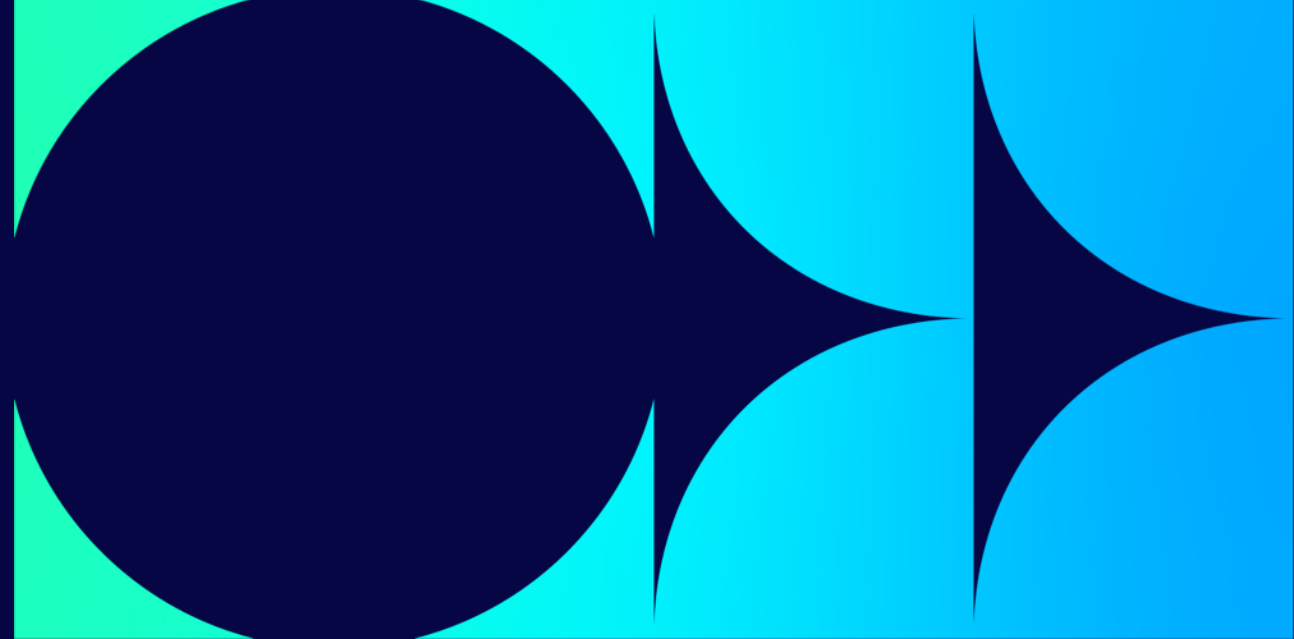


Co-creation via Student Internships

Recognition and Reward for Student Partners in STEM

Diane Butler and Andrew Potter, STEM
The Open University

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Student Co-Creation in the OU Context

Opportunities and Challenges

Opportunities

- Diverse lived experiences – e.g. 25% have declared disability; 11% declared multiple impairments
- May have significant employment and work experience
- May have more life experience – only 11% of students are under 21
- 160,000 students in academic year 20/21

Challenges

- Students are studying at a distance
- May have caring responsibilities
- Other paid employment
- Can't afford the luxury of volunteering

The Virtual Internship Scheme

Programme Overview 1

- ▶ Aims to improve and support the progression of underrepresented students and disadvantaged groups into further study or graduate-level employment through virtual work experience
- ▶ Virtual internships were offered to students in underrepresented groups supported through ringfenced funding via the university's Access, Participation and Success (APS) team
- ▶ Delivers opportunities to embed inclusive student co-creation into curriculum and student support in STEM



The Virtual Internship Scheme

Programme Overview 2



- ▶ Initially a joint project of the Faculty of Business and Law (FBL) and the Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) with the university's Careers and Employability Service (CES) Placements Team
- ▶ Varying lengths of internships offered over a 4-month period, usually part-time, and paid at the UK's real living wage
- ▶ Highly flexible format specifically to meet the needs of diverse students, e.g. working hours, virtual nature, disability, fitting around studies / other paid work and caring responsibilities

Examples of virtual internships in STEM

Co-creation internships

- Evaluating inclusivity of STEM curriculum
- Participating in the specification of a new Design qualification and co-designing learning activities
- Evaluating student peer-support activities
- Co-creation of formative assessment quizzes in Physics
- Conducting reviews of student induction in STEM with an inclusion lens



Student Intern Induction Project

Initial Features

- 4 part-time student interns working collaboratively over a 4-month period
- Embedded within the STEM EDI Team
- All interns were current students or recent alumni from across STEM
- Remit to focus on how well early learning experiences welcome diverse students to the Open University and prepare them for its model of supported open learning (SOL)
- This was an authentic project – not a 'make work' opportunity
- Project plan deliberately left open and exploratory to enable student autonomy and opportunities to tailor the work towards the intern's career aspirations



Student Intern Induction Project

What we thought they might do

- Through the lens of their own lived experience, review one Stage 1 STEM module (60 credits)
- Work collaboratively to identify key themes and issues connected to inclusive student induction across the Stage 1 curriculum
- As a team develop a methodology for collating this information which would help the faculty further develop inclusive practices at Stage 1
- Identify key areas which need urgent focus to improve inclusive practices

Student Intern Induction Project

What they did

- Interns' emergent themes focused on:
 - Data
 - Tutor-student relationship
 - Module materials
 - Hidden curriculum
 - Peer support
 - Inclusive culture
- Used these themes to create an Inclusive Student Engagement Framework
- Interns then chose to focus on Data and Tutor-student relationship to:
 - Conduct data analysis of induction outcomes for autistic students
 - Design and deliver a tutor staff development session on inclusive induction



Feedback from Student Interns

Student reflections on recognition and reward

- ▶ “I joined this internship program with the hope to shed some light on the challenges face by the students especially from ethnic minority backgrounds. I feel that there is not enough positive representation of people from underrepresented groups which could lead to having less confidence in ones 'self. I believe this internship provides an opportunity to bring about some positive change that would help future decisions to be more inclusive of all student's voices.”
- ▶ “My experience with the internship has truly been uplifting. I have not only gained confidence in my ability to use Microsoft packages, but being part of a team has helped me improve my communication skills. All the experiences that I have gained played a vital role in my job applications and interviews. As a result, I was able to secure a position on a teacher training program that I wanted. I would highly recommend this internship to anyone thinking of applying.”

Other benefits for students

- ▶ 100% of students who completed an OU internship in 21/22 and 22/23 are either still studying with the OU or have completed their qualification
- ▶ Interns' work amplified voices of minoritized groups: 50%+ OU students but often marginalized
- ▶ Students from underrepresented backgrounds benefitted from this targeted intervention, gaining high quality work experience
- ▶ Opportunities to access future careers guidance



Impact – for our Staff and Institution



- Staff have more opportunities for partnership with students
- Virtual internships have become an important element of our APP and inclusive curriculum work (e.g., featured in our TEF and B3 reports).
- There are huge impacts on the practice of developing inclusive curriculum.
- Work experience and other practice/work-based learning opportunities are being given strategic importance.
- External dissemination via journal publications and & conference papers.
- Won 2023 sparqs student engagement award in the Diverse Voices category

Thank you



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