Student Voice & Partnership at ECU



ECU's Student Voice & Partnership Framework

Framework

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Student Voice & Partnership at ECU

Introduction

Edith Cowan University's Student Voice and Partnership Framework strengthens how students contribute to shaping their university experience. It recognises students as active participants in developing learning, governance, support services and campus life.

By taking a whole-of-university approach, ECU is creating more intentional and meaningful opportunities for students and staff to work together. This helps build a stronger sense of belonging, supports better learning outcomes, and contributes to the wellbeing of the entire university community (Curren, 2017).

The framework is guided by the STEP-UP Principles, developed through an Australian National Senior Teaching Fellowship. These principles provide a national foundation for embedding student voice in university governance and decision-making (Varnham, 2017).

At its core, this framework is about creating a culture where student perspectives are valued, heard and acted on. It supports a shared commitment to collaboration and continuous improvement across ECU.

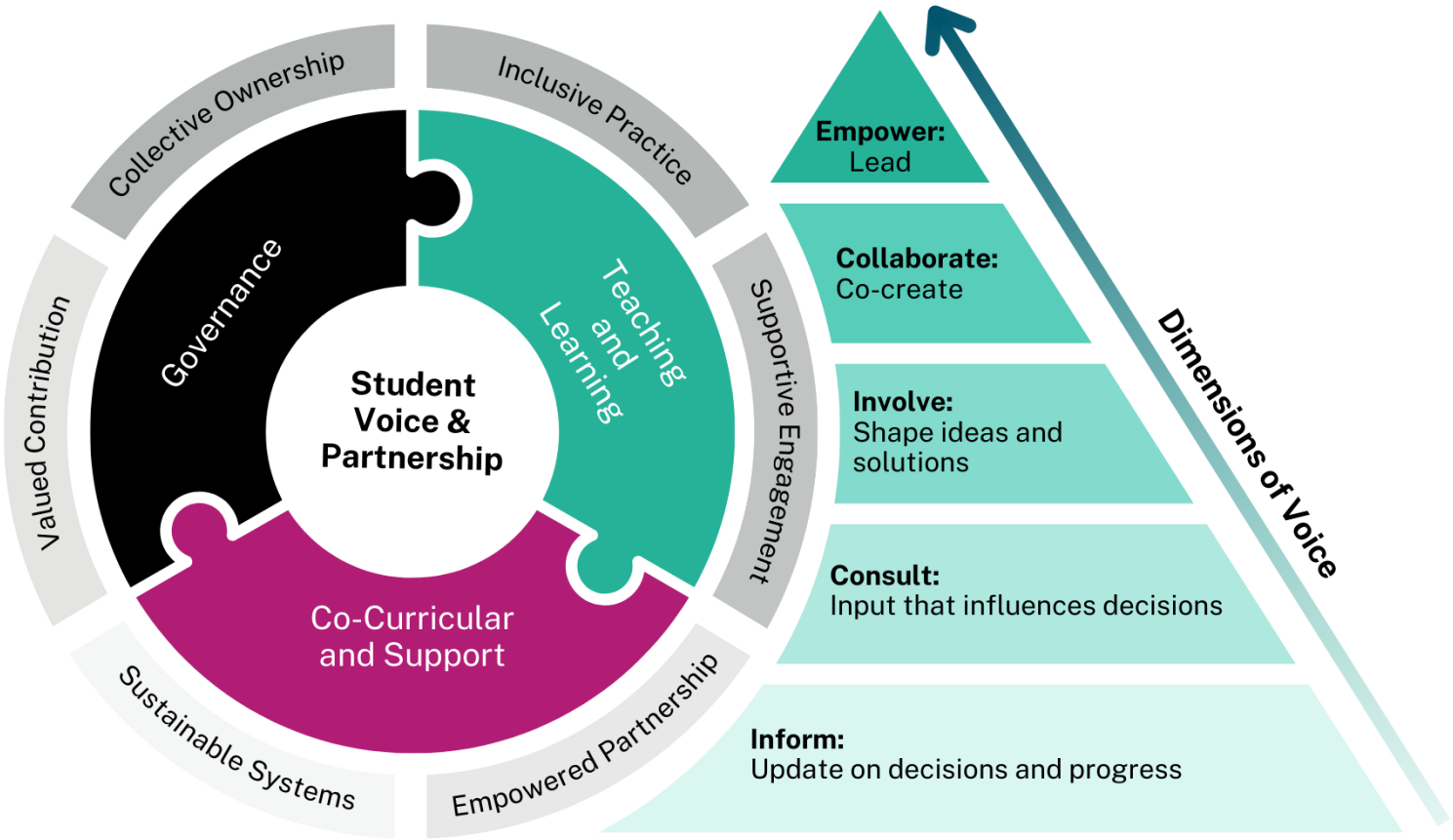
Using the Framework

This framework applies to all ECU students, including undergraduate, postgraduate and Higher Degree by Research (HDR) cohorts, ensuring that student voice reflects the full diversity of the ECU community.

The Student Voice and Partnership Framework is designed as a practical guide for everyday use across ECU. It brings together three key elements: the guiding principles (how staff and students work together), the domains (where partnership occurs across governance, teaching and learning, and student life), and the dimensions of voice (the level of engagement, from informing through to empowering students as partners). Used together, these elements help staff design purposeful, inclusive engagement, involve students at the right stage of decision-making, and ensure their input is visible and impactful.

Student Voice & Partnership at ECU

Framework



Student Voice & Partnership at ECU

Domains

Governance - Students participate in institutional decision-making, contributing to strategic planning, policy development, and oversight.

Examples: Students are trained in governance practice and embedded in governance structures including boards, committees, and university councils.

Teaching & Learning - Students actively contribute to curriculum design, teaching strategies, and assessment practices.

Examples: Students co-design learning methodology, co-develop unit content, and participate in curriculum review panels. Students contribute to the design of digital learning environments and feedback systems.

Co-Curricular & Support - Students shape programs and services that support study, wellbeing, inclusion, and student life outside the classroom.

Examples: Students co-design services, wellbeing initiatives, lead peer support programs, and shape orientation and transition experiences.

Guiding principles

The success of ECU's Student Voice and Partnership Framework relies on a strong foundation of shared values and clear expectations. These guiding principles outline the cultural and structural commitments needed to ensure student voice is embedded meaningfully and sustainably across the university. They serve as a compass for staff and students working in partnership, helping to shape a respectful, inclusive, and impactful approach to engagement.

Student Voice & Partnership at ECU

1. Collective Ownership

Student voice is essential to student wellbeing, learning, and institutional integrity. Staff and students share responsibility for shaping the university experience through meaningful partnership and a strong duty of care.

2. Inclusive Practice

Effective partnership centres the diverse realities of student life and prioritises voices often excluded from formal processes. Inclusion requires active effort, structural awareness, and a commitment to equity.

3. Supportive Engagement

Student partnership thrives in spaces that are safe, respectful, and built on mutual trust. ECU will foster environments where power is shared and students feel confident to speak, contribute, and learn without fear.

4. Empowered Partnership

True collaboration means students are involved early and meaningfully in shaping outcomes, not just reviewing decisions. Shared power, trust, and clear expectations underpin this approach.

5. Valued Contribution

Student input should be recognised, supported, and rewarded. ECU must offer fair compensation, visibility, and development opportunities, ensuring reciprocity and mutual benefit.

6. Sustainable Systems

Student partnership should be built into lasting structures. Clear roles, dedicated resources, and ongoing accountability help embed meaningful engagement into everyday practice.

Dimensions of Voice

Student voice can be expressed in different ways, depending on how students are engaged and the level of influence they have. To understand engagement maturity and capacity, this framework outlines five dimensions of engagement and potential risks for mitigation.

Level	Description	Mindset & Culture	Example	Risks / Limits
1. **Inform**	Students are kept updated on decisions and outcomes.	Students are seen as recipients of information	"You said, we did" dashboards, pulse updates, feedback summary emails	Passive participation, low trust
2. Consult	Student input is sought and considered in decision-making.	Students are contributors, not yet co-creators	Surveys, forums, town halls, listening post	Tokenism risk, unclear impact
3. Involve	Students help shape ideas, options, or solutions.	Students are engaged collaborators in design phases	Focus groups, advisory panels	Risk of burnout, unclear follow-up
4. Collaborate	Students are partners in co-creating solutions and sharing responsibility.	Students are equal partners with shared accountability	Working groups, curriculum design, Committee roles, co-led redesigns, joint planning workshops	Power imbalances if not managed well
5. Empower	Students lead and initiate projects with institutional support.	Students are changemakers with autonomy and trust	Peer-led projects, student-led committees, Peer-designed services	Requires strong infrastructure and mentoring

Evaluation & Continuous Improvement

To support continuous improvement, ECU will implement a reflective and outcomes-focused evaluation process across all Student Voice and Partnership initiatives. This will use a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, including surveys, case studies, and impact stories, to provide a comprehensive view of progress and effectiveness. Results will be shared annually through the *Student Voice and Partnership Impact Report*, promoting transparency, accountability, and institutional learning.

Metric Area	Sample Indicators
Reach	Number of students engaged, diversity of voices represented, number of projects across schools and services
Impact	Changes resulting from student input, participant satisfaction, improvements in student experience metrics
Capability	Confidence levels of staff and students, completion of training, use of reflective practice
Recognition	Number of students receiving recognition in varied forms, published case studies, participation in conferences and events

Reporting

Student Life shall produce periodic reports on student voice and partnership activity in collaboration with the following roles or their delegates:

- Director Strategic & Governance Services – to provide updates on voice and partnership activity within the governance domain
- Director, Centre for Learning and Teaching – to provide updates on voice and partnership within the teaching and learning domain
- President, ECU Guild – to provide updates on voice and partnership within the co-curricular and support domain

- Director, Student Life – to provide updates on voice and partnership within the co-curricular and support domain

Periodic reports will be submitted for noting to appropriate management and governance committees which may include the below:

- Academic Board
- Guild Forum
- Equity and Diversity Committee
- Dandjoo – Student Experience Advisory Forum
- University Executive

References

Curren, R. (2017). Students as Partners - Good for Students, Good for Staff: A Study on the Impact of Partnership Working and How This Transfers to Improve Student-Staff Engagement. *International Journal for Students as Partners, 1(2)*.

Varnham, S. (2017). *Creating a national framework for student partnership in university decision-making and governance*. Sydney, Australia.