

Editorial

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Festival of Learning 2021

The University of Lincoln has historically been a forerunner in the sector in student engagement and putting students first. IMPact, the University of Lincoln Higher Education Journal, fully supports Lincoln's Student as Producer ethos and takes the lead facilitating extra curricula opportunities for students to engage in learning. This special student edition of IMPact acts as a digital showcase for some of this engagement, celebrating the achievements of students for the work they completed during the Festival of Learning 2021.

This festival was conducted as an institution-wide initiative providing a series of programmes and sessions for students and staff to support learning. Some of the sessions were student-led, some facilitated by academic staff and others led by central services/departments, such as Wellbeing and Careers. The four main streams of the festival included an *Academic* strand, with disciplinary activities at a School and College level, a *Skills* strand, covering key themes such as sustainability and citizenship, a *Wellbeing, Health and Sport* strand, focusing upon providing sessions from professional service departments, and a *Live social* event which concluded the festival's activities for staff and students. This provided additional opportunities for students to engage with the University, aligning with One Community and Student as Producer ethos. In this instance, students were partners alongside staff in the design and production of accessible sessions delivered in the skills strands. The sessions were varied, with some delivered across disciplines whilst others were more discipline-specific. All of the sessions were accessible for the period transitioning back from social distancing, providing a combination of in person and online activities.

The Festival aimed to bridge the gap with recent limitations during the period of social distancing and the move to more online learning in response to Covid-19. In sum, efforts were made to utilise this Festival as one way to increase campus-based activities for students, emphasising the value of One Community and building a sense of belonging

Role of IMPact in supporting Student as Producer

Since its launch in 2018, IMPact has supported and promoted good pedagogical practice, with a remit to represent a wide variety of perspectives, from staff and

students. A student edition was published in 2019 and in 2020 the level of support for learning extended beyond conventional manuscripts with the addition of shorter scholarly research notices. This broadened the reach for colleagues and students, with the journal being a vehicle suited to smaller scale written pieces of work, enabling authors to submit focused reflective pedagogical discussions/ narratives.

The level of support, enhancing and supporting learning for all, through the promotion of good practice have all been developed under the principles of Student as Producer. Student as Producer, as a model embedded institutionally since 2010, enables students to become producers and collaborators, rather than passive consumers of information (Neary and Winn 2009). The model facilitates opportunities for collaboration with students, promoting their engagement and participation within and outside of the curriculum, with values including the promotion and facilitation of active engagement and participation for students as partners, co-creating, co-producing, co-learning, co-designing, co-developing and co-researching (Healey et al. 2014: 21).

By facilitating and enabling students *to be "...an integral part of the academic project of their institutions"* (Neary and Saunders 2016: 2), developments across the institution have reasserted the valued role of students, where contributions have *"...embraced student engagement with teaching, learning and research"* (Strudwick 2017: 74). Projects have been developed across all disciplines, in and outside of the curriculum, in practice *"...whereby students learn primarily by engagement in real research projects... Engagement is created through active collaboration amongst and between students and academics"* (Neary et al. 2014: 9).

Student as Producer draws upon eight key principles: Discovery, Technology in Teaching, Space and Spatiality, Assessment, Research and Evaluation, Student Voice, Support for research-based teaching through expert engagement with information resources, and Creating the future. These principles have been embedded in practice, through teaching and learning, module development, assessment design and opportunities for students to engage in partnership with academics in research (seen through the *Undergraduate Research Opportunities Scheme* (UROS)).

The Summer Festival special edition

This edition has been developed under the principles of Student as Producer, to provide students with the opportunities to publish in IMPact on their reflections as student presenters/facilitators for the Festival of Learning. Through a process of mentoring and support offered by LALT, students completed their reflective written pieces addressing their rationale, key areas of development learnt and reflecting upon challenges and lessons learnt. The submissions went through a peer review process as a form of skills development for students, again demonstrating the commitment to Student as Producer to enhance student engagement through

students as authors (Strudwick, 2021). This student edition presents four interesting discussions created by students on their experiences.

Holt discusses her contribution presenting a session on medieval medicine, exploring how she overcame the challenges and tackled some misconceptions with the subject matter. Arguing for the relevance of the topic today, she wanted to unlock some of the more theoretical aspects, with relevance to the diversity within medieval medicine. Setting the context within the relevant literature base Holt presented some comparative discussions on Western and Eastern traditions and explores how and why the topic has contemporary relevance for today. Methodological considerations were reflected upon, alongside her appreciation of how delivering the session has helped the development of skills and where and how technology can be used as an advantage.

Page discusses her reflections on the presentation on dog training, drawing upon her experiences as a student of animal behaviour and also as a dog trainer, bringing academic and practice together. With consideration of key areas to take away from her experience as facilitator, Holt focused upon canine body language, training techniques, socialisation through exploring how dogs learn and the importance of aligning dominance theory with her topic. Holt's submission is an exemplar of a student applying knowledge to tackle misconceptions, whilst further offering some practicalities of delivering online and overcoming challenges using digital platforms. Part of the guidance offered to authors was to address how facilitating a session impacted upon their own development. Holt makes reference to the value of this experience, and how it positively impacted upon levels of confidence and the help with assurances of her own level of knowledge.

Smart reflects upon his engagement with Student as Producer through his study with palaeontology. The session for the Festival of Learning focused upon dispelling myths, a common theme among all of the submissions, discussing the broad appeal alongside setting out the literature with modern palaeontology. The discussion by Smart is more explicit in its focus exploring where and how Student as Producer was an ethos for his work to be framed within. Importantly the reflection considers how this experience has aided the development of skills and competencies, notably presentation skills and enquiry-based learning. This dialogue addresses the commonalities and differences as a student with assessments and delves deeper into where and how the experience as a facilitator has represented a novel creation for development, academically and personally. As a master's student Smart illustrates the agency he feels over his learning journey and how such initiatives have aided this progression.

The final submission by Walsh focuses more on the wider purpose of the Festival of Learning, highlighting the development of skills learnt through the process as facilitator. With a three-strand approach Walsh explores the support for learning, her role in social enterprise, and reflects in the final strand as an undergraduate student in the Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) Foundation Diploma. Dialogue

addresses both personal and professional reflections and explored where and how these can be shared as learning tools and techniques. It is timely that Walsh places her discussion within the context of learning through Covid-19, highlighting the importance of communication, capabilities and confidence within active learning. The submission comes to an end by addressing the scope as facilitator with the planning and delivery of such sessions, viewing them as one means to understand the learners' position, whilst equipping learners with the skills to also understand their position and role within learning.

The four submissions have some common themes in their reflections. All address the evident benefits for skills development through the Festival of Learning, the role of Student as Producer, as an overriding ethos allowing them to apply their knowledge, and the Festival of Learning as central place for sharing knowledges, on specific disciplines, skills and approaches. By reflecting upon learning journeys and the integral place of students in the wider learning environment at Lincoln. Such discussions emphasised the importance of One Community at the University of Lincoln and what can be learnt from sharing practice.

In essence, this special edition of IMPact shines a light on showcasing the benefits of students engaging outside of the curriculum. It emphasises the value in them seeing their place in Higher Education as holistic, all encompassing, through active learning and skills development. Learning from the student perspectives on their role in the Festival of Learning has been fruitful in providing them the opportunity to be students as authors in practice. This ultimately shifts Student as Producer to the next level as a vehicle for enhancing student engagement and teaching and learning for the future.

References

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