

From tokenistic to authentic: Meaningful co- creation with students

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Structure



1. Authentic co-creation



2. Our approach



**3. Dimensions of
partnership**



4. Reflections

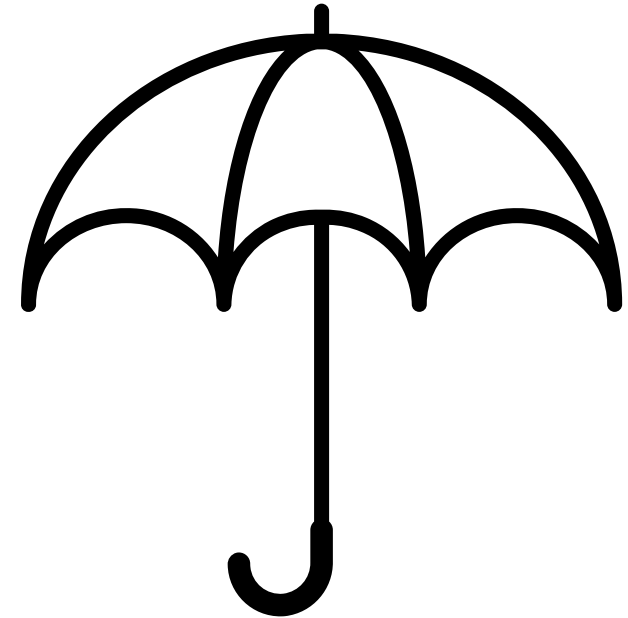


Authentic co-creation

Tokenism

- Partnership approaches are the antithesis of the 'students as consumer' model.
- Yet the neo-liberal university often uses the term to describe the way students and staff work together, e.g. NSS.
- Leading to tokenism rather than authentic engagement.

Student-Staff Partnership



Co-creators Co-producers Co-designers
Change agents Co-inquirers
Students as partners

Join the Vevox
session

Go to **vevox.app**

Enter the session ID:
139-897-567

Or scan the QR code

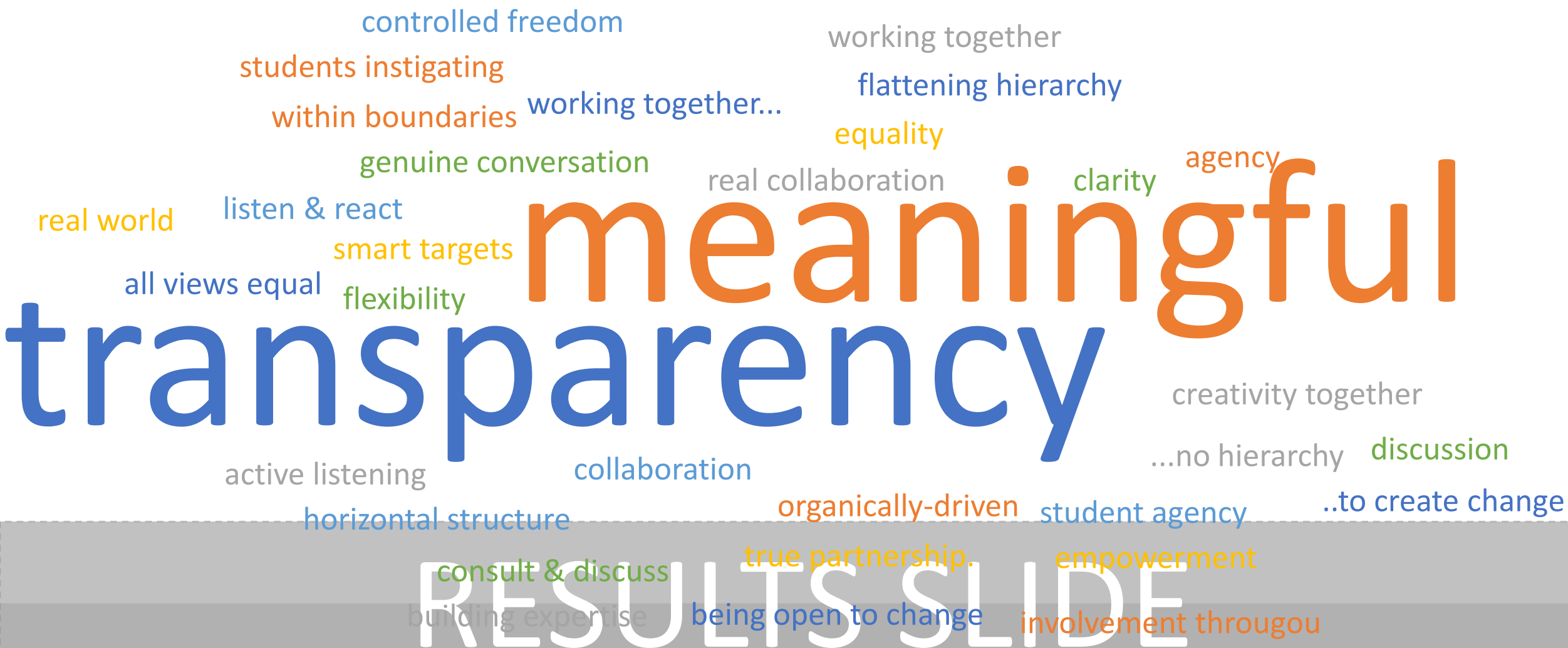




In fewer than
20 characters,
what does
'authentic co-
creation'
between
students and
staff mean to
you?



What does 'authentic co-creation' between students and staff mean to you?



Student Engagement Continuum

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	PARTNER	CONTROL
					
GOAL	To provide students with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives and solutions.	To obtain student feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with students throughout the process to ensure that their concerns and aspirations are consistently understood.	To partner with students in each aspect of the initiative from identification to solution.	Students design and lead initiatives that matter to them and are in control of final decision-making.
STYLE	"Here's what's happening."	"Here are some options, what do you think?"	"Here's a problem, what ideas do you have?"	"Let's identify the issues and work together to develop a plan and implement a solution."	"You care about this issue and are leading an initiative, how can we support you?"

Authentic co-creation

“There is a subtle, but extremely important, **difference between an institution that ‘listens’ to students** and responds accordingly, **and an institution that gives students the opportunity to explore areas that they believe to be significant, to recommend solutions** and to bring about the required changes.”

- Dunne in Dunne and Zandstra (2011, 4)

It's all about
relationships

“Fundamentally, collaborative working with students as partners is about building **meaningful relationships** that **challenge traditional** teacher-student **dynamics** and break down hierarchies to reposition **students and staff as colleagues and peers** to one another.”

Healey (2023, 6)

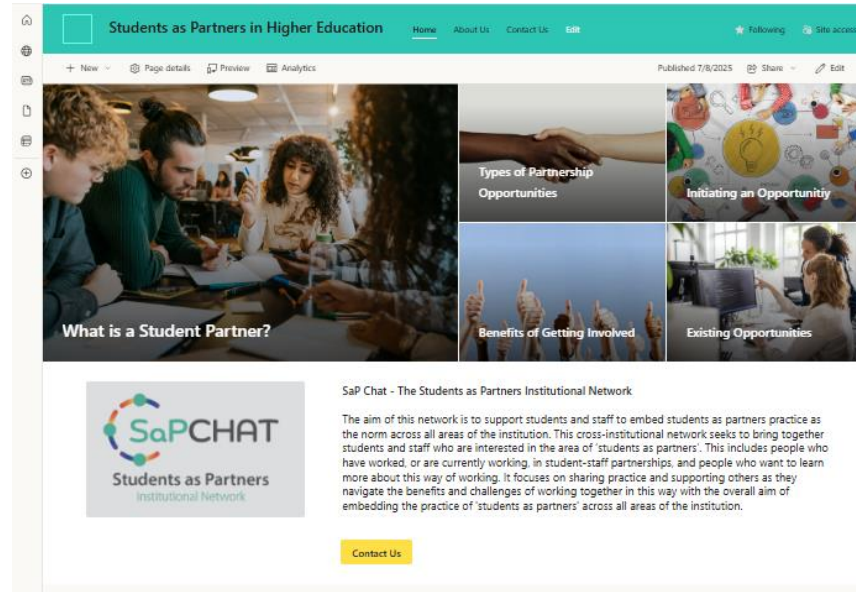


Our approach



A Guide to Working with Students as Partners

Ruth L. Healey
2023



Student Guide to Working with Staff and Students as Partners

Millie Leach and Ruth L. Healey
2025

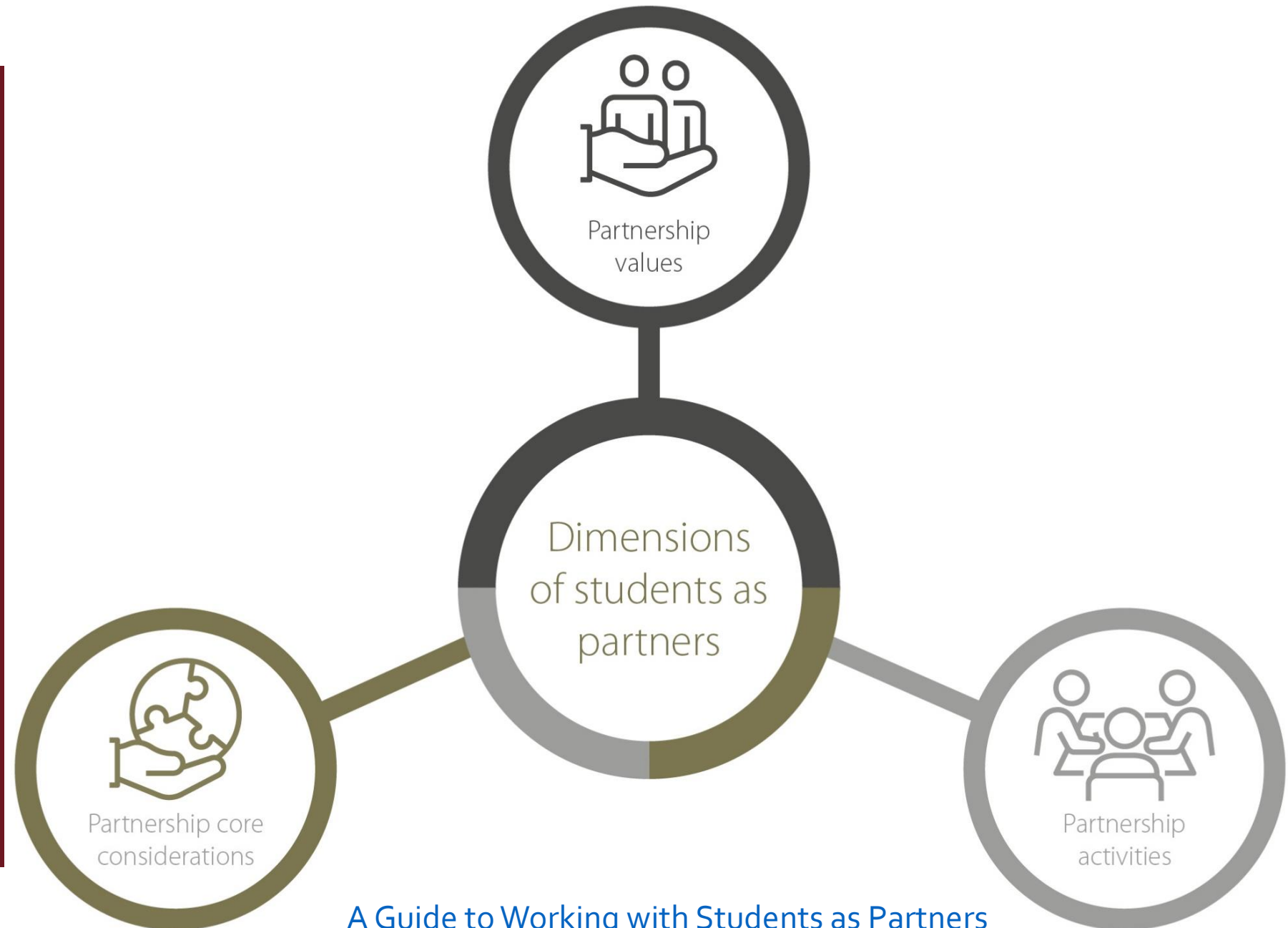
Developing authenticity

- Evidence-based holistic framework (grounded in a systematic analysis of existing guidance from 50 resources)
- Separate guidance for staff and students
- Both developed in conjunction with the target audience (in form and content)
- Demonstrated authentic approaches in context of institution



Dimensions of partnership

Dimensions of partnership



[A Guide to Working with Students as Partners](#)



Core considerations for authentic co-creation

Assumptions
and
expectations

Power
relations and
hierarchy

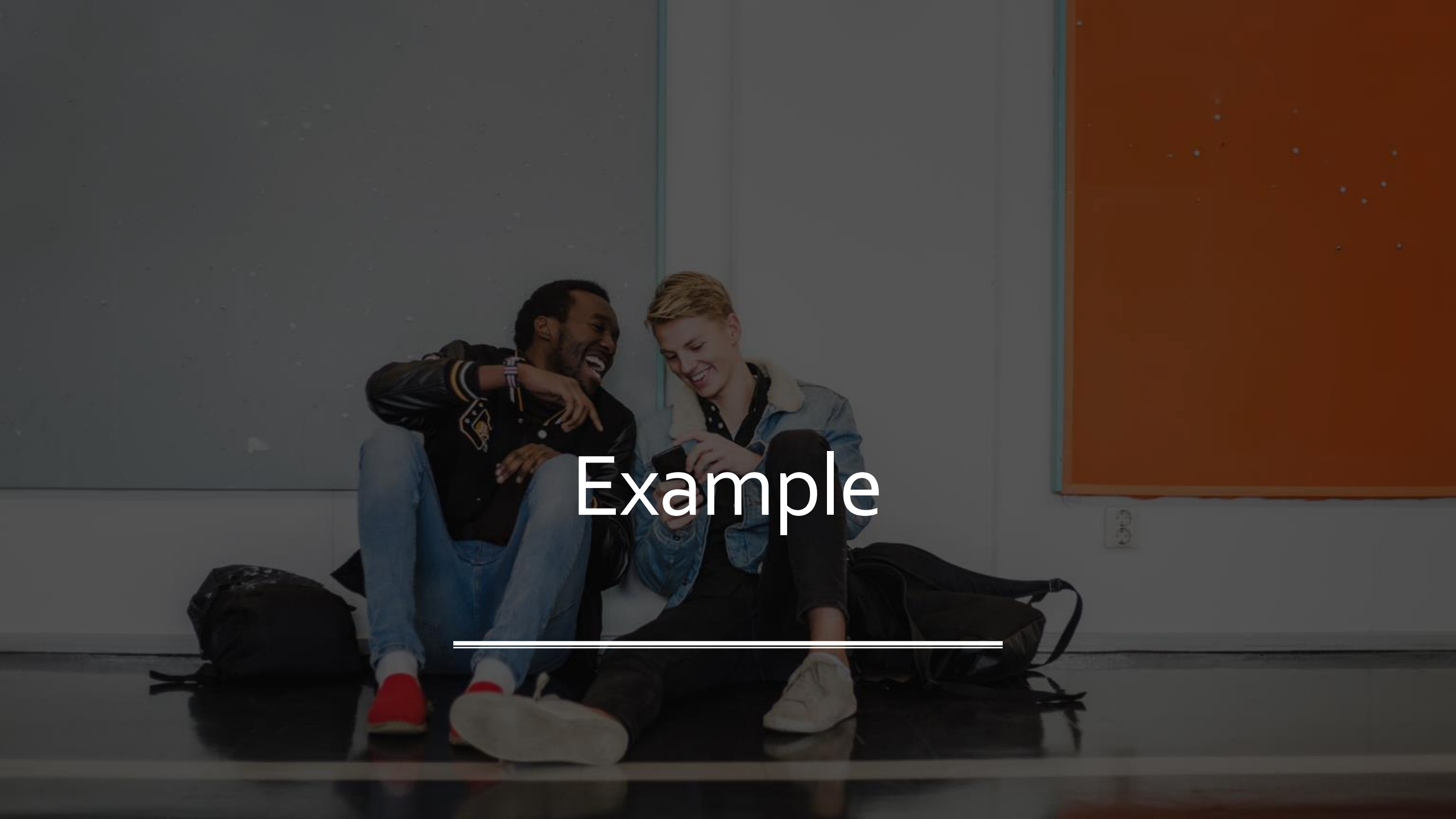
Diversity and
inclusivity

Emotions,
attitudes, and
behaviours

Time and
commitment

Appropriate
recognition
and reward

Spaces for
failure

A photograph of a man and a woman sitting on a dark, reflective floor against a light-colored wall. The man, on the left, is wearing a dark jacket with a logo and blue jeans, leaning back and smiling. The woman, on the right, is wearing a denim jacket and dark pants, holding a smartphone and looking at it. Two backpacks are on the floor next to them. A large orange bulletin board is on the wall to the right. The word "Example" is written in white, sans-serif font across the center of the image.

Example

Student Learning Consultants Programme

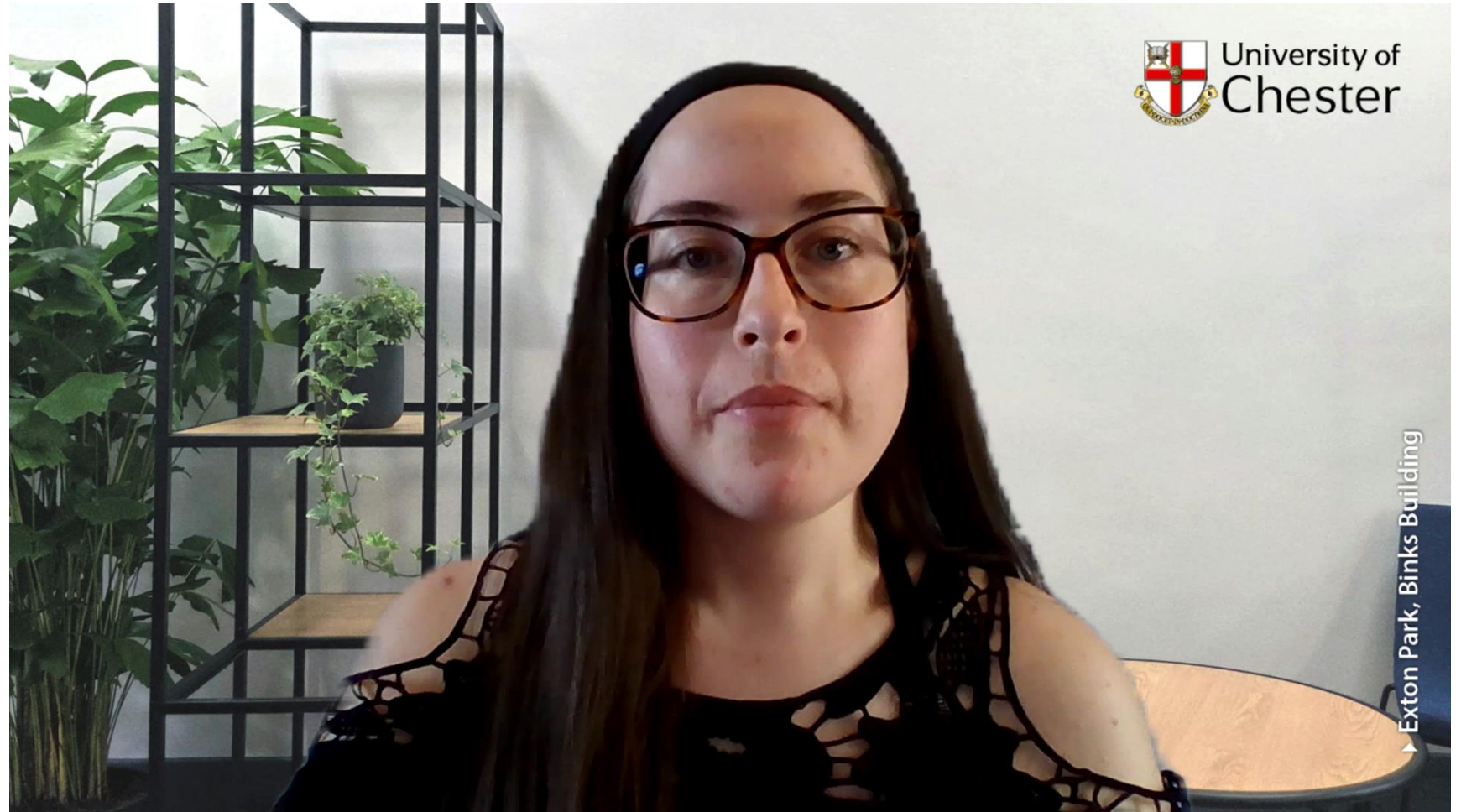
Projects

- SaP Chat: The Students as Partners Institutional Network' Student Partner
- As-is educational technology student review
- Student Guide to Working with Staff and Students as Partners
- Working with students to solicit and respond to student feedback
- Understanding student perceptions about staff use of AI for teaching
- Moodle content transfer project & co-design

Student Learning Consultants

Course	Level	Background
BSc Games Development	5	Domestic
Doctor of Public Health	8	International
Physician Associate Studies	7	Domestic
MSc Advanced Computer Science	7	International
LLB Law	5	International
BSc Cybersecurity	5	Domestic

Millie's reflections as a student partner



Impact of the programme

“**Radical**, and I don't say that lightly. Student input has really **changed** how we approach co-design... I am planning the next phase of workshops... I am **full of excitement** to see what **insightful** and **supportive** comments our SLCs can bring to the conversation”

- **Project Lead**

“The programme **significantly** impacted me by **enhancing my skills** in collaboration, communication, and facilitation... This experience **improved my ability** to work in partnership, adapt to diverse needs, and drive initiatives that **empower both students and staff** in the educational process”

- **Student Learning Consultant**

Further case studies

CAID

Centre for Academic
Innovation and Development



A Guide to Working with Students as Partners

University of Chester Case Studies
2025

Second Edition.
Edited by Ruth L Healey.

A photograph of a lecture hall with students seated at desks. In the foreground, a young man and woman are looking at a laptop. The man is wearing a light blue denim shirt and a black watch, and the woman is wearing a patterned sweater. Other students are visible in the background, some looking at their phones or papers. The overall atmosphere is quiet and focused.

Reflections

Reflections and learnings for authentic practice

- Cultural change takes time.
- Students need to be involved in developing SaP at the institutional level
- Support needs to speak to both students and staff (both content and form)
- The benefits of SaP practice at the institution need to be demonstrated to show that it can work in their context
- Having the academic development team on board is important - they have the greatest reach to staff across the institution

The background of the slide features a faded, grayscale photograph of a group of students in a classroom or meeting. They are seated at tables, looking towards the front of the room, suggesting an academic or collaborative environment.

From tokenistic to authentic: Conclusions

If students as partners and change agents are to be truly integrated into HE then the **nature of higher education will need to be reconceptualised.**

“universities need to move towards creating inclusive scholarly knowledge-building communities. ... **The notion of inclusive scholarly knowledge-building communities invites us to consider new ideas about who the scholars are in universities and how they might work in partnership**” (Brew, 2007, 4).

Questions or
comments?

