The Story so Far

March 2017

Helen from the Association office attended an OU Hack Day related to change management. Several OU colleagues expressed an interest in knowing more about the Association and how to engage effectively with their students.

Helen invited several colleagues to 'drop in' to the Association office for a cuppa and cake and to hear more about all the different aspects of work being carried out by and on behalf of OU students.

June 2017

Some colleagues from the OU's Portfolio office came to one of the 'drop in' sessions. Barry Verdin (then OU Portfolio office, now Business Change Project Manager and STEM AL) was in this group and he described an initiative he knew of in the NHS where patients recognised and rewarded where they had been 'actively involved' in decision making.

June 2017

A forum opened to ask Central Executive Committee and Association staff for any bright ideas related to the three themes of the new Association strategy:

- Listen to OU students and represent their collective voice and academic interests.

- Engage students in a vibrant and supportive community and create new opportunities.

- Raise awareness of our actions and the impact of our work to enhance the student experience.

Kitemark idea was suggested as part of the 'Listen' strand.

'Kitemark' became part of the Association strategy 2017-20 which was agreed by the Central Executive Committee and ratified by the Board of Trustees in July 2017.

It actually appears as part of both the 'Listen' and 'Raise Awareness' strands so it is a **BIG** part of the strategic aims!

October 2017 Kitemark Project Advisory Group convened and included:

- Members from the elected students on the Central Executive Committee (VP Education and VP Representation & Research and latterly VP Voice).

- Association staff (Education Policy Officer, Head of Student Voice and latterly Transformation Support Co-ordinator).

- Staff from OU Consultation office.

- Staff from OU Portfolio office.

- Staff from OU Transformation Communications team.

The group has met most months since convening. There have been several changes to the membership due to other OU work priorities and also to reflect a change of elected students.

Wanted to avoid 'reinventing the wheel' so the advisory group started to gather relevant information from elsewhere.

Early enquiries suggested that no other SU has done something similar to 'Kitemark' but there was interest in the work we were starting.

The advisory group gathered relevant information from a variety of sources to support what the current thinking about meaningful student engagement including:

- TSEP (the Student Engagement Partnership).

- QAA (Quality Assurance Agency) Quality Code Chapter B5.

It's expected that the new Office for Students will be finishing new guidance in autumn 2018 but as yet no date for publication-watch this space…

Helen requested QAA to 'build our own' quality assurance information for 'Kitemark' based on the theme 'enhancement' and category 'indicator' to extract relevant information from Chapter B5 on student engagement.

The bespoke document, a shorter more focussed document than the full Quality Code has been useful to really get to the heart of what good student engagement looks like.

Helen asked TSEP for their input to the project.

They had already looked at evaluating partnership working in HEI and had developed an idea called 'Partnership Authenticity Stars' whereby 12 aspects of a project, activity or process where students and staff work together are rated 1-5.

The 12 aspects were:

Agenda, Contribution, Co-design, Training, Diversity, Change, Dependency, Communication, Decision making, Accessibility, Debate, Relationships

The scale of 1-5 where:

1=No, not in any of the project, activity or process

2=Rarely

3=Sometimes

4=Most of the time

5=Yes, throughout or in all of the project, activity or process

The process was designed as an evaluation and planning tool whereby projects can be compared with one another and weaknesses noted for future reference and best practice recognised and shared more widely.

The advisory group thought this could be useful in developing the 'Kitemark' further but it seemed more quantitative than qualitative.

November 2017

An informal consultation in the Student Voice café. 14 SV volunteers contributed to the following request:

*The Kitemark project is part of the 2017-20 OU Students Association Strategy. It will explore the feasibility of introducing a University-wide kitemark signalling that a project or programme has completed **meaningful engagement with students**. Led by Lorraine and Caroline*

on the CEC (at that time) and supported by Sam and Helen in the office this project will also work closely with some colleagues from the OU.

*The first stages require the Association to define what different levels of meaningful engagement with students look like with the aim that quite soon an OU project can be measured against them. Trying this out will help clarify whether the measures are too stringent or too weak with the aim of finding that **Goldilocks zone of 'just right'.***

- *If you have a few minutes to spare and can only post one reply to this message then it would be good to hear any ideas you have about what you think **meaningful student engagement** looks like.*

- *If you have a little longer to give this some consideration then please also think about some details-do you have any thoughts about a more detailed grading system of 'not so good', 'fairly good', 'good', 'even better' or 'best' (or any other words that would help define!) then please let us know. Maybe you have some thoughts about how many levels should be defined to allow real differentiation about levels of '**meaningful engagement**'? What is too few? What is too many!?*

- *And if you are more interested in something creative then instead of or aswell as the above please think about what sort of image/symbol/code might work well that would work as a visual symbol that can be easily recognised?*

The summary of the consultation formed the basis of the next few meetings of the Kitemark Project Advisory Group and the truth is the group spent a long time talking around the subject and agreeing on not much more than,

'It's a difficult subject to define and measure'

Which was the very purpose of the feasibility study!

The time had come to really formalise the next steps...

April 2018

VP Education presented a paper to CEC including a Business Case outlining the impact, risks, governance and costs of 'Kitemark'.

Conference June 2018

Podcast available to nearly 200 Digital Delegates (now available on Association website).

Update by VP Education and Student Voice team in f2f session for 30 students.

August 2018

Recruited a team of Kitemark Project Volunteers to pull together elements of work completed so far and take the work into the next phase.

September 2018

Kitemark Project Volunteers met for a Task & Finish day, facilitated by Helen, Peter & Sue. The outputs achieved on the day were:

- Clarification on criteria to be used
- Criteria support framework details
- The name – *The Student Engagement Standard*
- The logo icon – a flag

Following the Task & Finish day, the office documented the criteria and framework. Final documents were approved by the student volunteers.

October 2018

Advisory Group met and proposed one tweak to the criteria, subsequently agreed by the student volunteers. Advisory Group agreed with plan to proceed with the test phase.

Logo designed by the Association's Digital Comms Team and approved by the student volunteers.

November 2018

Four OU units agreed to take part in the test/pilot programme and were able to submit their project details & evidence within the required timescales:

- Project 1 – Carers in OU Wales
- Project 2 – Online Student Experience
- Project 3 – Students eSTEem
- Project 4 – Transforming Student Policy

The student volunteers reviewed the submissions and then convened via an Adobe Connect evening session to review their findings and provide feedback. See document #4 for student findings and recommendations.