

Title: **What I know now... student engagement in a Partners in Learning initiative**

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Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, participants will have been provided with an opportunity to explore:

- i) some of the opportunities and threats to enhanced student involvement in academic affairs;
- ii) some of the ways in which students and staff can become co-joined in forms of scholarly activity;
- iii) some of the dynamic involved in how participation in academic life can enhance learning.

Session Outline

This interactive workshop will be led by students who will report on the progress to date of a Partners in Learning (PiL) initiative at Canterbury Christ Church. PiL has provided a space for staff and students to explore some of the dimensions to the notion of student as producer (Neary and Winn 2009). This has been facilitated by the creation of a physical space which houses twelve student ambassadors (SALTs), who coordinate a range of activities and campaigns associated with learning and teaching at the University (Little 2012). The space also incorporates a listening wall, exhibition space, and a café-style learning environment (Neary and Thody 2009).

A key theme in the SALT scheme been to explore how students might more actively contribute to the scholarship of learning and teaching, and help move away from some of the consumerist notions of students' experiences of HE (Cuthbert 2011) - with its emphasis on students' satisfaction with their teachers' performances, and what the university has done for them – and move towards more of an emphasis on student engagement in their studies and what they have been able to contribute to the university (Trowler and Trowler 2010). Through involvement in the peer review process, curriculum validation, and research projects with academics, the students will discuss how these initiatives have changed their perception of the learning process, and helped enhance their knowledge, learning, and scholarly engagement in HE (Gibbs 2010).

The workshop will enable participants to explore collectively some of the opportunities and threats presented to staff and students in the democratisation of academic affairs, and how and why student learning can be enhanced in the process (Dunne and Zandstra 2011). And more generally it will provide participants with an opportunity to share ideas on how the relationship between consuming knowledge and being satisfied might be countered a more enriching experience of HE for staff and students; indeed, to explore how this could be argued to be at the heart of the meaning of the word 'higher' (von Humboldt 1810).

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

Outline of context, and background to scheme – 10 mins

Student presentations – 7-8 mins each (30 mins in total)

Group work – 15 mins

- i) What is happening in your own institution?
- ii) Are there any barriers and how they might be overcome?
- iii) A question for a SALT?

Feedback and general discussion – 30 mins

Concluding thoughts – 5 mins

References

Cuthbert, R. (2010) Students as customers? *Higher Education Review*, 42 (3): 3–25.

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Neary, M. and Thody, A. (2009) Learning landscapes: designing a classroom of the future, in Bell, L., Stevenson, H. and Neary, M. (2009) *The Future of Higher Education*. London: Continuum.

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