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## **STUDENTS AS PARTNERS : ON DEVELOPING A STUDENT LED CONFERENCE TO ENHANCE THE SKILLS OF UG PROJECT STUDENTS**

### **Abstract:**

An important final year assessment which is common to most UK Undergraduate (UG) degree programmes is the final year project or dissertation. It is considered the capstone module on degree programmes whereby students gain valuable skills valued by employers. Our project engages final year UG students in a collaboration designed with inclusivity and partnership in mind.

We ran student-led conferences to communicate the experience of final year students and disseminate their top tips to level 5 students. The project sits across three disciplines in the health and life sciences, the largest faculty in Northumbria University with the aim of developing a widely applicable solution for use across different programmes, departments, faculties and universities. By placing the student experience at its heart, our project seeks to enhance support for student learning through the improvement of graduate attributes including independence of thought and action, curiosity and critical thinking. Thus, employability outcomes are enhanced.

The Project conferences aim to respect the diversity of the student body while creating a sense of equality to 1) support supervision quality across the institution. 2) Improve academic experience and 3) enhance graduate characteristics and thus employability.

The inclusion of students as partners in pedagogic research in the student-led conferences and in a reflective exercise on the inclusion of students as equal partners in pedagogical research encouraged self- management of their own project and supervisor/student relationship thereby enhancing the student experience whilst developing their key graduate attributes.

Student researchers played a major role in data analysis and evaluation. Additionally an eLearning platform organisation site has been constructed continuing the key resources for staff and students alongside video recordings of student presentations.

This scalable project supports the development of graduates that are distinguished by their intellectual expertise and employability through meaningful pedagogical research that maximises student satisfaction.

### **Keywords:**

Undergraduate, Research, Graduate, Skills, Partnership, Conference

**JEL Classification:** I23