

## HUBS T&L Workshop Series

Online Workshop 7<sup>th</sup> January 2021

### ENHANCING TEACHING AND LEARNING THROUGH LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS

On January 7<sup>th</sup> 2021, University of Reading's School of Agriculture, Policy and Development hosted a HUBS T&L virtual workshop on 'Enhancing Teaching and Learning Through Learning Partnerships', which was particularly aimed at exchanging good practice and ideas for engaging students as partners in curriculum enhancement – a pedagogic tool that is receiving ever increasing attention. On the day, around 40 academics and student partners joined us online, from around the UK and overseas. Some had extensive experience of T&L partnerships while some had little and were eager to know more.

The meeting started with a scene-setting introductory presentation from Dr Rachael Neal (University of Reading) exploring what T&L partnerships are, why they can be beneficial and the kinds of challenges we can face when engaging in partnership work with students. Everyone was encouraged to evaluate their practice in relation to the 'ladder of student participation in curriculum design' (Bovill & Bulley, 2011) – educating, consulting, or co-creating? The question of 'where would you like to be?' was posed.

#### What are T&L partnerships?

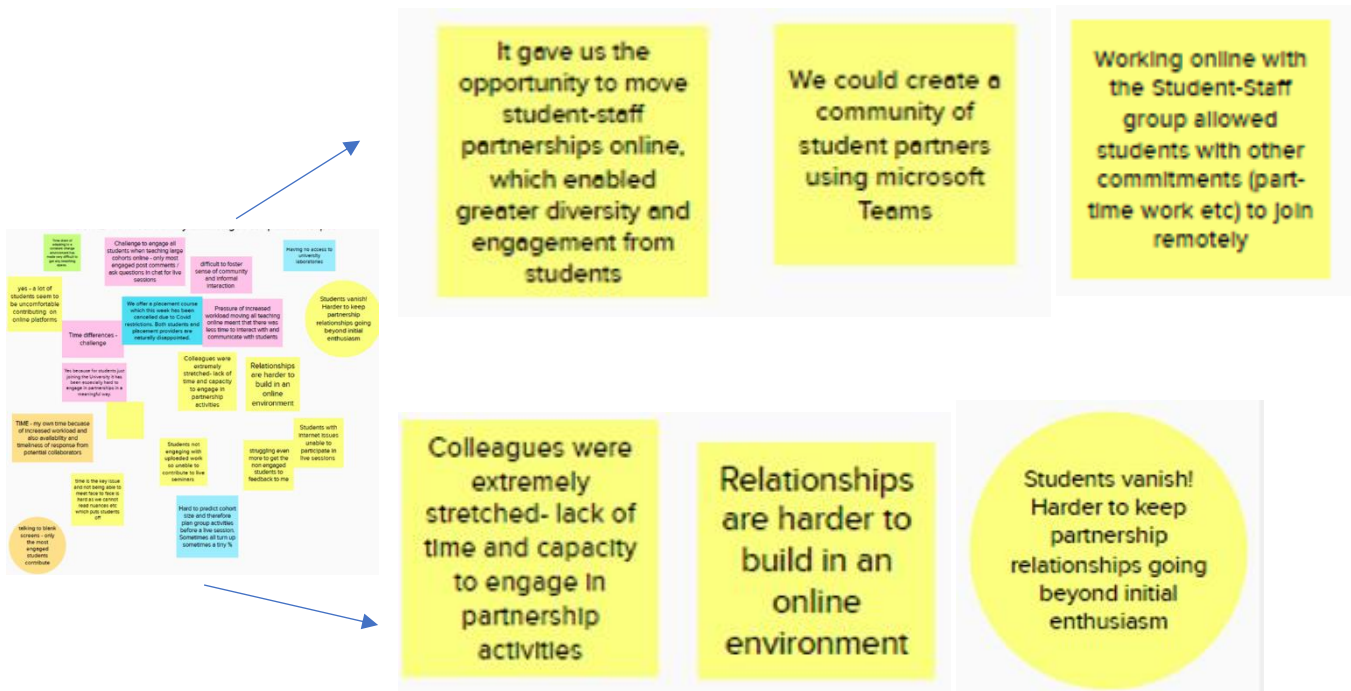
One word/phrase that comes to mind when you think of 'partnership' in an HE context



A major objective of the workshop was to provide a platform for colleagues to share a variety of good partnership practice. We certainly had the opportunity for this as we heard from seven enthusiastic 'lightning' speakers during the morning session. Dr Gill Knight (University of Aston) described successful work on introducing 'student champions' as agents for T&L change in the School of Engineering & Applied Sciences. Dr Jay Mulley (University of Reading) shared with us student opinions on the integration of an OOC into a module as a strategy to increase motivation to learn outside of the classroom. Dr Kalpana Surendranath and a small team of student contributors from University of Westminster described their experiences of their 'empty work bench to edited chromosomes: evolution of student cocreators in cellular engineering' project at Westminster. Victoria Bundy (University of Reading) helped us step back and consider institutional approaches to developing student partnerships while Dr Stephany Veuger (University of Northumbria) shared experiences of working with students as partner to uncover expectations and perceptions of the final year UG dissertation and related graduate attributes. Dr Kim Hayer (University of Leicester) spoke about the delivery of a collaborative online international learning ('COIL') project, the lessons learned and future directions (across institutions) for this work.

Dr Gillian Rose led an interactive activity using 'MURAL' focusing on the impact of Covid-19 on partnerships – what opportunities and challenges have arisen? We particularly reflected on challenges relating to connecting with students and initiating partnership in the remote T&L environment which has impacted on depth of partnership work, but equally how the sudden change in T&L approach we've all encountered has provided new opportunities for collaborative work on

curriculum design and delivery, and forced use of online communication technologies has in some cases allowed a greater diversity of students to become involved. Inevitably, this section of the workshop evolved into a more general discussion about our collective experiences of teaching during the pandemic and much needed show of solidarity for one another!



The final session of the meeting was a keynote from Dr Nick Freestone, of Kingston University, about his extensive and collaborative enhancement work which utilises learning partnerships ‘inside and outside the curriculum’. This included perspectives on student partnership work relating to student research internship schemes, engaging STEM students and academics as partners in pedagogic research, and partnership work relating to bridging attainment gaps.

The meeting concluded by encouraging participants to make a “note to self” with three ideas they’d gained from the workshop that they plan to take back to enhance their own practice in relation to T&L partnerships.

Although we greatly missed the opportunity for in person interaction over lunch and coffee the meeting was a success and participants left motivated and inspired by one another to go away and develop their own practice. We were delighted to see that the shift online meant even more colleagues from more distant parts of the UK and beyond were able to join us and benefit from each other’s experiences in the midst of such challenging times for all.

