and staff using project files at a team meeting

B. Staff and student development

Q: How will you create and document opportunities for personal and professional development?

Students and staff could identify and document their learning using a reflective log and reflective activities. Additional learning opportunities can be created alongside the project involving, for example, networking and collaborating with students and staff in other institutions; undertaking a shared study of a related text; and inviting colleagues from other settings to contribute their perspectives on the project and ways of working. These activities can all contribute to building capacity and to raising participants' awareness of their learning and of ways in which learning can be extended.

In our project we encouraged students to categorise and document their learning as employability skills and/or graduate attributes and developed an employability skills portfolio to support this process. Students and staff also carried out a series of reflective activities.

Resource: Our employability skills log included the following sections:

Collaborative Action Research for Learning (CARL) Project	
Employability Skills & Graduate Attributes Portfolio	
Record of examples	
For each example record the Challenge you faced, the Action you took and the Result of that action (CAR)	For each example identify the relevant employability skills and graduate attributes
Challenge: Action: Result:	Employability skills: Graduate Attributes:
Challenge: Action: Result:	Employability skills: Graduate Attributes:

Members of staff can use project activities to model processes of team working, collaboration, project organisation, research methods, data collection and analysis and dissemination. This modelling can be articulated to enhance dialogue and learning.
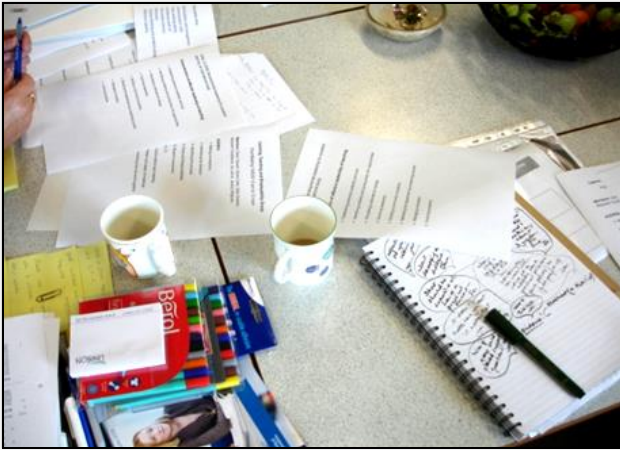
| Different ways of documenting individual learning | A group approach to documenting and sharing learning |

C. Impact

Q: How will you facilitate impact from your project?

Q: How will you identify and evidence impact from your project?

Impact can be seen 'as an effect on, change or benefit to'[4] different stakeholders i.e. those individuals effected by project activities and outputs. These stakeholders might include the project participants themselves, funders, managers, policy developers and colleagues running similar projects or those who are interested in this way of working. It is important to think about impact at the stage of planning the project; to consider how evidence could be collected to demonstrate impact; and to continue to be aware of the need to 'manage' impact throughout the project and post-project. This aspect of project management is referred to again in Part 7 where the focus is on demonstrating impact.

When considering the impact arising from a project it might be helpful to consider *who* has or will benefit in some way from the project, *how* they will benefit and *what* has been done or will be done to provide opportunities to benefit from the project. Although some impacts might be expected when the project is planned, these might change as the project develops or different impacts might be identified. Impact can be facilitated in many different ways and project team members can identify and record evidence of impact throughout the project and when it has finished.

Impact might relate to the key elements identified in the Jisc change management resource: people, processes and culture but other elements can also be considered. Resources available from the Research Councils UK and the Economic and Social Research Council provide further information about impact. Although these resources focus on managing impact from research they might be useful in the context of a partnership project.

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[4] Research Excellence Framework 2014 (2011/2012) Assessment framework and guidance on submissions p. 26. Available from:
www.ref.ac.uk/media/ref/content/pub/assessmentframeworkandguidanceonsubmissions/GOS%20including%20addendum.pdf

We used a range of methods to facilitate impact in our staff-student partnership study. For example, we talked about and presented the projects to audiences within our own University and in other settings both whilst we were carrying out the projects and afterwards. We also linked with colleagues with an interest in and expertise of partnership working within national bodies and in other universities. Some examples of the approaches we used and the resources we developed are available in Part 7.

Students and staff from UH visit Nottingham Trent University

Students and staff from Nottingham Trent University visit UH

D. Evaluation

Q: Will your project be evaluated?

At this stage it is important to decide whether the project will be evaluated and if so, the purpose of the evaluation, who will carry it out and what approach will be used. Both the learning relating to the project focus and the learning arising through the process of taking part in the project could be identified. The purpose of the evaluation might include describing the way the project is developed and implemented (the process of the project); identifying learning to help with understanding the process; and assessing the early impact with a view to helping with further development and improvement.

Carrying out a formative evaluation as the project is developed and implemented could be used as a learning exercise designed to provide insights and feedback about processes. It will contribute to

describing the 'what' (the description and accomplishments of the project), the 'how' ('how did you do it?') and the 'why it matters' or 'so what' (how it makes a difference and the impact it has).[5]

Potential risks associated with the evaluation will need to be assessed and managed, including those relating to ethics and data protection. These are discussed in relation to the project itself in Part 4.

Resources to support project evaluation are available from:

- Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation. Program Evaluation Standards Statements [Internet] 2013. Available from: http://www.jcsee.org/program-evaluation-standards/program-evaluation-standards-statements

- McNamara, C. Basic Guide to Program Evaluation (including Outcomes Evaluation) [Internet] 2013. Available from: http://managementhelp.org/evaluation/program-evaluation-guide.htm

- Cupitt, S. and Ellis, J. Monitoring and evaluation on a shoestring. Charities Evaluation Services; 2011. Available from: http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/view/ncc106030

- Pope, J. and Jolly, P. Evaluation Step-by-Step Guide. State Government Victoria Department of Planning and Community Development; 2008. Available from: http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/769943/Evaluation-Step-by-Step-Guide.pdf

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[5] Developing an Effective Evaluation Plan. Atlanta, Georgia: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health; Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity; 2011. p40 Available from: http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/CDC-Evaluation-Workbook-508.pdf

Part 4: Assessing and managing the risks

Overview

This section focuses on considering the risks involved in carrying out the project and on seeking advice where necessary. The risks need to be assessed and managed appropriately to ensure the project is carried out in adherence to relevant institutional guidelines and requirements including those relating to ethical considerations and data protection.

Sections

A. Risk assessment and management

B. Responsibility for risk assessment and management

A. Risk assessment and management

Q: Have you considered the risks associated with your project such as ethical issues, obtaining appropriate consents, data sharing and data protection?

Q: Have you sought advice to ensure that such risks are considered and managed appropriately, for example, application for institutional ethical approval?

It is important to show care in relation to student-staff relationships and to pay attention to issues of power. Establishing professional dialogue so that everyone is comfortable to initiate and respond to ideas is essential. The leadership team will need to take responsibility for oversight and communication with all project participants about ethical issues. These issues need to be given priority and planning between the leadership team and the participants will ensure appropriate processes are established and followed.

It might be appropriate to identify key principles for the project. For example, in our study we identified two underpinning principles: *shared responsibility* and *co-agency*.

- In *shared responsibility* each person must be responsible for the well-being of others and consider their perspective, the use of appropriate language, confidentiality and the impact of findings and how they are presented on individuals and groups. We found that this was best developed in reflective dialogic groups. Students taking part in our partnership projects to date have identified ethics as a key aspect of their learning.

- *Co-agency* happens if those with the most power listen, follow the ideas of others and trust the process to produce results. Co-agency becomes an ethical issue in partnership working as the implied equality must be worked at if students are not to become informants only.

Examples of ethical issues in relation to partnership projects

Example 1: Participants might be asked to reflect on their learning, to work with others to produce stories of their learning and to develop resources including photographs and videos. In their enthusiasm students might consent to video statements being presented without fully appreciating possible consequences, so it will be a key responsibility for the leadership team to ensure that all project leads and the external evaluator (if applicable) discuss each aspect of data collection and dissemination. Procedures need to be in place to ensure that relevant institutional ethical approval is obtained and that requirements are adhered to and that student and staff project leads give advance approval of all data collection. As the project expands it will be essential for the care of individuals and the reputation of partnership work that clearly framed procedures are available and that these are adhered to at all times.

Example 2: Ethical issues around collecting and storing data (such as students holding data on staff, and audio-taped voices being identifiable) might take significant working through. While looking for innovative methods we nevertheless had to jettison interesting approaches due to ethical concerns.

Example 3: Students will need information about university processes, both to contribute effectively and to adhere to ethical requirements. Knowledge held by staff, often unexpressed, needs to be shared with students if they are to have roles usually held only by members of staff to prevent harm to themselves and others. When engaging in informal conversation it is important for participants to be aware of and to manage confidentiality appropriately.

Example 4: Some data collection activities might be carried out in confidence, for example, interviews and the completion of individual questionnaires. However, participants will be aware that data collected during group activities is open to other attendees. Consideration needs to be given to whether or not it is appropriate to reveal participants' identities when the data is shared more widely. Special consideration will need to be given to managing sensitive data and taking care to ensure confidentiality is not compromised.

Consent

Participants should be informed of the nature and purpose of any data collection, how the data will be used and that they will not be disadvantaged in any way if they do not take part or if they withdraw at any stage. Written consent might not be appropriate depending on the nature of the project. Each institution has specific requirements that must be adhered to but for some of our data collection activities we provided participants with an explanatory statement prior to collecting data.

> **Example:** Example of an explanatory statement:
>
> Dear student,
>
> This is to let you know that aspects of learning and teaching on your module will be the focus of an enquiry into practice under the University's Protocol for Reflective Practitioner Work. This will involve students and members of staff asking questions and collecting information on learning and teaching in order to develop practice. A student researcher may contact you to ask questions about your experience or to seek ideas or suggestions for practice. Your name will not be recorded and anything you say will be confidential.
>
> Findings from the project with be shared within the School and perhaps in the wider University context and externally. Please note the following agreed statement about this work:
>
> 'This work is being carried out for pedagogical reasons as part of the ongoing evaluation of the curriculum and the data collected will be used for this purpose. There may be public dissemination of the data and findings, in which case confidentiality will be maintained. You will not be disadvantaged in any way if you do not contribute to this work.'
>
> Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. [add contact details]

Data protection and management

It is important to consider how issues relating to data protection and data management including data storage and data sharing will be dealt with and ensure that these are managed in compliance with local institutional procedures and other requirements such as the Data Protection Act. Issues relating to data protection and management might be documented and managed according to a project Data Management Plan (DMP).

B. Responsibility for risk assessment and management

Q: Who will be responsible for seeking advice and managing the risks for your project?

It is important to ensure that one or more members of the project take responsibility for these aspects of the project.

Part 5: Collecting the data

Overview

This section focuses on identifying the data to be collected for the project, data sources, methods and ways of obtaining quality data, and agreeing the timing and responsibility for data collection. Some aspects of data protection, data management and data storage are referred to in Part 4.

Sections

A. Types of data and methods of data collection

B. Timing and responsibility for data collection

A. Types of data and methods of data collection

Q: Are you planning to collect data on the process of partnership working as well as on your agreed focus topic?

Q: What data will you collect? (What do you want to know?)

Q: How will you collect the data?

Q: Is it feasible and/or useful to pilot aspects of your data collection methods?

It is likely that most of the data collected on the process of partnership working will be qualitative to provide insight into some of the project team members' views, attitudes, perceptions and experiences of the project at different stages of development and implementation.

The type of data collected on the focus topic will be determined by the nature of the focus and might include quantitative as well as qualitative data. Being clear at the beginning of the project about what data is needed and why and checking during the project that the required data is being collected will help with identifying gaps or excess data collection. It is easy to collect more data than necessary.

A mixed methods approach to data collection might be appropriate. This could involve: documentation of project meetings; collecting feedback from participants; and recording learning points. Keeping recording methods simple and using existing systems where possible can save time. It might be helpful to carry out a small scale pilot study to test aspects of the data collection methods and sort out any unexpected problems in advance of the main data collection activities. Some examples of data collection approaches are set out below.

Collage. In this example participants have used collage with narrative to respond to the question 'w*here are we now in talking about learning and teaching together?'*

Where are we now in talking about learning and teaching together?

"There is a separation shown here between students and staff.

The long road shows the long way we have to go in our communication between one another."

" This is how I see it at the moment, with all the staff on one side of the film and all the students on the other side.

This is starting to be broken down now but still the nuts and bolts of the university's policies are getting in the way."

Document review. The process of developing and implementing the project could be documented by collating evidence from different sources such as meeting notes, session resources and feedback from questionnaires.

Learning notes. Additional learning about the project could be recorded by inviting participants to use a simple recording log or learning journal to document some of the questions, issues and challenges of particular interest to them that arise at any point during the project. The approach taken to recording could be decided by each individual willing to take part.

Questionnaires. The views and experiences of project participants and relevant others connected to or affected by the project could be identified using questionnaires.

Other ways of identifying participants views and experiences include: focus groups and surveys (paper-based, email, interview or online perhaps using the Bristol Online Surveys (BOS) service http://survey.bris.ac.uk/).

During one of our projects staff and students worked together to prepare a resource about some of the different approaches we could use to identify students' views.

Resource: Extract from resource about ways of identifying students' views:

Faculty of Humanities, Law and Education

Collaborative Action Research for Learning (CARL) Project

How can we identify students' views?

The purpose of this document is to share ideas about different ways of identifying students' perspectives on learning and teaching. It has been prepared by students and staff within the CARL Project team who worked collaboratively:
- to identify some approaches that might be used to engage students in providing their views and
- to enhance understanding about the factors that influence students in their decision to provide feedback.

Faculty Student Researchers	Jessica Moule	Staff Team Members
Florence Afolabi	Socrates Pyliotis	Claire Dickerson
Megan Dibble	Sofia Sami	Sally Graham
Fatima Hussain	Lewis Stockwell	Joy Jarvis
Ellie Lawrence	Florence Thomas	Amanda Roberts
Emma McClaughlin	Jen Woodward	

What approaches might be used to engage students in providing their views?

Title	Brief Description
Card sorting (1)	Write key words on cards to use for a card sorting activity. Put words on separate cards relating to the topic – ask people to order them by priority
Card sorting (2)	Ask participants to identify words to use for a card sorting activity
Collage (1)	Participants use visual materials to represent a topic. They write or tell an interviewer the key points raised by the representation
Collage (2)	Participants draw or use materials to represent a time line e.g. of a module. Key events can be placed on this line
Critical incident	Participants identify and explain a critical incident focusing on what you want to find out e.g. something that influenced their thinking about academic writing
Discussion (focus group)	Small groups of students discuss an issue and feed back findings
Drama	Ask students in small groups to act out a typical example related to your question
Electronic Voting System (EVS)	Students respond to a set of questions using handsets or Students write a set of questions on the topic for the EVS

B. Timing and responsibility for data collection

Q: When will you collect the data?

Q: Who will be responsible for collecting the data?

The timing of data collection activities might be agreed early in the project or it might arise as an iterative process throughout the project so that data is collected at stages of particular interest.

Project team members will need to agree who will be responsible for collecting the data. Different participants might be responsible for different aspects of this activity.

Overview

This section identifies questions to consider in relation to aspects of data management including the approaches taken to analysing the data and deciding how it will be summarised and interpreted and who will take responsibility for this work.

Sections

A. Preparing the data for analysis

B. Analysing, summarising and interpreting the data

C. Responsibility for managing the data

A. Preparing the data for analysis

Q: Have you appropriately labelled your data sets and prepared them for analysis?

Appropriate and consistent labelling including the circumstances of collection, the origin, date of collection, who collected the data and other details need to be recorded for each data set. This is important during data analysis and for future reference. Some recorded and written data might need to be transcribed before it can be analysed.

B. Analysing, summarising and interpreting the data

Q: How will the data be analysed and how will the findings be summarised and interpreted?

At this stage, it will be helpful to consider the aim of the project, the context, the needs of different participants and the way the findings will be used. Any conclusions or suggestions arising from the findings should be clearly justified. Issues that could be considered include the role of the researcher (if applicable), students, staff and project lead in these processes and the extent to which they might carry out the analysis themselves and the extent to which they advise.

Analysing data together

Discussing ways of interpreting data

Although a researcher might advise on or suggest approaches to analysing the data, such as identifying themes, all project participants could be involved in the analysis process. The expertise of all participants will also be of particular value in contextualising and interpreting the data, which will help to ensure that any conclusions or recommendations have credibility with them in addition to being clearly justified from the findings.

C. Responsibility for managing the data

Q: Who will be responsible for managing the data?

One member of the project team (e.g. a researcher) or a group of participants might have overall responsibility for managing the data and ensuring adherence to appropriate requirements (see Part 4).

Presenting data collected from students

Part 7: Reporting and sharing the findings and demonstrating impact

Overview

This section explores ways of reporting and sharing the project findings with a range of people, demonstrating impact and deciding who will be responsible for these activities.

Sections

A. Reporting and sharing the findings

B. Demonstrating impact

C. Responsibility for managing the findings and demonstrating impact

A. Reporting and sharing the findings

Q: How will you report and share your findings?

A project report(s) can be used as a source document for providing information in different formats for different audiences although interim findings might be shared before the report is prepared. As part of a process of active dissemination findings could be shared through: presentations at workshops, meetings, conferences or other forums; briefing papers; newsletters; posters; discussion at meetings and networking events; professional journals; and websites.

Sharing findings at an internal conference


Resource developed from project - shared on YouTube

Q: Who will you share your findings with and why?

It would be useful to identify who will be responsible for making any decisions in light of the findings or who might like to use the findings in their practice.

Q: When will you share your findings?

The project findings might need to be shared in relation to particular decision making cycles. They might be shared throughout the project using a range of dissemination approaches and formats as suggested above both to encourage participants and other stakeholders to engage with the project and to support project development. We shared the process and findings of our projects

throughout and in a number of different ways including conference presentations, publications, flyers and other resources.

Resource developed from project – shared as an online resource
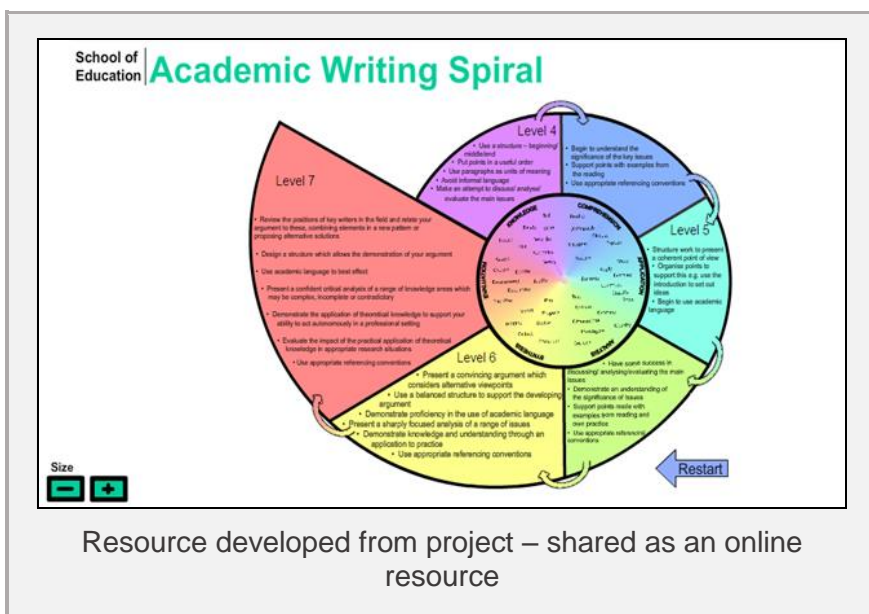
B. Demonstrating impact

Q: How will you demonstrate impact from your project?

Q: Who will be interested in the way your project was carried out and the impact it has had?

Part 7 returns to issues relating to managing project impact (see Part 3) and explores ways of demonstrating impact from a project where impact is seen 'as an effect on, change or benefit to'[6] different stakeholders. At this stage of the project it might be helpful to refer back to Part 3 and to review the questions and reflect on *who has* benefited in some way from the project, *how* they have benefited and *what* has been done to provide opportunities to benefit from the project. Potential future benefits can also be considered.

Qualitative and quantitative approaches can be used to provide evidence of impact. These approaches might include recording the number of individuals who have changed their practice as a result of the project and/or illustrative case studies of new practice. Examples of impact on people include changes to student-staff attitudes, approaches and skills in relation to partnership and to learning and teaching. Learning and teaching processes and the wider culture will be enhanced as more students participate at all levels. Examples of impact might arise locally, within the department or organisation in which the project is carried out or more widely when a project results in a change in practice in a different organisation or setting or when resources created through a project are used within the same or a different organisation.

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[6] HEFCE website Research Excellence Framework (REF) impact. Available from: http://www.hefce.ac.uk/rsrch/REFimpact/

Examples of impact on practice shared with senior managers

Examples of impact in relation to our partnership projects

Example 1: *Learning, teaching and the curriculum.* Improved provision arising from staff understanding students' perspectives and needs. For example, as a result of our first project new feedback procedures/formats and resources were developed to support student learning. Staff members use more enquiry-based learning and teaching approaches rather than transmission, leading to continuous improvement of the student learning experience and more appropriate student learning contexts. Our project has led to student-staff exchange visits with Nottingham Trent University and to the creation of a Business School Change Academy project at our University.

Resources developed from the projects used in learning and teaching sessions

Example 2: *Shared understanding of learning and teaching.* Dialogue around learning in partnership projects develops shared understanding leading to better student-staff communication. Enquiry surfaces tacit knowledge so members of staff are more able to recontextualise their knowledge for students. For example, our 'Reading in Law' project 2011-12 led to new teaching approaches. Students become advocates for enquiry learning within the University and the wider higher education sector (two student partners engaged in our projects published on this in Guardian Online http://www.guardian.co.uk/higher-education-network/blog/2012/nov/07/students-not-customers-graduate-view).

Student partners with HEA representative

Student partners with University Alliance representative

Example 3: *Employability.* Student experience improves as they gain employability skills including research, project management, communication and leadership. One student partner was employed as a University student representative officer; and another appointed to a new University 'Student Engagement Co-ordinator' post is now a permanent lecturer in Education.

Example 4: *Attainment (academic and graduate attributes).* Students report more engagement in their courses; greater understanding and responsibility for themselves as learners; improved work ethic and grades; and a sense of responsibility to the University.

Student partners representing the University at HEA events

Example 5: *Institutional development.* Student involvement in module development and evaluation leads to improved student experience and becomes part of the culture. As an example from our project, two of the student partners gained a Dean's Award for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, one of whom also gained a Vice-Chancellor's award for improving student experience, previously only awarded to staff.

Students who gained Dean's Awards presenting at
HEA conference

Example 6: *Engagement in a learning community.* Partnership projects can improve student experience by engaging students and staff as co-learners. In our case, students and staff studied together Peter Ovens' book on learning and one of the students initiated a student-staff reading group.

Resource:

Ovens, P., Wells, F., Wallis, P. & Hawkins, C. (2011) *Developing Inquiry for Learning.* London & New York: Routledge

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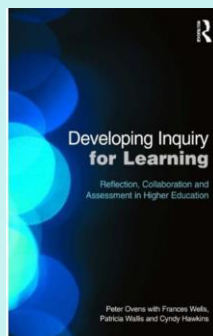
C. Responsibility for managing the findings and demonstrating impact

Q: Who will be responsible for reporting and sharing the findings?

Q: Who will be responsible for demonstrating impact from your project?

The project leaders might take responsibility for these aspects of the project or the responsibilities might be shared with different members of the team.