

Perspectives on Student Engagement

CARD SORT ACTIVITY



Purpose:

The purpose of this activity is to enable pairs or small groups to discuss their beliefs and views about the role of students in institutional change, to support participants in clarifying their thinking in this area and to understand where there may be differences of opinion. The activity can be used with staff or with students, or can work even better with mixed groups.

Instructions:

1. Take a full set of 20 cards.
2. Working in pairs or trios, lay out all the cards under five headings:
Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral/don't know, Disagree, Strongly disagree
3. The most important aspect of this activity is to discuss your views and to come to an agreement about where each statement is best placed. There are no right or wrong responses.
4. If there are several groups working on the same activity, compare some of the responses; the extremes of the scale are often the most interesting.

The task can be achieved in about fifteen to twenty minutes, but some groups may need longer, especially if there is a lot of discussion or if there are clashes of views.

A summary of card sort categories:

Having worked on the activity, it may be of interest to see all the statements listed and to note that they fall to some extent under five headings.

A. Engagement and institutional change

Student engagement with university change should be a normal part of institutional thinking.	Students are not the best people to bring about change because they do not understand how difficult institutional change can be.
Only a very small number of students wish to engage with institutional change	Students need institutional support in becoming effective change agents.

B. Breadth of engagement

So long as students engage well with their degree work, it doesn't matter if they don't engage with broader University affairs.	Whilst at University, students need to gain broader perspectives than just a focus on academic work.
The more a student engages with the broad range of activities available at University, the better they will be prepared for employment.	Engaging in the improvement of teaching and learning is a powerful means for students to understand processes of change.

C. Partnership

Academic staff do not always want to listen to students ideas for change in learning and teaching.	A collaborative partnership between staff and students is likely to be the most effective means of bringing about change.
The potential for student engagement, commitment and enthusiasm in bringing about change is not currently made use of.	Peers supporting peers is the most effective form of partnership in getting students to engage.

D. Student representation

A well-organised system of student representation is key to institutional development and change.	Student representatives can never be as effective as institutional leaders.
Student representation through institutional committee structures is the most powerful means of bringing about student-led change.	The more widely students are represented, the better will be the opportunities for change.

E. Improving learning and teaching

Students should be paid for undertaking activities to improve learning and teaching.	Students tend to like conventional teaching and learning (eg lectures, essays).
The most important form of student engagement is with their academic work.	Students should not be engaged with change in learning and teaching because they don't know enough about good teaching.

More information:

For more information on this resource, or other resources and activities of Realising Engagement through Active Culture Transformation (REACT), please visit www.studentengagement.ac.uk or email react@winchester.ac.uk.