

National Education Officers Network (NEON)

17th December 2025



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Your sparqs team today



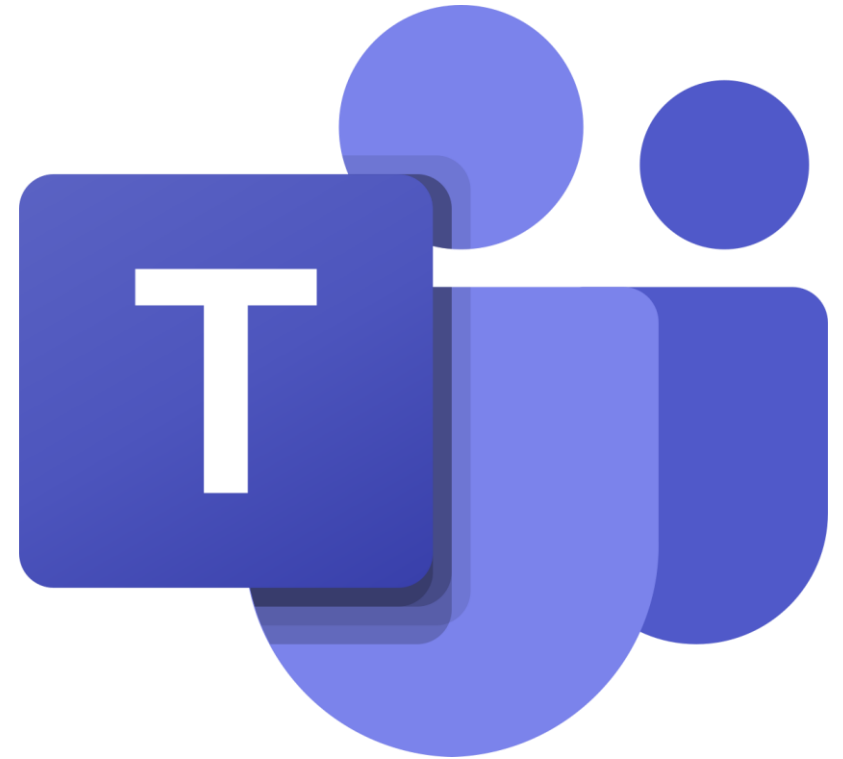
Chase Greenfield, Development Consultant

Shona Agnew, Development Consultant

Okay, Team!



- You can use your audio or the chat box to speak.
- Mute your microphone when not talking.
- To speak, click the “raise hand” icon.
- If you are having any tech issues, post a comment in the chat.



Agenda

- 10.30am **Welcome, Introduction, and sparqs Updates**
- 10.40am **Introduction to STEP**
- 11.00am **Overview of STEP Projects (includes 5min break)**
- 11.50am **British Council Alumni UK Programme**
- 11.55am **Officer Priorities**
- 12.15pm **Close**

Icebreaker

Let's come up with a "Winter Survival Kit" of Student Partnership

For example:

A Torch – to shine a light on student voices

A Thermal Mug – to keep your partnership ideas warm (and your hot drinks too!)

Please pop your answers in the chat :)



Updates from sparqs



- **Recruiting for a sparqs Trustee Board Chair**
- **Publishing STEP Guide for Students' Associations**
- **AT Recruitment – opens in March**
- **sparqs Office closes Friday (19 Dec) after 5pm**
 - We will return on 5 January 9am

Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP)

with

Adelayo Adebayo & Emma MacIsaac

STEP Topic Leads 2025-26



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Introducing STEP

Adelayo & Emma

Date: 17 December 2025





Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER)

Cyclical peer-led and enhancement-led process



Annual Quality Engagement (AQE)

Engagement with SFC and liaison meetings with QAA.
Institutional self-evaluation and action plan (SEAP), built on annual institutional activity.



Institution-led quality activity

Annual monitoring and Institution-led Quality Review of programmes and professional services.



Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP)

New approach to national enhancement activity across the tertiary sector

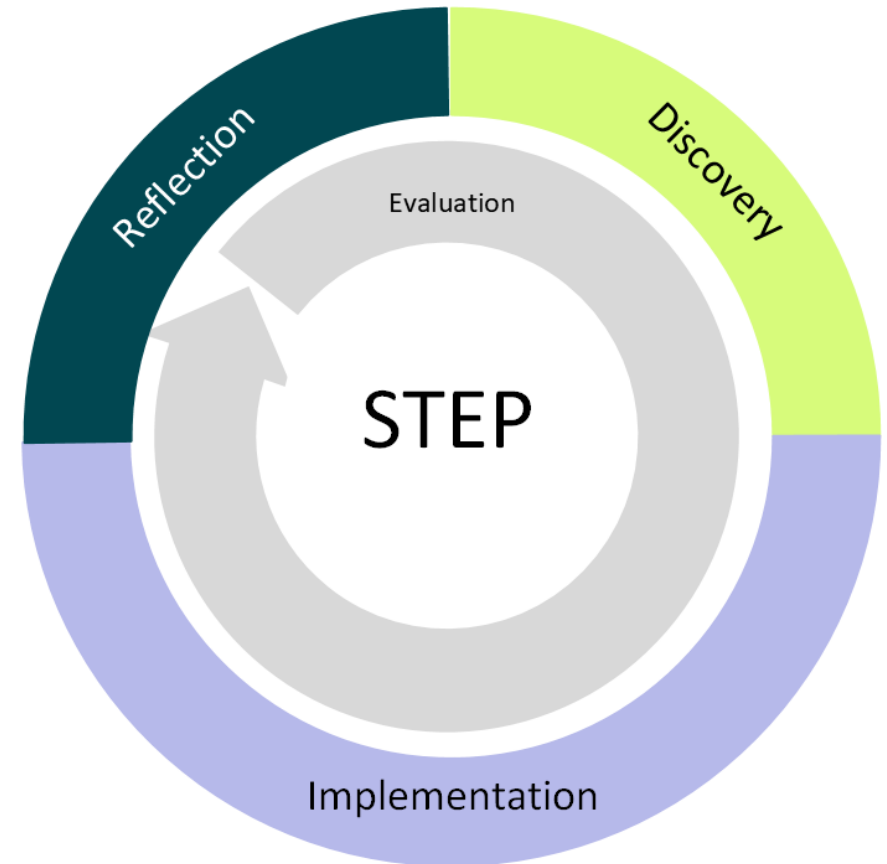


Use of data and evidence for reporting

Strengthened assurance and outcomes reporting

STEP

- National enhancement programme
- 4-year cycle
- Based around the enhancement topic: **Supporting diverse learner journeys** (2024-25 to 2027-28)



Supporting Diverse Learner Journeys by...

Supporting
Transitions
and Exploring
Pathways

Strengthening
Engagement,
Community
and Belonging

Developing
Skills and
Capabilities for
Learning

Delivering
Tailored,
Targeted and
Personalised
Support

How STEP is governed

Steering Group

- Strategic leadership and direction for STEP
- Membership from key sector groups

Topic Leadership Group

- Provides operational leadership for STEP
- Membership including STEP Topic Leads and STEP project leads

STEP Network

- A forum for the sector to work together on STEP
- One staff and one student representative from each institution
- Flow of information to institutional colleagues

Topic Leads

Name	Role	Institution
Emma MacIsaac	College Student	North East Scotland College
Adelayo Adebayo	University Student	University of Stirling
Derek Robertson	College Staff	City of Glasgow College
Steve Tucker	University Staff	University of Aberdeen

Discovery (Year 1)

- Development of proposals for collaborative projects
- Meetings of the STEP Network (four in-person Discovery Days and four online Navigation Sessions)
- Supporting activity from QAA and CDN
- Dissemination and evaluation

Implementation (Years 2 and 3)

- Implementation of approved collaborative projects – funding will flow from these
- Meetings of the STEP Network
- Annual conference
- Supporting activity from QAA and CDN
- Dissemination and evaluation

Reflection (Year 4)

- Summative evaluation of each project and of STEP cycle (impact and effectiveness)
- Final conference and other dissemination activity
- Supporting activity from QAA and CDN
- Selection of topic for next STEP cycle

7 Projects

- Appreciating Belonging and Enabling Change: From Strategy to Practice
- Language Accessibility Promise
- Regional Enhancement and Collaboration in Tertiary Scotland (REACTS)
- Supporting access, progression and successful outcomes in disabled student communities (SAPSO)
- Strategies to support student engagement and partnership within an increasingly time-poor and cash-poor student population
- Understanding the staff development landscape required to support diverse learner journeys in the tertiary sector
- Transforming Assessment Policy and Practice in Scotland (TAPPS)

Topic

Priority areas

Projects

Supporting Diverse Learner Journeys

Supporting Transitions
and Navigating
Pathways

Supporting Access, Progression and Successful Outcomes in Disabled Student Communities (SAPSO)

Appreciating Belonging and Enabling Change: From Strategy to Practice

Strengthening
Engagement,
Community and
Belonging

Language Accessibility Promise

Regional Enhancement and Collaboration in Tertiary Scotland (REACTS)

Developing Skills and
Capabilities for Learning

Strategies to Support Student Engagement and Partnership Within an Increasingly Time-Poor and Cash-Poor Student Population

Transforming Assessment Policy and Practice in Scotland (TAPPS)

Delivering Tailored,
Targeted and
Personalised Support

Understanding the Staff Development Landscape Required to Support Diverse Learner Journeys in the Tertiary Sector

TBC



STEP

Scotland's Tertiary
Enhancement Programme

How can student officers can get involved in STEP?

Get involved in STEP Project: If your institution's Student Association is interested in any project, you can reach out to the project lead to offer support or to explore collaboration opportunities and they would be happy for you to get involved.

Communication with STEP Network Member: If the student selected to be the STEP Network Student Member in your institution is not an officer, then a clear line of communication needs to be established between the student and the student officer with a regular line of communication.

Handover: In most institutions, the STEP Network Student Member will change over the summer. The students' association's need to ensure that STEP information is included in the handover and induction process for officers. Where the outgoing STEP network student member is not an officer, then handover process should be put in place.

Questions?

Thank you

- Please get in touch – info@step.ac.uk

An introduction to STEP projects

with
STEP Project Leads



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Schedule

- 11.00am **“Belonging” Project – Stella Howden**
- 11.10am **“Transforming Assessment Policy” – Cameron Graham**
- 11.20am **Comfort Break**
- 11.25am **“Staff Development” – Vic Boyd**
- 11.35am **“SAPSO Project” – Jakki Jeffery**
- 11.45am **“Time/Cash Poor Population” – Chase Greenfield**

The Belonging Project

Project lead: Stella Howden

- Heriot-Watt University

Co-lead: Jane Roscoe

- Dundee and Angus College



Overview

- What is belonging and mattering for students?
 - Why is it important?
- Project aim and approach.
- Seeking your input.



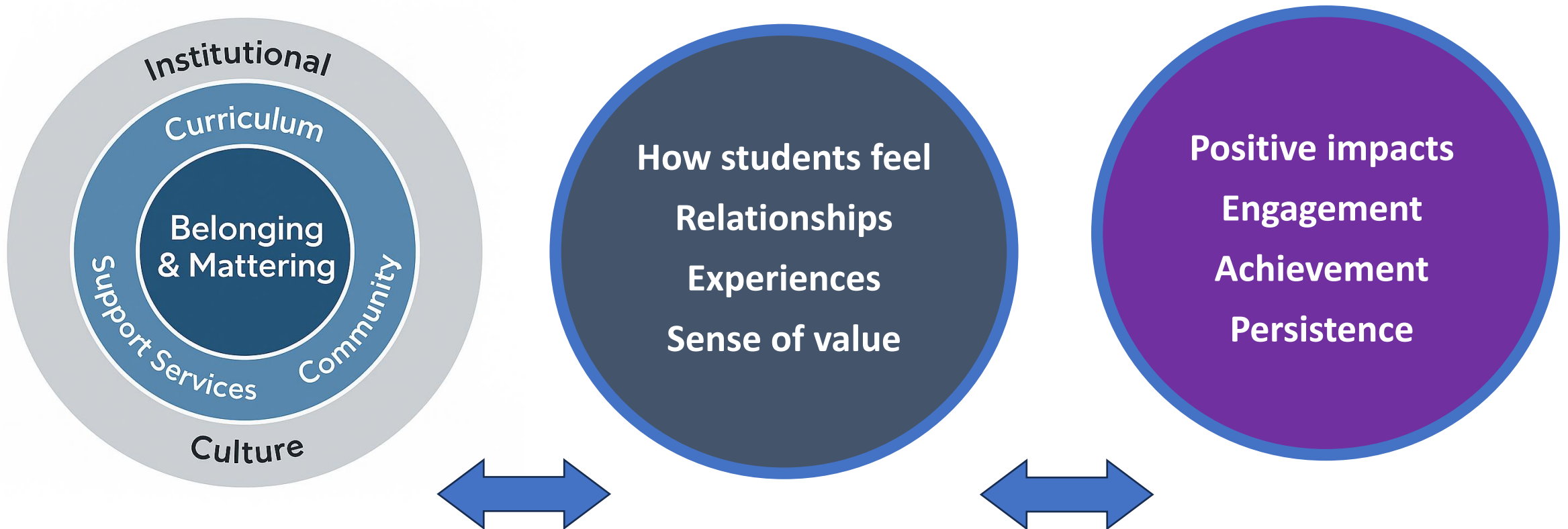
What does belonging and mattering mean for students at college or university?

Chatter fall instructions:

1. Type your response in Chat.
2. Wait for the call to: Send.



Why is it important to support students' sense of belonging and mattering at our colleges and universities?



Project Aim

- Learning by appreciating what is already working in Scotland's Tertiary sector.

Approach

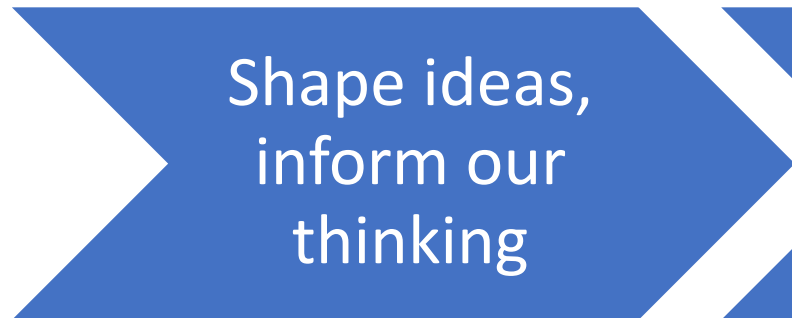
- Speak with students and staff who 'made it happen' at their college or university.
- Sharing 'what works' and 'how' to develop a framework.

Impact

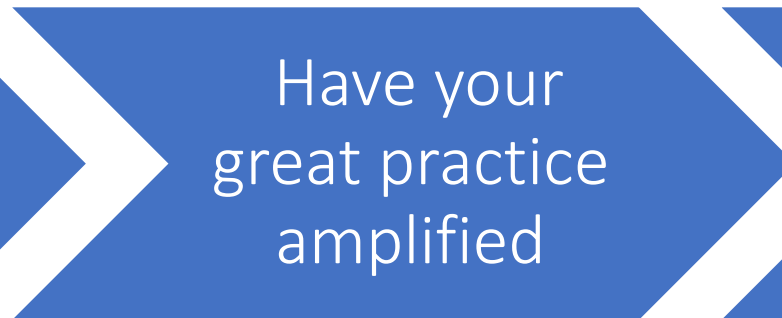
- Advance 'know-how' and confidence through practical support, sharing expertise, mentoring etc for those who want to initiate or enhance belonging and mattering for students.

Get involved

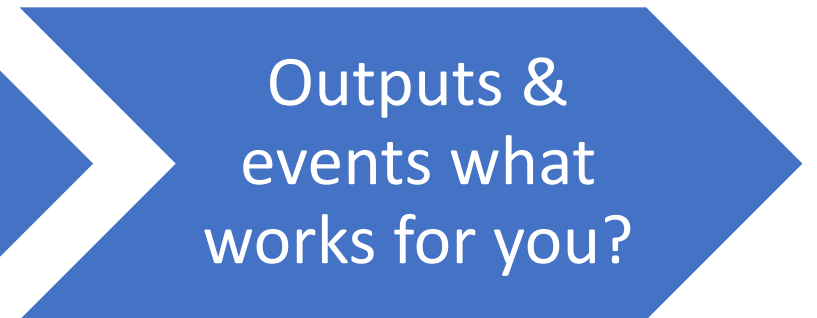
Join us as a consultative partner.




Guide us to great practice, outputs, examples.



Shape the sharing and dissemination outputs and events.



Connect in a way that works for you – Thank You





Your way..



S.Howden@hw.ac.uk

The Belonging Project



2 min form 



Transforming Assessment Policy & Practice in Scotland (TAPPS)

Dr Cameron Graham

Project Lead

Edinburgh Napier University

Driver for change....

“Assessment practice needs to transform to allow for further and more diverse methods of assessment (Advance HE, 2019) to be used across the sector to better accommodate the needs of an increasingly diverse student cohort, as well as the evolving skills development requirements of students to successfully navigate post-educational opportunities via work or further study”.

Context & Project Rationale

- Current policy and practice predominantly uses **traditional modes of assessment** which favour students with specific characteristics and demographics (QAA, 2005).
- With **increasing diversity of students** in tertiary education (e.g. background, experience and demographics, there is a need to ensure assessment practices support student learning, development and success – rather than hinder.
- We need to drive further **diversity in use of assessment formats and methods to better reflect the diversity of students help ensure fairness, inclusion and skills development** (Firth et al. 2023)

Our aims...

Collaborating our student and staff project members from 8 institutions across Scotland (4 FE, 4 HE), the TAPPS project aims to **capture existing effective assessment practice** in order to:

- **develop an evidence base** and a portfolio of resources to **enable policy change**,
- **increase awareness and sharing of best practice** from across the Scottish tertiary sector where innovative, inclusive and diverse methods of assessment that are student-centred and recognise growing learner diversity are effectively adopted,
- **influence widespread and sustained changes in assessment practice** to benefit student experiences of assessment across the Scottish tertiary sector.

What are aiming to do in the project overall...

- Develop a compendium of resources (including case studies and testimonials and literature review)
- Practice sharing events
 - Online and across Scotland
- Share institutional insights – e.g. assessment-related projects, UDL @ City of Glasgow
- Develop a ‘Transforming Assessment’ network/community of practice
- Lobby for policy change at a national level across the Sector

Outputs and work for this year 2025/26...

- Policy review
 - Analysis of assessment policies of colleges, universities and awarding bodies across Scotland.
- Literature Review
 - Analysis of relevant literature and research in inclusive assessment, optionality and diversification of methods.
- Practice Sharing Events
 - Sharing of examples/case studies of innovative assessment practice
 - First event – City of Glasgow College 20th January 2026

How can you support TAPPS...

- What are your experiences of assessment and what do students tell you?
- Do you have examples of inclusive, innovative or diverse methods of assessments that you have benefitted from or experienced that you can share?
- Would you like to help contribute to or promote our work in your institution?

Comfort Break!

5 minutes

Please be back by 11:40am!



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Understanding the staff development landscape required to support diverse learner journeys in the tertiary sector

Mark Charters (Glasgow School of Art)

Dr Alison Gilmour (University of the West of Scotland)

Dr Vic Boyd (City of Glasgow College)



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Project aims



A sector wide investigation into how we support and develop staff who are teaching and/or supporting learning in Scotland's Colleges and Universities. The project aims to enhance our collective understanding of how we support staff development as well as exploring the current and future development needs of staff.

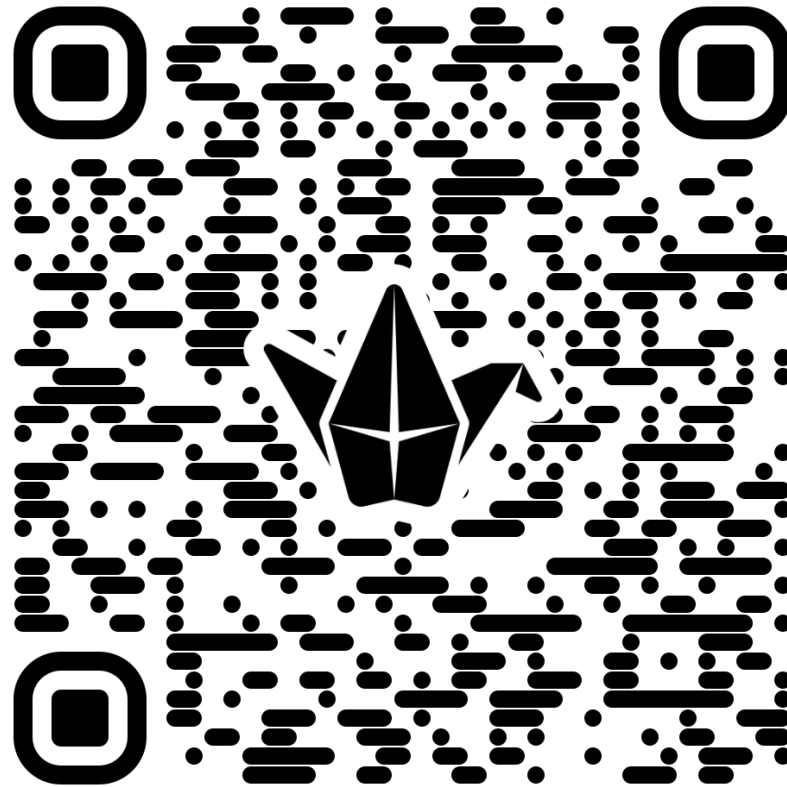
- **Address the research gap:** Current evidence on this topic does not exist across the tertiary sector, nor are the perspectives of leaders, those who teach / support learning nor their learners captured.
- **Support innovation and effective practice:** Support the tertiary sector to identify opportunities to innovate / transform approaches to staff development for high impact.
- **Foster tertiary collaborations:** Consider opportunities across the tertiary sector for collaboration in the development of staff in meeting the diverse needs of students and learners.

What are your project's goals?



1. *Map and compare staff development* approaches for those *who teach and/or support learning across the tertiary sector* to provide a sector analysis of current practice.
2. Identify the *current and future development needs* of those who teach and/or support learning across the tertiary sector drawing **insights from staff, students, leadership and sector agencies**.
3. *Identify existing high impact staff development activities* which enhance learning, teaching and assessment in meeting the diverse needs of our learners.
4. *Inform and support strategic approaches to the effective development of CPD* for learning and teaching to enhance the student learning experience and meet the diverse needs of our learners.

The future teacher  – what will they 'look' like?



Get involved!



- We are inviting notes of interest to join the STEP Staff Development Project Steering Group.
- We are looking for two Student Steering Group members (one studying in further education, one studying in higher education) to help shape how the project is developed and delivered.
- As a Steering Group member you will attend three online meetings of the group as well as the opportunity to attend three in person workshop days across Scotland.

Get involved!



The role of the Student Steering Group member is remunerated at £15 per hour for attending group meetings.

Key meeting dates:

- 27th January 2026 STEP Network Day 6 (full day)
- 2nd February 2026 Steering Group 2 (half day)
- 25th March 2026 STEP Network Day 7 (full day)
- 27th April 2026 Steering Group 3 (half day)
- 26th & 27th May 2026 STEP Network Day 8 and STEP Conference (full day)
- 18th June 2026 Steering Group 4 (half day)

If you are interested in joining the Steering Group please send a note of interest to learningandteaching@gsa.ac.uk including the following information: Full Name, name of the College or University you are attending, and a short paragraph (no more than 200 words) why you'd like to join the Steering Group.

Notes of interest should be received by Monday 5th January 12pm.

Questions for Student Officers



- Immediate reactions – what key attributes should staff who deliver and support learning prioritise?
- What development formats might lend themselves well to supporting these priorities?
- How can we embed the learner voice in staff development activities?



STEP

Scotland's Tertiary
Enhancement Programme

Supporting Access, Progression and Successful Outcomes for Disabled Learners

SAPSO

Project Lead – Jakki Jeffery- Edinburgh College
Project Co-Lead – Brian Connolly - University of Edinburgh
17 Tertiary Institutions in team SAPSO

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Background

SFC data sources demonstrate that disabled learners underperform in tertiary education compared to other student success outcomes

SAPSO want to hear the voice of disabled learners reflecting on their individual journey through podcasts, shortform video discussions and interview

How do students like to give feedback?

Student Involvement

Student roles include student mentor, milestone, communication, data analyst & media team

X20 tertiary students interviewed in pilot year 1

Any questions so far?

What are the barriers disabled learner's experience?

Questions for Student Officers



- Would you like to get involved in sharing the **SAPSO** project across Scottish tertiary institutions?

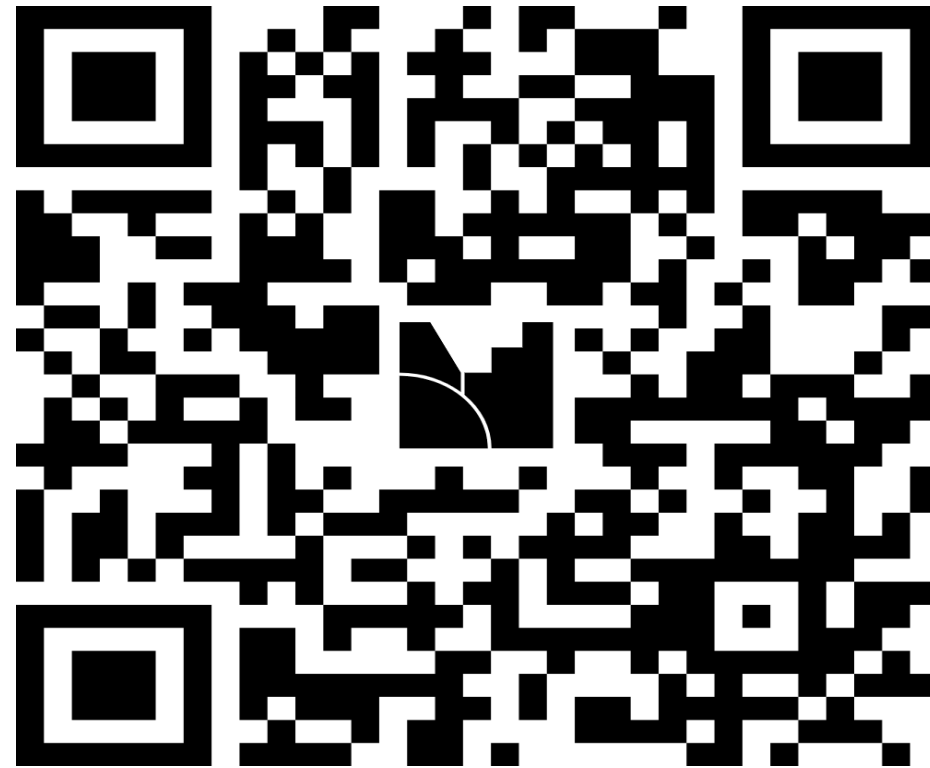
Where do you see SPARQS being involved in the SAPSO project?

How Students' Associations can get involved

- Can you support with organising disabled student engagement in discussions, from institutions that have no student rep on team SAPSO?

Have we missed anything?

- Mentimeter QR code



Student Engagement and Partnership for an Increasingly Time and Cash Poor Student Population

Chase Greenfield, sparqs







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An increasingly time and cash poor student population



- Record numbers of students in paid employment  during term time
- Students with caring responsibilities 
- Mental health  crisis among students
- Student homelessness, estrangement, and food insecurity 

How are you noticing these changes affecting students at your institution?

What are we doing about it?



Student Voice & Representation

- **Pilot workshops** with ~6 students' associations
- **Identifying** and **breaking down** financial and time-based **barriers** to:
 - **Representation systems**
 - **Student voice**
 - **Officer roles**

Pre-Arrival Information

- Researching **student needs** for pre-arrival advice & guidance via **focus groups**
- Developing **resources** to support time/cash poor student population

What do you think?

1. How are **barriers of time and money** preventing students from being involved with your students' association?
2. What **induction information about support resources and services** are not the right reaching students?

What your Students' Associations can do!



- Seeking volunteers to host us for **workshops** and **focus groups**
 - Drop a message in the chat that says "**workshops**" or "**focus groups**" (or do both!)
- **Follow along** with our project!
 - Drop a message in the chat that says "**mailing list**"
- Keep in touch: chase.greenfield@sparqs.ac.uk

British Council Alumni UK Programme

Chika Marvis



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Additional Student Officer Priorities

15 Minutes



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Some Possible Topics

- Completed projects during first semester
- Upcoming projects in 2026
- Elections prep/questions
- Resources that would be helpful to you
- **YOUR current priorities, challenges, or ideas!**

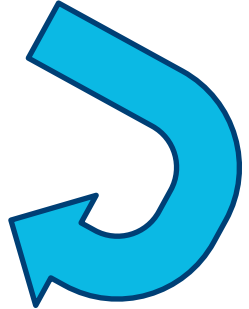
Conclusions and evaluation

Next NEON Meeting

- **When:** 5 March 2026, 10:30am-12:15pm
- **Where:** Online (via Microsoft Teams)
- **Topic:** Officer Handover
- **Registration Open: SOON** on the [sparqs website](#)

Before you go...

- Complete the [evaluation form](#) (select December)
- Sign up to the [sparqs newsletter](#).
- Remember to sign up to the [NEON's Jiscmail](#) (and do use the list to chat and share!).



NEON Communications



- NEON Mailing List
 - ask questions
 - share experiences
 - or seek advice

- Other modes of communication?
 - Microsoft Teams Chat/Channel?



**Thank you and see you
next time!**