

Using the Student Learning Experience (SLE) model to inform institutional strategy development #10



Summary and Reflective Questions

This podcast captures the approaches that Forth Valley College have taken to using the sparqs [Student Learning Experience \(SLE\) model](#) as a foundation for developing a new institutional-level Student Learning Experience Strategy.

The podcast is divided into three parts, outlined below, each of which has accompanying key points and reflective questions within this document:

- [Part 1](#): Introductions and rationale for using sparqs SLE model as a foundation for institutional strategy development (5 mins 31 secs).
- [view Part 1 transcript](#).
- [Part 2](#): Getting started, progress to date, and governance (5 mins 55 secs).
- [view Part 2 transcript](#).
- [Part 3](#): What worked or didn't work, practical tips for colleagues (6 mins 48 secs).
- [view Part 3 transcript](#).

Suggestions for using this resource:

- As a catalyst for discussion 'in advance of' or 'during' strategy development activities (for Boards and/or senior management teams in tertiary institutions).
- As a catalyst for group discussion during staff development sessions.
- As a self-directed reflective tool for colleagues to engage with on an individual basis.

Format

- Asynchronous resources, 3 x audio files (each of which are 5-7 minutes in length).
- Self-directed reflective activity, or prompt for group discussion.

Intended audiences

- Board members.
- Senior Leaders and academic staff.
- Students' association staff and sabbatical officers.

Acronyms

- SLE = Student Learning Experience
- sparqs = student partnerships in quality Scotland

Mapping to Professional Standards

[Professional Standards for Lecturers in Scotland's Colleges](#) (GTCS): 1.1.1; 1.2.1; 1.3.1; 1.3.4; 1.3.5; 2.1.1; 2.1.3; 2.2.2/5/11; 2.5.1/3/6; ; 3.5.3/4.

[Professional Standards Framework 2023 \(PSF 2023\)](#) (Advance HE): V4, V5, K1, K5

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Part 1: Introductions and rationale for using the sparqs (SLE) model as a foundation for institutional strategy development

[Listen here](#) (5 mins 31 secs)

Part 1 of this podcast introduces listeners to our guest speaker, Rob McDermott, Head of Learning and Quality at Forth Valley College.

Rob outlines the rationale for why the Forth Valley College team chose to use the sparqs [Student Learning Experience \(SLE\) model](#) as a foundation for developing their new institutional-level [Student Learning Experience Strategy 2025-2030](#).

Key Points

- Recognising the value of a sector-led model that has been co-created with students, and tested and endorsed by the Scottish tertiary sector.
- The SLE model addresses the needs of Scottish colleges.
- Why reinvent the wheel? Easy win and time-efficient approach.

Related Reflective Questions to consider:

1. Do you currently have an institutional level strategy that addresses the Student Learning Experience?
 - a. If no, why is this?
 - b. If yes, is this standalone or part of a wider strategy (e.g. Learning and Teaching strategy)?
2. Is Student Partnership explicitly stated in your strategy?
 - a. If no, why is this?
3. What might persuade your colleagues to value the sparqs Student Learning Experience (SLE) model as a foundation for institutional strategy development or renewal?
4. Can you personally outline the role that the sparqs Student Learning Experience (SLE) model plays within Scotland's Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF)?

Part 2: Getting started, progress to date, and governance

[Listen here](#) (5 mins 55 secs)

Part 2 discusses key drivers for change and strategy development, both within Forth Valley College and the wider Scottish tertiary sector. Rob outlines timelines, approaches and governance related aspects of their strategy development process, as well as sharing examples of tangible outcomes or impact measures that have been embedded to evaluate the success of their strategy implementation over its five year timeline.

Key points

- Key driver for change – changing types of learners, need to reconsider what we do for the student experience.
- Additional drivers for change - change in senior leadership, TQEF and institutional requirements.
- Journey so far at Forth Valley College – developed 5-year institutional level strategy over relatively short timeframe.
- Governance – ‘presented to’ and ‘endorsed by’ Board and senior leadership team.
- Approaches – started by defining key principles, focus on measurables, targets and evidence. Alignment with annual Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP) and TQEF. Justifies various elements to the Board and senior leadership team.
- Examples – e.g. increasing course rep numbers by 10%, increasing engagement with Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey by 10-15%.

Related Reflective Questions to consider:

1. What are the current key drivers for change at your institution?
 - a. Have you asked your students the same question?
 - b. Do staff and student responses align or differ? What might this tell you?
2. How might you embed student partnership approaches into strategy development at your institution?
3. What role will the SLE model play in your annual SEAP and cyclical TQER visits?

Part 3: What worked and tips for colleagues

[Listen here](#) (6 mins 48 secs)

Part 3 discusses approaches that worked well for strategy development at Forth Valley College, including identification of tangible measurables and outcomes that could be used to monitor progress. The strategic importance of focusing around the Student Learning Experience as the core ethos for Scottish tertiary institutions is also endorsed.

Key points

- Using the SLE model as a foundation accelerated the overall strategy development at Forth Valley College. Also acted as a catalyst for reviewing key processes within academic and quality timelines, e.g. programme review.
- Value of a single and practical core document that is continually revisited with stakeholders during strategy development and implementation.
- Measurables and monitoring progress will be key to successful strategy implementation and also contributed to building a strong buy-in for the new strategy from the senior leadership team and Board.
- Recognition that the student experience is at the heart of everything we do within tertiary institutions, and we need to be discussing this with all colleagues (not just learning and teaching staff).

Related Reflective Questions to consider:

1. What tangible outcomes or measures would be appropriate and impactful at your institution?
2. How do you talk about the importance of the Student Learning Experience at your institution? Is this consistent across all teams?
3. What are your current priorities for enhancing the Student Learning Experience at your institution? (see [Diamond 9 activity](#) and [session plan](#)).
 - a. Have you asked your students the same question?
 - b. Do staff and student responses align or differ? What might this tell you?