

**Title:**                   **Student engagement philosophy statements – a way to develop and guide praxis?**

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### **Session Learning Outcomes**

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

- Begin to articulate their own student engagement philosophy;
- Explore how student engagement philosophy statements could be used as a professional development tool;
- Consider whether student engagement philosophy statements may be used as a lens to unpick the relationship between policy/theory and individual practice.

### **Session Outline**

Student engagement is a complex umbrella concept (Kahu, 2013) that has gained prominence in theory, practice and policy, but whose nature is not always clearly defined in documents and discussions. Whilst there are national frameworks and guidance (e.g. HEA, 2016; sparqs, 2012; QAA, 2018) and many institutions have student engagement strategies that aim to offer clarity, how engagement is understood and practiced is often individual. These individual understandings can be plural and dynamic (Flint and Millard, 2018), and highly contextual (Healey and Healey, 2018). Given the continued and rising importance of student engagement in HE, there is a need to better understand the relationship between scholarship, policy and individual practice: the praxis of student engagement.

When thinking about their teaching, many staff are encouraged to write teaching philosophy statements: “a systematic and critical rationale that focuses on the important components defining effective teaching and learning in a particular discipline and/or institutional context” (Schönwetter et al, 2002). These statements are deemed to help clarify, guide and provide a rationale for good teaching as well as encourage its development, evaluation and dissemination (ibid). Could this approach be used to support student engagement practitioners - providing a focus for reflecting and acting on effective student engagement that acknowledges individual understandings?

During the workshop I will introduce a draft framework for a student engagement philosophy statement and invite participants to work through this, critically reflecting on the elements it comprises. The aim is to explore whether this approach could be used to

support individuals to reflect on and develop their practice, and to open conversations between individual practice and wider theory and policy.

The workshop will be of interest to anyone who considers student engagement an important element of their practice, whatever their formal role. This may include students' union colleagues and representatives, student partners, staff who teach and support learning, and educational developers.

### Session Activities and Approximate Timings

Timing	Activity
0-5 minutes	Brief presentation introducing the concept of student engagement and some of the tensions relating to defining this in practice.
5-10 minutes	Activity: Creative exercise to explore what student engagement means to you
10-20 minutes	Brief presentation introducing the Student Engagement Philosophy Statement Framework
20-40 minutes	Activity: Individual and group exploration and completion of the Framework
40-45 minutes	Discussion: focused on <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Feedback on the structure and elements of the framework: what worked well/less well? What was missing?</li><li>• How might educational developers use the framework to promote and develop effective student engagement practices? Who with? And how might this be linked to engagement strategies and policies?</li></ul>

### Preparation before session

There is no required preparation for the session. However, participants may find it useful to reflect on the central question that we will start with – how do you understand student engagement in your practice?

### References

Flint, A. and Millard, L. (2018) “‘Interactions with purpose’: Exploring staff understandings of student engagement in a university with an ethos of staff-student partnership”, *International Journal for Students as Partners*, 2(2), pp. 21-38. <https://mulpress.mcmaster.ca/ijsap/article/view/3410>

HEA (2016) *Framework for Student Engagement through Partnership*. York, Higher Education Academy <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/individuals/strategic-priorities/student-engagement>

Healey, M. and Healey, R. (2018) “‘It depends’: Exploring the context-dependent nature of students as partners practices and policies”, *International Journal for Students as Partners*, 2(1), pp. 1-10. <https://mulpress.mcmaster.ca/ijsap/article/view/3472>

Kahu, E. (2013). "Framing student engagement in higher education". *Studies in Higher Education*, 38(5), 758-773.

QAA (2018) *UK Quality Code Advice and Guidance: Student Engagement*. Quality Assurance Agency. <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/student-engagement>

Schönwetter, D.J., Sokal, L., Friesen, M. and Taylor, K.L. (2002) "Teaching philosophies reconsidered: A conceptual model for the development and evaluation of teaching philosophy statements", *International Journal for Academic Development*, 7:1, 83-97

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