

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

## Part 3

### Transcript

0:00 Catriona Bell

And so it sounds like you've made massive progress in a relatively short space of time.

0:04 Catriona Bell

Have you got any reflections on what worked and what didn't work as you went through the process at all?

0:10 Rob McDermott

I think what, I think, we always need to, with any strategy and something like this, it's about continually drip feeding it to people.

0:21 Rob McDermott

It's about continually referencing it and saying, well, actually, this is what we said we would do.

0:27 Rob McDermott

This is what this looks like.

0:29 Rob McDermott

And then also making sure that if that's, if the student experience is the core of what we do right at the centre, then everything else should fall in round about it.

0:40 Rob McDermott

So we went back and revisited our own self-evaluation process round about the student experience.

0:48 Rob McDermott

We will be asking those questions.

0:50 Rob McDermott

How have we achieved this?

0:51 Rob McDermott

Again, the measurables, but also in terms of, say, a programme review, we've looked at the Student Learning Experience within the context of revisiting programme review.

1:02 Rob McDermott

Are we asking the right questions at programme review?

1:05 Rob McDermott

Are we demonstrating true partnership working at programme review?

1:09 Rob McDermott

Are we?

1:10 Rob McDermott

Yeah, so that's one part.

1:12 Rob McDermott

We also gather in the college, we also gather something which is called Listening to Learners.

1:19 Rob McDermott

Where it's a survey like the Student Satisfaction Engagement Survey, but it asks more questions and those questions will reference or will be based on the actual learning, Student Learning Experience strategy that we've created.

1:35 Rob McDermott

And that again will be a measure that says, you know, these are the kind of questions we should be at, you know, asking.

1:41 Rob McDermott

And that then feeds into our own self-evaluation process, which will then feed into our SEAPs, which will then feed into...

1:48 Rob McDermott

...that our returns to the Funding Council and actually will build for our seven-year cyclical process.

1:55 Rob McDermott

So in many ways, it's a core document that should seep into everything round about us, you know, and it's convincing people that here is a core document.

2:06 Rob McDermott

You know, here is a core document that is really all about the student, and is really all about why we're here.

2:11 Rob McDermott

And that's always a conversation you need to have with the finance guys and the janitorial staff.

2:17 Rob McDermott

And do you know what I mean?

2:19 Rob McDermott

It's that idea that this is core.

2:21 Rob McDermott

You need to understand this because all the other stuff doesn't matter if we're not getting that student experience right.

2:27 Catriona Bell

Yeah, no.

2:28 Rob McDermott

And that's a challenge.

2:29 Rob McDermott

There is a challenge.

2:30 Catriona Bell

Yeah, no, but it's such a powerful insight.

2:33 Catriona Bell

I think that, you know, if you get the student experience right and that's at the core of everything, then everything else builds from it.

2:38 Catriona Bell

But you've articulated that.

2:39 Catriona Bell

So...

2:40 Catriona Bell

Powerfully.

2:42 Catriona Bell

I was going to ask you if you have any tips or reflections to share with colleagues in the sector, but I think you've just shared a pretty massive one with us there.

2:48 Catriona Bell

Is there anything else that you'd like to add?

2:50 Rob McDermott

I just think, I think sometimes, this is a big commitment here from us to the learning experience, a big commitment here.

2:59 Rob McDermott

We've kind of, we've tore it apart.

3:02 Rob McDermott


We've now got four or five bubbles and that mean, that are very strategic, and actually this is something that's fairly concrete.

3:09 Rob McDermott

That's what I liked about the Student Learning Experience in the first place.

3:12 Rob McDermott

And I think our strategy should be something that can be, and we can be held up against that strategy to say we have achieved X, Y & Z.



3:21 Rob McDermott

I've worked with strategies in the past.

3:22 Rob McDermott

We've all worked with strategy in the past that are so global that actually nobody, people go, what does that actually mean?

3:29 Rob McDermott

Do you know?

3:30 Rob McDermott

What does that actually mean?

3:32 Rob McDermott

Whereas I don't think this is, this is a very clear, this is what this means.

3:37 Rob McDermott

And I think maybe as colleagues across the sector, let's look to our strategies, let's make it measurable, let's make it something that the Board can understand, the senior management team can understand, the Students' Association can understand, the students themselves can understand, the lecturing staff can understand, everybody can understand and they can hang their hats on.

3:58 Rob McDermott

And that's what I think we've tried to do.

0:04 Catriona Bell

Yeah, no, that is powerful stuff, Rob, definitely.

4:04 Catriona Bell

And I'm just reflecting on what you've shared with us over the last few minutes.

4:07 Catriona Bell

So we've started talking about a Student Experience Strategy that you've built around the sparqs Student Learning Experience model.

4:14 Catriona Bell

But you've touched on, we start with student partnership.

4:16 Catriona Bell

We've talked about strategy development.

4:19 Catriona Bell

You've talked about how it embeds with quality and the SEAPs and the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework.

4:24 Catriona Bell

You've talked about it being endorsed by the Board, and governance at the highest level of the...

4:29 Catriona Bell

...of the college, that it needs to be measurable and impactful.

4:34 Catriona Bell

And it's the core document that hinges everything together for Forth Valley College is what I've heard from you.

4:41 Catriona Bell

But is there anything else that you wanted to add before we wrap up at all?

4:46 Rob McDermott

No, I think that's it.

4:47 Rob McDermott

I think it always helps that somebody else has done all the hard work and we just added to it.

4:52 Rob McDermott

I love that.

4:53 Rob McDermott

Do you know that...

4:54 Rob McDermott

That's effective collaboration.

4:56 Rob McDermott

Do you know?

4:57 Rob McDermott

And you know, and there's, that I have had the benefit of being engaged with sparqs round about this one.

5:04 Rob McDermott

And that in itself has been really, really useful.

5:07 Rob McDermott

You know, and you know, gives, I suppose, for me, as I've already mentioned, gives a certain amount of kudos to my thinking round about this.

5:15 Rob McDermott

It's not coming out of the blue this stuff.

5:17 Rob McDermott

This is stuff that's been tried and tested across lots and lots of, you know, with lots and lots of colleagues, students' associations, college students, you know, sabbatical officers, the whole kit and caboodle.

5:28 Rob McDermott

So in many ways, you know, it works and it's tried and well, it's tried and tested as an approach.

5:37 Rob McDermott

I think maybe we need to come back in five years' time and really review it and reflect on it.

5:43 Rob McDermott

Five years sounds a long time in college, isn't it?

5:47 Catriona Bell

Well, even you've got your impact and your measurables coming in even after a year.

5:52 Catriona Bell

So we'll be able to revisit, hopefully, and catch up with you and see how it's going.

5:55 Catriona Bell

But thanks so much, Rob, for your time, for sharing such valuable insights.

6:00 Catriona Bell

And I think this possibly wasn't a use of the SLE model that sparqs had anticipated, but it's really fascinating and powerful to capture it.

6:09 Catriona Bell

And as you say, you've got a co-created, sector-led...

6:13 Catriona Bell

...reference that you've used as your starting point and accelerated your strategy development from that.

6:18 Catriona Bell

So thank you.

6:20 Catriona Bell

Congratulations to you and your colleagues on what you've achieved in a pretty short space of time.

6:25 Catriona Bell

Thanks for your generosity in sharing it with us.

6:28 Catriona Bell

Anything you want to add just as a final point before we go?

6:31 Rob McDermott


No, I think I've spoken, I've said everything I want to say, which is something I don't normally say.

6:38 Rob McDermott

Anyway, I've got to that point.

6:41 Catriona Bell

Thanks ever so much, Rob.



6:42 Catriona Bell

We'll sign off here, but look out for other case studies and podcasts from sparqs.

6:46 Catriona Bell

And thanks again.

6:46 Catriona Bell

Bye, Rob.

6:47 Rob McDermott

Bye.