

11th European Quality Assurance Forum

17–19 November 2016

Quality in context – embedding improvement

Paper proposal form

Deadline 25 July 2016

Please note that all fields are obligatory. For a detailed description of the submission requirements and Frequently Asked Questions please consult the Call for Contributions.

Author(s)

Name: Joseph Levell

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Short bio (150 words max):

Joseph (Joe) Levell graduated from the University of East Anglia in 2012 with a degree in American History with English History, including a year studying at Occidental College, Los Angeles. He was then elected as Finance Officer for the Union of UEA Students, representing students on issues surrounding clubs and societies and commercial services. He was also elected to represent students at a national level as a director of NUS Services Ltd, the commercial arm of the National Union of Students. He then spent a year as Campaigns and Democratic Engagement Coordinator at Nottingham Trent Students' Union before moving to Bishop Grosseteste University as Student Engagement Facilitator in 2015. Joe has spent the last year embedding the 'Students Creating Change' project across Bishop Grosseteste University, working with academics and professional support staff to ensure student engagement projects are established and evaluated at all levels of the institution.

Name: Dr Claire Thomson

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Claire Thomson offers strategic leadership and management in the area of quality assurance and enhancement and the overall learning experience of students. Claire's research interest is in the area of learning and teaching in higher education and the development of new methodologies for the delivery of effective and engaging learning, teaching and assessment. A Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, Claire joined Bishop Grosseteste University in 2000; prior to this she lectured at the Universities of Keele and Sheffield

Name: Dr Ruth Sayers

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Ruth is part of the Senior Leadership Team at Bishop Grosseteste University. She is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and Bishop Grosseteste University as well as the Leadership Foundation. She has a cross cutting senior role with responsibility for leading Learning and Teaching and also the International Office. Her research interests are mainly in educational drama, situated learning across the curriculum and community placement work. Her PhD is in the area of Mantle of the Expert and process drama. Ruth served on the Executive Committee of National Drama for many years and was part of the editorial team for an international research journal. In 2012 she led a funded project for the Higher Education Academy in student placements in community settings.

Name: Professor Jayne Mitchell

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Short bio (150 words max):

Professor Jayne Mitchell is Deputy Vice-Chancellor at Bishop Grosseteste University. She provides strategic and intellectual leadership for all of Bishop Grosseteste University's learning, teaching, research and international activities. Prior to her appointment to Bishop Grosseteste University, Jayne was executive Director of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). She was responsible for ensuring that the UK Quality Code; the standards and reference points used by all UK higher education providers, QAA itself and those with an interest in higher education, to carry out key quality assurance and enhancement functions, maintained their relevance and usefulness. Jayne also provided strategic oversight for QAA's research and international activity and regulatory and development activity in relation to Access to HE courses and Access Validating Agency licensing. Jayne has previously held a number of posts in higher education institutions that reflect her commitment to quality assurance, and her academic and research interests in physical activity and health.

If accepted, Professor Jayne Mitchell will present the paper to the 11th European Quality Assurance Forum 17-19 November 2016.

Proposal

Title: 'Students Creating Change'

Abstract (150 words max):

The paper presents Bishop Grosseteste University's (BGU) experience of introducing and embedding an innovative whole-University student engagement initiative into a small, traditional, University.

The paper describes the development of an institutional wide 'students creating change' scheme where staff and students were coached and supported to research and create change to the learning opportunities and experiences for students. The scheme also include the development of a 'students creating change' framework, designed to identify and embed institutional enhancement in student representation, ensure that the Learning, Teaching, and Assessment Strategy is meeting the needs of students, and embed student engagement as a key part of the student experience.

The paper highlights the challenges, benefits, lessons learned and approaches to gaining the support and participation of the Students' Union, student body, senior University leaders and academic and professional services staff in the process.

The paper is based on: ~~research~~ / ~~policy~~ / practice (select one)

Has this paper previously been published/presented elsewhere? No

Text of paper (3000 words max):

1 Introduction

The concept that students should be active partners in their learning is now an important part of the debate about the creation, delivery and quality assurance of Higher Education. The term student engagement covers two aspects (i) improving the motivation of students to engage in learning and to learn independently, and / or (ii) the participation of students in quality enhancement and quality assurance processes, resulting in the improvement of their educational experience. Bishop Grosseteste University's approach to student engagement aims to address both aspects and is informed by the national expectation for external quality assurance contained in chapter B5 (student engagement) of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, that '*Higher education providers take deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience*^[1]

1.1 The University

Bishop Grosseteste University (BGU; the University) is located in Lincoln, UK. It was founded in 1862 as the Lincoln Diocesan Training School, an Anglican teacher training college for women. It was renamed Bishop Grosseteste College in 1962 and University title was confirmed in 2012. The established portfolio of Initial Teacher Education and other education courses has expanded in recent years to include Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities, Business, and Health and Social Care programmes that lead to first, second and third cycle qualifications.

The University's mission is to excel at teaching, learning and research, enabling all students to achieve the highest possible standard in their chosen field of study. This includes provision of life-enriching opportunities through self-development, the recognition of achievement and aspiration, and participation in regional, national and international partnerships.

Following an extensive, and reflective, research and development process involving staff, students and stakeholders, the University launched its Five Year Strategy 2014–2019^[2] in September 2014. The Strategy comprises eight strands, including '*Learning, Teaching and Student Engagement*'. The aim of this strand is to revise the University's overall approach to learning, teaching and assessment with a commitment to supporting active and accessible learning, whereby students are fully engaged with a variety of research-informed and enriched learning and assessment opportunities in a range of learning environments.

1.2 Rationale

A successful external quality assurance review of the University's provision by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) in 2009^[3] identified the following features of good practice:

- *The comprehensive arrangements for student feedback and its use in quality assurance and enhancement*
- *The enhancement of the student experience through provision of opportunities for self-development*
- *The contribution of the Centre for Learning and Teaching in support of staff development and the furtherance of the University [College's] quality enhancement agenda*

Building on this good practice, the University continued to further develop student engagement by introducing a 'Student Voice' project in 2012, in collaboration with Bishop Grosseteste University Students' Union and the National Union of Students (NUS), which resulted in a number of initiatives including enhanced training of student representatives.

Following the success of the 'student voice project' and recognising that student engagement has become a more prominent and increasingly significant part of the Higher Education sector in recent years, the University took the opportunity to review and further embed its strategic approach to student engagement in its 5-year strategy and its Learning, Teaching and Student Engagement Strategy specifically. A key aspect of the strategic approach, and an indication of the priority given by the University to student engagement, was taking the deliberate step, in 2015, to appoint a Student Engagement Facilitator. The post holder is required to work with staff and students to improve the student experience and enhance the dialogue and engagement between staff and students. An important outcome of this appointment was the development of a 'Students Creating Change' scheme.

2 Development of the 'Students Creating Change' scheme

During summer 2015, the Student Engagement Facilitator reviewed both the University's current practices in student engagement and initiatives from across the HE sector, to develop 'Students Creating Change' scheme; a process through which students are able to work alongside academics and professional support staff to actively lead on enhancements to the student experience.

In order to successfully embed student engagement across BGU, it was agreed by the Learning and Teaching Committee that any extra-curricular projects must be mirrored with the development of intra-curricular opportunities for student engagement in order to create an

environment where students feel able to shape and develop their experiences outside the classroom, and become partners in their own learning within the classroom.

The Learning, Teaching, and Assessment Strategy 2015-19 sets out clear expectations of what the institution hopes to achieve, with six clear aims for how students can become active participants in their learning while studying at the University. Through this strategy the University aims to:

- Work in a dynamic way with students in the co-creation and enhancement of learning opportunities with a shared understanding of objectives;
- Encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning;
- Be responsive in ensuring that students are fully supported in navigating the transition into and through higher education;
- Implement e-learning and digital literacies in partnership with students, making appropriate use of a portfolio of achievement;
- Work with students to agree and embed a set of expectations and responsibilities in learning teaching and assessment;
- Support and encourage the Students' Union to continue to develop its representational and engagement role on behalf of all students.^[4]

By developing, monitoring, and evaluating student engagement projects based around these aims, BGU aimed to embed student engagement across the University in both academic courses and professional support services, facilitating student leadership and ownership of their academic, and broader University, experience. For the purposes of the 'Students Creating Change' scheme the six goals were summarised into three main areas:

- developing the roles of student representatives,
- ensuring the Learning, Teaching, and Assessment Strategy is successfully embedded, and
- developing a culture of engagement as a key part of the student experience at BGU

In addition to developing cross-institutional student engagement projects aligned to the University's strategic goals, The University identified an opportunity to embed student engagement at the departmental/subject level through the annual monitoring process. Annual Monitoring Reports written by each academic programme and professional support services area, at the end of each academic year, contain an institutional enhancement action plan, where the academic coordinator or professional service lead must identify and report progress against enhancement activities in their department/area, identified the previous year.

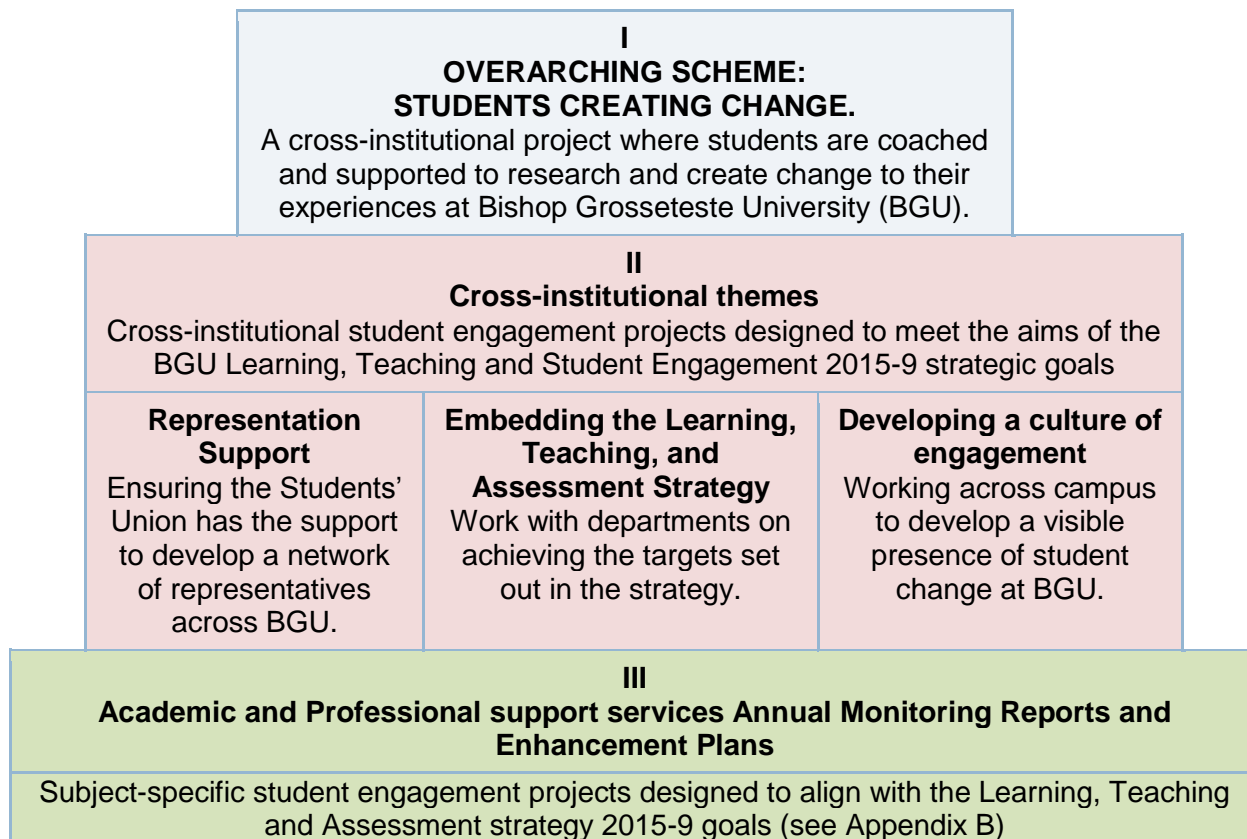
For the academic year 2015/6 each academic and professional support services area was required to identify at least one student engagement project, as part of the overall 'Students Creating Change' scheme. In order to ensure regular reporting and monitoring of these projects took place, a sub-group of the Learning and Teaching Committee was established with membership from each academic School, professional support team, and a student representative from each student year group within each of the three academic Schools.

2.1 Students Creating Change Framework

The following framework was developed to illustrate the three levels of the 'Students Creating Change' scheme and the relationship between (i) the overall aim of the scheme, (ii) the development of cross-institutional enhancement projects, in three main areas, that align to the goals of the University's Learning, Teaching and Student Engagement strand of its 5-year strategy; developing the roles of student representatives, ensuring the Learning, Teaching,

and Assessment Strategy is successfully embedded, and cementing student engagement as a key part of the student experience at BGU, and (iii) departmental student engagement projects identified in Annual Monitoring Reports and enhancement plans, aligned to the Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategy.

Figure 1: Students Creating Change Framework



2.2 Implementing the Framework

In October 2015, student course representatives, academic coordinators, and professional support staff were invited to develop and work on cross-institutional student engagement projects. Students were contacted by email, through presentations at the Students' Union Council meetings and direct promotion of the scheme by staff during taught sessions and contact points with professional support services staff. Staff were contacted by email and face to face meetings, where the scope of the project and the support provided by the Student Engagement Facilitator was discussed.

By targeting course representatives, the University aimed to work alongside students who already understood the concept of academic enhancement and had experience of working alongside academic and professional support services staff to address student issues.

In total, six cross-institutional projects were proposed in 2015/6. All projects proposals were submitted by the staff; no projects were initiated by students. In order to publicise the scheme and recruit students and staff to work on the projects a full description of each project was published on the BGU website^[5]. A summary of each of the projects is provided in Annex A.

For curriculum-focussed projects, face to face meetings were arranged with each academic coordinator to explain the requirement for a cross-institutional student engagement project to

take place within their course and the support available from the Student Engagement Facilitator to assist implementation. A project proposal form was drawn up to support the planning process and to ensure monitoring and evaluation of the project was kept centrally for accurate reporting through the Annual Monitoring process and deliberative committee structure. This form included the student engagement sections of the Learning, Teaching, and Assessment Strategy, and each project had to clearly show where it was matched to these strategic aims (Appendix B). Regular follow-up meetings were scheduled between the Student Engagement Facilitator and the project teams to discuss progress against the aims and review student feedback and module evaluation data in order to measure the impact of these projects.

In addition to the six cross-institutional projects, a further 22 subject-specific student engagement projects were identified in Annual Monitoring Report Enhancement Plans. A list of subject-specific projects is provided in Annex C. Each of these projects was set up based on the needs of the academic School and while some Schools worked on similar themes and ideas, they were each designed as bespoke projects for the needs of each course. A full review of the outcome and impact of the projects will be undertaken as part of the Annual Monitoring process in 2016/7. However, initial results have shown positive effects of student engagement across the institution.

3 Challenges, successes and lessons learned

The 'Students Creating Change' scheme has been embedded through the institutional annual monitoring process for each programme and at a strategic institutional level through the monitoring of cross-institutional projects via the deliberative committee structure (Student Engagement Group, Learning and Teaching Committees, Academic Enhancement Committee and Senate) to ensure there is a clear route to enact student-led change.

While it was, initially disappointing that no student-initiated cross-institutional projects were submitted, as the projects began to be developed and became more widely publicised and understood, students volunteers came forward to work on the projects and were integrated into the relevant project team in order for staff and students to create and develop the project plan together.

As the projects were already underway by the time students came forward to participate in the project development, the detailed, comprehensive training program for students designed to support their participation could not be delivered in full. Nevertheless, the Student Engagement Facilitator ensured that all students participating in the projects were fully briefed and encouraged to take a full and active role in developing the project, discussing and tracking progress and gathering feedback and evaluation to inform the reporting of the project outcomes. The Student Engagement Facilitator maintained regular contact with each student to ensure that they were well supported and understood their role as a change agent.

As a result of participating in the 'Students Creating Change' scheme students have gained in confidence and accepted greater responsibility for their own learning and shaping the learning experience for other, current and future, BGU students. One student has been supported to research (both locally and nationally) successful personal tutor systems, written reports for the Learning and Teaching Committee and developed guidance and promotional materials for students that is based on feedback gathered from students about their lack of understanding of the personal tutor role. Another student, leading research into student views on reading lists and library resources, has presented their findings and recommendations to the Library Services team with action to be considered an implemented during Summer 2016 prior to the start of the 2016/7 academic year. Both of these examples illustrate successful achievement of the aims of the 'Students Creating Change' scheme: students, supported by staff, researching and developing recommendations to improve students' learning experience.

The quality of the student representative role has also improved throughout the year. Having identified that there were limited opportunities for the University to discuss new developments and gauge student opinion about potential changes to provision, the Student Engagement Facilitator worked with the Students' Union to develop School Forums – regular meetings between academic staff, the Student Engagement Facilitator and student course representatives from each of the academic Schools, where ideas are discussed, student perspectives captured and comparisons made between Schools. The feedback from these meetings is used to provide feedback to individual course teams and to shape institutional policy. Topics discussed at these meetings have included the Graduate Attributes project, responses to national surveys of student opinion (the National Student Survey), and Library opening hours. By having a central forum for student opinion accessible to staff, the University is now more able to quickly gather student opinion and views and respond to these when designing new policy or developing projects.

Participating in cross-institutional and subject-specific student engagement projects has also demanded that students, and the Student Engagement Facilitator in particular, are familiar with, and ensure that, wider HE sector policy developments and national conversations about student leadership inform the developing student engagement agenda at BGU.

The incorporation of externality into BGU's Students Creating Change scheme was evident in February 2016, when the University hosted its first Student Engagement Conference. Keynote presentations were made by representatives from the national body 'The Student Engagement Partnership' and another UK university's Students' Union, in addition to presentations from University staff and students showcasing local best practice.

A Bishop Grosseteste University student has also been part of a national research project coordinated by The Student Engagement Partnership into the experiences of 'commuter' students. The student conducted focus groups and interviews with BGU students about their experiences and reported the results to both the University and the national project. Students have also presented at the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) 'Change Agents Network' conference, presenting their work on developing new digital initiatives alongside the BGU e-Learning staff team.

A further endorsement of the success of the 'Students Creating Change' scheme came in January 2016 when the national quality assurance body, QAA, undertook an external quality assurance review of BGU (Higher Education Review)^[6]. In addition to the overall successful outcome of the review, the QAA review team noted that

"...students play a key role in the University's Student Engagement Group (SEG), a subgroup of the LTC [Learning and Teaching Committee], which is led by the Student Engagement Facilitator supported by the Students' Union. The SEG has an equal student and staff representation and allows students to constructively raise issues as well as play a role in the development of new engagement and enhancement initiatives."

The review team also *".....explored the development of the Students Creating Change scheme, and found that a wide range of staff and students had a comprehensive and detailed understanding of the initiative and its importance to both academic and professional services departments. The team learned that currently all AMRs [Annual Monitoring Reports] must include a Students Creating Change initiative to be signed off by the Learning and Teaching Committee.....The strategic embedding of the Students Creating Change scheme across schools and professional services, which engages students in the quality assurance and enhancement of learning opportunities, is good practice."*

4 Conclusions

Whilst embedding a new project always has its initial challenges, BGU has shown a clear commitment to embedding student opinions and student led actions into the curriculum and the wider student experience.

The introduction of this innovative programme into a small traditional University, has challenged long-standing pedagogical assumptions, modes of working, quality assurance processes and mechanisms for student engagement. In many ways BGU provides a case-study of the conditions, described elsewhere^[7], required to stimulate change in HE, that is: “visionary and transformative leaders at all levels in the organisation; staff acting as inspiring role models; students empowered to act and take risks; mentors and coaches who can inspire and support development opportunities; education activists and critical friends who will lead innovation in the curricula and learning; learning technologists; dynamic and effective ecosystems and a diversity of stakeholders”.

Through the ‘Students Creating Change’ scheme, student engagement has been embedded through quality enhancements as well as extra-curricular opportunities for students to develop employability and work on improving the student experience. Together with the Students’ Union, the University will continue to support students in identifying opportunities to enhance the student learning experience and will continue to grow the ‘Students Creating Change’ scheme in order to fully embed student engagement into all institutional activity.

Appendix A: Cross-institutional student engagement projects 2015-6

“There Aren’t Enough Books For My Course”: Addressing Student Expectations of Resource Availability in the University Library

The aim of this project is to identify ways of better managing student expectations with regards to the availability of printed books in the University Library. The project will consider and review the effectiveness of annotated reading lists and make recommendations for other alternative approaches.

Enhancement of the Employability Award

This project aims to undertake research into how Bishop Grosseteste University can enhance its current Employability Award, and look at best practice at other universities.

Graduate Attributes at Bishop Grosseteste University

Bishop Grosseteste University launched Graduate Attributes in October 2015. ‘Graduate Attributes’ describe the skills and characteristics that Bishop Grosseteste University would like all of its graduates to develop. The project will involve collecting student views and making recommendations about the future development of the the Graduate Attributes project.

Effective Tutorials

Following an initial survey with students undertaken by the Student Union in 2014/15 further research need to be undertaken with students to:

- Find out what students understand the purpose of individual tutorials to be
- Review their current experience of tutorials
- Make recommendations for the future development of the tutorial system

Institutional Study Week:

This projects aims to gather feedback and assess the feasibility of developing an ‘institutional enhancement week’, where students are able to attend a week of employability and personal and professional development opportunities.

Can access to handheld learning technologies make an impact on the development of students as teachers?

This project aims to evaluate whether providing students with an i-Pad to access learning materials and resources at University and provides an effective mechanism for engaging children in learning whilst on placement.

Appendix B: Student Engagement projects monitoring form

Date						
Project Title						
Project Lead						
Subject						
The project meets the following Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategy aims.	Work in a dynamic way with students in the co-creation and enhancement of learning opportunities with a shared understanding of objectives	Encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning	Be responsive in ensuring that students are fully supported in navigating the transition into and through higher education	Implement e-learning and digital literacies in partnership	Work with students to agree and embed a set of expectations and responsibilities in learning teaching and assessment	Support and encourage the Students' Union to continue to develop its rep' and engagement role on behalf of all students
Tick all that apply						
What is the project?						
Why was it created?						
What does success look like?						
How will success be measured?						
How will progress be monitored?						
How are students involved?						
Date of Evaluation						
<u>Mid Year Review</u>						
Date						
What has been completed so far?						
What are the next steps?						
<u>End of Year Review</u>						
What was achieved?						
What can be rolled out elsewhere?						

Appendix C: Subject-specific departmental student engagement projects 2015-6

School	Course	Project title	Project Description
Social Science	Early Childhood Studies	Student led revalidation	As part of the revalidation process, students were surveyed to gather feedback on the course and areas they would like to be included in the curriculum.
	Applied Studies	Online Teaching, Assessment, Resources, Careers and Organisation (TARCO) forms	Using online survey software to ensure that professional and part-time students can engage with representative structures
	Education Studies	Feedback on Feedback	Developing a student-led framework for providing feedback on academic work
	Maths	Student interventions in school	L5 students designing academic interventions for C/D grade GCSE students and going into school to teach these.
	Sport	Student Led Teaching	Peer teaching of modules to help students engage with the theories being discussed.
	SENI	Professional Contexts	Students used their placement module to develop and establish co-curricular activity for their course.
	Psychology	Psychology Society	Supporting a student to research and identify the best ways for a course to support student-led activity through the Bishop Grosseteste University Students' Union society framework.
	Health and Social Care	Student generated feedback	Students took part in a formative peer assessment exercise in order to help identify ways to improve their own practice.
Humanities	English	Peer Marking	Students given examples of good practice from their class to peer mark and identify positive features.
	Music	Student workshops	Academic staff worked with students to put on a workshop event focussed around student interests.
	Drama	Level4/Level6 collaboration	L4 students to act in plays directed by L6 students to support transition and build communities within the course. This will be expanded onto placements, where L4

			will attend L6 placements and support activity.
	Art	Artist workshops	Students to work with academic coordinator to host and facilitate co-curricular workshops to support learning.
	History	Confidence in Academic Writing	Research project into how best to support students and their academic writing skills when transitioning into HE.
	Theology	Peer teaching	Students select an area of the curriculum to teach to the rest of class and create an A4 summary as a study resource
	Business (TE)	Coaching as tutoring	Students are coached and work in a team to develop academic communities and peer-support networks.
	Sociology	Student focus groups	Students take part in small focus group activities to ensure any improvements to the course can be delivered.
Teacher Development	Primary Teaching Studies	Online Teaching, Assessment, Resources, Careers and Organisation (TARCO) Forms	Using online survey software to ensure students can engage with representative structures.
	PGCE Primary	Socrative Surveys	Using Socrative survey tool to gather student feedback and measure impact of teaching, with sessions adapted based on responses
	PGCE Secondary	Course Charter	Working with students to develop a course-specific student charter. This is reviewed and monitored by students and clearly shows responsibilities of staff and students in professional contexts.
	MA Education	Student/Staff Research Projects	Developing Staff/Student research projects which are tied into national policy and a Bishop Grosseteste University hosted conference



References:

- [1] QAA (2015). *The Quality Code*. Available at: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/introducing-the-quality-code>
- [2] Bishop Grosseteste University (2014). *Strategic plan 2014-19*
- [3] QAA (2009) *Institutional Audit*. Bishop Grosseteste University College, Lincoln. Available at: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Documents/Bishop%20Grosseteste%20University/Bishop-Grosseteste-University-College-Lincoln-IA-09.pdf>
- [4] Bishop Grosseteste University (2014). *Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (2015-19)*. Available at: http://www.bishopg.ac.uk/documents/policies_and_procedures_-_governance/lta_strategy_2015-2019_final_version.pdf
- [5] Bishop Grosseteste University (2016) *Students Creating Change*. Available at: <https://sites.bishopg.ac.uk/celt/student-engagement/students-creating-change/>
- [6] QAA (2016) Higher Education Review of Bishop Grosseteste University <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Documents/Bishop%20Grosseteste%20University/Bishop-Grosseteste-University-HER-16.pdf>
- [7] Mitchell, J., Vettrano, E., Lawrence, A., Lowthrop, K & Jackson, C (2016). 'Sharing to Learn; Learning to Share' *Entrepreneurship education for the 21st century*. The Future of Education conference proceedings Available at: <http://conference.pixel-online.net/FOE/conferenceproceedings.php>

Discussion questions:

- Is the approach to student engagement described in the paper scalable to larger, more complex, Universities?
- What further improvements will you be making to the scheme?

Please submit your proposal by sending this form, in Word format, by 25 July 2016 to QAForum@eua.be. The file should be named using the last names of the authors, e.g. Smith_Jones.doc. Please do not send a hard copy or a PDF file.