A new approach to student engagement

A toolkit for delivering a student commission on learning

Part 2
## Contents

7. Maintaining and building on your foundations – going deeper and broader 4 – 13  
7.1 Reinforcing the design features from Part 1  
7.2 A particular focus on leadership and quality assurance  
7.3 Maintaining status and momentum  

8. Making sense of the learning from the initial enquiry 14 – 20  
8.1 Developing compelling early ideas about learning  
8.2 Sharing and building understanding of the early ideas about learning  

9. Moving from ideas to action 21 – 29  
9.1 Scoping possible practical enquiry projects  
9.2 Designing practical enquiry projects  
9.3 Helping students and staff become good ‘researchers’  
9.4 Looking outside the commission to examples of excellent practice  

10. Making recommendations, celebrating success and creating the conditions for change 30 – 38  
10.1 Sharing findings and building commitment to the practices being tested  
10.2 Setting expectations and preparing for change  
10.3 Making final recommendations  
10.4 Making plans for the future
The Harris Federation is a single charitable legal entity to which all of the Harris Academies belong. Its aim is to operate as a group of collaborating academies for the benefit of young people in London. There are currently nine academies stretching across four local authorities (LAs) and a further four Harris Academies will start in September 2011.

All Harris Academies are in challenging urban areas of London where underachievement has been endemic and the education on offer has failed many young people. But these schools are showing a unique capacity to transform aspiration and academic success. In the last few years Harris Academies have improved at a rate far above the national average. The academies are very popular with parents and students, being typically at least five times oversubscribed for each place.

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Section 7

Maintaining and building on your foundations – going deeper and broader

In the second phase of a commission’s work the enquiry into learning needs to be more focused and in depth than the initial enquiry as you work towards developing clear recommendations for how learning should be improved in your school or group of schools.

The design features you used to shape your commission in the early stages remain important as you plan for and implement more complex enquiry activity in phase 2. You also need to review and reconsider how your commission is being led, and how you can continue to engage leaders, teachers and students as the work progresses.
7.1 Reinforcing the design features from part 1

The design features introduced in part 1 of this toolkit should continue to underpin and guide your commission’s work during phase 2.

Design feature 1: The role of the student commissioner as ‘leader of learning’

The student commissioner role as leader of learning is at the heart of the commission approach. Student commissioners take responsibility, with the support of staff, for the discovery and enquiry process.

The early work of your commission will have opened student commissioners’ minds to what is possible and begun to create a shared understanding of good learning. As the commission’s work develops and grows, so will those student commissioners involved in it. They will develop greater levels of confidence through their engagement with teachers, in public and with other students, and their knowledge about good learning will expand rapidly.

In the second phase of the commission you should continue to place students at the heart of the enquiry process, drawing on and nurturing their insights, and further developing their expertise and skills as enquirers/researchers through training and support.

Profile of a Harris student commissioner

Matthew Gavin, Year 10, Harris Academy Merton

“The most significant skill I have gained from the commission is the ability to question things rather than accept them at face value.

I have been able to get far more from my education and have become a more self-sufficient learner who is confident and determined – whether I’m speaking in public or taking crazy ideas the distance.

Before becoming a Student commissioner, I would describe myself as somewhat lazy. I had a ‘I’ll do’ attitude towards most things, learning among them. I would take in the lessons, do the homework but I would never take it further. While I was self-confident, I rarely showed it; I was happy to keep myself to myself. I had ideas and strong opinions, but hadn’t the drive to project them. Teachers would describe me in much the same way. My friends would say I was a bit closed-off and cold.

Now I would describe myself as outspoken, articulate and opinionated. Whether this is good is debatable, but either way it has definitely made me a better learner. I make sure my opinion is heard, and I go the extra mile to get the most out of everything I experience.

Teachers now describe me as a confident learner who is usually willing to contribute to a lesson. Friends would say I am forthright and somewhat feisty. People tend to describe me as quite passionate, be it in expressing my opinions or taking my education a step further.

The expert witness sessions marked the beginning of my ideas, and they encouraged me to be more critical of my own approach to learning. They made me question things which have led to me taking my learning further and to more interesting places.”

Top tip

Your cohort of student commissioners will change over time as new students join the school and others leave. Make the most of the experience and commitment of the student commissioners who’ve been part of the commission since the start, e.g. by giving them a role in the recruitment and training of new commissioners, and giving them specific opportunities to promote and share the work of the commission, and to continue developing their understanding of good learning.
Design feature 2: Genuine partnerships between students and teachers

In the process of delivering the student commission there is real potential to create new relationships that will form the basis of a different learning dynamic between students and teachers.

As a way of deepening your enquiry into learning in the second phase, student commissioners will be working with teachers to explore their ideas about learning in practical ways through school-based enquiry projects. These projects provide an opportunity for the early partnership working between students and teachers to develop further through detailed planning, design, execution and reporting of their enquiries. Teachers will need to be willing to expose their practice as students take on roles as learning partners, observers and co-deliverers as part of the enquiry process.

Benefits:

• Students are very eager to work with teachers and convey their thoughts, feelings and opinions in relation to the improvement of learning and to see these applied in lessons.

• Effective partnership means that teachers retain authority but students also have a great deal of independence and self-motivation.

• Students and teachers can work together to improve the whole school, not just individual lessons or schemes of work. Students can offer new insights and respond positively to the new levels of responsibility they are given.

• Teachers identified the process of co-planning and co-design as a valuable and positive experience and said their approach to lesson planning/design was broader and more varied as a result.

Making it work:

• Students must be given adequate training and support when working in partnership with teachers to co-design learning. This ensures they are able to convey their ideas effectively and have a positive impact on learning.

• A regular and structured process for co-design, co-planning and co-delivery is essential, where students are clear on their roles and staff are open to their contribution.

• The creation of effective teams of students and teachers who design, plan and deliver learning together is critical. There must be genuine trust and partnership, and recognition of the value each party brings to the table.

• Time and opportunity for co-planning needs to be identified and protected – it will not happen otherwise.

Students’ unique contribution:

• Students can make a unique contribution to learning design. They bring empathy and can take decisions that teachers wouldn’t want to risk, e.g. creating new groupings of students as opposed to sticking to form groups.

• Students employed more interactive and creative approaches which teachers learnt from. In the co-planning process teachers are able to test whether their ideas would be engaging for students.

Top tip

Introduce and encourage many different opportunities for students to partner teachers to investigate, improve, design and deliver learning. Although at times teachers may be apprehensive about working closely with students in this way, ensuring there are structured processes and dedicated time to work together and build trust helps create effective collaboration that impacts on learning. Stories and reports of successful partnership will generate interest in and demand for student involvement in the learning process.
Design feature 3: A focus on learning about learning

A student commission is all about learning. Student commissioners are leaders of learning in school and their role is to work with teachers and other students to actively enquire into when and how learning is most powerful.

Learning about learning needs to remain at the heart of all you are doing in your student commission. In phase 1 your enquiry was about inviting and accessing a wide range of perspectives and views on what good learning looked like and getting people talking about learning. The commission needs to maintain this energetic and engaging dialogue about learning, among student commissioners and more widely with other students and staff. As the commission focuses its enquiry in phase 2, the conversations students are able to have about learning will become more detailed and specific. As students become more confident about what good learning looks like, so their appetite for change will increase.

Spending time processing and consolidating what you have learnt in phase 1 will enable you to create a clear plan for extending and deepening your enquiry in phase 2 as you test out in practice some of the ideas your commissioners and teachers have been most inspired by.

Top tip

When you’re planning the next phase of enquiry, pay attention to the ideas and practices that are most exciting and compelling for students and staff, as well as to the kinds of evidence that will encourage teachers to make significant changes to their practice. Design your enquiry with this evidence in mind (see 3.2).

Top tip

Don’t underestimate the capacity of students to understand and see the relevance of different pedagogical approaches and new ideas for how learning could be changed for the better. Combining explicit training and support with involvement in research, enquiry and public events will enable student commissioners to become knowledgeable advocates for new practices.

Notes

Don’t underestimate the capacity of students to understand and see the relevance of different pedagogical approaches and new ideas for how learning could be changed for the better. Combining explicit training and support with involvement in research, enquiry and public events will enable student commissioners to become knowledgeable advocates for new practices.
Design feature 4: Knowledge sources

A student commission needs to draw knowledge about learning from within the school and from outside, and also create new knowledge by testing ideas through practical enquiry projects.

A reminder of the three fields of knowledge

In phase 1 a commission focuses more on external sources of knowledge and ideas (what is known), e.g. through expert witness sessions and desk research, and less on creating new knowledge. That early phase is about opening up to as much information from outside as possible in order to build a picture of what good learning looks like and how it is nurtured. It’s about getting student commissioners and staff inspired and excited by what’s possible.

In phase 2 the commission will build on early, small-scale classroom enquiry by creating a clear framework for new, more significant, focused, longer-term enquiry projects that will be designed and implemented. In undertaking these projects the commission is shifting focus more to internal knowledge (what we know) and generating its own findings (new knowledge). The findings of these projects will inform the final recommendations the commission makes about how learning should change. But the commission doesn’t only focus on internal enquiry during phase 2 – you need to find ongoing opportunities for inspiration from outside your school(s), but make sure these are about building on what has been learnt so far (see 3.4).

Resources

- Harris Student Commissioner profiles
- Harris Commission learning about partnerships

Go to www.studentcommission.org.uk to access these resources

1 Based on a model for networked learning issued by the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services
Section 7

7.2 A particular focus on leadership and quality assurance

The leadership arrangements you established for your commission in the set-up and early implementation phase should be reviewed as you move into phase 2. The leadership task in this phase is two-fold – to motivate and support teachers and student commissioners in undertaking focused, practical enquiry into learning, and also to build commitment to the outcomes of phase 2 enquiry with senior leaders and staff.

Ideally you will have already established a co-leadership model for the commission, where two or three people share leadership responsibility. An ideal co-leadership group for the second phase of the commission would consist of the following (in each participating school if your commission is across a group of schools):

1. One or two relatively experienced teachers (3rd or 4th year) who have energy, enthusiasm and a good connection with students. These teachers need to be able to motivate students and other teachers and have the ability to recognise and deliver high quality practice and enquiry.

2. Someone from the senior leadership team who has responsibility for teaching and learning and can ensure the quality of enquiry. This direct route into the senior leadership of the school will be critical as a way of communicating progress and learning through the second phase of enquiry. This phase is partly about creating the conditions for the recommendations of the commission to be accepted and implemented, and a critical part of this is including the commission’s findings in wider strategic and planning discussions as early as possible.

The quality of the commission’s enquiry work must be high if its various audiences (leaders, teachers, students, parents) are to take the outcomes seriously. You need the findings of enquiry projects, which will lead to the commission’s final recommendations, to have real weight and substance and this comes from them being focused, well-organised and delivered authentically, and findings being communicated clearly.

Top tip

Plan how you will communicate the work and learning of the commission to senior leaders in your school(s) in order to galvanise their support. Use frequent updates on progress as well as scheduled events to share learning and celebrate achievement. The most powerful way of communicating is through students – using their energy, enthusiasm and excitement about the work they are involved in.

Top tip

Think early about what needs to be in place for effective monitoring and review of the commission’s enquiry in the second phase and schedule these opportunities in advance. You might consider learning walks by staff and students to see projects in action, or visits from other schools if your commission is operating across a group. Process the learning from these visits and share it widely.
Without doubt, the most fabulous reward of being part of this project has been the time spent working directly with students. Their energy, passion, insight, humour and sheer genius has been awe-inspiring. Our commissioners never fail to offer a fresh and enterprising approach to an issue and their capacity to problem solve, collaborate, eloquently present and take risks has rightly gained them accolades from all who meet them. They are literally a joy to work with and have added a dimension of fun, inspiration and challenge to my world.

My key responsibilities have been engaging all of the nine academies to fully support the work of the commission. This has meant ensuring that:

- high standards and expectations are set
- communication is transparent and efficiently managed
- organisation of public profile events is professionally executed
- quality and accuracy of publication and marketing is faultless
- the standard of workshops delivered by myself or co-leaders across the federation are of excellent quality
- federation and external deadlines are met
- the high profile of the commission is sustained across the federation and beyond
- induction of new commissioners is streamlined
- students and staff feel appreciated and highly regarded in their commitment to the work of the commission.

The expectations of co-leading the project has demanded the skills of rhetoric and diplomacy most of all! Appreciating that every academy is at a different stage of their journey regarding the commission has been crucial to be able to effectively support colleagues and know when to stretch teams further and when to offer further guidance and modelling. Trying to turn what were sometimes abstract learning concepts into concrete classroom practice has stretched my brain in ways I didn't think possible and has proved to be one of the most demanding and difficult aspects of education I have ever grappled with.*

Profile of Rebecca Hickey, Harris Student Commission Co-leader

“I was privileged to be asked to co-lead the development of the Student Commission across the Federation from May 2010. Although I had been involved at academy level previous to this, and a strong supporter of the concepts of the commission, it wasn’t until I had a more pro-active role that I became fully aware of the phenomenal scope and inspirational vision this project had the potential to realise for all of our students in the commission.

“You need to have a real commitment to the vision and a belief in students and their ability. You have to immerse yourself in the ideas about learning your commission is taking forward. But sometimes it feels like you’re clutching a cloud – there is no blueprint for getting it right. It’s not like anything else you do in school.”
Towards the end of the first phase, the Harris Student Commission undertook research and review visits to all academies. The purposes of these visits was to:

- acknowledge effort and the work that had been undertaken so far
- understand the detail of future plans (and help to shape these through discussion during the visits)
- monitor what had been happening within each academy
- gather evidence and information (through observation, discussion and interviews, and use of film and photos) that would feed into a number of key commission outputs at the start of phase 2.

Each visit was undertaken by a senior leader from the federation, a co-leader from another academy and a researcher, and was three hours long. Each visit included:

1. a 30-45 minute discussion with the principal and co-leaders (and other senior leaders if available)
2. a 30-45 minute discussion with student commissioners
3. observation of selected commission activities and/or evidence of recent work
4. possibly some additional one-to-one interviews.

Top tips for getting the commission leadership right:

- Create a role description for commission leaders, get people to formally apply for it and link it to performance management.
- Think about attaching a leadership point to the position of co-leader.
- Get the student commission on the leadership team agenda for the school and departmental agendas each week.
- Have in place appropriate administrative capacity to support the co-leaders – this helps keep things moving forward.

Resources

- Harris Commission research and review visits letter to schools
- Harris Commission research and review visits example schedule

Go to www.studentcommission.org.uk to access these resources

Notes
7.3 Maintaining status and momentum

People are excited by what’s new and the early days of any project can create a real buzz and sense of expectation about what is to come. By the second phase your commission should be well established in your school – all students and staff should know about it (what it is and why it exists) even if they haven’t yet had the opportunity to be directly involved. As you move into a deeper period of enquiry into learning with more of an internal focus within your own school, there is a risk that the early energy and excitement dissipates.

It may feel like the hard, more serious work is beginning – especially for co-leaders and teachers who have been working to make commission activity happen during the initial phase. Students may also feel a greater burden of responsibility as the commission begins to look at more specific pedagogical areas or ideas, and the prospect of undertaking detailed enquiry can be daunting.

If you have good leaders in place they will focus on setting out the journey ahead and what needs to be achieved if the commission is to be in a position to make firm recommendations at the end of phase 2. Staff and students need to be encouraged, guided and supported to continue to take the commission forward with the energy it deserves.

In order to maintain the status and momentum of the commission, you should consider the following:

- Accept that there will be noise in the system, i.e. other things going on in school that could crowd out what you’re doing, so be clear about goals and plans for the next phase and ensure you have the right leaders in place to communicate and help others achieve them.
- Look to recruit new commissioners alongside existing, more experienced students. They will bring new perspectives and energy to the role and the commission’s work.
- Mobilise staff around the opportunity to be actively involved in enquiry projects that will have a direct and visible impact on teaching and learning. These projects will be a unique learning opportunity for teachers.
- Aim to integrate the enquiry work of the commission into established structures and processes, e.g. review processes, stakeholder engagement mechanisms, development planning.
- Set time aside for commission activity and protect that time. There needs to be dedicated time for planning and implementing of enquiry projects (between staff and with students), communicating findings, supporting and training students and delivering whole commission events.
- Take as many opportunities as you can to share and raise the profile of the commission throughout phase 2. This should include sharing findings from the early phase of enquiry and plans for the future, as well as the outputs and learning from specific practical enquiry projects as they take place. Identify mechanisms (e.g. newsletters, briefings, bulletins) and dates early and make these public as this will bring focus and give participants clear goals to work towards. Involve external people (parents, governors, other schools), as students are really motivated by this.

Allocate resources to sharing the findings and learning from the commission at key points in phase 2 (i.e. at the start, part way through the detailed enquiry and at the point of making recommendations). This will bring a discipline to what you are learning – forcing you to reflect and process at key points in order to share with others. This could be achieved online through blogs or a website, through printed publications or video, but whatever format you choose make sure it is delivered to the best quality you can resource. How you share your learning will indicate to others the importance of the commission’s work.
Over the life of the Harris Commission it published four professionally designed and printed publications that were jointly funded by the Harris Federation and NESTA. They were designed to highlight the work of the commission and celebrate the efforts of students and staff, but most importantly to share what was being learnt in accessible and engaging ways, and at key moments in the life of the commission. They were compiled from content created by students, teachers and leaders involved and professionally edited.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Audience</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Harris Student Commission on Learning Update</td>
<td>September 2009</td>
<td>To share early work of the commission in each academy as a way of engaging staff</td>
<td>Staff in the Harris Federation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning about learning – 12 early ideas from the Harris Student Commission (launched with a high profile event)</td>
<td>October 2009</td>
<td>To consolidate and share the outcomes of the first phase of commission enquiry, and to set the agenda for phase 2</td>
<td>Staff and students in the Harris Federation, plus external partners and supporters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning about learning – further insights from the Harris Student Commission</td>
<td>September 2010</td>
<td>To share insights from phase 2 detailed enquiry and pave the way for the recommendations</td>
<td>Staff in the Harris Federation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A new design for learning – recommended by the Harris Student Commission (launched at external and internal events)</td>
<td>April 2011</td>
<td>To set out the final recommendations from the commission and set the agenda and expectations for change</td>
<td>Staff in the Harris Federation, plus external partners and supporters</td>
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Top tip

Keep student commissioners motivated by acknowledging and rewarding their efforts publicly. For example, for every event or activity students are involved in send a personal letter and certificate home to parents, and have pictures of student commissioners in every classroom.

Resources

- Scaling up ‘staff presentation used by Harris Academy South Norwood

Go to [www.studentcommission.org.uk](http://www.studentcommission.org.uk) to access these resources.
Section 8
Making sense of the learning from the initial enquiry

The second phase of a student commission involves taking the outcomes of the initial (phase 1) enquiry and consolidating them into a framework of key ideas or propositions about learning that your commission will investigate through practical enquiry projects during phase 2.

Your commission should be asking:

- What are the most compelling, interesting and exciting ideas about learning that we have heard so far?
- What do we want to focus on and explore further?
- What gaps in our enquiry do we need to address in phase 2?
- What kinds of evidence will inspire teachers to change their practice and leaders to make bold decisions about what will be implemented?
During phase 1 of your enquiry you gathered together the views and ideas of experts (within and outside your school), and undertook desk research and some small-scale classroom enquiry projects. At the start of phase 2 the commission is essentially agreeing not to keep collecting more and more new ideas. It is the right time to pause and look back at what you’ve learnt by bringing together the range of evidence and information you’ve collected and spending time identifying the ideas about learning you want to explore further.

Done well, this process will make sense of your findings to date and create an agenda for the next phase of enquiry. The output should be a framework of ideas or propositions that your commission uses to design the foci of significant, practical enquiry projects and any supplemental external enquiry you decide to undertake. Consider the following as you embark on this process of review:

- What evidence (written, oral, video) have you captured from phase 1 of the commission’s enquiry?
- What key themes or ideas have emerged as the most important? Important in this context may mean compelling, popular, relevant or pressing (for your school or group of schools).
- What has excited/interested students, teachers and leaders so far?
- How has the commission listened to and considered a wide range of perspectives, i.e. students, teachers and leaders? Consider the results of any internal surveys or interviews you undertook in phase 1.
- What collaborative processes will the commission use to discuss and agree (co-construct) the ideas or propositions to take forward? Consider focus groups, workshops, a development day with student commissioners, an online survey, activities during staff days, sessions with school leaders, etc.
- How will your framework be structured? Consider how many ideas or propositions you need to identify to capture the breadth of what the commission has learnt, but also be mindful of not including every interesting idea (just because it is easier than being selective).
- What context and background will help exemplify and illustrate your ideas about learning? Consider what examples from your own commission and other case studies will build the argument for your ideas.
- Once you’ve identified your framework, how could you test it with others, e.g. external and internal sources?
- How will you ensure the ideas or propositions are written in a clear and compelling way? What specific references to evidence or learning from the enquiry do you need to make in order to explain or justify the ideas?

Top tip

Listen closely to the ideas about learning that people (students, staff and leaders) are excited about. If you’re paying attention to what these stakeholders connect with it the process of selecting ideas will be much easier.
### The Harris Student Commission’s ‘12 early ideas’ about learning

#### Learners
Deep and lasting motivation to learn happens when:

1. learners explore and understand the ‘how’ of learning
2. learners take responsibility for, and have ownership and control of, their own learning and achievements
3. learners take on roles that involve responsibility for the learning and success of others
4. learners create worthwhile products and artefacts through the learning process.

#### Teachers
The role of the professional in schools needs to develop to ensure that:

5. teachers are specialist enablers of learning – experts not only in subjects but also in learning and learning design
6. teachers are orchestrators of variety in learning
7. teachers demonstrate that they are learners too.

#### Content and the curriculum
Young people are motivated by a curriculum that ensures:

8. learning explicitly combines valuable subject knowledge with the development of key skills and attributes
9. learning develops students’ curiosity about the unfamiliar and connects to their interests and experiences
10. learning is deep, enquiry-based and practical.

#### Partnerships
Changing the way learners and teachers work together involves:

11. learning partnerships of students and teachers that inspire and motivate
12. collaborative learning design, delivery and assessment.

From its first year of enquirу, which included hearing from and questioning education experts, and beginning to test new practices in all academies, the Harris Student Commission published ‘12 early ideas’ about learning.

These ideas brought together all the commission had been inspired and challenged by during that year. They represented the early thinking that students and teachers had been undertaking and, most importantly, they formed the platform and framework for the commission’s next phase.

These 12 ideas brought focus to the commission’s work, and they energised and empowered academies to explore them further – to question what the ideas meant in different contexts and to try out specific practices that brought them to life.

The ideas were organised into three domains: learners, teachers, and content and the curriculum. A fourth area – partnerships – was included to convey a firm belief that changing learning in any dramatic way means addressing each of the domains through the way in which learners and teachers work and learn together.

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**Top tip**

If you have more than a few ideas or propositions then find a simple structure to group and organise (e.g. teachers, learners, curriculum). This will help your audience navigate and remember them, and will provide a useful organising framework for your enquiry projects and eventually your commission recommendations.

**Top tip**

Pay attention to the language you use to share your ideas or propositions about learning. In particular, consider how you will turn what may be complex into something engaging and powerful to read and work with. Know that it may take time for the ideas to be clearly and widely understood and, rather than ‘dumbing down’ or oversimplifying the language, use quotes and case studies to bring the ideas to life.
Framing the Harris Student Commission early ideas about learning

In their publication the Harris Commission used the following material to help build the case for their 12 ideas about learning and also to celebrate and give status to the work being undertaken:

- a foreword from the Chief Executive and Sponsor of the Harris Federation
- an introduction to the commission
- statistics and a timeline to show what the commission had achieved so far
- a future scenario setting out a vision for the future of learning
- quotes about learning from students and teachers involved in the commission
- insights from expert witnesses
- short case studies from within and beyond the Harris Federation (including internationally) to highlight the innovative elements of the practice
- questions to prompt thinking about the next phase of enquiry.

Resources

- Brief for learning about learning publication
- Learning about learning – 12 early ideas from the Harris Student Commission

Go to www.studentcommission.org.uk to access these resources

Notes
8.2 Sharing and building understanding of the early ideas about learning

Once the commission has decided on the ideas about learning that will define enquiry in phase 2, time and effort need to be spent on creating opportunities for shared understanding of these ideas across the whole school.

This is the time to move from a general dialogue about learning to one about specific ideas and approaches to learning that your commission intends to explore. And this process of wide engagement with the early ideas or propositions about learning should be ongoing throughout phase 2 so that as many students and staff become aware of and understand them.

Many student commissioners will have been involved in developing your commission’s early ideas, but for all student commissioners to understand them fully the commission should design and deliver activities that:

- get groups of students of different ages discussing the ideas about learning and the concepts behind them, in particular, what they do/would look like in practice
- repeat opportunities over time for commissioners to share the work they’re doing in the commission using the ideas about learning framework
- encourage student commissioners to identify the ideas about learning that they like/associate with the most and why; this could be through an online survey or blog.

The commission also needs to work with teachers to generate interest in, understanding of and commitment to the ideas about learning. It will be on the basis of this interest and commitment that teachers will want to get involved in undertaking enquiry projects with student commissioners.

- Use the creation of the learning ideas framework to begin collaborative work with teachers to discuss what good learning is and to begin to consider how the ideas might be applied and tested through their own practice. This could be through INSET as a whole school or through specific subject areas or year groups.
- Establish some mechanisms that staff can use to identify how the ideas about learning are currently being lived out in the school; this could be through Learning Walks, an audit tool or best practice trawl.
- Share best practice examples from within the school that illustrate and illuminate the commission’s ideas about learning.

Top tip

Don’t underestimate the time needed for students and staff to grapple with and understand each idea fully. There is real scope for misunderstanding and oversimplification of some profound ideas and innovations that highlight the need for change.

Top tip

Run workshops with students and staff to create a future vision of what a school would look like if it implemented your commission’s early ideas about learning. This can be a powerful way of developing a deeper understanding of the ideas and leveraging ambition about what could be achieved in the future.

Top tip

Co-leaders should spend dedicated time working in depth with student commissioners to develop the conversation around the early ideas about learning. This will build students’ confidence and serve as good preparation for the design and delivery of practical enquiry projects.
The exhibition of Year 8’s ‘most valued learning products’ was even more inspiring than last year. The students were rightly proud of what they had developed and were looking forward to the community auction in a few weeks time. We were particularly impressed by the cross-department Year 8 Second World War project – the anthology of poetry and letters from the front line was quite exceptional. We also saw the large number of letters received from local residents following the ‘dealing with debt’ campaign.

Finally, we would like to praise the way in which you have developed the Student Leader of Learning role. There are now over 200 student commissioners working in learning and enquiry partnerships with staff and during the visit we also saw reading recovery mentors, mathematics buddies and skills coaches in both music and PE all working very well. We listened to learning podcasts on the school radio and thought the range and quality was excellent. All around the school we saw and heard students willingly helping one another learn.

Staff INSET days – copies of the publication were given to every member of staff, and a presentation given by student commissioners and/or academy co-leaders was used to introduce the ideas.

NQT and whole federation teaching and learning conferences – groups of student commissioners led a number of teaching and learning workshops based on the enquiry they were undertaking through the commission. Content included an overview of the commission and early enquiry findings, with explicit links to the 12 early ideas about learning.

Harris Student Commission future vision

This is an extract from the Harris Student Commission future vision that was included in the publication setting out the 12 early ideas about learning. It is written in the style of an internal report following a review visit to an academy:

“...The exhibition of Year 8’s ‘most valued learning products’ was even more inspiring than last year. The students were rightly proud of what they had developed and were looking forward to the community auction in a few weeks time. We were particularly impressed by the cross-department Year 8 Second World War project – the anthology of poetry and letters from the front line was quite exceptional. We also saw the large number of letters received from local residents following the ‘dealing with debt’ campaign.

Finally, we would like to praise the way in which you have developed the Student Leader of Learning role. There are now over 200 student commissioners working in learning and enquiry partnerships with staff and during the visit we also saw reading recovery mentors, mathematics buddies and skills coaches in both music and PE all working very well. We listened to learning podcasts on the school radio and thought the range and quality was excellent. All around the school we saw and heard students willingly helping one another learn.”

Sharing the 12 early ideas about learning across the Harris Federation

Shortly after the publication of the Harris Commission’s 12 early ideas about learning, a number of planned opportunities were used for student commissioners to share and discuss the ideas with groups of teachers and leaders from across the federation.

These included:

- Staff INSET days – copies of the publication were given to every member of staff, and a presentation given by student commissioners and/or academy co-leaders was used to introduce the ideas.

- NQT and whole federation teaching and learning conferences – groups of student commissioners led a number of teaching and learning workshops based on the enquiry they were undertaking through the commission. Content included an overview of the commission and early enquiry findings, with explicit links to the 12 early ideas about learning.
Harris student commissioners testing the 12 early ideas about learning

Harris commissioners attended two ‘innovation in education’ conferences in order to share and test their early ideas about learning.

As part of the conference they:

- set up a stand and distributed copies of the publication
- interviewed speakers and experts
- surveyed and interviewed conference delegates about the learning ideas they considered the most important.

The events were brilliant opportunities for the commissioners to introduce and explain the ideas about learning to people they didn’t know and this built their confidence and understanding.

Resources

- Academy presentation on the commission to Harris teaching and learning conference
- Academy presentation on the commission to Harris teaching and learning conference (2)
- Early ideas presentation from staff inset
- Harris Student Commission 12 ideas audit summary
- Innovation in education conference interview questions
- Outline of Harris NQT conference

Go to www.studentcommission.org.uk to access these resources

Notes
Once the early ideas or propositions about learning have been agreed the commission should begin to define the practical enquiry projects it will undertake in order to explore them further.

The ideas or propositions should be the framework you use to decide the focus of these projects, which are an opportunity to enquire more deeply into certain aspects of learning and test out the commission’s ideas in practice. In doing so you will be deepening the knowledge base about learning your commission has begun to create by grounding your ideas in practice, and hopefully inspiring students and staff about what changes to learning are possible.
9.1 Scoping possible practical enquiry projects

Student commissioners and teachers involved in the commission will undoubtedly have initial thoughts and preferences for the kinds of practical enquiry projects they would like to undertake in phase 2. As these early discussions take place and possibilities are explored, you should consider the following questions:

- What changes in practice could really create a profound shift in learning and engagement in your school? What are the greatest areas of need? What kinds of projects/foci are likely to have the most leverage if implemented to scale having been the second phase of enquiry?
- Which initial enquiry projects (from phase 1) could/should be continued into a second stage? What successes could be built on? What questions are left unanswered?
- What are the priority ideas about learning for your commission? Do some of your early ideas or propositions stand out as being of a higher order or more important than others? Why?
- How many projects do you have the capacity to start, and complete? Will you have multiple projects running at once, e.g. in every year group, key stage or department? Will you stagger the start of your projects to make them more manageable, and to ensure you learn as you go?
- Which teachers or other members of staff would be best equipped to lead enquiry projects with students? Do you have teachers with specific research skills?
- How big, or small, will your projects be? Will they vary in scale and scope, or be run on a similar basis?

Top tip

Consider designing an online or paper survey to gather views from student commissioners and staff about the sorts of enquiry projects they would like to run. Link this to your ideas about learning framework by asking respondents to identify how their preferred projects would explicitly respond to or connect with the ideas.

Resources

- Harris Commission enquiry projects review tool
- Table of Harris Commission enquiry projects and ideas

Go to www.studentcommission.org.uk to access these resources

Notes
As a starting point in the design of your enquiry projects, it’s useful for the commission leaders to identify some core features or principles that should underpin all projects. You’ll want to ensure these features are specific to your context, but all effective enquiry projects will:

- have one or two learning ideas at the core (relevant to context and need)
- be designed and delivered in partnership between students and teachers
- use an appropriate research method or intervention (based on evidence of what is good)
- be clear about the right scope and scale (who, where, when for the most impact).

Having a clear format and structure for all your commission’s practical enquiry projects will also help in their design and delivery and go some way to ensuring effectiveness and quality. Depending on the size of your commission you are likely to have multiple enquiry projects running in phase 2, and a generic template or format will enable many staff and students to be involved in their design.

Before your commission enquiry projects formally begin you should schedule one or two specific opportunities, both internal (within the commission) and external (including other students and staff from the school, and perhaps parents, governors or partner schools) where student commissioners and staff to come together and share early findings and update progress. This will create clear milestones and help keep the momentum during this critical phase.

**Top tip**

Think about what is genuinely useful and feasible. Decide on a manageable number of enquiry projects that are likely to have a high impact in their implementation (both on student learning and capturing evidence for the commission) and focus on delivering them well. Better to do a few simple things well than set out to do too much and fail to deliver.

Having a clear format and structure for all your commission’s practical enquiry projects will also help in their design and delivery and go some way to ensuring effectiveness and quality. Depending on the size of your commission you are likely to have multiple enquiry projects running in phase 2, and a generic template or format will enable many staff and students to be involved in their design.

Before your commission enquiry projects formally begin you should schedule one or two specific opportunities, both internal (within the commission) and external (including other students and staff from the school, and perhaps parents, governors or partner schools) where student commissioners and staff to come together and share early findings and update progress. This will create clear milestones and help keep the momentum during this critical phase.

**Top tip**

When you’re designing your enquiry projects, be clear about how the enquiry will have an impact on student learning and how good evidence (that will convince others) will be captured throughout the process. The most compelling evidence is a combination of data and personal testimony.

**Top tip**

Use practical enquiry projects as a way of extending the reach of the commission by encouraging more teachers and students to be involved, especially those who may previously have been sceptical or reticent. And design projects with scalability in mind – how will they build the capacity and skills of staff and students to undertake or support similar work in the future?
Use or adapt the following template to help design your practical enquiry projects:

1. **Learning idea foci + project approach**
   - Which one or two ideas about learning will the project focus on? Why?
   - How are they relevant to your context or do they meet a specific need in your school?
   - How will you frame your project approach?
     - A hypothesis? (e.g., designing starters and homework around students’ questions will increase engagement)
     - An enquiry question? (e.g., How might students’ curiosity and questions increase engagement?)
     - A precise description? (e.g., To use students’ curiosity and questions to help design lessons, starters and homework)

2. **Impact + evidence**
   - What impact do you hope to have?
     - All projects must...
       - have some kind of measurable impact on attainment/achievement
       - be able to collect rich stories of impact on people
       - carefully set out to gather the kinds of outputs that will convince others of the impact.
   - So what kind of research method is appropriate?
     - action research and interventions, observations, and introducing and assessing new practices
     - response research: surveys and questionnaires
     - visits and observations beyond your school
     - desk research: looking at case studies, examples and other research
     - meta-analysis: reading across projects.

3. **Scope + scale**
   - Significant enquiry projects
   - Who are the right people to lead students and staff?
   - Who will be involved? How many students and staff?
   - How many classrooms?
   - What kinds of students?
   - Where will it happen? Which subject(s), year group(s)?
   - Over what time period? How often?

**Top tip**

Be prepared to find unexpected outcomes from enquiry projects and to change and adjust the way projects are delivered during the process, e.g., to alter the enquiry question, method or participants. If you identify any gaps in your enquiry or areas/ideas that need more detailed exploration, consider undertaking or commissioning some supplementary desk research.

**Top tip**

Keep checking that the right capacity and time is being put into each of your commission’s enquiry projects. If any are faltering then act quickly to get them back on track. You may find it’s necessary to stop one or two projects part way through in order to guarantee the success of the majority.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of Harris Student Commisson practical enquiry projects</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Using effective Assessment for Learning (AFL) to develop learning and increase motivation in students (Harris Boys' Academy East Dulwich)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Focuses on idea 2 (learners take responsibility for, and have ownership and control of, their own learning and achievements) and idea 7 (teachers demonstrate that they are learners too). | Research questions:  
• Does metacognitive learning require the flexible use of time?  
• How does the flexible use of time support teachers to become orchestrators of variety in learning?  
• To what extent does project based learning require flexible timetabling? | Students trained as researchers and carried out research internally with students and staff, and consulted and observed potential models from other schools. |
| **Flexible use of time in association with Goldsmith’s University (Harris Girls’ Academy East Dulwich)** | **Hypothesis:** When students take on the role of observers and learning consultants, and teachers are open to learning from students’ feedback, enterprising lessons can be created. | Students co-planned and co-delivered lessons designed to use enterprising skills to make learning more differentiated. Three to four cycles of observation and feedback undertaken, as well as questionnaires, interviews and discussions with teachers and students. |
| Focuses on idea 10 (learning is deep, enquiry-based and practical). | Research questions:  
• Does metacognitive learning require the flexible use of time?  
• How does the flexible use of time support teachers to become orchestrators of variety in learning?  
• To what extent does project based learning require flexible timetabling? | Students co-planned and co-delivered lessons designed to use enterprising skills to make learning more differentiated. Three to four cycles of observation and feedback undertaken, as well as questionnaires, interviews and discussions with teachers and students. |
| **Teachers meeting all learners’ needs through enterprising lessons (Harris Academy Falconwood)** | **Hypothesis:** Students will learn more effectively if they are confident, happy and well behaved and other students can support their peers to develop these attitudes. | Carefully recruited mentors are paired to work with younger students to tackle behaviour and social issues, with the purpose of supporting better learning. Impact data is collated through existing academy tracking processes. |
| Focuses on idea 9 (learning develops students’ curiosity about the unfamiliar and connects to their interests and experiences) and idea 12 (collaborative learning design, delivery and assessment). | Research questions:  
• Does metacognitive learning require the flexible use of time?  
• How does the flexible use of time support teachers to become orchestrators of variety in learning?  
• To what extent does project based learning require flexible timetabling? | Students co-planned and co-delivered lessons designed to use enterprising skills to make learning more differentiated. Three to four cycles of observation and feedback undertaken, as well as questionnaires, interviews and discussions with teachers and students. |
| **Students working to help their peers develop into better citizens (Harris Academy Merton)** | **Hypothesis:** Students will learn more effectively if they are confident, happy and well behaved and other students can support their peers to develop these attitudes. | Carefully recruited mentors are paired to work with younger students to tackle behaviour and social issues, with the purpose of supporting better learning. Impact data is collated through existing academy tracking processes. |
| Focuses on idea 3 (learners take on roles that involve responsibility for the learning and success of others). | Research questions:  
• Does metacognitive learning require the flexible use of time?  
• How does the flexible use of time support teachers to become orchestrators of variety in learning?  
• To what extent does project based learning require flexible timetabling? | Students co-planned and co-delivered lessons designed to use enterprising skills to make learning more differentiated. Three to four cycles of observation and feedback undertaken, as well as questionnaires, interviews and discussions with teachers and students. |
| **Student involvement in monitoring, evaluation and review (Harris Academy South Norwood)** | **Hypothesis:** Active student involvement in monitoring and reviewing the quality of learning with teachers will have a positive impact on student progress and engagement levels. | Student commissioners were first trained in carrying out lesson observations and work scrutiny and then took on a key role in internal departmental reviews as part of the academies’ monitoring, evaluation and review cycle. Students fed back to teachers and the leadership group about the quality of teaching and learning. |
| Focuses on idea 3 (learners take on roles that involve responsibility for the learning and success of others) and idea 11 (learning partnerships of students and teachers that inspire and motivate). | | |

**Resources**

- Harris Commission phase 2 enquiry project summaries
- Presentation from enquiry projects workshop with Harris co-leaders
- Agenda for workshop with Harris principals
- David Hargreaves presentation from workshop with Harris principals
- Guy Claxton presentation from workshop with Harris principals
- Overview presentation for workshop with Harris principals

Go to www.studentcommission.org.uk to access these resources.
9.3 Helping students and staff become good ‘researchers’

The initial enquiry projects your commission undertook in phase 1 will have provided student commissioners and staff with some experience of how to undertake classroom or school-based enquiry, but there will be more they need to know.

As well as putting a clear structure in place for the design of enquiry projects in phase 2, ensure that you plan and deliver specific support and training, especially for student commissioners. This will help ensure they can continue to carry out their role as leaders of learning with the right skills, knowledge and confidence.

Top tip

Top tips for doing good research in schools

The Harris Student Commission invited Anna Carlile from Goldsmith’s University to talk to students about doing good school-based research. Anna gave a presentation as part of a student commissioner development day, which also included sessions to explore the 12 early ideas about learning, consider what makes a good commission enquiry project and plan specific projects.

Anna’s top tips were:
• Research is a learning experience.
• Be an ethically responsible researcher.
• Justify how you will find the answer to your question.
• Focus on your research question.
• Keep an open mind.

(for the full presentation, see resources)

Top tip

Many of your teachers will already have experience of carrying out in-school research, so consider how they could help train and support others. Alternatively, you could look outside the school to a local university for expertise in this area, or to the many online tools and resources (see resources).
The Harris Student Commission developed guidance for student commissioners in order to help them undertake their enquiry projects. It was designed as a resource students could refer to over time, not as a set of instructions, and included information drawn from a number of existing toolkits and resources (for the full guidance, see resources).

The guidance was set out in three parts:

Part 1: Designing your research project
- Deciding on a research project
- Ideas for research topics
- Constructing your own hypothesis
- Examples of hypotheses for the Harris Student Commission on Learning
- Finding ideas and using what is already known
- Examples of student research projects from the Open University
- Designing timescales
- Establishing a baseline

Part 2: Getting people involved in your research project
- Involving and selecting students
- Working with different age groups
- Working in partnership with staff

Part 3: Carrying out your research project
- Observations
- Designing questionnaires
- Conducting interviews
- Using pictures and photographs
- Analysing data
- Presenting data

Resources

- Harris student commissioner development day 4 programme (developing enquiry projects)
- Handouts and activities from student commissioner development day 4
- Top tips for doing good research in schools
- Harris Student Commission research guidance

Student researcher websites and toolkits:
- The Young Researcher Network – www.nya.org.uk/integrated-youth-support-services/young-researcher-network
- Children’s Research Centre – http://childrens-research-centre.open.ac.uk
- Active Enquiring Minds: Supporting Young Researchers, Essex County Council
- Using research to improve your school (resources and information for teachers) – www.nationalcollege.org.uk/index/leadershiplibrary/leadingschools/school-improvement/using-research-to-improve-your-school/supporting-information-and-resources.htm

Go to www.studentcommission.org.uk to access these resources
9.4 Looking outside the commission to examples of excellent practice

A student commission is continually working with three sources of knowledge: what is known, what we know and new knowledge. As your commission embarks on a deeper phase of practical, in-school enquiry in phase 2, it needs to be mindful not to become too inward looking.

When designing practical enquiry projects also consider how information and evidence from outside could enhance them. For example:

- What examples can you identify of other schools that have implemented some of the approaches or ideas you are testing through your projects? How can you use these examples as inspiration, to guide your work or as a benchmark?
- What research evidence can you find that is relevant to your commission projects? What insights do they offer that could inform how you deliver your project or add weight to your findings?
- What experts, from other schools, nationally or internationally, could you call on for advice?
- What organisations could you ask about examples of excellent practice in the UK and abroad? (e.g. the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust)

Top tip

There is a risk that as the commission is more internally focused during phase 2, students and staff may become more limited and less innovative in their ideas about learning and how it could be changed for the better. Identify opportunities for them to continue to be engaged and excited by more radical possibilities for what learning could be like.

International visits to sites of excellent practice

Working with the British Council as part of their Teachers’ International Professional Development Programme, the Harris Commission organised two international visits. These gave groups of commissioners and teachers from every academy the chance to see first-hand practice in High-Tech-High, San Diego and Charter Schools, New York.

The purposes of the visit were:

- to learn about learning and teaching from observable practice guided by the 12 ideas and questions from the interim commission publication (Learning about Learning)
- to establish a link for ongoing partnership work with the visited school.

Students and teachers uploaded videos and photos, and blogged during the visits, as well as producing a short report and presentation on their return. Insights and learning from the visits directly informed the delivery of practical enquiry projects and the final recommendations made by the commission.

“The commission has been full of positive impacts from start to the very end. In particular, the international trip to New York opened my eyes both as a person and a student. I was exposed to environments I might never have seen.”

David Gayle, Year 10, Harris City Academy Crystal Palace
Harris Student Commissioners discussed their 12 early ideas about learning with students around the world during a 24 hour learn-over. They used Skype to video chat with students from Australia, the US, Sweden, Scotland and in the UK.

It was a fantastic opportunity for student commissioners to explore interesting and innovative practice from other schools, and to share what the commission had been doing. Students were able to engage in real-time discussion with their peers to gain new insights into the 12 early ideas about learning already identified through the first year of commission activity.

Although the learn-over took a quite a lot of time to plan and organise, it was a low-cost and really engaging way to discuss the early ideas about learning and open students’ minds to what other schools were doing. Student commissioners found it exciting and motivating, and were often surprised by what they heard.

“One of the main parts of the commission that made a big impact on me was attending the learn-over. The learn-over was a big webcast with schools around the world that allowed us to video chat with children from America to Sweden! I saw how other students learnt around the world and thought about how that could fit into our school curriculum. It was fascinating to find out about foreign schools from a student’s perspective.”

Travis Payne, Year 10, Harris Academy South Norwood

Resources

- British Council report from New York visit
- British Council report from San Diego visit
- Harris Commission New York visit presentation
- Harris Commission San Diego visit presentation
- Learn-over briefing
- Learn-over programme
- Student commissioner blog posts from international visits

Go to www.studentcommission.org.uk to access these resources
Section 10
Making recommendations, celebrating success and creating the conditions for change

As your commission comes towards the end of phase 2, it will have developed a significant knowledge base about teaching and learning methods and approaches. And the students and teachers involved will be better informed about and more engaged in good learning. But a commission is set up to be much more than a research project. The end point for any commission is not about the discovery of great learning, but the widespread implementation of it.

The implementation of new and better approaches to learning starts with your final recommendations, which are drawn directly from the extensive and detailed enquiry it has undertaken. These recommendations need to provide clear direction and inspiration for the improvement of learning long into the future – they need to be able to stand the test of time.
10.1 Sharing findings and building commitment to the practices being tested

During phase 2 your commission should share early findings and insights from its enquiry projects. This may be through face-to-face events and presentations, or written reports, but ideally a combination of both. If possible, collate these early findings and insights and find a way to share them with those working directly as part of the commission and other staff, especially the senior leaders in your school.

Use this material to introduce and set expectations about what the commission is likely to recommend, and gauge responses from others, whether through informal discussion, surveys or written feedback. What do people seem to be most in agreement with or excited by? Are any of the findings controversial or contested?

If you are producing a report, blog or presentation to share collated early findings from your phase 2 enquiry, make sure you highlight specific evidence. This may be from your enquiry projects (case studies, data and other reports of impact), from supplementary desk research or by highlighting practices from other schools you’ve engaged with.

Top tip

When you share early findings from your enquiry projects make sure the sessions are designed as learning opportunities (deciding what is going well and what needs to change) and a chance to challenge, probe and lever the quality of individual projects.

Harris Commission ‘enquiry projects forum’

Most of the Harris enquiry projects ran for between six and eight months in phase 2. When the projects started the commission set a date for an ‘enquiry projects forum’ which was an opportunity for:

- student commissioners and teachers to process their early findings to an agreed format
- student commissioners to present their own and hear about others’ projects – both what and how they were doing and what was being learnt
- invited governors, teachers and principals to find out more about the enquiry projects and hear students talk about what they were learning.

All academies presented their projects at least twice throughout the day to different audiences, who were invited to ask questions, and presentations were shared after the event. The day boosted students’ confidence in what they were doing and motivated them to continue with their projects because they heard useful feedback and gained ideas from others.

For commission leaders the forum was a chance to identify and collate early insights and findings from the projects, and also to put in place extra support and guidance for projects where needed.
After the practical enquiry projects were well established and had started to generate findings, the Harris Commission produced an interim ‘report’ setting out its further insights about learning.

This used the structure of the 12 early ideas about learning to share exemplar projects and data, to highlight specific learning from international visits and to introduce new evidence that emerged from desk research. It was also a celebration of all the hard work undertaken through the commission and a chance to share the most interesting and powerful practices that were emerging, and which were likely to form part of the recommendations.

The introduction to the report was signed by all Harris Federation principals and it set out their commitment to the commission:

“In Spring 2011, two years after the commission started, it will publish recommendations setting out new approaches to teaching and learning for the federation to adopt. We, as a group of leaders, are committed to implementing these recommendations. Our task in the coming months is to develop a set of recommendations for learning transformation that we will all feel proud of and inspired to implement.”

Resources

- Enquiry projects forum notes template
- Enquiry projects forum reflections template
- Example student commission presentation from enquiry projects forum
- Example of processed notes and insights from enquiry projects forum
- Learning about learning – further insights from the Harris Student Commission

Go to www.studentcommission.org.uk to access these resources
A commission’s phase 2 enquiry should end with a process that will include reflection, processing of evidence and working collaboratively to secure support for emerging recommendations. The length and complexity of this process will entirely depend on the scope and scale of your commission and the time it takes to agree and make strategic decisions. In an individual school it may be possible to do it within weeks, but across a group of schools it is likely to take a few months.

As your commission embarks on this process, consider the following:

- Working with a small group of student commissioners and teachers to create a definitive set of insights from your phase 2 enquiry, and organise these according to the structure of your early ideas or propositions about learning.

- Who is the primary audience for your recommendations? Who do you need to inform, inspire or convince?

- The way in which you will frame and set out your final recommendations – what will be the most powerful way of conveying them and how will you do it? Will a written form suffice or do you also need a video or set of illustrations to go alongside a report or publication?

- Assigning responsibility for the writing of your commission’s recommendations. It should be an iterative process but one person needs to be able to update and adapt them as you go.

- Setting aside time and plan ways to engage with leaders, teachers and student commissioners in the process of creating the recommendations. Consider creating a blog where a range of people can edit and comment on the recommendations as they emerge.

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Top tip

The success of your commission is determined by how successfully the final recommendations for learning are delivered. Co-leaders of the commission need to work strategically with senior leaders to ensure they contribute to and know the implications of the recommendations you are developing. If they are not on board then you risk falling at the last and most important hurdle – the implementation of real changes to learning and teaching across your school.

Top tip

Don’t expect to get it right first time. The more the commission engages with others in the process of writing the recommendations, the more people will become committed to them and be willing to take them forward.
Developing recommendations with leaders, students and staff

Over the course of a term the Harris Student Commission held face-to-face events to begin to develop the final recommendations. These were specifically designed to gauge and build interest in and commitment to different ideas and practices that the commission had tested. The events were:

- Recommendations Conference for all student commissioners – students heard and discussed final findings from enquiry projects, and indicated the practices they most wanted to see taken forward.
- Workshop with commission co-leaders – co-leaders discussed the highest leverage practices that should be taken forward and mapped these against the 12 early ideas about learning. They also set out existing practices that could be further developed.
- Workshop with all Harris Academy principals – student commissioners presented their ideas for recommendations; principals were reminded of the purpose and achievements of the commission and then discussed their hopes and plans for the future.

The commission also created a blog (http://newdesignforlearning.posterous.com/) containing draft recommendations and students and staff were encouraged to comment.

The Harris Commission made its final recommendations in the form of:

Entitlements for learners and teachers – what they can expect teaching and learning to be like across the federation.

The entitlements were non-negotiable. Each Harris Academy would make this offer to their learners and teachers.

Opportunities for making the entitlements real – specific projects, programmes and activities that academies could take forward to live out the entitlements.

The opportunities were not a checklist or blueprint for every academy to deliver, nor an exhaustive list of possible activity. Some opportunities represented the most effective and exciting practices that emerged through the commission; others were entirely new activities the commission wanted to see implemented. Individual academies would develop their own approaches to meeting the entitlements, building from and on the opportunities set out.

Federation commitments to action – mechanisms the federation would put in place in order to realise, enhance, monitor and evaluate the entitlements and opportunities.

Resources

- Booklet from recommendations conference with Harris Student Commissioners
- Write up from Harris Student Commissioners recommendations conference – workshop 1
- Write up from Harris Student Commissioners recommendations conference – workshop 2
- Write up from Harris Student Commissioners recommendations conference – workshop 3
- Write up from Harris Student Commissioners recommendations conference – workshop 4
- Agenda from Harris Student Commission workshop with principals
- Presentation from workshop with principals

Go to www.studentcommission.org.uk to access these resources
10.3 Making final recommendations

When your commission has settled on the final recommendations it wants to make for how learning should be different, ensure that they are written in a compelling way. The recommendations need to be tangible and concrete, but also inspiring and exciting. You want the audience to be proud of what has been achieved and the motivated to make the recommended changes a reality.

Most importantly, they should relate directly to the range of evidence and insights the commission has gathered. Where possible, indicate the next steps and how the recommendations being made will be taken forward.

If your commission is across a group of schools, consider how prescriptive the recommendations will be. Will all schools take forward all the recommendations? Will some focus initially on certain areas?

Top tip

Be realistic about how quickly and on what scale your recommendations will be implemented. If you are proposing whole-scale changes to teaching and learning this will and should take time to deliver effectively. You need to get the level of ambition right for your organisation.

A new design for learning recommended by the Harris Student Commission

The final publication from the Harris Student Commission set out to make clear recommendations about what learning at Harris should look like in the future, based on what has been learned, tested and developed through the two years of the student commission.

The communication objectives were:

- to celebrate and share the work of the Harris Student Commission on Learning to a wide audience
- to make clear what has been achieved, the impact of the commission so far and what will change as a result, i.e. evidence based recommendations
- to succinctly and powerfully capture the whole journey of the commission while focusing on the recommendations being made.

Resources

- Harris Student Commission draft recommendations
- A new design for learning – recommendations from the Harris Student Commission

Go to www.studentcommission.org.uk to access these resources
Every learner will be entitled to…

1. Be an active leader of learning responsible for their own and others’ learning
2. Actively reflect on and assess their own and others’ learning
3. Become informed learners through planned learning to learn experiences and high quality feedback
4. Regularly create artefacts from their learning that have real-world value
5. Create exceptional work, be active entrepreneurs and gain pride from sharing their achievements publicly
6. Build learning partnerships with teachers to improve learning through feedback, co-planning and co-design

The curriculum will ensure all learners are entitled to…

1. Learn deep subject content, learn about learning and develop more elaborate conceptions of learning with teachers and other students
2. Become motivated, confident and successful learners who regularly engage in deep learning, and have opportunities for choice in what and how they learn
3. Undertake self-directed learning through extended projects or assignments focused on tackling real world questions and challenges, and developing critical thinking skills
Section 10

Every teacher will be entitled to...

1. Powerful professional development to develop their subject expertise and have that expertise recognised, and to learn more about learning

2. Develop the curriculum and their own expertise in partnership with outside experts and to access opportunities for learning beyond the classroom

3. Coaching, mentoring and collaborative enquiry to keep their practice moving forward, fuel their passion for teaching and support them to take risks and innovate

4. Share their skills and knowledge, learn from their peers and develop high quality curriculum opportunities within and across subjects

5. Build learning partnerships with students to improve learning through feedback, co-planning and co-design

Partnerships

Curriculum

Teachers

4. Participate in enterprise activities, undertake practical, hands on learning and learning with external providers, the community and in real world situations beyond school

5. Learn in a variety of time units, including longer and shorter lessons, half days, whole days and non-timetabled independent learning

6. Explore, experiment with and use technology in innovative ways to enhance the learning experience and access resources for learning through 24/7 learning platforms
10.4 Making plans for the future

Once the final recommendations have been shared and an outline plan of action created the hard work really begins. All that the commission has worked towards rests on the ability of your organisation(s) to deliver those recommendations well and achieve some real changes to the quality of teaching and learning on offer.

At this point the task is to create and agree a way forward, perhaps focusing initially on scaling up across the whole school some of the projects the commission started as a route to some ‘quick wins’. It is clear that for any significant changes to take place they need to be directly linked to wider school strategic or development plans.

Consider what the leaders of the school could put in place to ensure the commission’s recommendations are taken forward. This could involve giving specific staff responsibility for certain recommendations (connected to performance management) or planning specific opportunities to collect, observe and review progress being made.

Student commissioners and staff who’ve been part of the commission should continue to be actively involved. Hold a celebration event to thank student commissioners and staff for their hard work and to share the recommendations widely. Your commissioners will be enthusiastic about and committed to the recommendations, so consider how the commission could continue with a new remit that is about implementation and review, rather than ongoing enquiry.

Top tip

As the student commission’s formal enquiry ends try and build from the in school research and learning that has been started. Consider how the enquiry and leadership skills and capacity that have been generated could continue to be utilised to improve learning.

Celebrating the work of Harris Student Commissioners

The Harris Student Commission made a public launch of its ‘new design for learning’ at a high profile education conference, where students and Harris leaders presented the work of the commission and the final recommendations.

But more importantly, the commission held a celebration event where the hard work and commitment of student commissioners and staff was highlighted and congratulated. All current student commissioners attended.

Resources

- Opportunities map from Harris recommendations
- Presentation shown at the external launch of Harris’ ‘new design for learning’

Go to www.studentcommission.org.uk to access these resources
You can download parts 1 and 2 of the toolkit and all the additional resources at www.studentcommission.org.uk.

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