

Chapter 7

The Importance of Student Partnership in Rubric Construction, Discussion, and Evaluation

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ABSTRACT

The chapter explores the importance of utilising student-staff partnerships in the development and evaluation of rubrics. The approach followed is underpinned by the University of Reading principles for student-staff partnerships that centres student voice in the development of Teaching and Learning initiatives. The chapter explores the challenges of engaging students with assessment rubrics and through engaging in listening exercises, the actions taken to remove these barriers to engagement. The chapter provides three case studies that detail practical recommendations to improving student assessment literacy including in-class support for rubrics, additional support outside of the classroom e.g., assessment rubric screencasts and discussion boards, and the importance of co-creation in creating new rubrics. The chapter concludes by detailing the importance of student-staff partnerships in rubric development and evaluation, but also detailing the additional support mechanisms that need to be in place to effectively develop student and staff assessment literacy.

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter supports the view that student-staff partnerships are central to advancing rubric construction and evaluation. In order to explore this view, the objectives of the chapter are:

Objective 1: To provide a literature review on student-staff partnerships and to explore the student-staff partnership framework used at UoR

Objective 2: To explore, through student voice, the current difficulties faced in rubric construction, use, and evaluation

Objective 3: To provide tangible case studies on institutional work that detail solutions to the difficulties raised in Objective 2

Objective 4: To provide future research directions and the implications of our institutional work on sector practice.

BACKGROUND

Partnership is widely recognised as a priority area for engaging learners within the HE sector; as evidenced in The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)'s UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: Student Engagement (2018), Office for Students (OfS)'s Student Engagement Strategy (2022), and Advance HE's Student Engagement through Partnership in Higher Education Framework, as part of their Essential Frameworks for Enhancing Student Success (2016). Partnership can have a positive impact in annual student evaluations including the student voice sections of the National Students' Survey (NSS) and UK Engagement Survey (UKES), and is a highly desirable indicator of success in many award providers such as the OfS's Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and Student Minds' University Mental Health Charter Framework (2019).

Partnership between students and staff can be defined as a collaborative and developmental process for unlocking student success and academic engagement, whilst enabling institutions to strengthen their commitment to improving the experiences of their students (Healey and Healey, 2019). Partnership in its truest form focuses less on the outcome, and places importance on building a sense of belonging and connection to the academic community through the process of co-creation (Healey et al., 2014). However, Bovill and Bulley (2011) highlight that the outcomes of partnership work, in addition to the benefits afforded by individuals involved, often result in more impactful research or teaching practices. Lastly, the challenge, and opportunity, of partnership working lies within the uncertainty and flipped power dynamics that arise when staff and students shed their traditional roles, and students (who are inherently experts in their knowledge and experiences of being a student), are empowered to be co-developers of their education (Mercer-Mapstone et al., (2019).

At the University of Reading (UoR), there has been an institution-wide focus to strengthen our approach to student voice and partnership, ensuring we move beyond the formal engagement mechanisms for gathering student feedback, and position students as partners within their own educational experience. With a fully established academic representation system and strong relationship with the elected Students' Union Officers, the student engagement activities were largely governed by University quality assurance policies and led by staff. Bovill and Bulley's (2011) ladder of participation distinguishes the need and importance of different types of student engagement, particularly in curricular design, from

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