

## Ulster Integrated Curriculum Design Framework:

### A Guide for Staff: Involving Students in Curriculum Design

#### **Why Involve Students?**

Students will bring their unique view of the 'lived student experience' to the team. This may include all aspects of the student lifecycle/journey and give you an insight into not just how the designed curriculum is received in the **Academic sphere** (scheduled sessions) but also an insight into what happens in the **Social sphere** (formal and informal sport, social and leisure activities with HE peers) and the **Enhancement sphere** (engagement in co-curricular and enhancement activities including representation and leadership roles that contribute to personal and professional development).

Tried and tested methods might need refreshed, or vice versa – methods you think are outdated might still be really valued by the people you teach. It is also important to think about the diversity of learners within UU and try and reflect this within the team when reimagining your curriculum.

Stage 2 of the Integrated Curriculum Design Framework involves 'Stakeholder Engagement'. Students are part of the wider stakeholder group with a vested interest in curriculum design. In this context, they could be first, second or final year students, recent graduates, or students on placement.

Engaging with students in this way aligns with the University/UUSU Partnership Agreement, the University's L&T Strategy and is one of the expectations articulated by the QAA as part of the Quality Code.

Your students and the UUSU will be involved at stage 6 'Programme Approval' – engaging with them earlier in the process allows you to integrate their ideas and suggestions at the design stage.

#### **How Might Students get Involved?**

There is no set approach for this and it depends on many factors such as the timeline for the curriculum design process and the level and scope of the programme being (re)designed. We recommend though that some dedicated time is set aside so that students can contribute to this process. The following are some suggestions:

- face-to-face engagement between staff and students in the form of a workshop. This could be part of the Stage 2 process and may be continued at stages 3, 4 and 5;
- A dedicated survey (online or hardcopy);
- Focus groups involving a range of students at different stages of the student lifecycle;
- Co-creating modules with staff.

#### **Getting Students Involved**

Students will engage with this type of activity for the similar reasons to staff:

- Is it interesting to them?
- Do they understand the process?
- Will they be rewarded? This could be through a material way, or professionally through feeling more valued or engaged with their course team.

- Do they have the time to take on the commitment?

It is important that all of these factors are made clear to students, to ensure they feel a part of the team. Explaining the importance of this role and the long-term impact on future students will appeal to some people – others may be considering a future in academia and an experience like this would be invaluable for them. Make sure the scope of the project and influence are clearly spelt out!

Whilst student academic reps are an invaluable asset to UUSU and their courses, they might not be the best person for this role and will be committing a significant amount of time to this role. Also, it is important to widen the opportunity to all students to gather the breadth of experience.

If it is possible to reward the students, then this should be considered. As a minimum transport should be covered and lunch/refreshments on the day.

Accreditation through the EDGE award or other means could also be considered; any support for the student to ensure it is a positive and worthwhile experience.

### **How to Keep Students Involved/Engaged**

Making sure the students feel comfortable and part of the team from the beginning is essential. They may feel intimidated around so many members of academic staff, and afraid of saying the wrong thing or criticising current practice.

The first barrier to overcome could be language; there is a student guide to accompany this one which covers some of the most common terms. It could be useful to go through these for the whole team – there may also be some nervous members of staff attending for the first time.

### **How can UUSU Help with Curriculum Design?**

If you would like a Student Officer to speak to your class about getting involved, and the subsequent benefits, please get in touch.

A member of the team could also meet with students in advance of your first meeting to chat to them about the process and what to expect.

### **Designing UUSU Into the Curriculum – how to more broadly engage with Us.**

Outside of helping to engage students with this process, UUSU can also support your team to deliver engagement activities throughout the lifespan of your course.

### Academic Reps

UUSU supports three levels of academic representation: at Course; School/Department and Faculty.

Elections take place for these at the end of Semester 2 for returning students, and at the beginning of Semester 1 for new students.

These students are an invaluable source of feedback for course teams, as well as support for their peers, and it is important that students are supported in this role.

Within class time, there could be a session on running the election – which will boost students confidence and public speaking skills. We have a dedicated resource for staff on the academic rep system on our website: [Student Voice Document](#)

### Societies (course-based or interest-based)

We have a wide range of course and interest-based societies that your students may already be part of.

The benefits for students joining these can be readily seen across Ulster University, with student societies taking the lead in first year inductions, creating study groups, planning trips and creating a community for your students to make friends and build a sense of community within their course.

You can find out more about the societies already on offer on the [society pages](#) of our website – if your course isn't listed, you will also find helpful information aimed at staff, to encourage the formation of a student led society within your discipline.

If you would like to find out more speak to one of our co-ordinators:

J'town & Belfast: Karen Pothin – [k.pothin@uusu.org](mailto:k.pothin@uusu.org)

Coleraine & Magee: Emer Smith – [e.smith2@uusu.org](mailto:e.smith2@uusu.org)

### Volunteering

Our Volunteer Centre has a range of opportunities available all-year round for individual students to give back to their local community.

We also have bespoke projects each year for students to get involved with, or if you would like to set up some group volunteering as a team building exercise – get in touch with our [Volunteer Centre](#).

### Support for Students

Our Advice Bureau offers students support with academic issues, if they are feeling like they would like to change course or if they have issues outside of University – for example with their housing.

If students are having issues – please link them with our professional advisors: [UUSU Advice Bureau](#).