

Strategic review of Student Partnership initiatives at institutional level (using Scotland's Ambition for Student Partnership) #11

Podcast Part 1

Transcript

0:00 Catriona Bell

Welcome colleagues, and thank you for joining this sparqs podcast.

0:04 Catriona Bell

We've curated case studies from a range of different Scottish tertiary institutions to share practice and ideas with you about how you can use two key sparqs resources.

0:13 Catriona Bell

So the first of those is the Student Learning Experience model and the second is Scotland's Ambition for Student Partnership, which is the focus of today's conversation.

0:23 Catriona Bell

So it's therefore my great pleasure to be joined by Pamela Calabrese from Edinburgh Napier University.

0:28 Catriona Bell

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

0:32 Pamela Calabrese

Yes, you certainly can.

0:33 Pamela Calabrese

Delighted to be here.

0:34 Pamela Calabrese

Thanks for having me, Catriona.

0:37 Pamela Calabrese

So I am Head of Student Engagement at Edinburgh Napier.

0:41 Pamela Calabrese

I'm based in our Department of Learning and Teaching Enhancement, DLTE for short, and I have a strategic leadership role for student partnership, but the university work very closely with our Students' Association, ENSA.

0:55 Pamela Calabrese

I also lead on personal development tutoring and academic skills at Edinburgh Napier.

1:02 Pamela Calabrese

So those are my other kind of areas of interest.

1:04 Catriona Bell

Fantastic.

1:05 Catriona Bell

Thank you very much.

1:06 Catriona Bell

And I should introduce myself as well.

1:08 Catriona Bell

So my name is Catriona Bell and I'm working with sparqs on a particular project around staff development and the use of the two models that we've just mentioned.

1:15 Catriona Bell

So fantastic.

1:17 Catriona Bell

I'm looking forward to our conversation this morning, Pamela.

1:19 Catriona Bell

And I was going to ask if you could maybe just start us off with a one-minute overview of how you've used the Partnership Ambition.

1:27 Pamela Calabrese

Yes, no problem.

1:28 Pamela Calabrese

So the introduction section to the Partnership Ambition, the context and uses part provides two examples of how the Partnership Ambition might be used.

1:39 Pamela Calabrese

So a high-level evaluation of partnership activities and taking a specific feature and/or a group of indicators and exploring those in detail against institutional practice.

1:50 Pamela Calabrese

The other point to note is the statement in the document, that sparqs intends to work with the sector to explore how the ambition interacts with Student Partnership Agreements (SPAs).

1:58 Pamela Calabrese

SPAs now when the resource was published, we, Edinburgh Napier, and with our Students' Association.

2:04 Pamela Calabrese

And so we were in the midst of developing our new SPA and we've made quite a lot of progress actually in growing our institutional partnership culture.

2:13 Pamela Calabrese

So I proposed conducting this high-level mapping exercise and that was to help us identify where we needed to focus our efforts, looking at our activities across the features and the indicators and identifying that positive practice and areas for development.

2:29 Pamela Calabrese

And the intention was that this would provide the evidence to underpin our SPA activities.

2:35 Catriona Bell

Wonderful.

2:36 Catriona Bell

So really interesting starting point now linking really closely with your SPA development.

2:41 Catriona Bell

So we're going to dive into that in a little bit more detail over the next few minutes, but I wanted to maybe go back a step, if you don't mind, and just ask what were your initial reflections when you first engaged with the Partnership Ambition?

2:53 Pamela Calabrese

OK, so I think it's fair to say I was a little sceptical about the usefulness of the resource.

3:00 Pamela Calabrese

So while myself and colleagues in in our Students' Association really appreciate it and indeed the university really appreciate that enhancement focus of the Partnership Ambition.

3:12 Pamela Calabrese

And I think that the sense of the impetus, impetus that this would give to us into the sector to strive to do better.

3:20 Pamela Calabrese

It came in a time of, you know, significant changes.

3:24 Pamela Calabrese

Colleagues who are listening will know, in relation to the quality enhancement in the sector.

3:28 Pamela Calabrese

External review guidance hadn't yet been published.

3:31 Pamela Calabrese

So the review method wasn't clear.

3:33 Pamela Calabrese

And I think among other things at the time, I particularly remember discussion about the Lead Student Role, OK, and the sense that that might require an unrealistic commitment of time and effort from sabbaticals.

3:45 Pamela Calabrese

We're sort of grappling with that, with that notion.

3:50 Pamela Calabrese

I think the other thing that struck me was that this represented the potential for another required mapping exercise, which brought to mind, for me, mapping to the UK Quality Code, with which, for everyone who's done that, they'll recognise the huge undertaking that that is.

4:08 Pamela Calabrese

So I would say there was a tension there between ambition and pragmatism.

4:16 Catriona Bell

No, thanks for your honest reflections there.

4:18 Catriona Bell

And I'm sure other colleagues may well resonate with that.

4:20 Catriona Bell

But moving onwards, moving on, what helps you see the potential within the Partnership Ambition?

4:26 Pamela Calabrese

So in a nutshell, it was getting started with it and the catalyst for us, as I've touched on, the Student Partnership Agreement, and we would have a bit of an impasse with that.

4:38 Pamela Calabrese

So it had started to feel less of a forward-looking document and more retrospective.

4:45 Pamela Calabrese

So it was useful from the perspective of supporting a reflection and reporting on partnership activities at the end of the year.

4:52 Pamela Calabrese

But I was feeling it was starting to be a little less useful in terms of prioritisation.

4:57 Pamela Calabrese

So when I engaged with the Partnership Ambition, saw the Features and Indicators within that, I really recognised it as a tool to help us assess partnership and support that strategic planning that maybe felt was lacking a wee bit.

5:11 Pamela Calabrese

And I think the other thing is that when I was looking at the Indicators, they felt right.

5:17 Pamela Calabrese

So it really felt that those would help identify work happening under each feature, what had been working well and where we could push ourselves to do more.