

Preface

Sarah Flynn, (Centre for Learning, Access and Student Success, University of Hertfordshire), Lucy Bamwo (Office for Learning and Teaching, Coventry University¹) and Tim Stafford (University of Hertfordshire)

It is the long established and well-regarded approach to staff-student partnership working in the technology space which has led to the University of Hertfordshire being invited by Jisc to host the 2023 10th Jisc Change Agents' Conference, and to guest edit this volume of the journal.

The current issue broadly explores co-creation and partnership in the service of several different objectives, across a range of HE areas. Colette Mair and co-authors report on a project where students and staff collaborated in order to consider how students and staff 'engage with student evaluations'. They reach a number of interesting conclusions which 'indicate a need for a change in attitude and behaviours towards student evaluations', something which many of us in HE can likely identify with. Their research works towards the conclusion that 'incorporating an informal and conversational approach to course evaluations can create a more inclusive learning environment for students and staff'.

Curriculum design also manifests across this issue, specifically in two articles. Elodie Wakerley and co-authors detail a staff-student project which aimed to redesign a staff development course at Birmingham City University. The intention here was to ensure that the student voice was a consistent presence throughout the process. The project had positive, material outcomes and is an important reminder that 'as educators, we cannot have meaningful discussions around student expectations without including students themselves'. The second example of curriculum collaboration comes from Karen Clark and

¹ Formerly University of Hertfordshire

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co-authors, who write about a student-staff partnership which was part of a wider institutional project that intended to 'embed flexible community-created principles of curriculum design'. As a result of their experience in these paid Student Curriculum Consultant roles, students offer supportive advice to their successors in this article.

An interesting area which is approached from different perspectives here is that of universities' recognition schemes and awards. Professor Harriet Dunbar-Morris and co-authors discuss University of Portsmouth's Seven Steps to Success, an employability programme led by the Students' Union. This aimed to develop students' 'careers management knowledge and employability skills'. The article notes that the programme's success was in part due to 'the strong partnership formed between the Students' Union elected Learning Experience Officer and the University of Portsmouth'. Another recognition scheme is detailed in Ana Cabral and co-authors' article. This is Queen Mary's SEED scheme (Student Enhanced Engagement and Development), an internal award designed 'to acknowledge the contribution of students and establish a culture of co-creation'. The results of the award programme are clear to see: since June of 2021, over 100 students have been recognised for their work. Crucially, there are some important ramifications for this post-COVID period, with one of the conclusions being that 'At a time when burnout, loneliness and disconnection are rife in higher education, the potential for co-creation and our SEED award ... enhance[s] belonging and inclusion on top of developing educational spaces and curricula'. As with other articles in this issue, the work offers vital tips for anyone else who is designing such a programme.

Anna Udalowska and co-authors' collective autoethnography focuses on a central and fascinating aspect of staff-student partnerships: the role of culture. Using personal experiences, the writers note three elements which help to build 'authentic intercultural partnerships': helping students to develop critical thinking skills, adopting and encouraging honest, assertive communication methods, and an exploration of the concept of partnership in the light of individuals' specific relationships and the cultural capital they bring to it. This is an important reminder that, when collaborating with any and all students, we need to 'equip the partners with tools to analyse what they want to say, to communicate how they want to say it and the space to express it in a way that makes sense to them'.

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Digital literacy is, as ever, a key part of this issue too. Viv Hocking and co-authors detail the Student Digital Champion programme at the University of Plymouth, a peer support scheme which harnesses the digital literacy of some of the students to provide daily clinics for other students. The success of the scheme is evident in the numerous requests for digital support in induction and in the exciting student-staff collaborative projects where digital expertise is required, such as 'digitising assessment practices as members of a senior project board [and] steering the response to artificial intelligence'. In a related discussion, Lauren Bolz and co-authors' case study looks at a project where students and staff aimed to gain a better understanding of students' digital needs at Oxford University. This is, of course, a key area as we move through the contemporary HE landscape and, among other things, this article notes that the project was not only valuable in relation to its digital goals. In addition, the students' reflections note the centrality of 'the importance of treating students and staff as equals within the project, and the necessity of engaging in honest conversations about the nature and dynamics of the partnership approach'.

It is not just digital literacy being supported through collaboration, students' writing is also prioritised in Amanda Simpson and co-authors' work exploring student facilitators' initiative of a Psychology 'Power Hour of Progress'. This project aimed to provide consistent, short but targeted writing sessions for undergraduates. The interesting results are honest about challenges many of us are familiar with ('poor attendance and general research challenges') but also acknowledge the benefits ('encourag[ing] intentional learning practices, and promot[ing] engagement in multiple academic communities'). This too provides invaluable advice and recommendations for best practice for similar schemes.

Finally, two articles are situated broadly in another ever-changing and challenging area: induction. Jennifer Hamlin and co-authors look at the role of student voice within their institution's induction processes, detailing 'an embedded institutional process which enables the understanding of individual students' profiles and routes into university and the ability to respond accordingly'. Crucially, the re-design of this process has had important benefits for majorly significant areas such as 'student access and success [and] equality and diversity'. Similarly, Amanda Yip and co-authors reflect on how the collaborative development of

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University of Hertfordshire's Getting Ready to Study at Herts, an online pre-induction transition Massive Open Online Course, has enabled 'all partners to learn from the experience and has developed a great sense of community'. Here, as in all collaborations, partnering with students, rather than just consulting them, has a transformative effect on the project and those involved.

Hertfordshire's commitment to staff-student partnership underpinned the Change Agents' Network conference. By employing their Student Technology Mentors to support the delivery of the event, in addition to presenting at it, it was evident to all those who attended how transformative partnership can be. The papers in this issue are all from contributors at the conference, all of whom spoke with such passion and drive for co-creation, and who recognised that working together means that we achieve something that could truly never be otherwise achieved.