

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

Part 1

Transcript

0:00 Catriona Bell

Welcome colleagues and thank you for joining this sparqs podcast.

0:03 Catriona Bell

My name is Catriona Bell and I'm working with sparqs on a project focused around student partnership and staff development.

0:10 Catriona Bell

And as part of this, we've curated case studies from different Scottish colleges, universities and Higher Education institutions.

0:16 Catriona Bell

And our aim is to share practice and ideas about how you might use two key resources which have been developed by sparqs to support the Scottish tertiary sector.

0:25 Catriona Bell

So these are the new Student Learning Experience model and Scotland's Ambition for Student Partnership.

0:30 Catriona Bell

So today we're going to focus on the Student Learning Experience or SLE model and how it's been used strategically at institutional level to inform the development of a new Student Experience Strategy.

0:42 Catriona Bell

So it's my great pleasure to be joined by Rob McDermott from Forth Valley College.

0:46 Catriona Bell

And Rob, can I pass over to you to introduce yourself, please?

0:50 Rob McDermott

Hi, my name is Rob McDermott.

0:52 Rob McDermott

I am Head of Learning and Quality at Forth Valley College.

0:57 Rob McDermott

My responsibility is wide-ranging, as it says, learning and quality, but one of the main focuses we've got is working very closely with the Students' Association, round about partnership working, and the main focus for myself and my team is really to promote a good, positive student experience.

1:16 Catriona Bell
Great stuff.

1:16 Catriona Bell
Thanks, Rob.

1:17 Catriona Bell
Thanks for your time this morning.

1:18 Catriona Bell
We really appreciate hearing from you about how you've been working at Forth Valley College recently with the SLE model.

1:24 Catriona Bell
So I wondered if we could start with just a one-minute overview of how you've used the SLE or Student Learning Experience model in your work, please.

1:32 Rob McDermott
So...

1:34 Rob McDermott
I'll fess up to this one.

1:36 Rob McDermott
I'm involved in the Joint Advisory Group at sparqs, so therefore I was very kind of au fait with the development round about the Student Learning Experience, and I had quite a lot of commitment to it and had been involved in the development of it.

1:49 Rob McDermott
So it's something that was in the forefront of my mind and something that I understood very well.

1:55 Rob McDermott
We had recently been tasked as a team, myself and led by the Vice Principal Student Experience, Learning Student Experience, Sarah Higgins. We'd been tasked to relook at a new strategy, a new learning, a student strategy or Student Experience Strategy.

2:12 Rob McDermott
Myself, the Head of Inclusion and the three Directors of Curriculum across the college, we've been asked to look at.

2:22 Rob McDermott
Re-looking and revisiting the strategy around about student experience, and actually the learning student experience strategy that has come from sparqs, was a model that fitted beautifully into this conversation.

2:36 Rob McDermott
My question to them was, Why do we reinvent the wheel when there's something that's been done?

2:41 Rob McDermott

Sector-led, sector-developed with lots and lots of student input in it that we would probably never have had the time to deal with.

2:49 Rob McDermott

So therefore it was...

2:50 Rob McDermott

I hate to use the phrase, but it was a kind of nearly oven-ready and a little student experience.

2:57 Rob McDermott

Maybe we shouldn't, maybe we won't use that phrase, but anyway, so it was oven-ready in that sense.

3:01 Catriona Bell

Okay.

3:02 Catriona Bell

That's great, because I was going to ask you what made you choose the SLE model as the basis for your strategy development, but I think you've just touched on that.

3:08 Catriona Bell

Is there anything else that added into the mix for you?

3:11 Rob McDermott

I think it gave us the breadth of the things that we were looking for, but it also gave us an opportunity to perhaps tease out some of the things that we were looking for and actually maybe didn't quite fit into Forth Valley College model, perhaps not into the college model.

3:27 Rob McDermott

...in the sense that there were elements in there that perhaps, remember, that I suppose it's been designed to cover all of the different tertiary institutions in that sense.

3:38 Rob McDermott

So, you know, it's oven-ready to a certain extent, but yet there are little bits that we perhaps we would probably add to or maybe take out that make it Forth Valley.

3:49 Catriona Bell

Okay.

3:49 Catriona Bell

OK, that's really good to hear.

3:51 Catriona Bell

And what helped in persuading your colleagues to see the value in this approach?

3:55 Catriona Bell

Did you need to persuade them at all?

3:57 Rob McDermott
No, not at all.

3:58 Rob McDermott
I think the interesting thing, as I suppose, as the person who probably leads on Student Experience, and actually having that ability to sit on external groups, you know, I become the expert to a certain extent in the room because I'm engaged with a lot of this, you know, a lot of the thinking round about it, working with sparqs themselves.

4:19 Rob McDermott
And working as, I suppose, also part of the quality group and been involved in the TQER, the review, the framework.

4:27 Rob McDermott
In many ways, what it does is, I'm kind of probably steeped in that more than perhaps some of my other colleagues are because they are very operational, they're very much curriculum based, whereas myself and perhaps Sarah Tervit, who's the Head of Inclusion and Student Services, very much sees a whole student experience thing

4:44 Rob McDermott
So it was an easy win, because it was something on the table that they all want.

4:49 Rob McDermott
I recognise that.

4:52 Rob McDermott
This is what we want.

4:54 Rob McDermott
And that was to their benefit.

4:56 Rob McDermott
Plus, it saved us a bit of time, to be honest.

4:58 Catriona Bell
Yeah, absolutely.

4:59 Catriona Bell
Yeah.

5:00 Catriona Bell
And as you say, sector-led and co-created with students as well.

5:03 Rob McDermott
Absolutely.

5:03 Rob McDermott
All of those elements are really important.

5:05 Rob McDermott
And that was the convincing thing..

5:07 Rob McDermott

I think I've already said, we would never have the time to really workshop it the way sparqs has, and actually say this has been rubber stamped by...

5:18 Rob McDermott

...a student-focused organisation that goes across the sector.

5:22 Rob McDermott

That was another winner as well for us.

5:25 Catriona Bell

Yeah, really important points.

5:27 Catriona Bell

Thank you and helpful for anybody else in other institutions who's...

5:30 Catriona Bell

...who's listening to this, definitely.