

STUDENTS AS CHANGE AGENTS

What students and staff say about the Change Agents initiative

The following comments come from some of those who have been keen supporters of the Students as Change Agents activities.

Sam

Sam, the third year Business School student who ran the first technology survey, says:

The best bit of the project is being exposed to new learning devices but also going further than seeing whether students like them, but why they liked them... interpreting the results that we got back from the questionnaire was probably the most interesting part of the project. This is what the project built up for and it was interesting to see if the results were the same as expectations. For example, the various uses of the video recordings were contrasting to what I had previously thought.

He adds:

The fact you are doing a presentation in front of many university staff and lecturers looks very good to employers and others.

Johan

A first year Business School student from Sweden, who has been heavily involved in collecting data and supporting the use of Flipcams, states:

I think the most exciting part of this project has been that it is possible to make a change even at such a large institution. Before this project I did not expect it to be possible to make a change, but this has shown me that with a little work and dedication you can make things happen. Another exciting aspect of this project was to meet and work with different people, not only other students but also staff that I might otherwise not have met.

Tim

Tim became involved in the first year of his studies, working on a project capturing the student experience of employability events on video. He continued this into the second year.

Students as Change Agents; projects initially attracted my attention as being a good medium for getting the student voice heard across the university, therefore shaping future student experiences for the better. I hope that through the involvement of students like myself, we have already helped to develop more student-centric teaching and learning environments.

He is also highly aware of the benefits to himself.

Additionally, I have taken many personal benefits from involvement with 'Students as Change Agents', comprising an exposure to more senior staff within the university and therefore having the opportunity to experience the more intricate workings of the business and how it operates. Further benefits included developing enhanced presentation skills, developing an ability to prioritise my time more effectively as well as having a wealth of experiences to include in my CV and talk about at interviews. Moreover, since my project revolved around the employability services on offer at Exeter, my own awareness of the world of work and the need to be proactive in looking for a career as a graduate was enhanced. On the whole experience of engagement with 'Students as Change Agents', it has been a positive and enjoyable journey and I would unreservedly recommend getting involved to any proactive individual who has a passion for making a difference and enhancing their student experience and that of others.

Staff have also really embraced the notion of involving students in learning and teaching developments.

Juliette Stephenson, Senior Teaching Fellow and Head of Student Learning at the Business School, has strongly supported data-collection, and has used the data gained to pursue arguments for change. Sam's original survey is being used again in 2010-11, so as to gain longitudinal data on learning through technology. Juliette believes that students bring with them new ideas and perspectives to the research they undertake.

They come up with questions that staff would not necessarily have thought to ask. The students know what it is like to be part of the learning environment and know the issues students face.

Jackie Bagnall, also a Senior Teaching Fellow, adds that although it may mean educators stepping outside their comfort zones, there is no better way to engage with students.

Dale Potter, the Graduate Co-ordinator of Change Agents projects during 2009/10, says:

The 'Students as Change Agents' initiative offers invaluable benefits on many levels to both the University and to students. Collaborative working is implicit in the 21st century economy: fostering this culture offers long-term benefits to develop the potential of everyone involved. Engaged students – the leaders of tomorrow – are encouraged to see how their own ideas can lead to collaborative change, whilst also gaining important experience and understanding of how change happens in real-world situations. If institutions can embrace passionate student advocates, they will be in a good position to drive forward innovation and to make a real and genuine difference to the services they provide.