

Students as Co-Creators Project Application Form

Thank you for considering applying for a Students as Co-Creators project. Please answer **all** of the questions in the application form and email it to studentpartnership@westminster.ac.uk by the **26th October 2018**.

1) The Project Team

Student partner 1:

Student number:

Email:

College/School: College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

Course and year/level of study: Biomedical Sciences Year 1

Student partner 2

Student number:

Email:

College/School: College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

Course and year/level of study: Biomedical Sciences Year 1

Student partner 3:

Student number:

Email:

College/School: College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

Course and year/level of study: Biomedical Sciences Year 1

Academic partner:

Email:

College/School: College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

2) Research Topic

- a) What is your research question? Be specific and write this as a question. Your answer may include more than one question.

Our research questions will focus on first year students in the School of Life Sciences: The questions we aim to address are:

Q1. How Many Email and Blackboard Communications do First Year Students Receive in the Initial Few Weeks of University?

Q2. Do all First Year Students experience Information Overload via Email and Blackboard Communications?

Q3. What is the Lived Experience of First Year Students when it comes to email and Blackboard communications?

- b) What are the aims of your research? Tell us specifically what your team wishes to discover in the process of undertaking the project.

There appears to be little research into how mass email communication from university staff may desensitise students to key (important) messages sent. We found a blog post by Haskin (2016) which gave university staff an idea of what they could do to improve the email system, however no evidence of student thoughts were included in the post nor indication of whether universities have an email monitoring system in place. Other work (Pignata et al., 2015), has focused on employees' perceptions of email communication. However, this work reported on how academics and professionals organised their emails and how email overload led to increased levels of work-related stress for staff. Our project work aims to focus on students.

Firstly, we wish to discover IF there is an information overload for first year students (personal experiences point to there being overload). We would like to collate some concrete evidence for this and use this evidence as a basis to create a questionnaire. We will survey the current first year population in Life Sciences to further explore experiences of email and blackboard communications. We hope to be able to reveal the lived experience of first year students and possibly suggest ways forward for effective communication.

References:

JULIA HASKIN *EAB* [online] EAB 05/11/2016 (Date accessed 25/10/18)
<https://www.eab.com/daily-briefing/2016/12/05/why-students-dont-read-your-emails>

Pignata, S., Lushington, K., Sloan, J., Buchanan, F. (2015) Employees' Perceptions of Email Communication, Volume and Management Strategies in an Australian University, *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*. 37(2):159-171.

3) Research Impact

a) Why is this research project important for you and other students at Westminster?

Since starting university, we (Maira, Alishba and Kitija) have experienced an enormous number of email and Blackboard communications, many of which seem unnecessary. Given our first-hand experience, we feel like we are increasingly becoming desensitised to the information that we receive in these communications. For example, some of the information sent to us directly related to Level 5 and 6 students such as when deadlines for their final year projects are due. Furthermore, information relating to placement year deadlines – which do not really relate to us.

We are aware that this issue has been flagged up in the past via course committee meetings. In response, we hear on the grapevine that there were tweaks made to the Blackboard notification system. However, whether this has resulted in improvements or whether the changes were even made, have not been investigated (to our knowledge). We would certainly like to take this opportunity to tie in our personal experiences and that of the cohort to reflect the situation in 2018.

b) How do you propose to communicate the outcomes of your project (e.g. blogs, websites, posters, booklet, video, podcast) and share your final findings?

We envisage to communicate the outcomes via the SCC report. In addition, we hope to liaise with Smoke Magazine to possibly write an article on what we found and our suggestions in terms of the way forward. During the SCC annual event, we hope to either produce a poster to communicate our work or, if time permits, produce a vodcast to showcase our work.

- c) Describe the key methodologies you will use to achieve the aims of your research. Tell us specifically how your team will find answers to your research questions.

As a team we hope to use a mixed-method approach to achieving our aims. We hope to do the following:

1. The three first year student members in this project, will go through their emails to date (i.e. first 5 weeks of university). We would like to tally where the emails have come from, what it was regarding, when we received the email and whether the email was relevant to us or not. This information will give us the concrete evidence we need to move forward.
2. As a team, we will construct a hard-copy questionnaire designed to use with other first years. We will include both open and closed questions to gain a thorough reflection of experiences. To make sure we reach as many students as possible, the questionnaire will be transferred to an online platform (i.e. Google forms). A period of two to three weeks will be given for promotion of survey and data collection.
3. After 3 weeks, we will collate and analyse the data both quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative analysis will involve predominantly reporting on frequencies/percentages. Qualitative analysis will involve coding and thematic analysis – possibly even producing word clouds reflective of the open-ended questions asked.

4) Project Management

- a) Please confirm a team meeting has taken place with all the Partners listed on this application form to discuss the project and the application, and that you have all referred to the 'Westminster Co-Creators Principles'. List the names of those present at the meeting and the date of the meeting:

Yes two meetings have taken place, one on 23/10/18 and the second one on 25/10/18. The people present in the meetings were Dr

- b) How will the Partners in your team communicate to manage the project and share its workload?

We will be communicating via Email and WhatsApp. As well as meeting in person with our academic partner.

c) Please refer to the timelines below and indicate whether you wish to complete your project and submit the final report by the cycle 1 or cycle 2 deadline. If you are submitting this form in October then **you must follow the deadlines for ethics and budget approval for cycle 1** but can opt to submit your final report by the cycle 2 deadline.

Cycle 1 deadline (28th June 2019)

Cycle 2 deadline (21st August 2019)

Please email your application form to Studentpartnership@westminster.ac.uk by the **26th October 2018**.

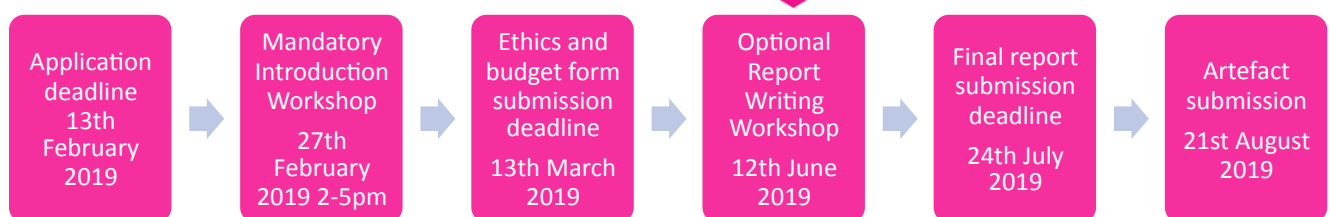
Next Steps

A student and staff selection panel will meet on the 31st October to assess the applications. You will receive the outcome of your application via email by the 2nd November. If your application is successful, your team will be required to attend a **mandatory introduction workshop** on **7th November 2018, 2-5pm**.

Cycle 1 Timeline



Cycle 2 Timeline



For further information and guidance on completing your project submission please contact:

Moonisah Bajwa Usman

Student Partnership Projects Co-ordinator, Centre for Teaching Innovation

M.Usman@westminster.ac.uk