

Inspiring the next generation

Building Student Council's Capacity to Research Teaching and Learning

The Lancaster University partnership with Queen Elizabeth Teaching School has facilitated interaction between Lancaster University researchers and the Student Council of one of the QES' Alliance Schools. Queen Katherine School, which has recently become a Teaching School, have benefitted from the project and seen first-hand the positive impact of pupil – researcher interaction as a means to inspiring the next generation of researchers.



Responding to need

Members of the Student Council have been asked to play a role in accessing and representing the student voice on teaching and learning projects within the school. Year 12 students recognised that to be taken seriously they needed to be able to support their ideas with research. However, as they started to plan their projects they realised that they needed support. Although two teachers had been assigned to provide assistance, the students felt they would benefit from talking to real researchers.

Building capacity is a two way process

This small scale intervention consisted of three main activities, spaced out to enable the Student Council to prepare and consolidate learning. It resulted in the capacity of Student Council members and PhD students being developed. School Council members gained a greater knowledge of the research process, increased in confidence, enthusiasm and desire to do a good job. PhD students having their first opportunity of understanding the role of supervision and being put in the position as experts and researchers whose experience was of value to those starting their research journey.

Researchers visited the school and were asked about their research and ways in which they might be able to help the Student Council. The meeting was framed as an initial consultancy and the Student Council were asked by researchers to expand on their research ideas and progress to date. This resulted in them realising their need for much greater planning and the involvement of other members of the Student Council if they were to follow up their research interests.

Student Council visited the University following their request for specific methodological advice. They were asked to prepare for their university visit by outlining what support they thought they needed. Meanwhile four Educational Research PhD students were recruited to act as consultants. During the visit they met with their 'consultant researcher' and problem solved. Finally, the Student Council presented their current plans and received feedback from **more experienced researchers**.

Following the university visit the **Student Council undertook their research** and has shared their findings with the school who have reported the insights gained and benefits of having their own students asking other pupils about teaching and learning. The timing of their research project meant it was not possible to meet again with researchers, despite this a Senior Leader who represents QKS on the QES Research Working Group reported the invaluable impact of interaction with real researchers. She felt that the Student Council listened and responded more to the advice of the PhD researchers, that this motivated them and built their confidence that they could undertake the research.

Future Plans

Follow up interaction with the members of the Student Council, who are now in Year 13, is planned as part of the RCUK-SUPI evaluation. However, what is already evident is that facilitating interaction based on real research projects is relatively simple if there is some funding to support travel, an existing relationship between school and university and recognition that this type of public engagement is inspiring the next generation of student researchers and the next generation of postdoctoral researchers.