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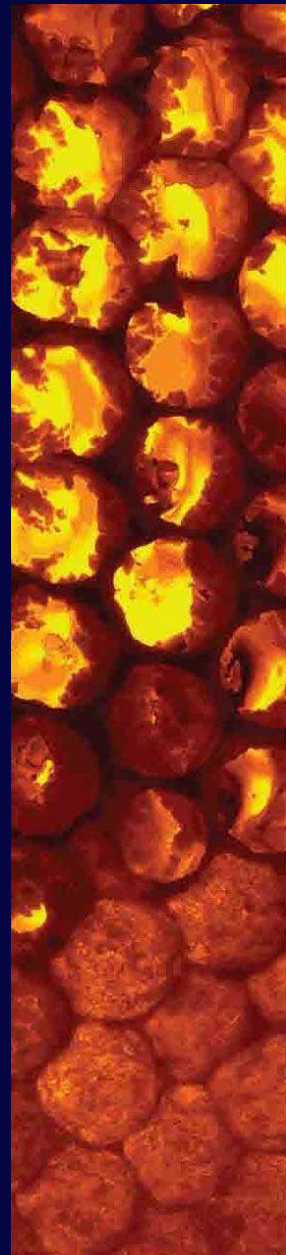
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# Supporting Scholarship in STEM: Developing and Supporting an engaged, dynamic community of Scholars

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**ESTEEM**  
THE OU CENTRE FOR  
STEM PEDAGOGY



# Meet the Team



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eSTEEem is the Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) centre for scholarship and innovation, based at The Open University.

Established in 2010, eSTEEem brings together STEM academics, academic related staff, and students to support and promote the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) in open and distance learning.

The Team comprises permanent Professional Services staff (Centre Manager, Centre Support Assistant, and since 2021, the Data Project Officer) and limited term Academic staff (Director, Deputy Director).



# About the Open University



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- One of Europe's largest universities with 208,308 students (Open University, 2023)
- Developing practice in distance learning for over 50 years
- With an open admissions policy
  - 77% of OU students have one A level or a lower qualification on entry
  - 25% of OU undergraduates live in the 25% most deprived areas
  - 71% of directly registered students work full or part-time during their studies
- The OU is the largest UK provider of higher education for people with disabilities, with 37,078 students declaring a disability
- 1854 students studying in secure environments in approximately 150 prisons and 50 secure hospital units around the UK. (2021/22 data)

# eSTEEeM's ethos



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eSTEEeM's ethos is to empower STEM staff and students to engage in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) and innovation

Starting from the premise that practitioners have deep insights into teaching, learning and student support

eSTEEeM equips project teams to run SoTL projects from initial ideas and proposals...

...through to the dissemination of findings that have an impact on practice and policy

# Defining scholarship



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- Defining scholarship as the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)  
*“systematic and ethically reasoned investigation of aspects of teaching and student learning by applying disciplinary knowledge, resulting in reflections and outcomes that are publicly shared for peer-review and for others to build upon”* (SoTL in STEM BOC – Minocha and Butler, 2021)
- SoTL is important in three ways
  - *For students* allowing us to evaluate our teaching to improve the quality of student learning
  - *For academic disciplines and institutions* ensuring we base future development on robust evidence enabling our teaching and learning to be recognised externally for its excellence and impact
  - *For practitioners* allowing staff to develop their professional practice in the field of teaching and learning

# From ideas to projects



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Call for practitioner-led projects, issued twice a year, with an emphasis on strategic priority areas.

eSTeeM team hold pre-bidding workshops and drop in sessions

Project idea – discuss with School Scholarship Lead or eSTeeM Directors

Project proposal form completed and submitted to eSTeeM

eSTeeM Coordination Group meeting to evaluate proposals – accept or revise.

Where necessary, plans revised. Final sign-off by eSTeeM Directors

# Progress and completion



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Induction workshop  
- project begins

Mentoring and ongoing project management and support

Ethics review, approval to contact students or staff, Data Protection compliance

Ongoing staff development events

Short reports approx. twice a year

Dissemination  
- eSTeEM Annual Conference, internal and external events

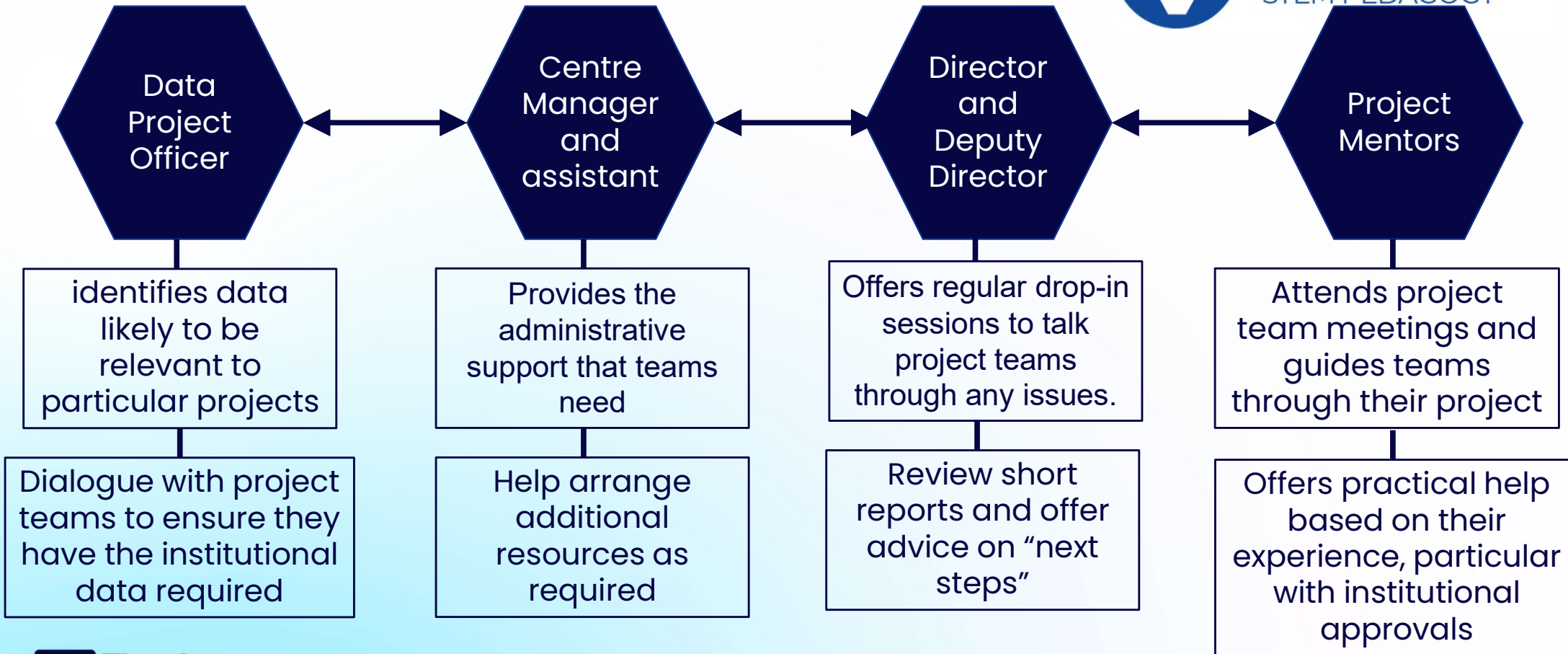
Final Report, both internal and external outputs and publications



# Project support



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# Professional development



# Students in Partnership

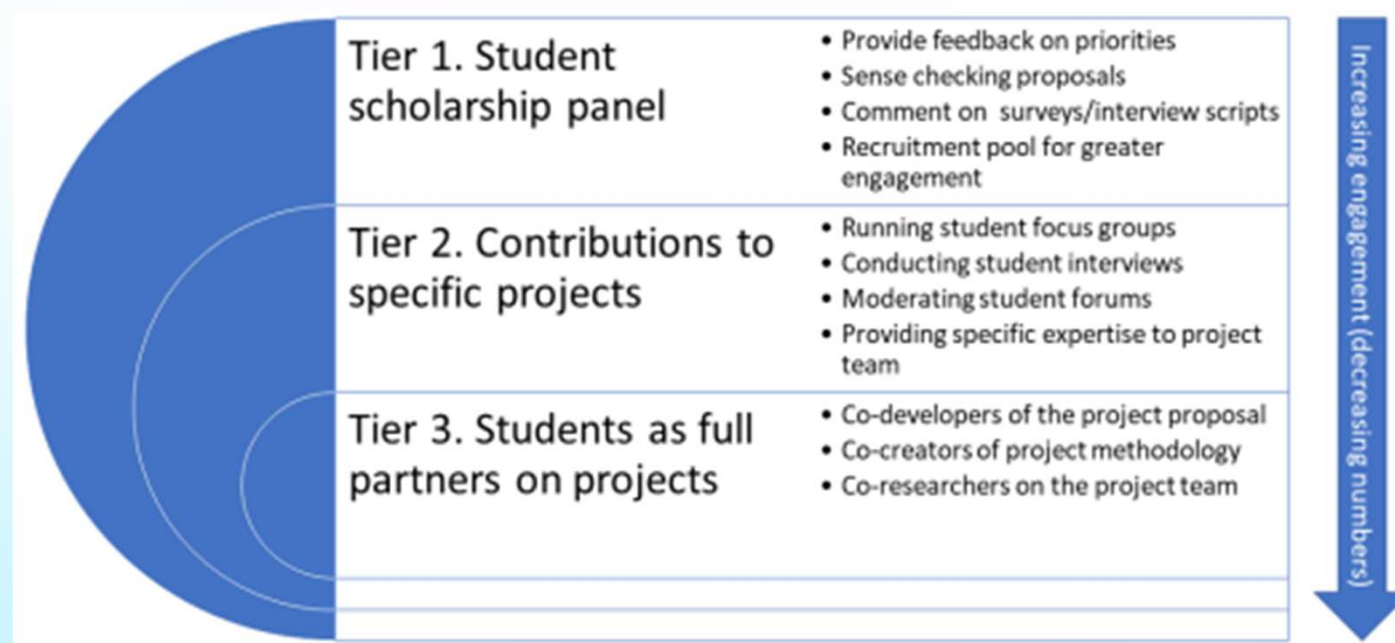


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The student view on eSTEEeM's scholarship activity is provided primarily by a **Student Reference Panel** that comprises six student representatives.

The panel meets regularly with the eSTEEeM Core Team to give the student perspective on SoTL and help establish priority areas.

It also actively promotes students as co-researchers.



The tier structure of Students as  
Co-researchers

## eSTEEeM projects

- There are currently 67 projects in progress
- We have supported over 200 projects to completion
- Projects normally complete within 18 months
- Project usually involve evaluation of innovative practice that develops some aspect of the OU's framework for inclusive teaching and student support
- Projects may be run by individuals, groups from one school or cross disciplinary teams. They can also include support staff and students.
- Each team member is expected to commit to at least 10 days



eSTEEeM encourages the formation of teams that cut across school and functional role boundaries. In this environment, project teams develop excellence in their own collaborative working.

*"Working on this project has enabled us to build and foster these relationships, encouraging the development of future scholarship and collaborations."*  
[An eSTEEeM Project Team Leader]

# Supported dissemination of findings, that have an impact on policy and practice



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## Internal Dissemination

- Annual Scholarship Conference
- Monthly seminar series
- Support scholarship leads to run school seminars
- Provision of project summaries to OU committees

- Member of programme committee for [Horizons in STEM HE conference](#)
- Visiting Scholarship programme with Shanghai Open University
- Support project teams to attend external scholarship conferences
- Support project teams to publish findings in peer reviewed journals

## External Dissemination

# eSTEEeM highlights



Badged Open Course  
titled 'Scholarship of  
Teaching and Learning in  
STEM'

## Impact on Career development

*"Promotion to [Senior Lecturer] requires publications – without eSTEEeM that would never have been possible for me to achieve as a part-time staff tutor. eSTEEeM offers a fully supported, collegiate and flexible environment for the development of scholarship projects."*  
[eSTEEeM project leader]



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eSTEEeM – First SOTL centre at OU



Creation of University-wide  
Scholarship Plan (2018)



Wrote internal "Scholarship toolkit"  
Set of guidelines and procedures  
describing the eSTEEeM model



Set up and adoption of similar models  
across 3 new scholarship centres



Shared practices and cross  
institutional SOTL projects

**Thank you**

