

Title: **Whose Curriculum is it, Anyway? Involving students in curriculum design and development**

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Abstract:

Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- discuss how students can be meaningfully involved in the design and development of the curriculum
- consider the transferability of the exemplars of practice showcased to their own contexts
- explore wider issues involved in this process

Session Outline

This session will explore involving students meaningfully in shaping the curriculum. James Alexander (current President of NUS Scotland), in recently discussing what makes for inspirational learning, stated “we must engage with students in a richer, more deliberate way at the course level that acknowledges their right... to participate in the development and design of their own curriculum.¹

Participation at this level can both enhance the curriculum (which benefits from the fresh ideas and profound insights which students bring) and motivate students (with evidence showing that there is a direct correlation between students perceiving that their contribution is valued by their institution and engaging with their courses²).

Drawing on their work within the Hearing the Student Voice project³ which investigated effective means to capture and use the student voice to inform and enhance academic professional development, the presenters will discuss ways in which they have begun to use the same principles and methods to enable the student voice to inform curriculum development and design. The session will showcase initial work they have undertaken which is involving students in this activity and will discuss how to equip students to contribute, encourage staff to facilitate student participation and the impact of this process.

In the ensuing discussion participants will have an opportunity to share their experiences of involving students in the development and design of curricula and debate wider issues relating to this activity such as:

- do staff know best what the curriculum should be?
- what if students don't like what staff think is better for them in the long term etc?
- are we in danger of giving students unrealistic expectations from their involvement in curriculum development?
- are students and staff equal partners in the learning and teaching process?
- and, ultimately, who owns the curriculum?

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

10 mins	Introduction to the impact of the student voice on professional development and curriculum design
10 mins	Exploration of exemplars of student involvement in curriculum design
20 mins	Discussion of issues and sharing of experience – see example questions above
5 mins	Concluding comments

References

Alexander, J Keynote address at Higher Education Academy conference *Engaging students in Higher Education Harrogate*, July 2007

www.heacademy.ac.uk/events/conference/papers

QAA (2005) *Outcomes from institutional audit. Student representation and feedback arrangements* QAA

Campbell, F; Beasley, L; Eland, J; Rumpus, A (2007) *Final report of Hearing the student voice project* (An ESCalate-funded project Promoting and encouraging the effective use of the student voice to enhance professional development in learning, teaching and assessment within higher education) Napier University

www.napier.ac.uk/studentvoices/download/Final_report_studentvoice_web.pdf