

The Student Learning Experience model

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Outline of today's session

- Introduction to sparqs.
- Background and context to the Student Learning Experience model.
- Development of the model.
- Introducing the model.
- Reflections on student engagement and belonging.



Who is sparqs?



- **student partnerships in quality Scotland.**
- Scotland's national agency for student engagement.
- Works with all institutions and students' associations in the college and university sector.
- Main funding from the Scottish Funding Council.
- Our vision: *"Students are partners in shaping the quality of learning, making positive change to their own and others' experience, however and wherever they learn."*

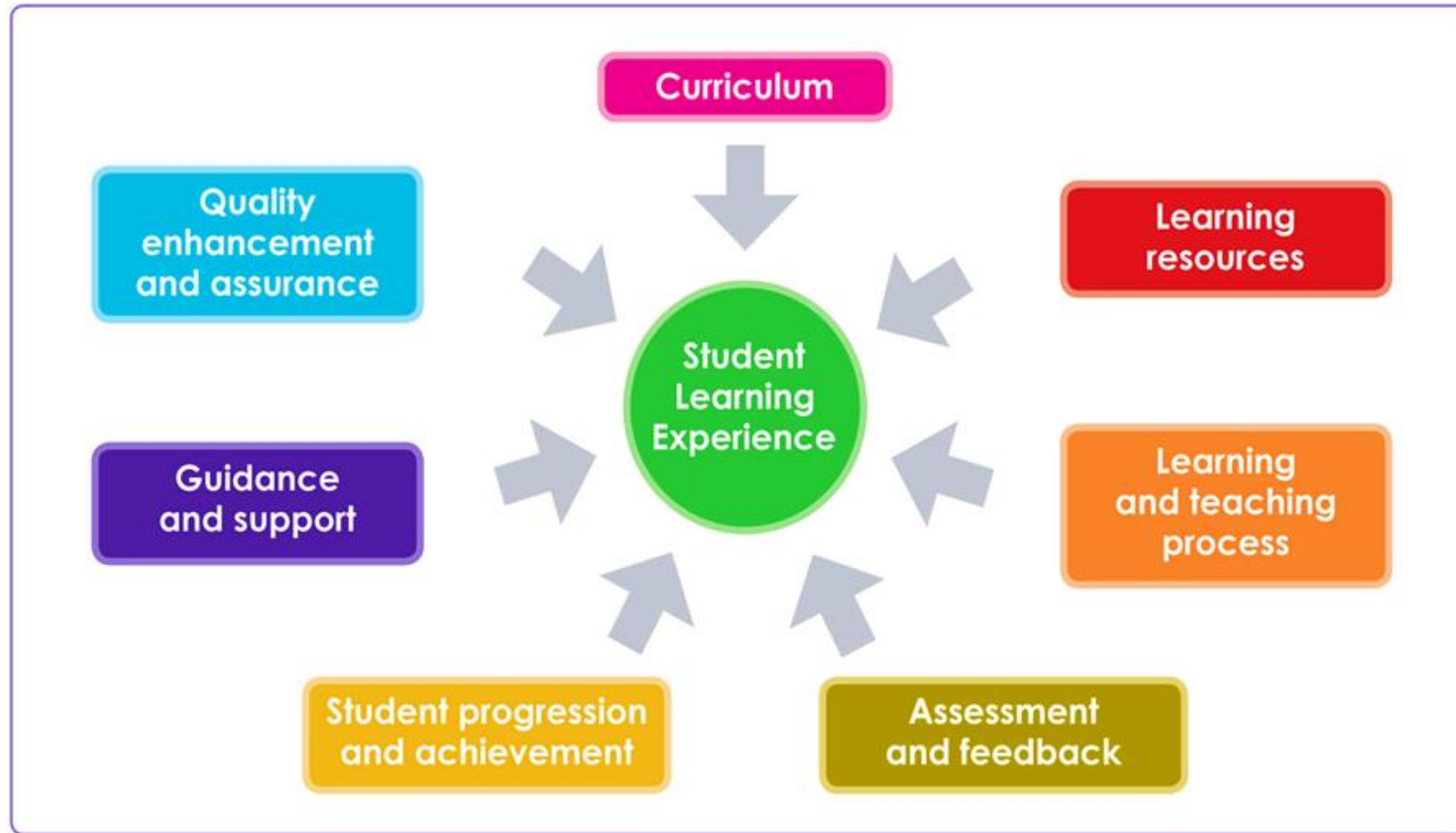


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Background and context



SLE Model: Background & Context



SLE Model: Background & Context



- In 2022, the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) commissioned sparqs to work on an updated Student Learning Experience (SLE) model.
- This model will play a key role in the new **tertiary approach to quality**.
- The new SLE model continues to sit at the **heart of conversations** with students, enabling students and staff to work together to identify priorities to enhance the quality of learning.
- A distinct aspect of the SLE model is that the building blocks, lenses and reflective questions are **founded upon the views of students** across Scotland on what makes an excellent quality learning experience.



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The new model needed to work across:

- All **levels** of study (e.g. apprentices, National Qualifications, Higher Nationals, undergraduate and postgraduate taught degrees).
- Online and in-person teaching **delivery**.
- All **subject areas**.
- All student **groups** and **demographics**.

There is no such thing as *the* student experience.



Development of the model



Stage 1:

Sector benchmarking - investigating a range of existing sector reference points and research that explore the SLE and set out principles that contribute to excellence in the student experience.



12 building blocks:

Curriculum

**Learning resources,
environment and
technologies**

**Learning, teaching
and research process/
approaches/
pedagogy**

**Assessment and
feedback**

**Progression and
attainment/ learner
journey/ transitions/
pathways**

**Academic and
pastoral support
and guidance**

**Quality enhancement
and assurance/
monitoring and
evaluation**

**Student voice/
engagement/
partnership**

**Learning community/
academic community/
research community**

**Personal and
professional skills
development**

**Organisation and
management**

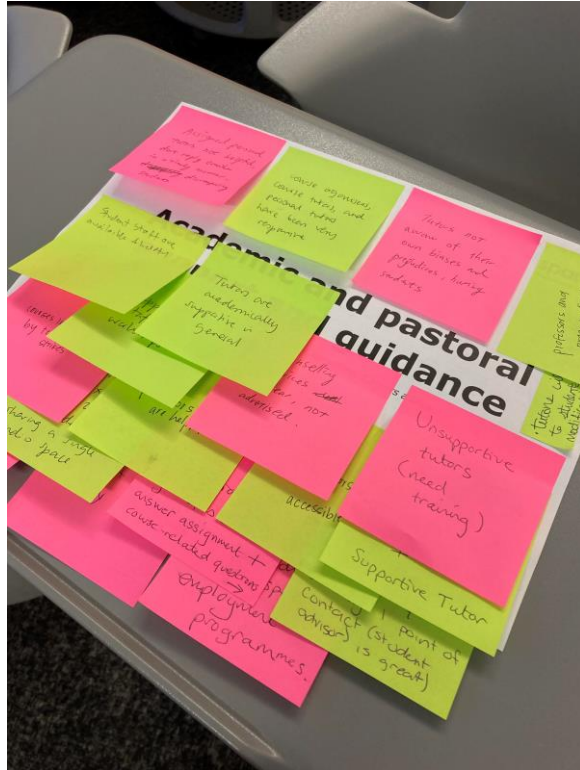
**Equality, diversity,
inclusion and
wellbeing**



Stage 2: A series of national workshops
– ensuring the foundations of the model
were defined and developed by
Scotland’s students.



Which students took part in the workshops?



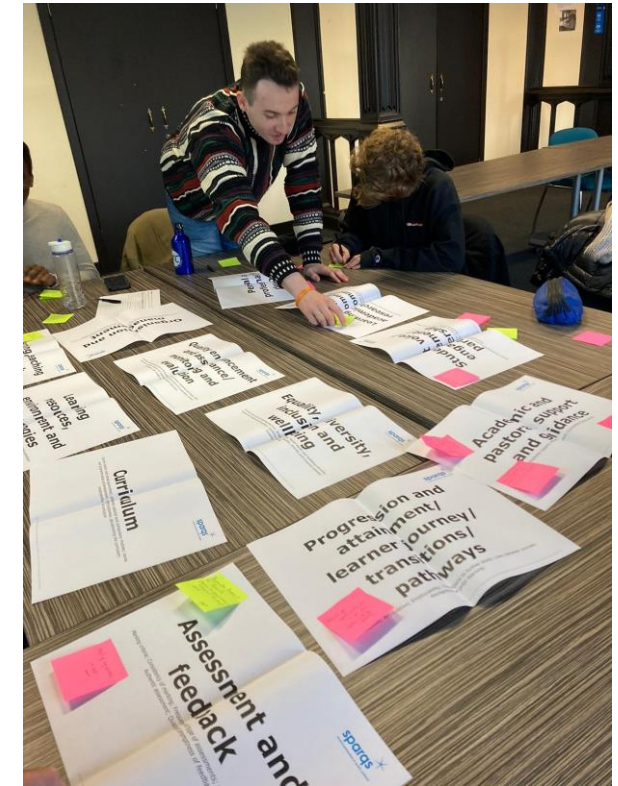
- Over **300 students** from across Scotland.
- Representation from **15** universities, **19** colleges & **2** tertiary institutions.
- Including:
 - Modern and graduate apprentices.
 - Postgraduate taught students.
 - Senior phase school pupils studying at college.
 - Students studying on supported education programmes.
 - International students
 - Widening access students



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Which students took part in the workshops?

- **34%** of respondents were **over the age of 25**.
- **Just over a quarter** of respondents identified as **having a disability**.
- **20%** of respondents were **Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME)**.
- **14%** of respondents were **parents** and **6%** were **carers**.
- **1 in 10** respondents were **care-experienced**.
- **1 in 5 respondents** were studying **part-time** or studying their course while **released from work**.
- **3%** of respondents were **sign-language users**.



Stages 3 and 4:



- **Establishment of a student and staff advisory group** - developing the final wording of the model and its accompanying questions. This group was comprised of students, students' association staff and institutional staff from Scotland's tertiary sector.
- **Sector committee dialogue** - the model and questions were consulted upon and discussed at several national committees and events.

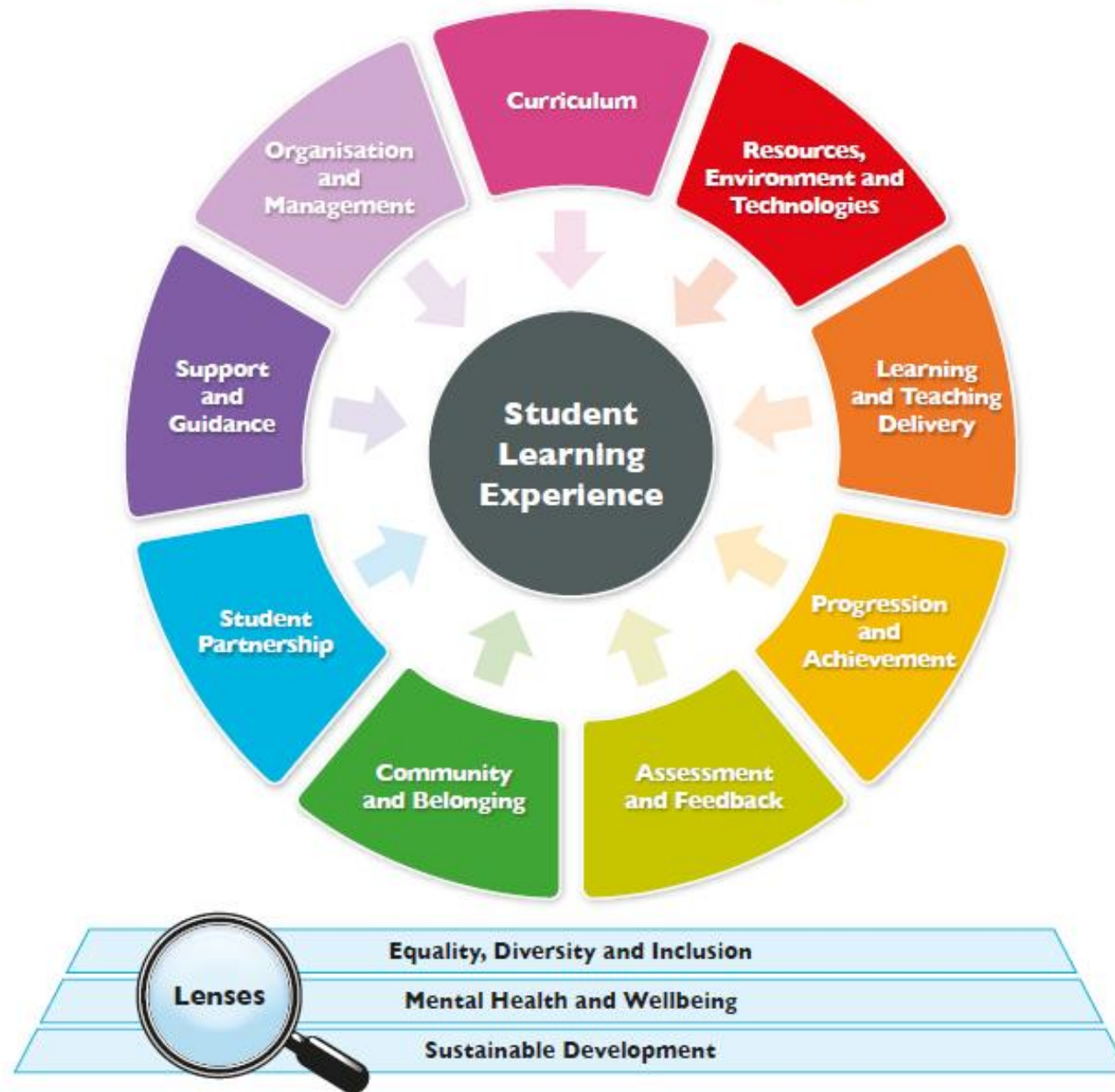


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Introducing the model



Student Learning Experience (SLE) model



Reflective Questions: Community & Belonging



- A. In what ways do all students have the opportunity to participate in social and academic communities, and to feel **included** and that they **belong**?
- B. What opportunities do students and staff have to collaborate as part of a **learning community** within their course and subject area?
- C. What **social opportunities** are there for students to get to know other students outside of class, including students on other courses?
- D. To what extent are community spaces **accessible** to all students, with principles of universal design employed when planning events or projects?
- E. How are students studying **at a distance** included in institutional and students' association communities? Are dedicated **online spaces** established to build community and belonging, such as forums, online chat platforms, and video conferencing spaces?



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Reflective Questions: Community and Belonging



- F. How are students and staff supported to feel **safe** and **welcome** in their learning spaces? Is there an effective and accessible process for reporting bullying, harassment, and discrimination?
- G. Are students and staff mindful of their responsibilities to one another and foster a **positive, respectful, kind, and inclusive** environment?
- H. Are students informed and respectful of the **diverse community** of their student and staff body? In what ways does the institution **value** and **celebrate** the unique experiences and ideas that each individual can bring to the community?
- I. What opportunities do students have to engage with **local communities** within the curriculum and outside it? Do students, staff, and community groups work in partnership on shared goals?
- J. In what ways does the institution and students' association enable the creation and support of **student-led communities**?



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Uses of the SLE model



- As a basis for **discussions between students and staff**, e.g. at student-staff liaison meetings, to prompt conversations on what is working well and what could be improved within the student experience.
- As a basis for **recruitment, training, and support activities** for student reps. sparqs uses the SLE model as a core element of its training for course representatives and student officers.
- To support **student reps** to gather **meaningful feedback** from the students they represent, at both course level and at institutional level. sparqs can explore ways to **support students' associations to bring together evidence** from across the institution and nationally.



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Uses of the SLE model

- To collate **evidence** on the SLE at a course, institutional and national level, to support institutions in **self-evaluative activity** and **enhancement planning**.
- As a reference point for review teams in **internal and external review**, to provide a shared understanding of the student learning experience.



Student engagement and belonging



Building Belonging in Higher Education (Wonkhe & Pearson)



- 4 areas which form the foundations of belonging:
 - Connection
 - Inclusion
 - Support
 - Autonomy



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Building Belonging in Higher Education (Wonkhe & Pearson)



“Throughout the research there a strong connection between student autonomy and a sense of belonging and inclusion. In the student survey, 67% of those who felt like they belonged agreed that they felt **empowered to act if they saw an opportunity to change things for the better**, compared with 29% of students who did not feel that they belonged.”



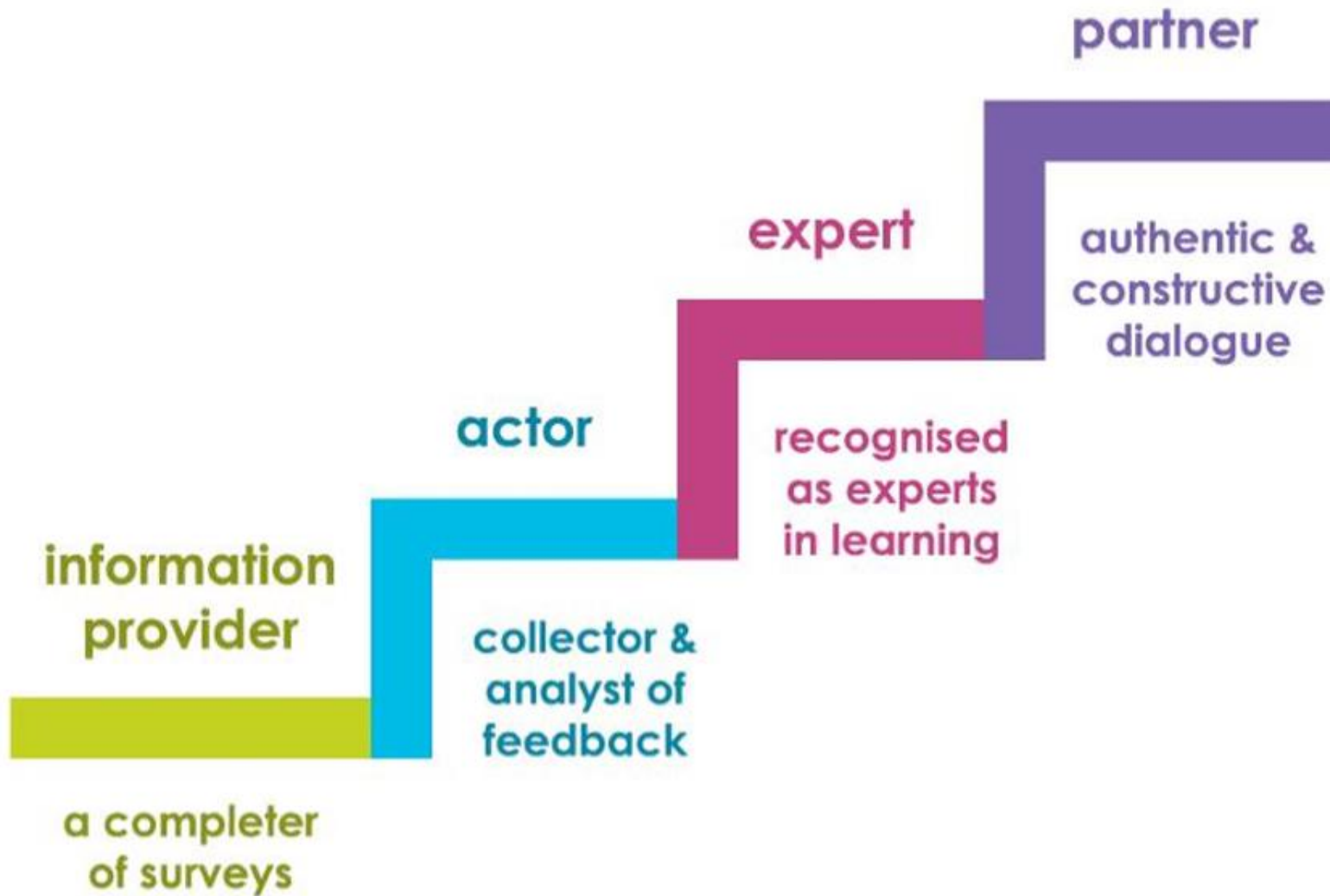
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“ The key thing is always to involve students at all stages of decision-making and action – e.g. from the initial ideas stage to planning, implementation and evaluation. Belongingness’ does not come from having things done ‘to’ you – it’s all about collaboration and co-construction.”

Response from a staff member to a Wonkhe survey on belonging, shared on the [Wonkhe website](#).



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Student Partnership Staircase



Some final reflections...



- Opportunities to influence and make change to your institution, and to be heard, improve belonging.
- Tools like the SLE model have a key role in engaging students in making changes to their student experience and, ultimately, in supporting students to feel that they belong to their course, their subject area, and their institution.
- Barriers to engagement in rep systems and student engagement processes are crucial to explore and alleviate – who isn't being heard?



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"Diversity is having a seat at the table, inclusion is having a voice, and belonging is having that voice be heard."

Liz Fosslien



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Thank you, stay in touch!

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