

University of Westminster Student Partnership Framework



Centre for Education and
Teaching Innovation



What is student : staff partnership?

At the heart of our understanding of student : staff partnership is the belief that partnership is about the relationships we build in Higher Education. Partnership is a space in which we build relationships that can be catalysts for social justice and institutional transformation. By centring our relationships in love, trust, and our shared desire to co-create positive change, we build partnerships that hope to dismantle the extractive and hierarchical relationships which have shaped higher education (Grande, 2018; Patel, 2016; Tuck, 2009; Yahlnaaw, 2019).



In partnership work and practice, we view the contributions of students and staff as equal, even if not the same (Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten, 2014), centring partnership practices as an approach of 'doing with' and not 'doing to' (Bindra et al., 2018; O'Shea, 2018). To us, this means a commitment to building ethical relationships in which we share responsibility and leadership, commit to accountability and to working towards transformation, learn and unlearn together and from one another, centre minoritized voices and knowledges, develop community, and open space for care and sustenance.



“For me, student-staff partnership work has three major areas of importance. This work empowers students, enabling them to engage with their lecturers in knowledge creation and to actively shape the learning journey. It enables lecturers to learn in dialogue with students, developing their own practice through reflection. And the insights developed from such partnerships have the potential to change the whole institution, if ways of sharing learning are cultivated.”

Dr Sal Jarvis, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)

What is student : staff partnership?



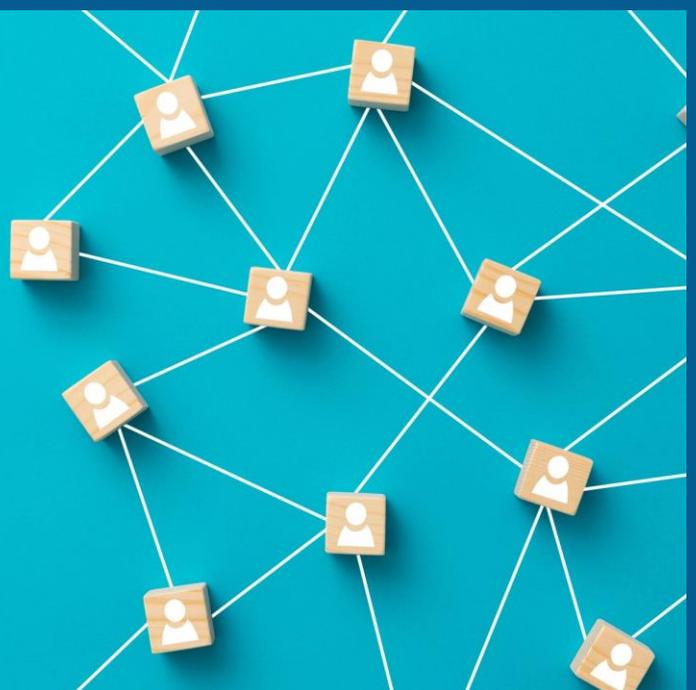
In building these relationships, we view partnership as a disruptive tool which allows us to reimagine higher education institutions and our roles within them. Within partnerships, students and staff come together in a reciprocal process and share responsibility for shaping their journeys through higher education. While learning and teaching are often at the core of partnerships, we view the relationships as going beyond the projects students and staff undertake together. Through meaningfully disruptive partnerships, we co-create knowledges, we rethink and reimagine curricula, we use decolonial and anti-racist research methods, we reflect on our roles in the institution, and we acknowledge the spaces we occupy within it.



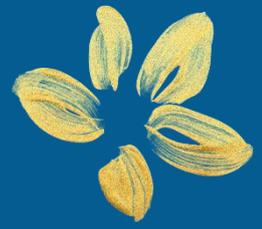
“Student partnership to me is rewarding in that I can actually work with students collaboratively on projects and share cultural experiences that enhance curriculum design, teaching, and assessment. I have been able to build sustainable relationships with students. This has enabled me to conduct further research and develop projects with students.”

Dr Stephen Bunbury

Senior Lecturer, Westminster Law School



What is student : staff partnership?



Aligned with the University's [Black Lives Matter commitments](#), [Education Strategy](#), [Curriculum Design Framework](#), and [Being Westminster Strategy](#), our Student Partnership Framework is committed to opening opportunities for equitable, socially just, and holistic education. We aim to centre student voices, to collaborate to shape our learning and teaching environments and to build student : staff relationships that allow us to dream and re-imagine higher education. Partnership journeys unfold differently for each of us and while many students and staff take part in formal partnership programmes and initiatives, we recognise that many engage in partnership work without formally calling it partnership. This framework is an invitation to students and staff to reflect on their relationships, roles, assumptions, power, and identities in higher education. It is an invitation to start thinking about how you can initiate the changes you want to see at Westminster. Most importantly, it is an invitation to work in partnership and to form decolonial and socially just relationships. In this framework, we provide you with our understanding of partnership, hoping it will inspire you to reflect on your own understanding and experiences of it. We also provide a list of questions to reflect on when you are in partnership or considering partnership work with the hope that they will help you engage with challenges that might arise. We offer you our partnership values as an invitation to think about your own values and how these shape your partnership relationships. Finally, to give you insight into how partnership is lived and practiced at the University of Westminster and beyond, we offer some examples of partnership projects and efforts, hoping these will inspire your partnerships.

“Doing partnership work has taught me the value of student : staff collaboration in our efforts towards decolonising the university. I’ve always had an interest in social justice, but it was through being a research assistant on the PSJ project, did I realise how I could make real impact in the university; raising awareness of coloniality and co-creating resources to help people understand how it manifests in the academy.”

Kyra Araneta, International Relations MA Student, Pedagogies for Social Project Justice Research Assistant, University of Westminster



Reflective Questions for working in Partnership

In our roles as students or staff, we often face challenges, emotions and questions that can shape how we experience partnership and how we form and sustain our relationships. We offer you the questions below to open space for reflection and to help with thinking about your partnership work.

Relationships



- ✦ Who do I want to be in partnership with and why?
- ✦ How can we co-create a shared vision for our project?
- ✦ Am I looking for short- or long-term partnerships?
- ✦ How can I build meaningful relationships with my partners?
- ✦ How can I address sensitive or uncomfortable issues with my partners?
- ✦ Which relationships shape my higher education journey?

Assumptions



- ✦ What are my assumptions about working in partnership?
- ✦ What are my assumptions and beliefs about students and staff in higher education?
- ✦ What are my assumptions and beliefs about classroom dynamics?
- ✦ How did my assumptions about higher education change or transform through working in partnership?

Emotions



- ✦ If you think of your relationships in the University, how do they make you feel?
- ✦ What might bring joy into your partnership relationships?
- ✦ How can we work in partnership to navigate uncomfortable or painful experiences we face in higher education?
- ✦ How can I ensure that my partnerships offer space for healing and decolonisation?

Reflective Questions for working in Partnership

Values and Power



- ✦ What are my values for working in partnership?
- ✦ How can power be shared meaningfully in my partnerships?
- ✦ How is equity considered in my partnerships?
- ✦ How can I make sure that partnership is a space where everyone can speak freely?
- ✦ How can I make sure I am not unconsciously holding onto traditional power dynamics?
- ✦ How can I work in partnership sustainably?

Practices and Resources



- ✦ What is the scope of our partnership work?
- ✦ What do we want to address with our partnership work?
- ✦ What resources do we need to work in partnership?
- ✦ What kind of funding do we need for our partnership work?
- ✦ What time commitment is needed for our partnership work?

Hopes and Dreams



- ✦ Which dynamics would I like to transform through partnership?
- ✦ What changes do I hope to make through working in partnership?
- ✦ What concrete changes can I enact through my partnerships in higher education in the next 5 years?
- ✦ Which collective dreams and hopes influence our work in partnership?

“For me, Student Partnership is a dynamic and sustainable model for higher education institutions. It showed me the possibility that people with diverse backgrounds can, through storytelling, reflection and interaction, build strong decolonization, anti-racism and anti-sexism allies for a better environment of the student-staff relationship in HE.”
Huanyu Huang, Doctoral Researcher and Pedagogies for Social Justice Project Research Intern, University of Westminster

Student Partnership Values



To guide our student : staff partnership relationships, work, and programmes, we, students and staff working in partnership, along with the Student Partnership team, came together to establish and articulate our partnership values. They reflect our understanding of partnership, our commitments when working in partnership and our dreams for education, social justice, and partnership.

Recognise all
our
knowledges
and lived
experiences

Uniqueness
and
togetherness

Inspire ideas,
creativity,
and
innovation

Trigger our
curiosity

Mutual
reliance and
collective
learning

Social
justice

Allow us
to be
reflective

Rehumanising
and
restorative
spaces

Challenge
traditional
hierarchies
and power
dynamics

Bring
joy

Help us uplift
each other
and
underserved
groups

Transformative

Learning and
unlearning
together

Student Partnership at Westminster and beyond

Partnership work at Westminster takes many different forms. Many projects and programmes are rooted in specific disciplines, while others are interdisciplinary or pedagogically focused. Below, we share examples of student : staff partnership projects and initiatives at Westminster and other institutions to inspire you and to demonstrate the different forms partnership work can take. We particularly want to emphasise that partnership, social justice, decolonial and anti-racist work need to be shaped by their specific contexts. We hope the below examples will offer you guidance in thinking of how this work can be done in your disciplines and contexts.

- ✦ [Decolonial approaches to the legal curriculum](#)
- ✦ [University of Westminster Green Fund Scheme](#)
- ✦ [Pedagogies for Social Justice](#)
- ✦ [Students as Co-Creators](#)
- ✦ [Mental Health, Design and Wellbeing: A Co-Design Workshop](#)
- ✦ [Understanding Genetics to Counter Racial Discrimination](#)
- ✦ [Designing Authentic Assessment and Activities for a level 6 module](#)
- ✦ [Evaluating Assessment for Learning in Introduction to Academic Practice](#)
- ✦ [Unsettled Subjects / Confronting Questions: Reading Group](#)
- ✦ [EDI and authentic assessments](#)
- ✦ [Inclusive Curriculum Consultants, Kingston University London](#)

“Partnership is at the heart of learning at Westminster. I hope this Framework inspires you to find new ways to collaborate, and to co-create new knowledge that improves our environment and our university.”

Dr Andy Pitchford, Head of Centre for Education and Teaching Innovation, University of Westminster

“I understood that partnership goes beyond university collaboration. It’s about making things happen together, by accepting each other’s strengths and weaknesses.”

Ruxandra Calin, University of Westminster and Students as Co-Creators Ambassador Alumni



Getting involved in Student Partnership

The Student Partnership team, situated within the Centre for Education and Teaching Innovation (CETI) offers tools and runs programmes through which students and staff can begin their partnerships and collaborations. Below are some options through which you can engage and work in partnership:

- ✦ Workshops on working in partnership offered by the Student Partnership team
- ✦ Students as Co-Creators programme
- ✦ Westminster Student Partnership Ambassadors programme
- ✦ You can apply for any of the above listed schemes run by the university
- ✦ Access our student partnership reading list [here](#) which can help you in your partnership practices

If you would like to discuss your thoughts and ideas or are looking for other ways to get involved, please get in touch with the Student Partnership team at studentpartnership@westminster.ac.uk
Find out more about our work here: <https://cti.westminster.ac.uk/about-student-partnership/>



“Student Partnership isn't just about collaborating with staff and students. But rather, it is building that deeper connection on who we are, our place in the institutional community and wider society, and how the ability and power of our collaborative voice are far greater than we can ever imagine. My experience with Student Partnership at Westminster has inspired me to see beyond my academic study and facilitated my growth and development as an individual.”

Kiu Sum, Ambassador and Alumni Students as Co-Creators; Lecturer in Nutrition at Solent University, Southampton

“The Students as Co-Creators projects for which I have been the academic partner, have given rise to outputs that I have been able to use in my course and module planning and delivery. I feel that Students as Co-creators is an important and valuable initiative which both complements and extends staff and student discussions here at the University of Westminster.”

Chrystalla Ferrier, Senior Lecturer, School of Life Sciences, University of Westminster

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