



ENssentials Quick Guide:

Student Partnership

Why engage in partnership work?

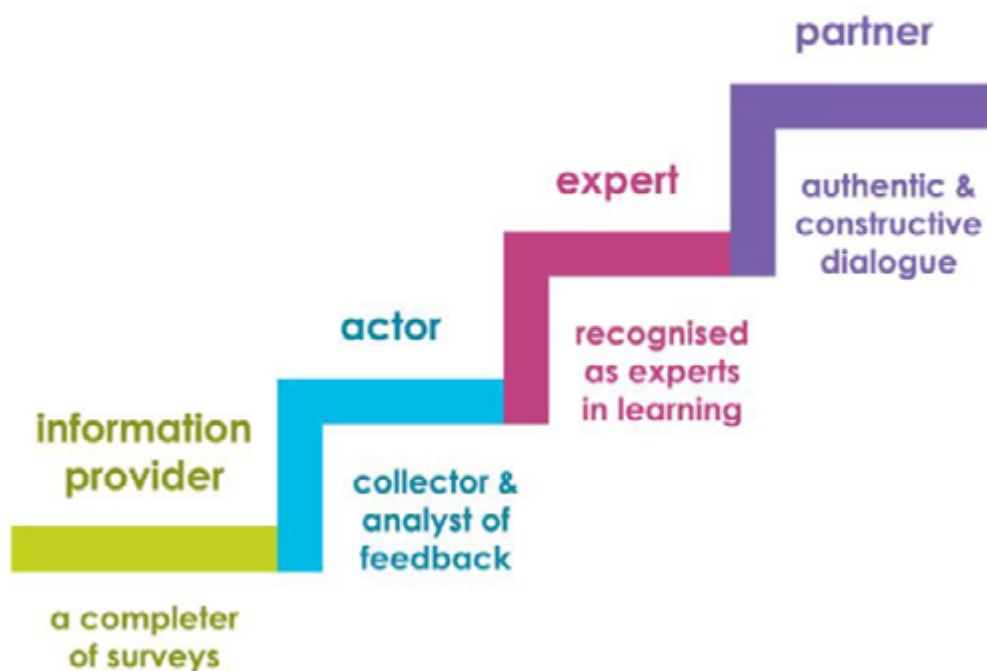
Partnership working between students and staff can be a hugely rewarding experience for those involved, offering a more authentic, and therefore more effective, approach to student engagement (Healey et al. 2014). This is considered to contribute to a relationship-rich university experience, building a sense of community and belonging and an institutional culture of student engagement (Cook-Sather & Felten, 2017; Cook-Sather et al., 2014).

However, it is not always easy to know where to begin, to know what approach to take for the particular project under consideration, and to anticipate potential areas of challenge. This Quick Guide, informed by Edinburgh Napier student and staff experiences (Bossoni et al. 2023) is intended to help to inform your practice as you embark upon partnership projects with students.

1. Getting started

- Think about your research question and how the project you have in mind would benefit most from a partnership approach with students.
- Some approaches give students significant autonomy and decision-making and create greater collaborative opportunities and therefore more meaningful relationships. While this may be considered the most transformative and authentic approach to partnership, if resources and time are limited, then involving students in a consultative role, where they offer their perspectives may be more appropriate.
- No matter which approach is taken, our study of students' experiences highlighted that students want to understand the project aims, how findings will be used, the impact of their contributions and how these will be recognised, suggesting a need for transparency and inclusivity.
- There should also be flexibility to adapt and change the approach as the project progresses, adjusting to shifting priorities of both staff and students, for example assessment and marking deadlines.

Student partnership staircase



- The Student Partnership Staircase developed by sparqs (student partnerships in quality Scotland) illustrates the different roles students can take and is designed to aid reflection and discussion about partnership (sparqs, 2018).
- A more detailed resource is Professor Cathy Bovill's 'co-creation of learning and teaching typology' (Bovill, 2019), which was developed to help people gain a clearer understanding of their approach to co-creation and to support planning. It is also applicable to student-staff partnership projects.

2. Rewarding and recruiting student partners

To pay or not to pay

- Our view is that students should receive financial recognition for their contributions to learning and teaching enhancement projects. There are different ways of doing this, so consider what would be appropriate for the kinds of things students will be expected to do in the project.
- Free food, vouchers and prize draws work well for workshop activities, focus groups, and completion of surveys as a thank you for contributions. Your School Support team will be able to advise on how to arrange these, charging to the appropriate budget code (also referred to as cost code/folder code).
- If students are doing work that could be undertaken by staff on the project team, i.e. leading on key project deliverables and will be involved for several months to a year, contributing a significant commitment of time, effort and personal responsibility, a paid role on a University contract should be arranged.

Contracts and Staffing Authorisation

- Two types of HR contract are normally used by the University to employ students on partnership projects, either a casual contract or student internship (both Grade 2, spine point 9 Non-academic). Please refer to the [University's salary scales](#) to calculate costs.
- Once you have decided on an appropriate contract type, draft a job description using the examples provided on [the Student Partnership site on the DLTE Hub](#). You can email this to dlte@napier.ac.uk if you would like some feedback.
- [A staffing authorisation form \(SAF\)](#) should then be completed to get approval to recruit to the role. You will need to allow at least 14 working days for this process, and we recommend a discussion with your HR partner and budget-holder in advance so that they can offer advice and are aware of the request and time-frames.

Recruitment and selection

- Consider your approach to recruitment, taking into account accessibility, inclusivity and visibility of the opportunity. You may have a student in mind who you know has skills and experience

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relevant to your project, but approaching them means engaging 'the usual suspects' and blocks access to other students for paid part-time work, professional development and relationship-building opportunities (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2019).

- Please get in touch with DLTE at dlte@napier.ac.uk to discuss next steps so that we can advise you about advertising, recruitment and selection.

For more information

Sample job descriptions are available on [the DLTE Hub](#).

3. Getting started

- If recruited onto a contract, students will need to undertake a Right to Work (RTW) check with HR, and both line manager and student will need to complete the appointment form and receive notification from HR that the student is in the HR system *before* any work can commence.
- Note that international students on a visa are restricted in the number of hours they can work each week. Ensure this is discussed and clarified with the student before agreeing the hours they will be expected to work on the project. HR will explain restrictions to the student when conducting the Right to Work Check prior to employment.
- Note also that PhD students may already be employed by the University on Student Experience contracts, which limits the number of hours of work they can undertake. Discuss this with the student and contact the students' PhD supervisor to discuss additional hours.

4. Working together

- A good starting point is meeting to agree how you will work together and covering the essentials, e.g. how and when students will get paid, how and when to submit a [casual hours claim form](#) (note that pay rates do frequently change so please ensure students always use the latest version). Agree the practicalities, e.g. how often you will meet, *how* will you meet (flexibility is important both for staff and students).
- We suggest you co-create a timeline to identify pinch points, including assessment deadlines, holidays and project milestones. Remember that commitment to the project can vary, both for staff and students and team members may have to take on more or less at different points.

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- Signpost students to resources and sources of support on [the DLTE Student Partnership site](#), e.g. how to run focus groups. It's also good to check if students know how to deal with some of the practical matters related to the project, such as how to book rooms and arrange meetings with students, and how to organise and use any essential equipment such as microphones.
- Ensure students have been signposted to [the University's data protection policy](#) and have signed an [oath of confidentiality](#) in relation to personal data and commercially sensitive or confidential data to which they will have access in the course of their work.
- Think, and talk about what to do if things go wrong. And when things do go wrong, arrange a meeting to discuss how to progress.

For more information:

HR key information and documents: <https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/hr/HRDocuments/Pages/Documents.aspx>

Data Protection: dataprotection@napier.ac.uk

5. Project outputs

- Be transparent about your aims and ideas for the project and share the intended outputs. When will these be known? Does the student have a say post-graduation? If passing to a new student, will there be a handover (report at end)? Will the student be credited in future presentations and papers?
- Reflect on the partnership experience - create time and space for this really valuable activity and to plan how you will share this beyond your project team.

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Useful References and Resources

[DLTE Student Partnership pages on the DLTE Hub](#) (under development)

[Student Partnership Reading List: https://eu.alma.exlibrisgroup.com/leganto/public/44NAP_INST/lists/6686600630002111?auth=SAML](https://eu.alma.exlibrisgroup.com/leganto/public/44NAP_INST/lists/6686600630002111?auth=SAML)

Any questions

Please get in touch with us at dlte@napier.ac.uk if there is anything you would like to discuss, or explore anything further in relation to this Quick Guide. We also welcome feedback and suggestions to help us improve the Quick Guide and the partnership resources we provide.

