

# Taking stock 2022: Student-Community Service Learning

## Background

The [National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement](#) is undertaking a collaborative research project funded by the University of Westminster. We're interested in how universities engage with communities and organisations in their immediate settings through the vehicle(s) of learning and teaching.

We will focus on a small sample of universities (the UK and beyond) that are facilitating engaged learning, service learning and other forms of student knowledge exchange in University-Community settings.

This work aims to identify areas of innovation and excellence, with a particular focus on social and environmental justice, from a wide range of UK and International Universities. In particular, we would like to investigate:

**The key narratives, strategic priorities, framings and philosophies underpinning practices.** For example:

- What hooks and framing ideas/principles prove most successful in mobilising an effective student-community learning environment?
- How are people framing students, learners, knowledge, the community etc.? What frameworks, theories, and methodologies underpin effective practice? (i.e. decolonising, active learners, community development, social capital etc.)
- How do these narratives and framings relate and align with strategic institutional priorities and needs?
- How are people linking education, research and knowledge Exchange and breaking down the barriers between them?

**How is learning being designed?** For example:

- What pedagogical structures are being developed? (i.e., credit, assessment models, optional etc.)
- What frameworks and assessment processes are being used? What role do the key actors play in shaping these?
- How are people framing the value of this work and evidencing this (i.e., learning outcomes, graduate attributes)?
- What evaluation frameworks are being adopted? (i.e. KPIs, metrics, indicators, narratives etc.)?

**How are people transforming the practice, embedding, and building communities of learning?** For example:

- How are people developing and supporting meaningful collaborations to deliver this work? (i.e., with community organisations; other HEIs; FE and schools; local authorities etc.)

- How do people nurture talent, capability, team structures and programme management to deliver excellent projects and outcomes?
- What resources and tools are people using to build effective and equitable learning communities? (e.g. asset mapping, digital repositories)

We will look at a subset of universities with a similar context to the University of Westminster. For example, inner city location, diverse commuter students, a significant historic estate and proximity to commerce and enterprise. Whilst we are interested in opportunities that would suit the Westminster setting, we would also like to draw on a wider sample that can inspire other Universities and the sector as a whole.

We intend to create an inclusive conversation around this research project. We invite you to join us on the research journey by:

- Sharing and inviting comments on our framing of the research project
- Responding to a set of specific questions emerging from the agreed framing of the research project
- Contributing to a University of Westminster workshop sharing the insights from this work
- Sharing and inviting comments on the outputs, key findings and themes

## **Outputs**

We anticipate up to two key outputs from this work:

- A resource pack illustrating a range of conceptual and practical approaches and highlighting by theme a range of innovative models which others can learn from.
- A policy report/briefing which sets the scene for how the UK Higher Education Sector can support and enable innovative student-community practices within the UK HE landscapes.

Our intention is that the above work can be used by both University of Westminster and all participating HEIs to:

1. Identify innovative practices which can be scaled and applied across contexts.
2. Articulate the strategic potential of a focus on key areas of engagement which align with the institutional vision and mission.

The above work will be used by the NCCPE to:

1. Identify innovative practices which can be scaled, e.g. through the Engage Conference and other events and resources.
2. Provide Public Engagement professionals and educators with tools and evidence to mobilise support within their institutions.
3. Feed intelligence back to our funders and policy stakeholders, to illuminate how their investment in the system is being deployed.
4. To refresh our understanding of how public and community engagement is being developed and delivered through the curriculum and inform future strategy and operational support for the sector.

## **Key dates**

We are proposing to publish the final outputs in February/March 2023. We are holding 1pm – 5pm (GMT) on 25<sup>th</sup> of January 2023 for a workshop to explore the findings from this work.