Fellow Profile

Sally Varnham
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Sally Varnham is a Professor of Law, University of Technology Sydney. Her research on law and policy in education is widely published in Australia and abroad and she is co-editor of “Higher Education and the Law” (Federation, 2015).

Fellowship title: Creating a National Framework for student partnership in university decision making and governance

Expected Completion Date: 2019

Expertise key words: student, partnership, law

What will you achieve?: Following research (OLT Project) abroad and nationally which considered the ‘what, why and how’ of student engagement to partnership in tertiary institutions, the Fellowship enabled a sector-wide collaboration involving all – senior managers, academics, professional staff, students and national student bodies, and sector agencies such as TEQSA. The principles and framework, STEPUP (Students and Tertiary Education Providers Undertaking Partnership) for quality enhancement, were formulated. A wide program of dissemination enabled a collective understanding and a motivation to progress and sustain a culture of authentic student partnership within institutions and nationally. This led to the Student Voice Australia Pilot Project formed in October 2018 with a Project Manager hosted at UTS and involving ten participant institutions initially for one year. It is important to note that ‘university’ has been widened to embrace all institutions within the sector and it is significant that Holmsglen Institute is one of the pilot institutions. The Pilot continues after my Fellowship finishes in March 2019, and is commencing now undertaking a program of Institutional Analysis workshops, and working with participant institutions staff and students to develop student representative training programs and Partnership Agreements where appropriate. Working with student partnership agencies such as sparqs (Scotland), TSEP (UK) and NStEP (Ireland), the Pilot aims also to develop and sustain a national presence for student partnership across the sector.

I wish to widen a common understanding of the importance and centrality of student voice to all we do as tertiary institutions and for an ethos of effectively and authentically working with students for students to be embedded across the Australian sector.

What does the sector need now?: For the Pilot Project to expand to a national organisation working across the tertiary sector on student partnership involving all national agencies and peak student bodies.