

Enhancement of Scholarship and Interdisciplinarity through Research Partnership for Imperial Students

The project aims to enhance scholarship and interdisciplinary skills through a research partnership, which will impact positively on two student cohorts: 1) level 5 and 6 students as research partners; and 2) level 4, 5, and 6 students who will act as research participants.

This exploratory project extends an ongoing study exploring the views and expectations of what it means to be a university student, from the perspectives of both students and staff in higher education (Wong & Chiu, 2018 forthcoming). Anecdotal evidence from staff conversations, especially at Imperial, has highlighted the increasing concern that students are taking a pragmatic approach to their education. That is that students are emphasising academic outcomes/grades, much more than the holistic aims of higher education, such as the importance of transferable and social skills development. The research methods employed for data collection involve staff and student focus groups and a survey on staff and student views of university learners. The rationales for the choices are given the focus of this project where we aim to unveil the views and expectations of what it means to be a university student, from the perspectives of both students and staff. To do this, the use of the focus group method allows us to explore and brainstorm ideas from university students and staff, alongside relevant items from existing literature. This will therefore help to gain insights on staff and student views and construction of what it means to be a student in higher education.

By conducting this research, the expectations of staff and students will be made more explicit and transparent. This should better support endeavours to bridge any gaps in expectations. The pedagogical implications derived from this project will therefore support the process of curriculum review and impact positively on student engagement and learning experience. To disseminate research findings, we (along with our student partners) will present in internal curriculum review workshops, department seminars/Education committees, and external conferences. Internal seminars/workshops will seek a cross-disciplinary audience in the broad disciplines of the survey across the university. External dissemination will focus on institutions (e.g. Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE), Advance HE) with an interest in higher education.