

Background

In November 2009, Birmingham City University and Birmingham City Students’ Union launched the Student Academic Partners (SAP) scheme. SAP aims to integrate students into the teaching and pedagogic research community within Birmingham City University, to develop collaboration between students and staff and to instill a sense of ownership and pride in the University. Since 2009 SAP has supported innovative student-staff projects across the University involving over 500 students and 250 members of staff on over 160 projects.

We are extremely proud of this scheme and the potential it offers to staff and students alike. To date the Scheme has gained [significant interest](http://www.bcusu.com/learning/saps/publications/) from the National Union of Students (NUS) and the Higher Education Academy (HEA) in their joint project on student engagement as well as the Association of Registrars’ Council (ARC), the Quality Assurance Agency and from Unions and Universities across the United Kingdom and beyond.

In 2010 SAP won the [Times Higher Education Award](http://www.bcusu.com/learning/saps/awards/) for Outstanding support for Students and in 2012/13 our ‘Students as Partners’ approach has been identified by the [Higher Education Academy as the theme for a national initiative](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/change/SAP_CP) in which Birmingham City will act as consultants.

The purpose of Student Academic Partners

The scheme helps foster and develop our learning community and places students at the heart of the University, working with staff, to develop new avenues in which to enhance the experience of university for us all. Through meaningful partnerships we aim to create a sense of ownership and pride in the University. The scheme employs students as partners, not assistants, as many projects are designed and delivered by students based within Birmingham City University’s six faculties, professional service departments and the wider University community, ensure students actively engage in and out of the classroom.

Why we think this partnership work between students and staff is important

Partnership work helps create student friendly services from the initial development stages, making students more responsible for their learning experience. Staff will be able to share their expertise and support students but at the same time can learn from student enthusiasm, knowledge and perspective on how things could be done to improve existing practices.

How Student Academic Partners benefits students and staff

The SAP scheme offers an opportunity for paid employment (up to 100 hours of work per project) to enable students to be active members of project teams to work in partnership with faculties to strengthen the learning and teaching development of the University.

Working hours are flexible rather than a fixed contract of employment and students manage their own projects guided by their staff partners. This provides greater flexibility so that students can fit their work commitments around their studies.

Both students and staff feel a great sense of satisfaction accomplishing research projects alongside their studies and work commitments and often see their ideas adopted by the University, being able to inspire others to support students in better, more innovative ways.

Who to contact

If you require further information about the SAP scheme please contact paul.chapman@bcu.ac.uk

- See more at: http://www.bcusu.com/learning/academicpartnerships/saps/#sthash.b9138u4y.dpuf