

# SEDA Spring Conference 2024



**Session Title:** The role of academic developers in initiating, developing, and supporting student-staff partnerships

**Session Type:** Research paper (20 mins plus questions)

**Main presenter(s):** Mick Healey, Healey HE Consultants

**Co presenter(s):** Ruth L Healey, University of Chester

**Session Summary:** We offer a systematic narrative literature review about the role of academic developers (ADs) in student-staff partnerships (SSPs). We draw on 35 papers on SSPs published in the International Journal for Academic Development (IJAD). We focus on the roles ADs may play in developing partnership learning communities for SSPs. We end by proposing a new framework for examining the variety of ways that ADs may initiate, develop, and support SSPs.

**Session Outline:** "As calls for student-staff partnership proliferate across higher education, academic development must re-examine and reimagine its relationship to students" (Felten et al., 2019, p. 192).

Student-staff partnerships (SSPs) have become a key feature in the changing face of academic development in the last decade and a half. Within this context, key issues to be addressed are:

- The variety of roles academic developers (ADs) may play in developing partnership learning communities for SSPs
- How ADs may be supported to face the challenges in initiating, developing, and supporting SSPs through implementing a new framework

We address these issues by outlining the findings of a systematic narrative literature review about the role of ADs in SSPs. We draw on 35 papers on SSPs published in the International Journal for Academic Development (IJAD). We group the roles into three interrelated themes that are needed to develop partnership learning communities:

- Designing institutional structures, strategies, and practices that promote inclusive and sustainable SSPs
- Building the capacity of students, staff, and ADs by focusing on relationships
- Researching and evaluating SSP experiences and outcomes

We propose a new framework that interprets these roles according to, first, how academic development functions within the institution, and who undertakes AD roles; second, the nature of the SSPs; and, third, the overall context in which the range of roles of ADs take place. We argue that the roles of ADs in SSPs are nuanced and context-dependent, and over-generalisations should be avoided. Higher education is too diverse for a one-size-fits-all approach.



ADs are likely to have increasingly critical roles in the next decade that reflect their context and culture in initiating, developing, and supporting SSPs in learning and teaching in higher education. Fortunately, working with students can be fun and enhance the job satisfaction of ADs.

**References:** Felten, P., Abbot, S., Kirkwood, J., Long, A., Lubicz-Nawrocka, T., Mercer-Mapstone, L., & Verwood, R. (2019). Reimagining the place of students in academic development. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 24(2), 192-203. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2019.1594235>

Healey, M. & Healey, R. L. (in submission) The role of academic developers in initiating, developing, and supporting student-staff partnerships in learning and teaching in higher education:

A systematic narrative literature review and a new framework.