



## Students as Partners in Course Design

### Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology at the University of British Columbia

**Domain:** Assessment & Pedagogy

**Challenge Area:** Authentic and Skills-Relevant Assessment

**Status:** Established Best Practice (validated and replicable practices)

**Implementation Complexity:** Medium

Students as partners in course design The Students as Partners (SaP) in Course Design fund (<https://sap.ubc.ca>) awarded over \$250,000 in grants to support student-faculty partnerships to redesign UBC undergraduate courses. Funding was provided to hire a group of students to share their expertise in the student experience and to work collaboratively with faculty and staff to develop more engaging and student focused learning opportunities.

In support of the Transformative Learning focus of UBC’s Strategic plan, data collected through pre and post project interviews revealed transformative impacts from participating in SaP. Participants noted significant skill development, improved relationships, and the transformative potential of partnership work.

### Practical Implementation

The SaP in Course Design fund supported the redesign of 52 courses across 10 UBC faculties. The Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology supported SaP project teams through both a structured program cohort and dedicated staff learning design mentors.

The program cohort included interactive workshops on course design, partnership practices, project evaluation, and inclusive teaching. These sessions also provided opportunities for students and faculty to connect with others engaged in similar partnership work. In parallel, staff mentors offered tailored support focused on learning design, partnership development, and evaluation.

Over the two years the initiative was active, 133 students and 65 faculty members participated. Additional funding supported student partners in co-presenting their work with faculty at academic conferences. Twenty-two students received funding and presented their work at 14 different conferences.

Impact Indicator	Enablers
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The effectiveness of the Students as Partners (SaP) initiative was evaluated through a combination of surveys and individual interviews conducted before and after project participation. These data were used to assess the impact of partnership work on student and faculty learning, experiences, and partnership dynamics, as well as to understand both benefits and challenges of the approach.

Analysis of the data revealed several consistent themes. Participants highlighted the transformative potential of partnership work, particularly the shift from traditional hierarchical roles toward more collaborative and reciprocal relationships. Both students and faculty reported strengthened relationships built on trust, mutual respect, and open

- Institutional funding for student–faculty partnerships
- Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology program support
- Structured workshops on course design and partnership practices
- Dedicated learning design mentors
- Funding for student co-presentation at academic conferences

communication. Students described gaining insight into course design processes, assessment decisions, and pedagogical trade-offs, alongside the development of academic, professional, and communication skills. Faculty reported valuing student perspectives, noting that student input led to more inclusive, engaging, and relevant course designs and improved approaches to teaching and learning.

The initiative also supported confidence-building and agency among student partners. Students reported feeling more empowered to contribute to academic conversations and decision-making, while faculty observed increased student confidence, initiative, and ownership of learning-related work. These outcomes contributed to broader transformative learning experiences for both groups and reinforced the value of partnership-based approaches in higher education. As one faculty partner reflected: “Seeing students gain confidence and actively contribute to academic discussions has been one of the most fulfilling aspects of this experience.”