

Special Interest Group: Student Knowledge Exchange

Monday 18th March 2024, 11:00 – 12:00

Attendees

Leanne Kenyon, ProjectMatch (Group Coordinator)

Miriam Hackett, PraxisAuril (Event Manager)

Neale Daniel, Anglia Ruskin University

Mohammed Ali, London South Bank University

Mark Gray, Middlesex University

Sam Drake, University College London

Pippa Christie, University of Sunderland

Alison Johnson, University of Nottingham

Gordon Brady, University of Bedfordshire

Josef Walker, University of Leicester

Nicola Musgrove, Anchored In

Simon Harrison, Lancaster University

Jon Powell, Lancaster University

Rachel Hanneman, Nottingham Trent University

Chris Lambert, Lancaster University

David Hughes, University of Glasgow

Fang Huang, University of Birmingham

Simon Harrison, Lancaster University

Kelly Jordan, Swansea University

Marnie Brennan, University of Nottingham

Molly Steadman, Royal Holloway

Topics Discussed

Definitions

There is a very broad range of activities that feasibly come under a 'Student Knowledge Exchange' banner, but there is not a singular, clear definition of it. Although developing a

definition, or definitions, of SKE would be helpful for advocacy and internal communications, it needs to avoid constricting the concept to harshly.

Considerations in defining Student Knowledge Exchange included current general Knowledge Exchange definitions, i.e. requiring a third party in the activity, being of monetary value, impact led, solution focused etc. A more targeted way to define it is if it can be recorded in HEBCIS then its student KE. If it can't be reported that way, then it is civic, public or community engagement etc. If there is no financial value attached to it, then it's not (recordable) KE.

There is also a struggle with different terminology in different contexts. For example, student KE could be any instance in which students are bringing what they learn in a classroom to the 'outside world', then learning new things there that they bring back to the classroom. This same activity can be referred to by a dozen other terms, so it can be difficult to capture. Students and academics often don't see what they are doing as Knowledge Exchange, making it difficult to encourage them to engage or to measure it.

- Good framework for thinking about what student KE looks like is <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/42059052-8051-4d8e-b197-50b0407d34ff/evaluation-of-student-engagement-in-knowledge-exchange-final-report.pdf>, paras 4-26
- Student KE is that activity described in <https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/RE-291123-HigherEducationInnovationFundingAnnualMonitoringStatementGuidance2022To2023.pdf> - Annex A

Policy & IP

Policies around student KE seem to be relatively rare, and perhaps don't cover the full range of activities and contexts that could be applicable. Issues include academic ones (credit for KE? learning gain? etc.), pastoral (e.g. safeguarding?), legal (CMA expectations around announced changes to student curriculum; insurance; risk insulation...)

Middlesex has created a separate Student IP Policy, using Clear English drafting, to stand alongside clear English guidance for academic integrity etc. Swansea also have a policy on Student IP. IP is very important but what other areas still need policies in place to deal with challenges, conflicts of interest, student guidance, academic guidance etc.

There is also the question of how we (or the university) support the students with this. There could be a conflict of interest in advising students on their own IP position (though they could do some signposting) but finding the right support they need on their own could put them off engaging at all. Also, here are HMRC concerns regarding PhD students working on faculty KE activity that is funded by the company.

Should there be an externally created baseline policy position? If we are being measured on specific metrics or activity is linked to funding by an external body, then templates or policy guidance should be given by those bodies. But if not, working to an external norm if there is no benefit from it may be less helpful than each institution devising what works best for own students or academics.

Some shared templates and examples amongst the KE community would still be helpful.

Funding

Institutions receiving HEIF are technically already receiving funding from the Office for Students directly for Student Knowledge Exchange activity. Noted that Wales does not receive HEIF funding. Theoretically, we could work out how much of the HEBCI return has a student KE link, and therefore what % of HEIF is student KE linked. This also would only be relevant for the few activity areas that are captured by the HEBCI return.

It was noted currently HEBCI doesn't have somewhere to record student KE. However, one of the areas of focus for the HEBCI Major Review is 'Staff and students as agents of knowledge exchange (KE)': it *will* have a place after the review. It was suggested that we should feed into the OFS review, and how are they funding SKE activity.

Advocacy & Championship

Members noted that Student KE activity is already happening in institutions, regardless of standardised guidance or wrap-round support for it. Some universities are currently working on building facilitated networks internally to bring together academics and supporters to share best practice and resources. Others are building data capture, measurement and reporting procedures to collate the institutions varied SKE activity.

Very few institutions have dedicated student support. There may be elements of their role that clearly define supporting student KE, but usually this is a small part. How much time and resource is genuinely dedicated to student knowledge exchange, rather than being driven by passionate individuals?

It was noted that Student KE can overlap with many other university areas including teaching, research and engagement. This can be both an opportunity and a challenge. By being in this cross section SKE can fall between the cracks and not have its own senior level champion to drive it. However, it can gather support and champions from other functions for how it increases things like widening participation and student mobility.

Academic Engagement & Support

Much like any KE activity, it can be a challenge to engage academics to take on this activity, or to enable releasing academic time for them to take it on. One likely issue behind this is their understanding of what KE is and what support is already available for them. Another challenge is finding space in curriculum time to initiate conversation about how students can be involved in faculty KE.

It was suggested that our focus should be on building more wrap around support for the wide range of SKE activity and academics that drive it. This can be by demonstrating the relevance for education clearly. Also, by giving them a soft and easy route to developing relationships with external organisations. with a goal of developing research.

Without an academic progression pathway for enterprise, it can be an uphill battle to engage academics. Time buyouts via funding programmes (e.g. via ICURe) can help, but academics could still be expected to participate in teaching/research so do not benefit from the buyout as they should.

Student PhD KE programmes are more beneficial for the students, especially if you teach them entrepreneurial/KE skills so their research has some level industry consideration. For taught

students, there can also be a challenge of motivation or confidence to take on KE projects or to drive them.

Bottom-up vs Top-down

There is an argument that Student KE does have both bottom-up and top-down drivers going on, though perhaps not at the same time, in the same place or with the same goal in mind.

Current SKE activity is largely led by passionate or proactive academics or faculties that are creating their own opportunities. Though this leads to some fascinating and impactful outcomes, the subject specific nature of the activities makes it harder to pinpoint it as SKE or to scale it up across the institution. This bottom-up process can work well when there is individual project funding to go for, but without that there is an issue not having top-down buy in to keep the momentum going.

However, there are examples of strategic level drivers to increase and improve SKE. Sometimes in a roundabout way via skills and employability agendas, but also specifically, for example at Anglia Ruskin University that has made the SHoKE project a core activity continuing it beyond the OFS project funding. The ARU Vice Chancellor is also sponsoring a PhD student to study the SHoKE project to generate learning & looking at data analytics.

Measures, Reporting & Impact

Currently there are different metrics or data types being collected across faculties within institutions and across institutions, so it is hard to measure and demonstrate impact institutionally or across the sector.

There seem to be two broad camps in the discussion of metrics. On the one hand (“If we can’t measure it, it doesn’t count”), measuring and reporting Student KE should be aligned with the measuring and reporting of central knowledge exchange activity. These activities should include an external organisation and, in some fashion, include and monetary value. This doesn’t have to strictly mean money changing hands, but we must be able to demonstrate that the outcomes of the activity have a financial impact somewhere.

On the other hand (“Some activities we need to measure, some we might ruin by trying to measure it”), HEIF / HEBCIS is not the sole authority on Knowledge Exchange and the value of its outcomes. As one member describer; students are doing KE without us – students do volunteer work in local communities which unless you ask them, we don’t know about. This might not have money associated with it but is still KE and makes useful narratives for demonstrating activity and benefit.

Another added; We’re very interested in getting students involved in community engagement and interested in models from Europe and elsewhere: ‘student community ambassadors’, student ‘translators’ of research to community solutions, student attachments to live community projects. Students get involved in community engagement that is KE activity, it is solution focused, it’s drawing on the knowledge base, it’s taking learning from within the university and using it externally.

One challenge is that there isn’t a serious longitudinal impact piece of work that can demonstrate the lasting impact on student enterprise and KE. This might uncover both a monetary impact later on, or new outcomes that we haven’t thought to measure on include.

Resources Mentioned

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/42059052-8051-4d8e-b197-50b0407d34ff/evaluation-of-student-engagement-in-knowledge-exchange-final-report.pdf>

<https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/RE-291123-HigherEducationInnovationFundingAnnualMonitoringStatementGuidance2022To2023.pdf>
(Annex A)

Next Steps

Online Community

We will move discussions now to the dedicated Student Knowledge Exchange SIG on the PraxisAuril Online Community. You can join this via the link here:

<https://community.praxisauril.org.uk/communities/community-home?communitykey=6ed87620-443d-4e03-b499-a1cd75944d01>

This will be where we collate any helpful resources members find and want to share. It will also house meeting minutes.

Questionnaire

To help guide the ongoing direction and structure of this SIG, please take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire. There are only 5 questions and should take no longer than 10 minutes. This is for everyone interested in taking part, not just those that were able to attend this meeting.

<https://forms.office.com/e/efzsdPnSL8>

Call for Resources

As a starting point for building our collective knowledge, it would be helpful to start a repository of any SKE related documentation, reports or guidance that can be shared. Also, any links to PR, stories or blogs of the work that has already been going on.

If you have or know of any, please feel free to add them to the Online Community SIG Library directly or email them to Leanne to add them: leanne@project-match.com.