



Curtin University

*Curtin Students as Partners*  
**Framework**

Make tomorrow better.

[curtin.edu/students-as-partners](https://curtin.edu/students-as-partners)



# Contents

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<b>3</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Making a difference</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Defining Students as Partners</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Guiding propositions</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Our services</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Partnership structures</b>
8	Partnership spectrum
9	Levels of engagement
<b>10</b>	<b>First Nations perspectives</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>Implementing Students as Partners</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>Best practice criteria</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>Contact us</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>References</b>



# Purpose

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The Curtin University Students as Partners Framework (CSaPF) formalises the collaborative relationship between students and staff; acknowledging the important role students play in shaping their university experience. At Curtin University it is vital students contribute towards the decisions that impact their student learning experience.

Students as Partners is a commitment between students and staff (academically and professionally) to work as partners in learning, research and university decision making. This way of working brings students and staff together to create opportunities to work in a more reciprocal, mutually respectful, and meaningful way through consultation, collaboration, co-design, and co-delivery.



Curtin Leaders Program, 2023

The framework outlines our approach to supporting both students and staff to identify, initiate and deliver successful and effective student-staff partnerships. It provides an understanding of what Students as Partners 'is', what it looks like at Curtin University, differing partnership structures, the planning process and the services we provide.

Drawing upon research and best practices across the Australian Higher Education sector the framework facilitates a way to embed Students as Partners within curricular and through co-curricular initiatives and therefore offering the following benefits:

## **Benefits to students**

- Form meaningful partnerships with staff and students
- Develop transferable employability and life skills through professional and personal development
- Be an agent of change and have a positive impact at Curtin

## **Benefits to staff**

- Obtain valuable insight into students lived experiences
- Collaborate and co-design with motivated and passionate students
- Learn from, and with, a diverse group of students

## **Benefits to Curtin**

- Brings students and staff together to co-create impactful ways of working that enhance the student learning experience
- Foster respectful and meaningful student-staff partnerships
- Enhance the student learning experience, achieving our aspirations for learning and teaching at Curtin





# Making a difference

Further embedding Students as Partners across Curtin University is a priority within Curtin's 2030 Vision of working in partnership to make a difference for people and planet. Students as Partners makes a difference through:

- **People – student experience** – delivering a sector leading student experience that builds aspirations, fosters critical thinking, nurtures ethical leadership, and creates life-changing memories.
- **People – staff engagement** – cultivating a culture and working environment that provides an inspiring, rewarding and meaningful experience for staff so they can deliver world-class teaching and a sector leading student experience.
- **Partnership – community outcomes** – creating new partnerships that deliver real engagement and outcomes for local and global communities and enhance opportunities for students.

Students as Partners sits within the Student Success, Student Life and Community portfolio and reports through to the Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic. The Students as Partners Coordinator works with other staff in the DVCA portfolio, and the broader university community, to coordinate the delivery and evaluation of the Students as Partners model with associated initiatives and programs across Curtin.



Students as Partners staff and students, 2023-24



Students as Partners at Curtin University has a multi-layered approach to governance which aligns with our principle to 'create and promote a culture of staff and student partnership which is supported by all members of the Curtin community'. An agreement between Curtin University and the Curtin Student Guild was developed in December 2020. Known as the 'Curtin Student Partnership', it serves to strengthen collaboration between Curtin University and the Curtin Student Guild, thus further embedding a commitment to partnership between staff and students.

A further agreement was signed in 2024 and reflects an evolved approach to student staff partnerships given the experiences of both Curtin University and the Curtin Student Guild. Our approach is embedded and extensive both in-curricular and co-curricular and Curtin University continues to be a leader in this space.

## Students as Partners Leadership Group

Established in June 2021, the Students as Partners Leadership Group is comprised of equal numbers of students and staff. The leadership group is responsible for coming together throughout the year to focus on implementing the principles of the Students as Partners across Curtin, aligned with the Students as Partners operational plan. It ensures the perspectives of students, staff, and Curtin, locally and globally, are sought, valued, and respected. It ensures the appropriate stakeholders are engaged and equipped to champion embedding Students as Partners pedagogy throughout the Curtin community.

In 2024 the SaP Leadership Group was re-structured ensuring the purpose and responsibilities of the leadership group reflected the evolving needs of student staff partnership at Curtin University. Alongside a reviewal of the Terms of Reference for this group, we welcomed new academic and professional staff, students (Guild and non-guild).

## Students as Partners Community of Practice

The Students as Partners Community of Practice (CoP) was established in June 2021 and is comprised of staff (academic and professional) and students who are actively involved in championing Students as Partners at Curtin University. The CoP is available to Curtin Staff (academic and professional), Guild staff and all Curtin students who coordinate or are interested in Students as Partners.

It aims to increase visibility and awareness of Students as Partners initiatives at Curtin, achievements within the group, promote and champion the Students as Partners methodology, showcase individual areas of key learnings, and share helpful resources.

If you would like to join, please email [studentsaspartners@curtin.edu.au](mailto:studentsaspartners@curtin.edu.au).



# Defining Students as Partners

Students as Partners at Curtin University covers a vast array of programs, initiatives and activities within and outside of the classroom. Partnerships can involve students with students, students with staff (academic and professional) and students with senior university administrators. A commonly cited definition for student-staff partnerships with an intent to improve the student learning and co-curricular outcomes is:

*"A collaborative, reciprocal process through which all participants have the opportunity to contribute equally, although not necessarily in the same ways, to curricular or pedagogical conceptualisation, decision-making, implementation, investigation, or analysis".*

**(Cook-Sather et al., 2014, p. 6-7)**

## Guiding propositions

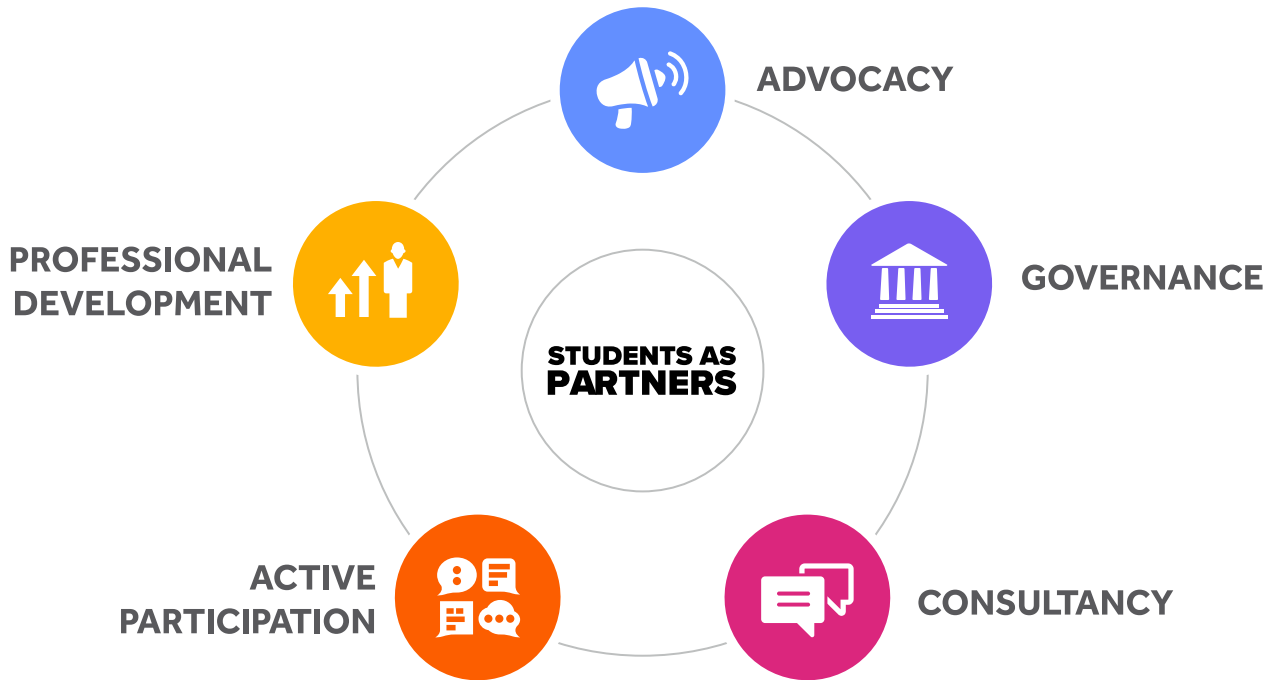
To ensure our Students as Partners ways of working are mutually respectful and beneficial for students as well as staff, there are five guiding principles to consider. These underpin genuine Students as Partners approaches. Published in the International Journal for Students as Partners, Matthews (2017) proposes the following good practice principles:

1. **Foster inclusive partnerships;** creating spaces for partnership and participation with members from differing backgrounds, social class, culture, religion, discipline and countries.
2. **Nurture power-sharing relationships through dialogue and reflection;** being aware of the presence of any inherent power imbalance, whether spoken or not. Taking action to ensure equitable contribution, with respect for experience, position and perspectives.
3. **Accept partnership as a process with uncertain outcomes;** the inherent nature of Students as Partners is focussed on the process, not the outcome, which are often unknown.
4. **Engage in ethical partnerships;** ethical guidelines and considerations should be in place for all student as partners initiatives.
5. **Enacting partnership for transformation;** embracing the potential for transformation within the individual and community where respectful and effective student-staff partnerships are in place.



# Our services

In supporting staff and students to have a positive and effective Students as Partners experience, the following services are delivered by the Students as Partners Coordinator:



<b>Advocacy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing awareness, knowledge and participation in Students as Partners at Curtin University.</li> <li>• Collaboration with Curtin staff and students.</li> <li>• Contributing, collecting and sharing good practice with the broader university sector.</li> </ul>
<b>Governance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsibility for Curtin Students as Partners Framework, Best Practice Guidelines and associated resources.</li> <li>• Oversee governance of leadership group, community of practice, along with reporting.</li> </ul>
<b>Consultancy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide consultative process with staff and students to assist the planning and delivery of Students as Partners initiatives and programs.</li> <li>• Administer endorsement of Students as Partners programs in alignment with Curtin Students as Partners Framework.</li> </ul>
<b>Active participation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hands on involvement in the delivery of Students as Partners projects, from project scope, promotion and recruitment through to rollout and review.</li> </ul>
<b>Professional development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education and training for staff and students.</li> <li>• Provide professional development opportunities aligned with Students as Partners.</li> </ul>



# Partnership structures

Different partnering structures will be necessary based upon the nature of the initiative. One size does not fit all in the partnering relationship.

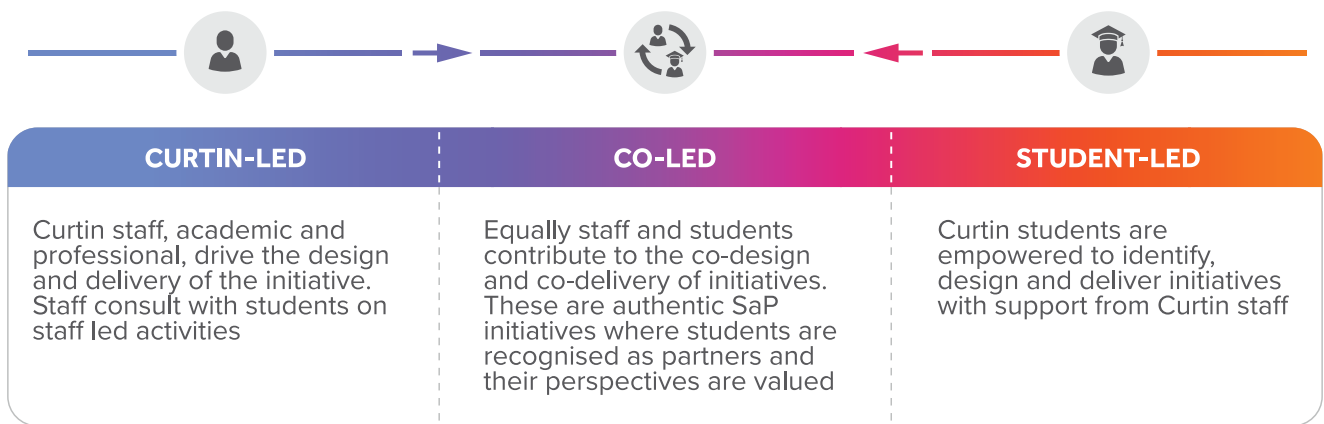
We acknowledge that within each partnership structure there will be different levels of engagement and layers of partnering between staff and students. The structure will be dynamic as the needs of the initiative could change over time.

Each partnership structure consists of:

- **Partnership spectrum**
- **Levels of engagement**

## Partnership spectrum

At Curtin we identify the following partnership spectrum which is based upon the QUT Continuum of Partnership model:








Initiatives outside of this continuum, whilst important, do not fit within the Students as Partners framework.





# Levels of engagement

There will be different levels of engagement between staff and students in Students as Partners initiatives. The Bovill (2017) model outlines levels of engagement along a spectrum. Drawing upon this model, at Curtin University we identify the following levels of engagement – students as sounding boards, students as influencers, students as mentors and students as co-creators.

	 <b>Students as SOUNDING BOARDS</b>	 <b>Students as INFLUENCERS</b>	 <b>Students as MENTORS</b>	 <b>Students as CO-CREATORS</b>	 <b>Students as DECISION-MAKERS</b>
Goal	Students offer input, perspectives, opinions, and experience	Students actively participate in designated roles and contribute insights and shape outcomes	Students recognised as the experts in their lived experience and positioned as teachers/mentors of the student experience	Students are involved in the initiative from conception to solution. Sharing ownership and decision making	Students design and lead initiatives that matter to them and are in control of the final decision-making
Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus groups</li> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Surveys</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshops</li> <li>• Working groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentoring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project co-design teams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide the resources, support and agency needed to deliver projects</li> </ul>
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DVCA student reference group</li> <li>• Students mentoring staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer mentoring</li> <li>• UniPASS</li> <li>• Course design</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guild reps on Curtin committees</li> <li>• Students mentoring staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills for Success</li> <li>• Makerspace</li> <li>• Rubrics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clubs</li> <li>• Student-run initiatives</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student voice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student partnership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student partnership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student partnership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student partnership</li> </ul>

It is important to note that student voice is distinct from student partnership. They are two complimentary models, with student voice often being a very important first step in student partnership. In their article, Matthews and Dollinger (2022) draw upon two points of difference – responsibility and access. Student voice means students have a say on what is important to them, that they are heard. Student partnership speaks to co-design and co-creating with staff, who are involved in actioning change.



# First Nations perspectives

Curtin University is committed to embedding voices and perspectives of First Nations people in decision making to create a learning environment in which all thrive. The inclusion of the following perspectives enhances the collaborative partnerships between staff and students.



Artwork by Rickiesha Deegan



# Implementing Students as Partners

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Delivering a Students as Partners initiative is an extremely rewarding experience. At Curtin we are fortunate to have a broad range of programs, both in-curricular and through an extensive number of co-curricular programs.

If you would like to explore Students as Partners further and/or are keen to roll out a new student as partners initiative, take these three easy steps:

1. Reach out to the Coordinator, Students as Partners at [studentsaspartners@curtin.edu.au](mailto:studentsaspartners@curtin.edu.au).
2. Speak with the coordinator who will assist you through:
  - a. scoping the initiative
  - b. identifying the nature of the partnership
  - c. what level of support you require (recruit, train, rollout)
  - d. best practice considerations and
  - e. gaining endorsement.
3. Rollout your partnership.

## Best practice criteria

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To ensure a high-quality Students as Partners experience for staff, students and Curtin University, the following best practice criteria must be considered:

- Clear purpose for Students as Partners initiative is articulated
- Identified 'partnership spectrum' and 'level of engagement'
- Remuneration and/or reward specified
- Roles and responsibilities identified and agreed upon
- Pre-training identified and delivered, for staff and students, where appropriate
- Reflective practice component integrated into program
- Data is gathered to facilitate reporting, feedback and program improvement
- Consulted with Coordinator, Students as Partners.



# Contact us

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## Students as Partners

Any feedback on the Curtin Students as Partners Framework, or queries regarding **Students as Partners** here at Curtin University, can be emailed directly to Libby Kinna, Coordinator, Students as Partners at [studentsaspartners@curtin.edu.au](mailto:studentsaspartners@curtin.edu.au).



John Curtin Scholar - Mentor Program, 2024

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