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# Co-Creation of Research on Co-Creation of the Curriculum

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# Co-creation of the curriculum

We define co-creation of the curriculum as:

A process of student engagement that encourages students and staff members to become partners who each have a voice and a stake in curriculum development

Cook-Sather et al (2014, p. 1) emphasise that in co-creation of the curriculum: 'Partnerships are based on respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibility between students and faculty'.

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## Co-creation of the curriculum



### Student choice

- Content
- Pedagogy
- Assessment

### Peer teaching embedded into the curriculum

- Student-led presentations
- 4<sup>th</sup> years teaching 2<sup>nd</sup> years
- Student-developed educational resources and/or reading lists

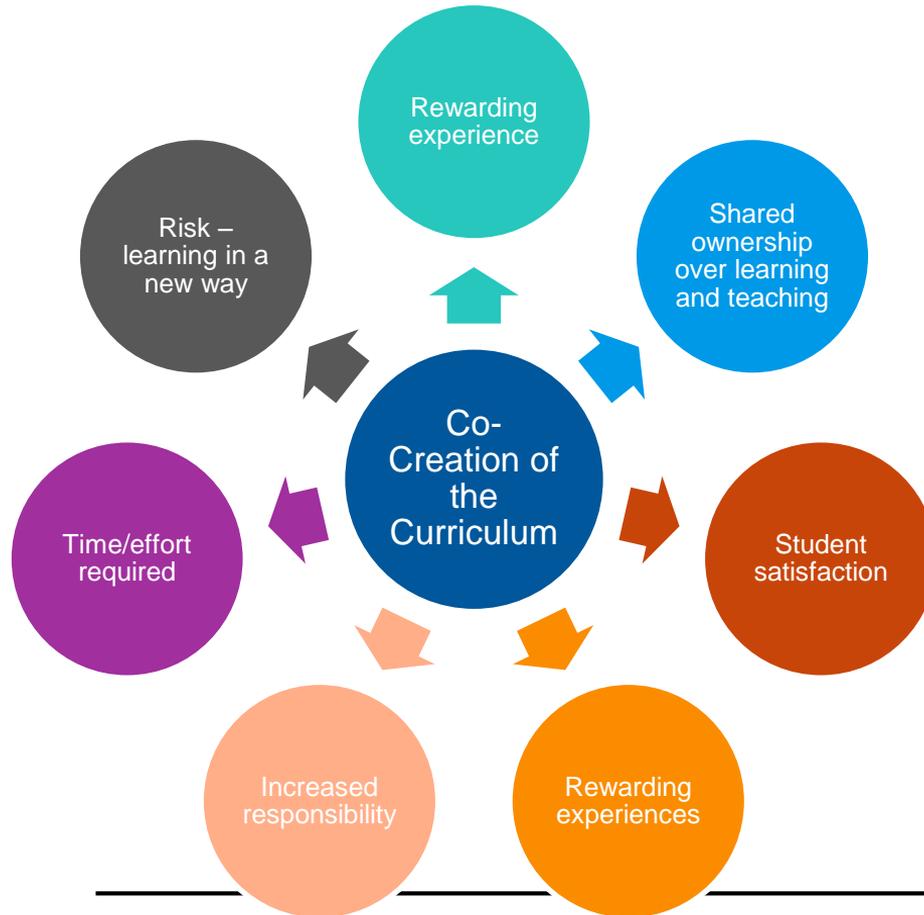
### Co-creation as a course unfolds

- Co-design of content, pedagogy, and/or marking criteria
- Co-design of student projects / assessment

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# Student co-creators' perspectives on their experiences

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# Co-creation promotes a learning community

## Students engage more and develop ownership

- Although co-creation can be more work and take more time, it can also be more fun and enjoyable learning when taking ownership over projects

## Students develop empathy for staff

- “It allows the students to understand the human side of academic staff” and the other side of teaching

## Students feel respected

- Respecting students’ views and discussing their feedback changes the dynamic from a passive consumer to a more active participant
- Students feel empowered to make a difference in the course, and beyond

## Students feel their learning is more authentic and relevant

- Rather than cramming and memorising information, students feel that their learning is more relevant to helping them work towards their aims and gain skills that are important for after Uni

*“I think it’s being treated with respect in that way really gives students a kind of satisfaction from the course and know that their views are actually being listened to because they’re being treated like adults. I think there’s a sense of empowerment from it so you really leave feeling that you can make a difference”*

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# **Class Reps' perspectives on trying co-creation of the curriculum**

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# Co-creation benefits

## Learning community

- Students and staff working as peers and equals so courses are more effective
- Learning from not only staff but also other students – the sum is greater than the parts

## Active learning

- Thinking outside of the box and applying learning
- Discussing staff and students' practical goals and wider aims, and making sure they could be reached in the course
- Tailoring the curriculum to each cohort of students, and making boring subjects more interesting
- Helping students to learn more about or become part of staff members' research

## Valuing students' feedback

- Valuing student feedback (it's currently undervalued) so staff take on board students' feedback and improve teaching
  - Working more closely with staff to implement positive changes (currently it's hard to see follow-through for feedback)
  - Involving students from the start could mean fewer issues with the course
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## Making courses less frustrating:

*“I think that’s kind of in general the disappointing part of being a class rep sometimes, because you feel like the only impact you have is maybe, if any, on later years. ...[With co-creation] it might be less frustrating.”*

## Increasing students’ stake in learning:

*“I feel people are often more involved when their own interests are at stake, when it’s about their course. That’s why I think ongoing co-creation is a good idea because people will sort of see the benefits, see the light at the end of the tunnel, and what results could be at the end of the day. “*

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# Co-creation challenges

## Challenges for students

- Harder with large lectures for students to engage
- Harder in pre-honours years when you need to have a broader education and don't know what you want to know and what's out there
- Harder for students who are more focused on what you have to learn to get a good grade (less intrinsic motivation to learn)

## Challenges for staff

- Expertise needs to be recognised: staff should take the lead on subject expertise, quality assurance, and maintaining world-class reputation of the university whilst also valuing students' opinions and contributions

## Challenges in lack of consensus and 'misaligned incentives'

- For students: short-term versus long-term benefits for students (such as dumbing down content) need to be weighed against long-term benefits (greater overall learning, overcoming challenges)
- For students and staff when they have conflicting incentives and aims

## Challenges in trust

- Difficult for both students and staff the first time you do something new
  - Although co-creation sounds good in theory, both students and staff may mistrust each other's engagement levels or not be respectful of ideas, so co-creation could then fail in practice
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# **Class Reps' ideas for facilitating effective co- creation of the curriculum**

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# Staff should discuss students' aims with them

## Picture activity helped students talk about their aims

- Developing confidence
- Exploring subject areas with curiosity and keeping an open mind for opportunities
- Developing strength internally to help and support others, and make a difference
- Preparing for an unknown/uncertain future
- Having fun with the learning experience



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# Discuss responsibilities to facilitate partnership

## Student engagement responsibilities

- Student should be responsible for doing reading, participating in class, peer learning, and initiative to seek out opportunities within their subject area.

## Staff engagement responsibilities

- Staff should reach out to students, create an environment for students to feel comfortable engaging, and help students materialise ideas (such as supporting student representatives, peer support projects and academic societies).

## University responsibilities

- University responsibility to support staff and student engagement by valuing teaching (not just research), paying tutors adequately, and giving staff job security so they can focus on teaching and partnership work.

*“...fair enough, you’ve gotta prioritise your research, but engagement definitely lacks because it can feel like it’s a side thing and they’re just like ‘I just gotta tell you these things and go through these things and that’s it’. Whereas I found my other ones where the tutors are really interested and they want to share knowledge with you, it lifts the dynamic and everyone seems to engage more.”*

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# Staff still need to take responsibility

## Students still need to learn difficult concepts

- Co-creation of the curriculum shouldn't just focus on the fun topics
- Staff also need to teach topics which are more difficult or unpopular, but critical for students to learn for the future

## Staff need to maintain a progressive, high-quality, forward-thinking curriculum

- Co-creation of the curriculum has the potential to focus on known information
- It's also important to work on solving important problems together in a progressive higher education degree

*“Equally of course, with regards to teaching methods and things like that, I know that many students think they are aware of what’s useful for their learning, but I think that a lot of the time unpopular things are things that are difficult.”*



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# Staff need to respect student views

## Themes of respect and reciprocity

- Co-creation of the curriculum can lead to higher student satisfaction
- It can promote staff listening to students so they work together to enhance the educational experience, and can be a step further than Class Reps' roles
- It can help students feel like they are more in control of their learning

*“I think people would be a lot happier and more relaxed [with co-creation of the curriculum]. I feel like sometimes, when giving feedback as a class rep, I’ve had to give it so many times because I’ve felt like I’ve not been listened to and it makes it so frustrating. In general I think it would be so much easier if you can go to the staff and give them suggestions, and they would take them seriously and work with you to see how you can take that on board. I think it would help you feel like you are more in control of your learning.”*

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**Our experience of co-  
creation of the research**

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# Our experiences of co-researching co-creation

## Challenges

- Maintaining objectivity when the topic is close to your heart
- Not jumping in to the focus group discussions with staff to influence participants
- Staying focused on the research questions – there are so many interesting themes to explore
- Timelines - working fully in partnership isn't possible if some things had already been decided already in order to get the project off the ground

## Benefits

- Making connections with studies: psychology of education & co-creation within healthcare
  - Fun to work collaboratively and hear different perspectives since research can be lonely otherwise
  - Putting theory into practice by being involved in qualitative research data collection, analysis, and sharing at conferences
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## Additional resources:

Bovill, C. (2014). An investigation of co-created curricula within higher education in the UK, Ireland and the USA. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 51(1), 15 - 25.

Cook-Sather, A., Bovill, C., & Felten, P. (2014). *Engaging students as partners in learning and teaching: A guide for faculty*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

HEA. (2015). Students as partners. Retrieved from <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/enhancement/themes/students-partners>

Kuh, G. D. (2009). What student affairs professionals need to know about student engagement. *Journal of College Student Development*, 50(6), 683-706.

**Thank you!**

**Questions?**

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