



# Bristol Student Partnership Vision



University of  
BRISTOL

*“There is abundant evidence that the most effective higher education environments are ones in which students are diligently involved as part of a community of learners. As part of this engagement, they work together with academics to enhance teaching, assure quality and maintain standards. In these contexts, they understand themselves as active partners with academic staff in a process of continual improvement of the learning experience.”*

**(Ramsden, The Future of Higher Education Teaching and the Student Experience, 2008)**

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*“Conceiving of students as consumers is a thoroughly impoverished way of describing the relationship between students and their institutions, which ought to be one of mutual trust, care and respect. The consumer never grows, is never challenged, is never made to understand the vastness of the knowledge that exists and that has yet to be created. The consumer is not asked to imagine unthought-of possibilities...the consumer model reduces complex interactions to mere transactions and de-values the role and expertise of educators”.*

**(NUS - A Manifesto for Partnership, 2012)**

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*Partnership working is based on the values of: openness; trust and honesty; agreed shared goals and values; and regular communication between the partners. . . partnership working recognises that all members in the partnership have legitimate, but different, perceptions and experiences. By working together to a common agreed purpose, steps can be taken that lead to enhancements for all concerned. Partnerships reflect a mature relationship based on mutual respect between students and staff.*

**(QAA, Student Engagement)- Advice and Guidance**

*Relationships between staff, students and peers promote and enable student engagement and success in Higher Education. These should be nurtured pre-entry, in the classroom and in the delivery of professional services.*

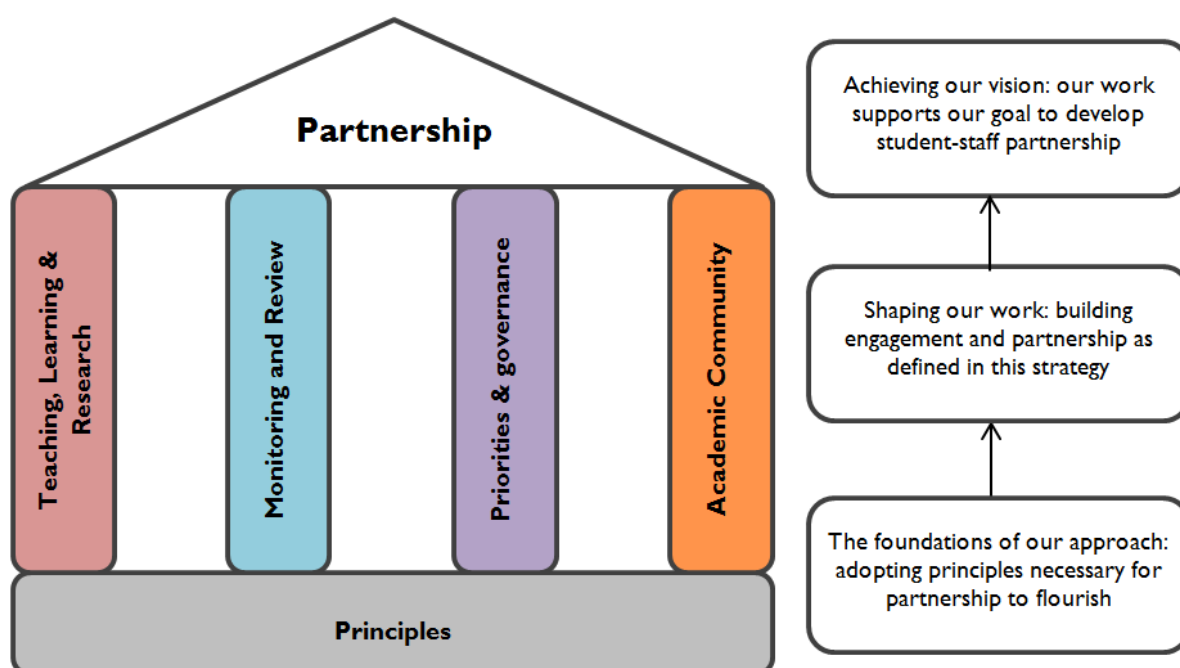
**(What Works, HEA, 2012)**

## Our Vision

This Vision sets out what we mean by student engagement and partnership, it will be jointly owned by the University and its student bodies. It is intended to shape our thinking and future plans, and to help us identify and prioritise work that must be taken forward if we are to be successful in achieving our aims.

The Vision sets out:

- Our **vision** for student partnership
- **Principles** that should define our approach to partnership
- **Indicators** that will define our success in achieving our vision, and form a basis for ongoing evaluation and monitoring.



This Vision sets out students' and staff joint ambition to develop opportunities for students to engage with all aspects of their university experience. We have taken the deliberate decision to frame these ambitions in the language of partnership, focusing not on the process of student engagement, but on the goals of that approach.

Partnership working between students and staff requires the nurturing of a collaborative culture in which our activities operate and develop, and through which we maximise the learning and developmental potential of interactions between students and staff. It requires an environment where the priorities, content and direction of students' university experience are determined by students and staff together.

Our Vision requires close partnership working between students and staff. We will jointly communicate and promote the achievements we accomplish together, and encourage students to make use of representative channels which we operate collaboratively. We will create opportunities for both individual and collective student engagement, blending individual engagement with collective, accountable, democratic decision-making to maximise the ways in which students have a say in shaping their experiences. Our model of student engagement and partnership will recognise that different students may want to engage to varying extents from straightforward participatory feedback to deep involvement in joint initiatives.

Creating opportunities for students to engage as partners in their educational and wider University experience is fundamental to creating a University community based on scholarship, challenge and learning. It should help to fulfil our commitment to:

- Collaborative, innovative academic practice and not a consumer model of higher education in which students are the passive recipients of knowledge and skills.
- Opportunities for students to actively develop leadership capacity, skills to create change, and an ability to influence societal challenges and complex organisations.
- Employability and enterprise, by allowing students to engage in current issues shaping their discipline, ensure their education and broader experience relates to their passions and interests, and develops skills of use in their future endeavours.

## Our Vision

Students and staff will benefit from a culture of partnership, in which they are:

1. Members of a shared University community, engaged with one another's pursuits and aspirations
2. Joint owners of monitoring, review, and oversight processes
3. Equal partners in developing student-facing policy, priorities, and strategic ambitions
4. Co-creators of discursive, interactive learning experiences

## Partnership Principles

Successful student partnership on student-facing issues will demonstrate:

- **Partnership at all stages.** Partnership means an approach in which students are involved with staff in work stretching from the ideas stage, through to development, planning, decision, implementation, and monitoring.
- **Contributions are equally valued** Partnership requires recognition that staff and students are equals, with different perspectives, experience and skills, but the same amount to contribute.
- **Collective and individual engagement.** Opportunities should exist for all students to engage, and engagement may happen in a variety of ways; collectively through student representation and individually, through teaching and learning, undertaking research and completing surveys - achieving partnership requires both these approaches.
- **Commitment, resourcing, and change.** Developing partnership approaches requires commitment and an open-mindedness to change; processes and structures may need re-engineering or re-developing to allow for a partnership approach.
- **Encouragement and respect.** Many students will require time, space, training and encouragement to develop the confidence to engage in University processes as equals, and staff will require support and guidance to develop partnership with their students.
- **Valuing success.** Students and staff working in partnership, and enhancements resulting from this partnership working should be communicated and celebrated.
- **Inclusivity, diversity and equality.** It is important to ensure a diverse range of student and staff voices are engaged in partnership working to ensure an inclusive environment.

## **Indicators of Partnership**

Institutionally achieving our vision of partnership will require consideration of the following indicators which will underpin our work (however not all indicators will be relevant to all schools/professional services).

### **1. Teaching, Learning & Research:**

- (a) Students and staff develop discursive approaches in which students have opportunities to actively contribute to the development of their teaching, learning and research experience.
- (b) The content and delivery of teaching and learning, skills development and training are flexible and receptive to student feedback.
- (c) Students and staff work together to review and enhance the curriculum and associated pedagogy.
- (d) Students have opportunity to undertake research designed to enhance the student experience.

### **2. Monitoring and Review:**

- (a) Students and staff engage in processes of developing monitoring, scrutiny and review across schools, faculties and professional services, including setting criteria for success for student-facing activities.
- (b) Students and staff engage with quality assurance and enhancement processes with equal opportunities to contribute.

### **3. Priorities and Governance:**

- (a) Students and staff are involved as partners at all levels of student-facing decision-making, including development of vision and strategy.
- (b) Student priorities are built into work plans, and students and staff work together to identify areas of focus and implement new initiatives.
- (c) Democratic student representation on student facing decision-making bodies is widespread and engages a wide range of students through consultation and feedback.

### **4. Academic Community:**

- (a) Achievements of students and staff beyond the programme of study are valued, celebrated and supported.
- (b) Students and staff form cohesive research communities and academic support networks.
- (c) Opportunities are available for students and staff to mix regularly in informal environments.