# SEDA Jisc Student Partnership Impact Award: sample applications

# Applicant A

# Brief description of the student-staff partnership educational development activity (max.150 words)

A university-wide initiative to improve the digital accessibility of all online learning content across all undergraduate modules. This included a review of Microsoft Word, Excel and Powerpoint documents, video captioning, image descriptions and PDF documents, all of which the department used in teaching and learning.

*45 words*

# Describe your role in the student-staff partnership activity (max.150 words)

My role was Digital Student Intern at Poppleton University for 12 weeks during the summer of 2021, working as a member of the group of students who volunteered to work in the Social Sciences department. My role was to improve the digital accessibility of all online learning content across every undergraduate module within the department. I was asked to co-ordinate the student group which reviewed this online provision. I called a meeting of the group and we discussed how to organise ourselves; I then presented our plan to the academic staff project leader for her agreement. I also drafted the new accessibility handbook (containing guidance and examples) for staff - now being considered by the University Learning and Teaching Committee for possible deployment at institutional level. I was also part of a sub-group that worked on social media content, and I took the lead in proposing and running a ‘Wellbeing Session’.

*150 words*

# Statement of impact you have had in that role (max.500 words)

In the 12-week period, we were able to improve the digital accessibility of learning content by 23%. No other departmental student group was able to show a bigger improvement; the three modules I worked on individually achieved improvements of 24, 26 and 27%.

To prepare myself for this work, I completed relevant training courses (including diversity, inclusion and equality within the workplace, advanced document accessibility, and inclusion within media) to enhance my knowledge and expertise. I also interviewed staff from our Student Services department and members of the Student Union with particular responsibilities for accessibility.

The project impacted every module within the department – achieving accessibility score of at least 85% on Blackboard. The Course Leader assured us that she will continue to monitor these scores in future years to ensure that progress is maintained.

As well as creating a long-term, sustainable impact for online learning access and capabilities for students at Poppleton, this will allow future students who require accessible documents to achieve higher grades and even impact their post-graduate employability as a result. Additionally, boosting the accessibility of Poppleton online learning content (in additional to the push to create an accessible physical environment on campus) paves the way for promoting equality and inclusivity for disabled people and others who require accessibility. One disabled student who trialled the changes, which I made stated:

‘I always found online documents a challenge. Supplying adapted versions (including colour backgrounds and larger fonts) has made reading less challenging and I have used much more of the resources.’

I also took on additional voluntary responsibilities as part of a small sub-group to produce weekly social media content to promote wellbeing and good mental health for students and staff members through blog posts and videos. They received over 1000 likes and comments, which helped raise interest and esteem for the project.

I also took the lead in proposing and then running a ‘Wellbeing Session’ for the student intern group at the mid-point of the project. Feedback from this session was hugely positive and impactful as the internship was held online remotely - a working environment unfamiliar to most. Creating a mid-point well-being session was a great way to ensure people were socialising and felt included within the group, even whilst studying at home. The University has adopted this process for future partner initiatives.

*387 words*

# Corroborating statement from referee (max.100 words)

I fully support A’s application, it meets fully the SEDA criteria and shows great commitment and contribution to the institution. She proposed and introduced several improvements to the scheme which we will use in the future, and her preparations for the role through short courses and interviews (all done off her own initiative) was exemplary. Very well done.

*58 words*

# Applicant B

# Brief description of the student-staff partnership educational development activity (max.150 words)

A university-wide initiative to increase the digital accessibility of the virtual learning environment (VLE) across all faculties. 40 student interns were selected to undertake this work.

*26 words*

# Describe your role in the student-staff partnership activity (max.150 words)

During the summer of 2021 I was involved in a digital internship to increase digital accessibility on the VLE across all faculties at Poppleton.. It was a 12-week, full-time, work from home programme. There were also opportunities for professional development and each faculty assigned additional tasks to be completed by the interns. Project manager was XX and she was assisted by YY. I was assigned to the Creative Arts faculty, along with one other student, AA. My supervisor was BB. There was a project management spreadsheet for me to work from.

*92 words*

# Statement of impact you have had in that role (max.500 words)

My first project was to audit some modules and provide feedback to the staff tutors – highlighting issues and suggesting improvements. I was given plenty of time to complete this task, XX was working on a PowerPoint of an “ideal” module layout. And I made a few suggestions which XX liked. This has now been sent to all module leaders within the Creative Arts department to be considered as a template for module setup.

I was asked to make each module that I had reviewed over 70% accessible. At the start of the project the overall accessibility for Creative Arts was 68%. There were 45 modules in total. By the end of the project, total accessibility had increased to 90%. This included modules that had been brought up from as low as 41% accessible. At the end of the project, all the modules were between 80-100% accessible.

My final task was to assist two module leaders to create one new module each, ensuring that they were 100% accessible from the outcome. This was successful and involved additional skills such as creating artwork for the module banners.

All interns were in regular contact via Microsoft Teams, with regular full team meetings. There were many accessibility issues that we came across as a group. I made some suggestions on some of the more complicated issues that I had encountered and subsequently overcome. At the end of the project, I helped to produce a PowerPoint presentation on accessibility. At points during the project, I was assigned tasks that were not directly involved with my faculty, e.g. I undertook a brief review of the new VLE platform from an accessibility perspective.

Following the internship, I was invited to train as a Student Advisor, working with Learning Services to assist students in accessing the support available in the library. I have particularly enjoyed taking part in webinars and workshops that enhance learning. As a direct result of the internship, it was also suggested that I volunteer to serve on the SEDA/Jisc panel working on the new Student Partnership Award - an opportunity that I have enjoyed immensely.

*351 words*

# Corroborating statement from referee (max.100 words)

B has been a useful member of the digital intern student team. She has been proactive in working with others and engaging students in the project. There is some evidence illustrating that B’s contribution has had impact. She has shown some ability to work collaboratively with staff and students and has helped the team develop innovative ideas to make learning more accessible. B meets the SEDA values in her approach to educational development. I recommend B for the award.

*79 words*

# Applicant C

# Brief description of the student-staff partnership educational development activity (max.150 words)

The rationale for the initiative I worked on was to create an award that recognises the achievements students have made towards educational development and enhancement, and for students to work in liaison with staff to achieve this.

*37 words*

# Describe your role in the student-staff partnership activity (max.150 words)

I worked as a member of the SEDA JISC panel to contribute my experiences both as a previous student and current staff member, to help design and implement the award at the participating universities.

*34 words*

# Statement of impact you have had in that role (max.500 words)

The panel work was additionally supported by the valuable professional expertise of the XX Chair, SEDA and JISC representatives. As a result of the work, the panel has now been able to create an award that will provide students with the opportunity to enhance their Award statement and to strengthen their CV.

Partnership was demonstrated by the collaborative nature involved in designing and implementing the award, which was discussed and decided on by the three participating universities, working in collaboration over the course of three monthly virtual zoom meetings, held in Jan, Feb and March 2022. Currently, the SEDA Award is being trialled by myself and panel members in the current round of applications. The award aligns with the emphasis of the Office for Students’ (OfS) Strategic Objective 3: ‘All students, from all backgrounds, are able to progress into employment, further study, and fulfilling lives, and their qualifications hold their value over time’ (OfS, 2021). The skills gained will enhance students’ performance by encouraging them to develop long lasting employability skills including but not limited to resilience, communication (verbal/written), teamworking, problem-solving skills, and to develop experience of engaging in charitable work to self-fund applications. As a result, students will be able to apply the skills learnt from the initiative towards their university training, and also when seeking employment opportunities once graduated.

To outline the design process of the award, I worked alongside five members from three universities, and we discussed and decided on the various issues including:

* The maximum number of students that can apply as a group is 7;
* 2 deadlines a year, and suitable times for these (March/August), to work around submission dates for university assignments;
* Cost of the award for individual/group applications for students from institutions that are members of SEDA/non-members of SEDA;
* The types of activities that students can engage in to self-fund their application. Ideas included for e.g.: students raising funds through bake sales and vegetable sales, where a proportion of the money would go to a charity;
* Word count for the submission to be 500 words. To promote inclusivity, the format of the submission to be either a word document or alternative audio-visual file.

Our chair and SEDA representative helped us to consider the important factors to consider for the award, so that we could arrive at our decisions for the award to work in practice. Also, Jisc representative will be working on the technical aspects to design an online system for applications to be submitted online.

Now the design process of the award has been completed, the panel looks forward to take the initiative to the Change Agents Conference in Bermuda as a screencast, to share our partnership project with the wider HE community.

*451 words*

# Corroborating statement from referee (max.100 words)

C has been a useful member of the planning group for the SEDA/Jisc Student Partnership Impact Award. Her interest during the process was clear throughout. She was a thoughtful and considered group member, feeding back on the different stages and elements of the project. The five SEDA values have clearly been upheld by C and underpin the whole project, in terms of its aims, the process and the intended outcomes. I am happy to support C’s application for recognition via the SEDA/Jisc Student Partnership Award and it has been a pleasure working with her.

*94 words*