

Enhancement Through Partnership: Co-Leading Enhancements with Students

Theme: Engaging Leadership

Institution: Glasgow School of Art

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Introduction

Working in ambitious, creative partnership with students is a key focus for us at the Glasgow School of Art (GSA 2022^{a&b}). Partnership working with students provides us with a collaborative, reciprocal and developmental opportunity for staff and students to lead and deliver key enhancement projects (Cook-Sathers et al, 2014). Our experience of partnership working aligns closely to findings within the research literature (Millard et al, 2022) supporting us to gain strong insights into the experiences of our students, better understanding methods for effectively engaging students, and innovating in the development of projects and resources to enhance the students learning experience.

Key to delivering our ambition has been the development and introduction of the Student Consultant role as a co-leader for change and enhancement. This case study presents an overview of the Student Consultant role, the impact this role has had on key enhancement activities and projects, and perspectives from staff and students who have worked with these roles discussing impacts, challenges, and advice as to how the role could be developed within other contexts.

The Student Consultant Role

The Student Consultant role is a remunerated part-time post (1 day per week for 6 months) recruited from our student body to a specific enhancement project. This project is linked to our Education Strategy and has specific aims to enhance the student experience. The process for recruitment is competitive, with applicants evidencing key skills in developing consultation activities, desk-based research, and working as a key member of a team.

The project is co-led by the Student Consultant and a member of GSA staff who acts as staff partner, line manager and mentor. Together they scope, develop, and deliver the project in partnership, identifying how key stakeholders will be engaged, what the outcomes/resources of the project will be, and how these will be disseminated to achieve impact.

Examples of projects delivered in this way have included:

A student guide to assessment and feedback: A student-authored guide to assessment and feedback policy and practice. This guidance was developed through consultation with students, academic and professional service staff as a gateway into our policy and regulations, as well as FAQ on key practices such as marking, grading and extensions.

Support for student transitions to art school: A multimedia induction resource for students who have not studied in a studio-based educational context. This resource was developed in partnership with a Student Consultant and a colleague in our Widening Participation team,

exploring the student journey and transition challenges and was deployed through our pre-enrolment induction for all students.

Exploration of students' views on good practice: Based within the Learning and Teaching Team, a Student Consultant co-authored an analysis of our Student Teaching Awards, producing a good practice report from students' nominations. This report helped staff recognise the role students have in identifying good practice as well as leading to the development of case studies and resources.

Engaging students in curriculum review: Building upon the success of the role, five Student Consultants were employed in session 2022/23 across our five academic Schools to support curriculum review. These students worked with Academic Development Leads to devise innovative methods for engaging students in curriculum conversations leading to a range of outcomes which fed directly into our curriculum review and revalidation work.



Figure 1. Student Guide to Assessment and Feedback.

Image credit Emma Defty



Figure 2 Student Teaching Awards Report 2022/23.

Image credit Tintin Lindkvist Nielsen



Figure 3 Student Guide to Studio Based Learning.

Image credit Rosie Ellen Patterson

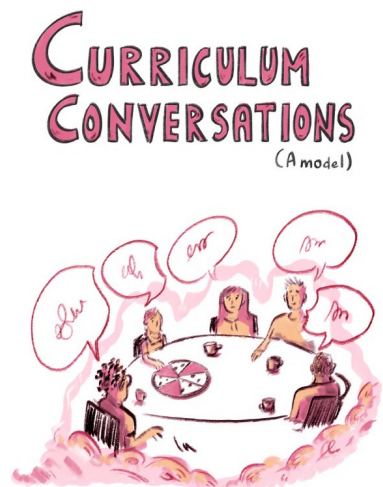


Figure 4 Curriculum Conversations Zine for School of Design.

Image credit Bhavani Balasubramanyam

Challenges and Impacts

The Student Consultant role has been a key feature of our partnership activities over the past three years and has led to the development of innovative and student-centred outcomes within our enhancement projects. Having students in these roles and central to the leadership of these projects has been key for ensuring they meet the needs of students and helping us better understand students' perspectives as well as identify our blind spots.

Key challenges with the role have been ensuring we can be flexible to support students to succeed in the role whilst also undertaking full time study. Another key challenge has been supporting the staff project lead to understand the nature of partnership and how to work effectively in partnership with students.

The following video provides a series of short reflections by the authors on their experience of working with these roles.

[Embed video.](#)

[Video transcript](#)

Employing a Student Consultant-like Role in Your Context

A number of higher education institutions have utilised Student Consultant-like roles through internships and projects (Hughes et al, 2024. Mercer-Mapstone et al 2017). Based upon our experience of the role we would recommend the following considerations be given:

- Recruit the role through existing staff recruitment processes (good experience for all applicants) and having a standard role profile is helpful for remunerating similar types of student work for projects in the future.
- Be clear as to the project's aims, deliverables, and timelines, include these in recruitment adverts. This sets expectations and ensures everyone is aware of the skills and experience required to succeed in the role.
- Have a clear and supportive structure for line management and training needs for both the Student Consultant and the staff lead.
- Provide an induction for both staff and student lead, focus on the nature of partnership, working in partnership and navigating challenges.
- Negotiate with HR induction requirements, flexibility in hours and contingency for absence/early exit from the role.
- Consider opportunities for institutional oversight and consultation e.g. a project steering group including Students' Association stakeholders – this can build buy-in and demonstrate the value and impact of partnership.

Wordcount: 976 words

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