Engaging students in research and scholarship

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There are a growing number of institutions that through policy, strategy and emergent practices, are articulating, developing and advocating for student engagement in the scholarship of teaching and learning. Establishing an optimum environment for engagement (Pittaway and Moss, 2014) is a significant and enabling factor, and is essential for the growth of student engagement in learning and teaching. Establishing key principles that guide, underpin, and enable effective engagement practices can articulate a vision of SoTL partnership culture among staff and students (Felten, 2013). In order to move beyond student engagement as a 'compliant' or 'procedural' process argued ineffectual by Crick (2012), Lawson and Lawson outline extensive research which highlights the effectiveness of authentic and action-oriented forms of engagement (Lawson and Lawson, 2013: 445-446). Reeve (2012: 161) describe this behavioural activity as 'agentic engagement'. The potential is for student engagement in learning and teaching research and practice to embody an active, participatory role, which develops students' critical enquiry, reflection and reflexivity. This paper will outline the culmination of two national projects enquiring into interrelated practices of students engaged in research and scholarship (HEA Defining and Supporting SoTL: a sector-wide study) and Student Collaborators in Educational Development (SEDA small grant). Whilst these projects are in progress, it will be beneficial to share at this conference the emergent findings which represent the views of students and staff involved in partnerships. Early themes that have been identified and may be of interest to delegates include:

- the environmental factors that enable student partnership
- the establishment of key principles
- the possibility for students to engage in interdisciplinary practices
- the challenge of changing roles, identities and expectations
- the practical tensions of partnership working
- the ethics of engaging students and crossing boundaries

There will also be opportunity for discussion and questions. Establishing a community of practice around student engagement and partnership in learning and teaching will offer a fora for both theorising, and collecting sector-wide evidence of practices and impacts. At a practical level, it will be possible for this group to consider developing helpful guidance for students and academics wishing to embark into this exciting SoTL territory.

Teaching English in the Sciences, and then writing policy about it

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My role is unique at Newcastle University and, as far as I know, across most universities. I teach literature in the School of English, provide QA and QE support to Schools within the 'Sciences' Faculty, and write and consult on University learning and teaching policies. My role challenges the boundaries too often set up in HE -- between disciplines, University hierarchies, and academic and administrative staff - and it asks us to reconsider the type of scholarship that can be achieved through cross-field innovation. This paper focuses on an ongoing project to enhance students' engagement with marking criteria and academics' use of criteria as feedback. Beginning in 2013, I have worked with academics across five Schools to re-design marking criteria for writing-based coursework (lab reports, reflective writing, literature reviews, and projects). At the same time, I have piloted and then embedded workshops aimed to enhance students' assessment literacy and engage students in using the marking criteria. These workshops have been enormously successful precisely because they give students ownership of the criteria -- asking them to dissect the language, explain the differences between grade boundaries across a given criterion, and then apply the criteria to sample scenarios and assignments. Students have noted that the workshops are especially effective in sustaining their engagement with assessment processes beyond the original module. The success of this project has led to initiatives at University level, including new guidance on student engagement with assessment and a workshop for the Directors of Excellence in Learning and Teaching. More importantly, as this paper suggests, it demonstrates the value of rethinking disciplinary and university boundaries: it is my inside knowledge of School QA practices, combined with pedagogical experience of talking with students and providing feedback, that allows me to support changing attitudes toward assessment across the Faculty and University.