# Framework for student engagement through partnership

## Introducing the framework

This framework offers a structure for thinking about and planning for student engagement through partnership in learning and teaching in higher education (HE). The framework and set of partnership values provides a mechanism to support the development and enhancement of partnerships between students and staff, among students, and between higher education providers (HEPs) and their students' unions, associations or guilds. The framework places community at the heart of individual and collective partnerships and describes shared values which are embodied in practice, and supported by structures, processes and policies.

## What is student engagement through partnership?

In the context of HE, the Higher Education Academy (HEA) regard partnership as a relationship in which all involved are actively engaged in and stand to gain from the process of learning and working together. It is distinct from listening to, or consulting with, students. A partnership between students and staff, among students, or between HEPs and students' unions is student engagement, but not all student engagement is partnership; hence the approach here is engagement through partnership.

Partnership is a process for developing engaged student learning and effective learning and teaching enhancement. At its heart, partnership is about applying well-evidenced and effective approaches to learning, teaching and assessment with a commitment to open, constructive and continuous dialogue. Partnership involves treating all partners as intelligent and capable members of the academic community.

## Who is this framework for?

The framework has been written for all partners (staff, students, institutions and students' unions) to reflect on, inspire and enhance practice and policy relating to partnerships in learning and teaching. It can be most effective if adopted at an institutional level, as well as embedded within programmes.

## Why is student engagement through partnership important?

Partnership approaches to student engagement are important for:

### Student learning
- to enable and empower all students to engage deeply;
- to enhance employability through developing high level knowledge, behaviours and skills;
- to engender a sense of belonging; vital for retention and success.

### Staff engagement
- to renew engagement with learning and teaching enhancement;
- to transform thinking about learning and teaching practices as collaborative processes;
- to deepen understanding of academic community.

### Transformation
- as a powerful alternative to traditional relationships in higher education;
- to prompt reflection on implicit assumptions about learning processes and the people within them;
- to open up new spaces for learning, dialogue and inquiry.

### Sustainability
- to develop self-sustaining communities defined by shared goals and values.

## Want to find out more?

The HEA can help you or your institution to use and apply this framework to enhance policy and/or practice.

consultancy@heacademy.ac.uk

The HEA has a toolkit containing complementary tools and resources to help you apply this framework.

www.heacademy.ac.uk/frameworks-toolkits/toolkits

**Be kept informed through:**

studentsaspartners@heacademy.ac.uk

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## How is the framework structured?

The framework illustrates four overlapping areas of focus where partnerships may be fostered. The left-hand side emphasises partnership in student experiences of learning, teaching and research. The right hand side emphasises partnership in the enhancement and scholarship of learning and teaching. Embedding partnership as an ethos requires a holistic approach, with attention to all four areas of focus. Community is integral to developing a culture of partnership. Therefore, partnership learning communities are at the heart of the framework.

## Areas of focus

**Learning, teaching and assessment:** engaging students through partnership casts students as active participants in their learning. Partnership approaches:

- focus on collaborative and active learning (e.g. flipping the classroom, experiential learning, community and work related learning);
- give students a level of choice and ownership;
- place students in different roles (e.g. as tutors, mentors or assessors) and as co-designers of learning materials and resources.

**Curriculum design and pedagogic consultancy:** students are commonly engaged through programme evaluations and staff-student committees. Partnership approaches involve students in the formal processes of course design, revalidation, and professional development for staff.

**Subject-based research and inquiry:** engaging students as co-researchers and co-inquirers can involve all students on a programme learning through research, or selected students working with staff on extra-curricular research projects. Partnership approaches:

- involve students directly in knowledge production within their discipline community (e.g. through enquiry and problem-based learning, research based assessments, and 'live projects');
- provide opportunities for students to share their research publicly (e.g. through undergraduate research journals, blogs and conferences).

**Scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL):** inquiring into learning, teaching and assessment in partnership with students is one of the five principles of good practice in SoTL. Partnership approaches:

- involve students at all stages of the SoTL process; from co-designing research questions to acting on research findings;
- cast students as co-researchers not just subjects of research.

## Partnership learning communities

As partnership acknowledges students and staff as learners, scholars and colleagues, it invites critical reflection on existing relationships, identity, processes and structures. For partnership to be embedded and sustained beyond documentation and initiatives, it needs to become part of the culture and ethos of the institution. Developing strong partnership-learning communities is a way of doing this. These communities facilitate deep connections between staff and students and bring partnership values to life. All members should co-create and contribute to the development and direction of the community.



## How can this framework be used?

This framework can be used flexibly, reflecting institutional context and priorities, to enhance practice and policy.

**Research:** framing research into partnership, mapping of current practice and benchmarking across and between institutions.

**Review:** assessing institutional readiness for partnership and exploring the relationship between an institution and its students' union, association or guild.

**Curriculum design:** informing validation and course approval processes, reviewing the curriculum and making pedagogic decisions.

**Engagement:** developing a sense of community among students and staff and developing ground rules for partnership meetings and initiatives.

**Planning:** developing meaningful strategies and policies and planning or reflecting on specific initiatives.

**Professional development:** informing professional development for staff, students' union staff and student partners.

## Partnership values

The values which underpin successful student engagement through partnership are:

**Authenticity:** the rationale for all parties to invest in partnership is meaningful and credible.

**Honesty:** all parties are honest about what they can contribute to partnership and about where the boundaries of partnership lie.

**Inclusivity:** there is equality of opportunity and any barriers (structural or cultural) that prevent engagement are challenged.

**Reciprocity:** all parties have an interest in, and stand to benefit from working and/or learning in partnership.

**Empowerment:** power is distributed appropriately and ways of working and learning promote healthy power dynamics.

**Trust:** all parties take time to get to know one-another and can be confident they will be treated with respect and fairness.

**Courage:** all parties are encouraged to critique and challenge practices, structures and approaches that undermine partnership, and are enabled to take risks to develop new ways of working and learning.

**Plurality:** all parties recognise and value the unique talents, perspectives and experiences that individuals contribute to partnership.

**Responsibility:** all parties share collective responsibility for the aims of the partnership, and individual responsibility for the contribution they make.
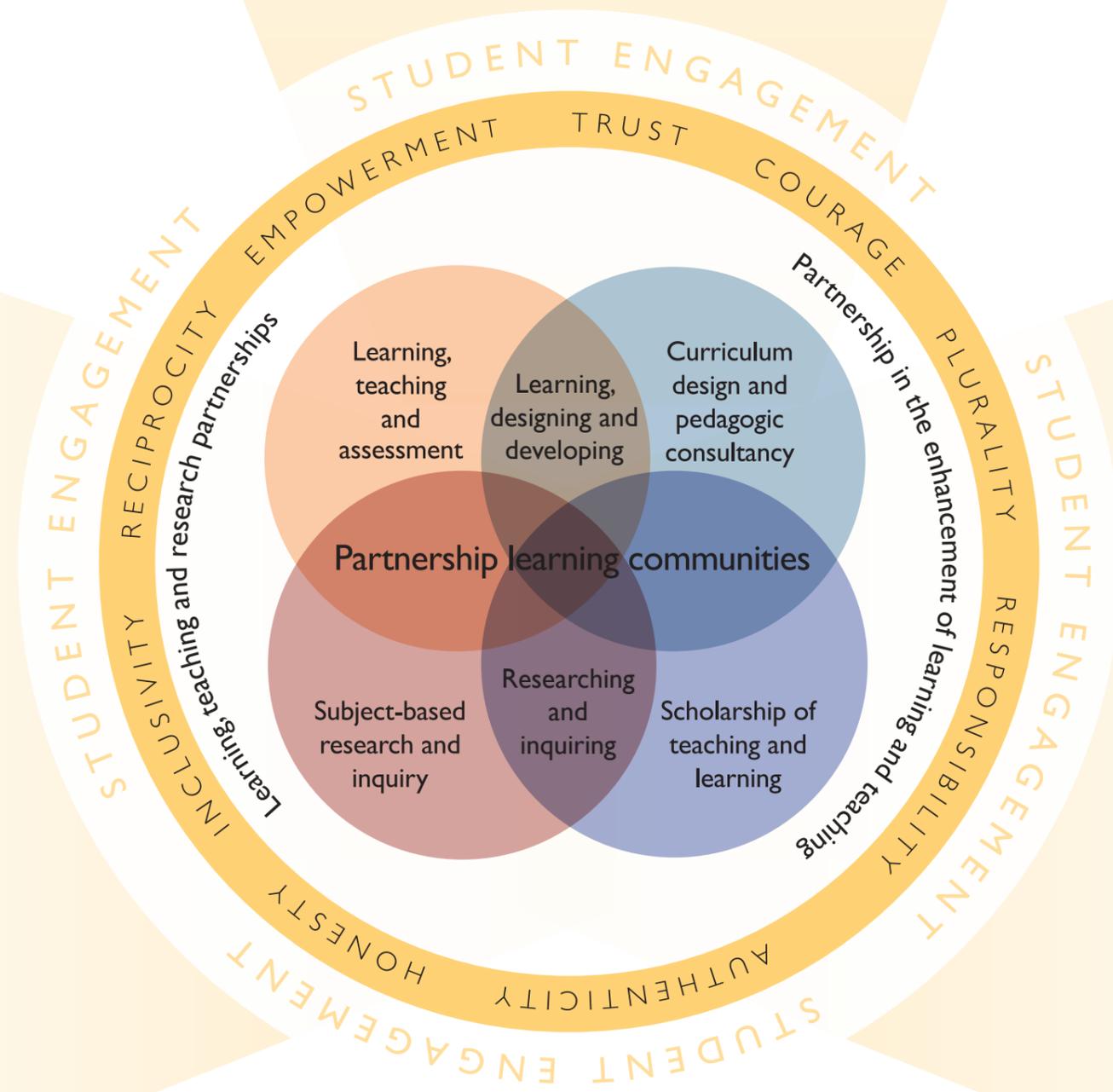
## HEA frameworks series

This is one of a series of strategic frameworks on core sector priorities, developed by the HEA, the national body for learning and teaching in the United Kingdom (UK). They have been created in response to, and in collaboration with, the HE sector and draw on extensive evidence, expertise and experience.

The frameworks can be adapted by a wide range of HE stakeholders, individuals and groups, and applied to different disciplines, modes of study and institutional contexts. They may have more impact if adopted at an institutional level and embedded across all provision, with all staff. HEA toolkits can support you in this process. Frameworks are designed to enhance individual sector priorities or be interconnected to enrich policy and practice. They aim to improve learning outcomes by raising the quality and status of teaching in HE, across the UK and internationally.

**Frameworks in the series include:**

- Student engagement through partnership
- Embedding employability in higher education
- Internationalising higher education
- Transforming assessment in higher education
- Student access, retention, attainment and progression in higher education
- Flexible learning in higher education

## How does this framework align with the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF)?

Staff and students (who have roles in teaching and supporting learning) may want to consider how engagement through partnership can offer an effective approach to areas of activity, enable deeper understanding of core knowledge and demonstrate alignment with professional values. This framework is particularly relevant to:

**Activity:** A1, A2, A3, A4, and A5   **Knowledge:** K2, K3, K5, and K6   **Values:** V1, V2, and V3

The HEA invites lecturers, teachers, learning support staff and graduate teaching assistants to evidence their use of this or other HEA frameworks in applying for HEA Fellowship in recognition of their commitment to professional practice.

www.heacademy.ac.uk/fellowships

recognition@heacademy.ac.uk

## Acknowledgements

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