Impact case study:  
**Student as Producer: embedding student engagement in learning and teaching and research**  

**HEA collaboration with the University of Lincoln**

The University of Lincoln prides itself on leading the sector for student engagement within its learning and teaching and research. The University’s research-engaged teaching initiative ‘Student as Producer,’ supported by the HEA, is now the underlying principle of student engagement at Lincoln.

The concept behind Student as Producer is that students’ learning will be grounded in research and research-like activities, so that much of what students are learning will be through their own discoveries, working in collaboration with academics and other students, in a research-rich environment.

The project was led by Mike Neary, Professor of Sociology in the School of Social and Political Sciences, and the University’s Dean of Teaching and Learning.

“People learn best by doing – this is something we recognise intuitively from our own education or experience of teaching others and is confirmed by pedagogical research,” Mike said. “Yet conventional models of higher education have seen a schism appear between the two most fundamental activities universities undertake, teaching and research.”

He explained that the Student as Producer project emphasises the role of students as collaborators rather than passive consumers, because: “Students are here to learn by generating knowledge through real research or projects which replicate the process of research within their chosen discipline.”

Student as Producer, and the concept of research-engaged teaching, has been introduced in a variety of ways by a number of universities, including the Universities of Warwick and Hertfordshire, the University of Central Lancashire and Macquarie University in Australia.

“The HEA have been enormously helpful. They gave us confidence that we were heading in the right direction and facilitated the institutional project.”

Mike Neary, Dean of Learning and Teaching, University of Lincoln

» Case study continued overleaf
The HEA also supported specific projects for students to work alongside academics. Henry Lennon, a third year Psychology undergraduate, became involved in a research project after seeing Student as Producer advertised.

“It was an incredible experience and one of the most beneficial parts of my degree,” Henry said. “It taught me to apply everything I know as opposed to theorising it.”

“On the degree, as much as you try and emphasise the applied nature of degrees, they are still theory – it’s all based on exams – and this didn’t have exams, you had to take it on as what it was and get the most out of it in that way.”

Scott Davidson, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Teaching Quality and Student Experience) worked with Mike on Student as Producer at the beginning of the project and when reviewing the teaching and learning strategy decided that it would become the central organising principle of teaching and learning in the university.

“The interesting thing about Student as Producer is that it is not purely academically focused, although clearly it has a very important role to play in our research engaged teaching agenda,” Scott said. “It is actually a holistic approach to student engagement across the university, not just in their own learning experiences, but also the way in which the students can also help co-produce the University.”

He added that the university now includes students on many of its internal panels including those for staff appointments, course validation and approval and periodic academic reviews.

Student as Producer was recognised by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) at the University’s Institutional Review in November 2012. The QAA commented that the level of student engagement, which they identified as best practice, could be directly attributed to the Student as Producer concept.