

## Student as Producer

# The Model United Nations simulation and the student as producer agenda

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## Biographies

Simon Obendorf was educated at the University of Melbourne where he read for undergraduate degrees in political science and in law before completing a PhD in international relations theory. He teaches and researches in the fields of international relations, postcolonial studies, and gender and sexuality.

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## Abstract

The authors of this paper introduced an assessed Model United Nations simulation as a core component of the undergraduate politics and international relations programmes at the University of Lincoln. The authors use their experience of creating and delivering this module to reflect upon the institutional implementation of a student as producer agenda to guide curriculum development and pedagogy. They conclude that many existing trends in the teaching and learning of politics and international relations are congruent with the emerging focus in British higher education on research-engaged teaching and learning and the development of students as producers of knowledge. They conclude by suggesting that these priorities are perhaps best implemented at degree programme level and that they should take greater account of a broad notion of internationalisation and the value of simulation-driven teaching and learning.

**Key words:** Model United Nations, simulation, pedagogy, student as producer, research-engaged teaching, case-based learning, international relations, politics

## The student as producer

Reflecting contemporary concerns about the challenges facing higher education and a desire to recapture the nature of the university as a liberal humanist institution (Neary and Winn 2009), the University of Lincoln-led Student as Producer project is funded by the Higher Education Academy (2010a) through its National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (2010b). In co-operation with the universities of Sheffield, Reading, Warwick, Oxford Brookes, Gloucestershire, Wolverhampton and Plymouth, the £200,000 project addresses concerns about the disconnect between research and teaching in higher education institutions and the notion of students as consumers and “passive recipients of knowledge” (Ramsden 1992: 111). The focus of Student as Producer therefore is to rejuvenate the university project via a reconceptualisation of the relationship between research and teaching. It seeks to collaboratively engage students in the main function of academia, the production of knowledge.

Central to the Student as Producer project therefore is the notion of research-engaged teaching and learning, defined by the University of Lincoln as “a fundamental principle of curriculum design whereby students learn primarily by engagement in real research projects, or projects which replicate the process of research in their discipline. Engagement is created through active collaboration among and between students and academics” (University of Lincoln 2010). Research-engaged teaching and learning has been designated a key institutional priority by the University of Lincoln and represents an extension of the previous policy of research-informed teaching in which the connection between research and teaching resulted from curriculum content, enriched by an academic’s own research interests, transmitted to undergraduate students via lectures (University of Lincoln 2010: 5). Concerns about the potential negative effects of the research-informed teaching approach on student engagement have led Lincoln to place research-engaged teaching and learning as the key paradigm around which curriculum design and delivery will be constructed in the future. This key priority reflects increasing interest in the wider academic community in reconfiguring the relationship between teaching and research at university level to enhance the student learning experience via student involvement in research (Hattie and Marsh 1996; Neary and Winn 2009; Pascarella and Terenzini 2005; Zamorski 2002).

Central to the institutional priority of Student as Producer at the University of Lincoln is its distinctive commitment to position research-engaged teaching and learning as a “unifying principle for its pedagogic practices” (University of Lincoln 2010: 3), ensuring that the design and delivery of undergraduate programmes and modules engage with this principle throughout. At the same time, however, there is clear recognition that the concept and practice of research-engaged teaching and learning already exists both in the broader academic community and in existing teaching practice at the University of Lincoln.

In 2008, the authors chose to introduce a version of the well-established Model United Nations simulation to the School of Social Sciences’ undergraduate programmes at the University of Lincoln. Model United Nations is a compulsory part of the second-year assessed programme of the BA (Hons) International Relations. It is also open to second-year students studying other degrees in the School of Social Sciences. The existence of Model United Nations as an *assessed* module is a highly distinctive feature of Lincoln’s international relations programme and a departure from the delivery of Model United Nations primarily as a co-curricular or extra-curricular activity at other institutions worldwide. Delivery of the simulation as a compulsory module for level two international relations students means that it forms a core component of degree-level assessment and contributes to the overall degree classification of participating students.

The decision to introduce a simulation-led module was influenced by increased evidence of the advantages of simulations in the delivery of political science and international relations programmes. Simulations require

students to learn and perform in interactive environments in which “it is the environment that is simulated ... but the behaviour is real” (Jones 1995: 7). As Asal and Blake (2006) have argued:

*Simulations offer social science students an opportunity to learn from firsthand experience ... This sort of experiential learning allows students to apply and test what they learn in their textbooks, and often helps to increase students’ understanding of the subtleties of theories or concepts and draw in students who can be alienated by traditional teaching approaches. By putting students in role-play situations where they need to make defensible decisions and often have to convince others to work with them, simulations also provide students with the opportunity to develop their communication, negotiation, and critical thinking skills, and in many cases, improve teamwork skills.*

In this paper, we explore how simulation-led teaching and learning aids the delivery of the objectives envisaged by the Student as Producer project. We reflect on the contributions simulations can make in placing students and student production at the heart of the teaching and learning process. We also take the opportunity to examine how our experience of delivering a simulation can inform and enhance an institution’s understanding and implementation of the Student as Producer policy framework. Some of the key areas in which simulations extend our understanding of student-led and research-engaged teaching are those of student voice and the need to embrace a broad notion of internationalisation.

## The Model United Nations simulation

The Model United Nations simulation is a global phenomenon. According to the United Nations Association of the United States of America (2012a,b), over 400,000 students worldwide participate in a Model United Nations simulation each year. Having originated in the United States of America, the Model United Nations simulation has grown in popularity globally, especially since the end of the Cold War (Deutsche Gesellschaft für die Vereinten Nationen 2001). The growth in membership and topical relevance of the United Nations itself has been largely responsible for the worldwide dissemination of the Model United Nations project, providing the motivation for educators and students alike to embrace the popular Model United Nations simulation as a way of teaching and learning about transnational issues, global governance and diplomacy (Muldoon 1995: 28; Phillips and Muldoon 1996).

The Model United Nations blends case-based instruction and investigation with aspects of problem-based learning (McIntosh 2001: 270–271). Participants are allocated specific roles as representatives of United Nations member states or United Nations observer states/bodies. After a period of preparation involving research on their allocated countries and designated policies, delegates participate in a strategically condensed simulation of the work of existing United Nations bodies such as the Security Council, the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) (Phillips and Muldoon 1996: 142). The Model United Nations programme is best understood as an operational simulation, which is to say it seeks to simulate the work of an actually existing body and uses role descriptions and expectations of participants derived from the United Nations itself. Further, it encourages participants to engage with contemporary or historical events or issues of importance to the United Nations system (Muldoon 1995: 28).

As a highly flexible simulation framework, the Model United Nations is suitable for delivery in a variety of contexts and at a wide range of learning levels. Model United Nations simulations are found in schools, colleges and universities around the world, and run variously as short duration in-class events, semester- and year-long programmes, and even major residential conferences, bringing together hundreds of participants from across nations, regions or the world. At many universities, the Model United Nations simulation operates as an extra-curricular activity open to the entire student body and staged by student clubs and societies, sometimes with the assistance or support of international relations programmes and academics.

Significant guidance is available on the logistics of organising successful conferences (Endless and Wolfe 2003): national United Nations Associations provide a wealth of teaching and learning resources to support Model United Nations programmes in their countries (United Nations Association of the United Kingdom 2012; United Nations Association of the United States of America 2002, 2012c) and the United Nations itself offers a range of Model United Nations resources through its website and other publications (Barrs and Juffkins 1995; United Nations 2012).

## Simulation in international relations teaching and learning

Despite its introduction prior to the adoption of the Student as Producer project at the University of Lincoln (in 2010), it is clear that the module is aligned with many of the features and outcomes envisaged by the research-engaged teaching and learning and student as producer agendas. The decision to include an assessed version of Model United Nations on the international relations programme was informed by the extensive literature encouraging adoption of simulation models in international relations teaching and learning.

This literature speaks of the desirability of broadening the range of teaching, learning and assessment methods in politics and international relations (Hale 2005; Ralph, Head and Lightfoot 2010; Simpson and Kausler 2009). Driving this concern is an awareness that students acquire skills and knowledge in various ways and that curricula and teaching practice should be designed to reflect this (Kolb 1984, 1985). Fox and Ronkowski (1997) draw on these insights to examine the learning styles of political science students. Their research concluded that political science students learn in a diverse range of ways, highlighting a need for teaching methods to more fully reflect the diversity of learning styles among political science students, with potentially significant implications for improving knowledge and skills development, confidence building and student retention.

The advantages of case- or problem-based learning and its applicability to the teaching of politics have been extensively surveyed by Sarah Hale (2005, 2006). She maintains that “case based learning is an innovative teaching method that has a great deal to offer tutors and students in the social sciences, including increased inclusivity, deep learning, better retention of knowledge, development of critical and analytical skills, greater student interest and the development of key employability skills” (Hale 2006: 85).

Research on the strengths of case- or problem-based learning validates the increasing use of simulations in undergraduate and postgraduate politics and international relations programmes. Writing specifically about international relations courses, Weir and Baranowski (2011) emphasise the importance of simulations in promoting active learning and as a means of facilitating students’ ability to consider international politics from non-western perspectives. Newmann and Twigg (2000) argue that simulations enable students to experience and more fully understand theories, issues and concepts in international relations. They assert that “the simulation format provides students a better framework than do lecture notes for long term retention of important international relations concepts” (Newmann and Twigg 2000: 835). Simpson and Kausler (2009) highlight the role of simulations in the development of key communication and analytical skills among students and the conveyance of empirical, issue-based knowledge and theoretical understanding.

It is evident therefore that a broad consensus exists in the pedagogic literature about the value of simulations, such as Model United Nations, in both scaffolding student knowledge of global affairs and the politics of international organisation, and in developing key skills in research, negotiation, debating, public speaking, parliamentary procedure, etc) (Hazleton and Jacob 1983; Karns 1980; Phillips and Muldoon 1996).

## Model United Nations at the University of Lincoln

The Lincoln Model United Nations takes place within a single-semester academic module and culminates in a day-long simulation of the United Nations General Assembly and two of its committees (the committees simulated vary from year to year according to the issues under debate). Given the size of the student cohort, not all of the 193 member states of the United Nations are represented. Each student is each allocated a country by teaching staff in a way that maintains the proportional voting balance of the United Nations' regional blocs.

Students meet weekly in two-hour sessions, where vital materials are introduced, including briefings on the history and structure of the United Nations, the functioning of the United Nations regional bloc system, instruction in resolution writing, rules of procedure, etc. The two-hour teaching block facilitates a greater level of interactivity among students and staff and allows students to work in small groups on allocated tasks or skills development. These encompass the areas of public speaking, caucusing, negotiation, using the rules of procedure and giving in-class presentations on their country/issues. A concurrent fortnightly session is held in a computer laboratory to facilitate student research on their countries and the issues under debate.

Having familiarised themselves with their country and with United Nations structure and procedure, each student produces a proposed draft resolution on a topic of relevance to their country. Students then caucus among their fellow delegates in an attempt to reach a defined threshold of support for the inclusion of their resolution on the draft agenda. After this process is complete, a formatively assessed practice simulation of the General Committee of the General Assembly is held in which delegates debate and revise the ordering of resolutions on this draft agenda. The formative nature of this process also enhances student ownership of the simulation and allows delegates to determine the topics addressed at the formally assessed final simulation. Once the issues to be debated have been finalised, teaching staff offer detailed briefings on the specific subjects to be discussed, giving all students a baseline of knowledge from which to research and write about their countries' positions on the chosen issues and to prepare for debate.

The highlight of the module, a formal conference simulation, is held over an entire day, using the debating chamber of the Lincolnshire County Council. The position of chair is occupied by a member of the teaching team, with other staff members co-ordinating the activities of the Secretariat, observing student performance for assessment purposes, and facilitating the smooth running of proceedings. Several days after the simulation, students are invited to a debriefing session with teaching staff.

## Evaluating the Model United Nations: the student as producer approach

The decision to implement Model United Nations as an assessed module in the School of Social Sciences curriculum at Lincoln was taken before the introduction of the Student as Producer programme and was informed by broader moves towards research-engaged and student-led teaching and learning in the British higher education sector. It was not, therefore, subject to the formal Student as Producer validation requirements envisaged in the current institutional policy framework (University of Lincoln 2010: 10). It is therefore timely to consider the extent to which the Lincoln Model United Nations operates to embed the principles envisaged by the Student as Producer project and in what ways the experience of delivering this unique module may contribute to future iterations of teaching and learning policy at both institutional and national levels.

Such a project is simplified considerably by the clarity of the key features of the Student as Producer programme delineated by its authors. These are:

- Discovery: Student as Producer
- Technology in Teaching: Digital Scholarship
- Space and Spatiality: Learning Landscapes in Higher Education
- Assessment: Active Learners in Communities of Practice
- Research and Evaluation: Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
- Student Voice: Diversity, Difference and Dissensus
- Support for Research Based Learning through Expert Engagement with Information Resources
- Creating the Future: Employability, Enterprise, Beyond Employability, Postgraduate

(University of Lincoln, 2010: 10)

In each of these areas it is possible to discern clear synergies between the institutional objectives of the student as producer agenda and the learning outcomes envisaged by the co-ordinators of the Model United Nations module. These are explored in greater detail in the sections that follow.

## Discovery

Discovery is conceived of as a mode of teaching and learning that spans problem-, enquiry- and research-based learning. It envisages students working collaboratively to solve “challenging open-ended problems or scenarios” (University of Lincoln, 2010: 11) under the guidance of teaching staff who function as facilitators of student learning. It also recommends the integration of practical use of disciplinary research methodologies to address “authentic research problems in the public domain” (University of Lincoln, 2010: 11), again with support and instruction from both academic and library staff. In its blend of case-based instruction and investigation with aspects of problem-based learning (McIntosh 2001: 270), Model United Nations as an assessed module at the University of Lincoln provides a clear example of research-engaged teaching and learning where “students learn as researchers [and] the curriculum is largely designed around inquiry based and problem solving activities” (University of Lincoln 2010: 5). Model United Nations requires undergraduate students to obtain and produce knowledge (often of cultures, nations and issues unfamiliar to them) using engaging and innovative methods and provides them with experience of independent research.

Students are also encouraged to conduct research in ways that emulate, as closely as possible, the practice of academic and foreign policy professionals. Alongside library-based research, students have contacted foreign governments, made contact with diplomatic missions and interviewed diplomatic personnel, made use of non-governmental and intergovernmental organisations’ research findings, and in many cases have used the opportunity of travel abroad (whether personal or on university-organised study tours) to gather appropriate materials from overseas archives and sources.

Students are given skills in the management and evaluation of research sources through the assessment requirement of maintaining an indexed, annotated and comprehensive binder of research sources. This forms a valuable point of reference throughout the module and at the final simulation conference. It also serves as evidence of undergraduate research activity and engagement. Students draw on their research in crafting country- and issue- specific policy position papers, in preparing strategy, speeches and negotiation positions. This serves to link the craft of research to the practice of diplomacy and demonstrates its importance to students’ future professional careers.

## Technology in teaching

The student as producer agenda invokes a vision of digital scholarship, whereby information technology facilitates the teaching and learning process and shapes new intellectual relationships between teacher and student, and between students themselves. In this context, technology is an enabler of learning and performance. Information technology and audiovisual support are integral to the delivery of Model United Nations. Students are required to disseminate their research outputs (country profiles, position papers, etc) via the virtual learning environment for the module hosted on the Blackboard platform. This environment underpins the collaborative nature of the simulation, whereby each student's individual performance and contributions are vital to the overall success of the simulation and inform other students' participation. Students also use computer-mediated communication technologies such as threaded discussion boards, social networks and email for caucusing, negotiation and collaboration.

Teaching staff design the Blackboard site in order to encourage student participation. The site thus functions as an evidence base of student engagement and activity levels that can be taken into consideration in assessment. While virtual learning environments are a central complement to the simulation proceedings, they are not permitted to replace face-to-face contact, negotiation or debate. As with the real United Nations, human interaction is vital (Matthys and Klabbers 2004).

At the final simulation, audio and video of proceedings are recorded to a DVD for later playback and use in formal assessment and external examination procedures.

## Space and spatiality

One of the defining aspects of the student as producer model is its attention to the imbrication of teaching space and student experience. The model explicitly encourages staff to take the landscapes in which learning occurs into consideration in their planning and delivery of modules. Such concerns are familiar to the teaching staff of Model United Nations, who have identified the significance of space and spatiality to student experience and utilise a diverse range of venues in the delivery of this module.

The bulk of the module is delivered in a large, technology-enabled learning space. Significantly, this space was one of a number of teaching rooms in the university that were remodelled as new learning landscapes (University of Lincoln and DEGW 2009) and features open teaching space, collaborative table groups, facilities for small group work/brainstorming, as well as the usual range of conventional teaching tools (computer, projector, visualiser, etc). This space facilitates a high level of interactivity among students and staff.

The Student as Producer project documentation speaks of the desirability of using venues such as “the library and elsewhere on and off campus to deliver enhanced teaching experiences” and to “engage with the community outside of the campus” (University of Lincoln 2010: 12). For Model United Nations, important aspects of learning and student activity take place in the library and in computer laboratories. Most significantly, the module culminates in a formal conference simulation held using the debating chamber of the Lincolnshire County Council. The use of this formal, horseshoe-styled debating chamber adds immeasurably to the student experience (See Lincolnshire County Council 2010). Convening in such a venue contributes to the seriousness with which students approach the proceedings. The purpose-built debating chamber, equipped with microphones and large-screen closed circuit video projection of students as they address the chamber, facilitates discussion, negotiation and the efficient management of debate.

## Assessment

There are remarkable similarities between the guidance for assessment provided by the Student as Producer documentation and the assessment matrix adopted by the teaching staff for Model United Nations. The Student as Producer documents call for an approach to assessment that reflects the discovery mode of teaching and learning and which rewards research skills and outputs as well as creative problem solving. In the Model United Nations, assessment has been designed to evaluate and encourage the development of a range of skills and knowledge. The assessment matrix for the module comprises both formative and formal assessed components. Students produce documents (including written country profiles, draft resolutions and amendments to resolutions), give speeches, debate, negotiate and caucus throughout the semester and are provided with feedback in both group and one-on-one tutorial sessions. There are four components of formal assessment of candidates' performance: a formal written and researched country position paper (worth 25% of the overall grade); in-simulation participation (worth 35%); a collated, annotated and indexed binder of research sources (worth 25%); and a reflective essay in which the candidate is asked to link their experiences in the simulation to the theories and approaches studied in their degree programme (worth 15%).

The nature of the module necessitates consistent levels of student attendance and participation in comparison with many more conventional undergraduate modules. As a consequence, the authors have sought to ensure that assessment rewards and encourages continuous engagement and performance and completion of key tasks and stages throughout the module. The module also gives students some leeway in determining the subjects studied and the issues debated in the simulation. This emerges from the process of students researching their own country's politics and international priorities and negotiating with each other for these to be included on the simulation's agenda. A formative debate forum, simulating one of the United Nations' administrative committees, is built into the curriculum in order to facilitate this process. Staff members have noted how this engages student interest and encourages student ownership of the module. This fact exhibits a high degree of congruence with the student as producer model, which similarly calls for student participation in designing assessment and providing peer feedback.

## Research and evaluation

The Student as Producer programme calls for both curriculum development and learning styles to be developed in light of prevailing pedagogic research and to provide opportunities for students and staff to reflect on and disseminate their own teaching and learning experiences. Again, this is an area where the Lincoln Model United Nations has seemed to anticipate many of these preoccupations. Certain formative and formally assessed tasks provide students with the ability to research, reflect and engage critically with their experience as learners. The reflective essay component of the module encourages students to reflect on how their Model United Nations experience has illuminated or informed other materials they have studied in their degree. They are also encouraged to reflect on the skills they have acquired through participation. Participants are led to consider the extent to which the simulation and its outcomes reflect the 'reality' of diplomatic practice and United Nations procedure. Prior to the submission of this output, students are invited to a review session where they can share and discuss their experiences of the conference and the module.

Student feedback is collected at the end of the module and has been uniformly positive. In their feedback and evaluations, students have praised the module for developing their awareness of other cultures and countries, facilitating knowledge of the operation of international diplomacy and the work of the United Nations, and providing them with key vocational skills. In this, the experience of both teaching staff and students bears out the conclusions drawn from academic studies of the value of simulations in higher education teaching and learning (and international relations studies more specifically). Staff have used student

feedback to inform continual improvement of the module and its delivery (one example is the introduction of a practice simulation session prior to the assessed conference).

The Lincoln Model United Nations is unique in its position as an assessed part of the core curriculum. Teaching staff drew extensively on published pedagogic research on the value of simulations in the teaching and learning of higher education when developing the module. Staff have also been involved in the dissemination of their pedagogic experience through the sharing of best practice and the preparation of research outputs.

## Student voice

It is in the area of student voice that the similarities between the teaching model proposed by the Student as Producer programme and the nature of the Model United Nations programme might be seen to diverge and thus require careful reflection. The Student as Producer project places emphasis on amplifying students' voices and concerns and allowing greater levels of student input into the management and delivery of their own learning. Model United Nations, on the other hand, requires students to role-play, identifying, researching and representing established positions that in fact often diverge considerably from their own.

In addition, the formally assessed nature of the module, as well as the strict rules of debate and conduct in which international diplomacy is conducted, can derogate against providing students with excessive autonomy and influence over the module. Staff are continually involved in balancing the competing demands of providing an accurate simulation of international diplomacy and the need to ensure equitable opportunities for participation and assessed performance. However, while students may well be constrained by the demands of role-play and the requirements of the simulation itself, many of the issues that emerge for debate are clearly the product of students' own preoccupations and concerns (while still relevant in the simulation framework).

Simulation role-play encourages students to examine their own prejudices and positions more thoroughly and to draw on a wider range of research materials. The requirement to represent a nation other than their own also ensures that students examine unfamiliar viewpoints and develop empathy for alternative voices and perspectives. In this, students have the ability to enrich their understanding and that of their peers. The cross-cultural awareness gained and the training in diplomatic protocol, formal debating standards and the processes of an intergovernmental organisation requires students to encounter and engage with diversity and difference and to respectfully and productively dissent where appropriate. In this the module scaffolds the Student as Producer programme's concerns with developing new forms of citizen engagement.

The collaborative nature of the module means that each student's participation influences the success of the module. The absence of a particular country, or a disengaged delegate, has the clear potential to detract from the experience and performance of other delegates in terms of denying them information, documentation, vital allies and opponents and in limiting the range of voices and positions aired. Thus students see themselves as having a collegial responsibility to the student community to which the module is delivered. Such concerns also form part of the student as producer agenda, which calls for the development of environments in which "students might support the learning of other students".

## Support for research-based learning

Library staff are valorised in the Student as Producer documentation. Similarly, library staff are an integral part of the delivery of the Model United Nations module. They provide expert training in research on diplomatic affairs and in the use of the sprawling and complex United Nations research databases. They also provide key support to both students and staff in the identification of problem- and role-specific research information.

Much of this takes place in instructor-facilitated, research-focused laboratory/library sessions where students work collaboratively with teaching and library staff and each other (particularly in groupings of importance to the simulation) to identify, share, synthesise and absorb relevant research materials.

## Creating the future

One of the concerns of student as producer is to pay due regard to preparing the student for life after graduation. This spans inculcating broader graduate attributes as well as the provision of key vocational skills. It is clear that Model United Nations fulfils such a role. At the heart of the module is a far deeper concern with skills development than is usual in conventional undergraduate modules. Students develop skills in the areas of public speaking, the practice and rules of formal institutional/parliamentary debate, report writing, the presentation of organisational and/or institutional views and opinions, collaboration, negotiation and caucusing, research and problem-based enquiry.

It is worthy of note that many students use their Model United Nations research to scaffold other undergraduate research, such as in independent studies (BA Honours dissertations) and in other subject-specific modules such as Human Rights, War Crimes and Genocide, and Globalization and Developing Societies. The centrality of Model United Nations to the international relations programme has also helped inform and shape other co-curricular activities such as student trips to the headquarters of intergovernmental institutions including the International Monetary Fund, the European Union and the United Nations itself. Feedback also indicates that Model United Nations, and the skill-set it has fostered, features strongly in students' applications for graduate employment or postgraduate course enrolment.

## Evaluation frameworks: Model United Nations' contribution to the Student as Producer objectives

The Student as Producer programme may be evaluated at a range of levels: institutional, departmental, course/programme and module/unit. At the University of Lincoln, a comprehensive evaluation framework exists to provide criteria for measuring the success and contributions of the Student as Producer programme as it is rolled out on an institution-wide basis. The opportunity therefore exists to explore the extent to which the implementation and delivery of the Lincoln Model United Nations has contributed to meeting institutional objectives and entrenchment of the Student as Producer ideal. The discussion here naturally focuses on the desired objectives and projected longer-term impacts identified by the institution and those responsible for its embrace of Student as Producer.

The Student as Producer evaluation framework (University of Lincoln 2012) differentiates between internal and external institutional outcomes by which the project can be analysed. For instance, the framework calls for the measurement of tangible student research outputs, whether traditionally understood publications or student participation in academic conferences. The Model United Nations module's embrace of student research leading up to and including the day conference contributes to this objective. The conference provides students with a controlled space in which to demonstrate the breadth and quality of their research, analysis and preparation. Similarly, the range of extra-curricular Model United Nations conferences that exist at national, regional and global levels provide a strong platform which can be leveraged to showcase University of Lincoln student research capabilities and scholastic achievements.

Elsewhere, the internal objectives identified by the evaluation framework call for a changed relationship between students and staff and heightened levels of student engagement. Evidence from student feedback and module evaluation processes continually reveal that Model United Nations is a highlight of many students'

undergraduate careers. The module enjoys high degrees of student engagement due to its unique blend of diplomatic simulation, student research and staff-led teaching. Further, the fact that teaching staff also play roles in the simulation itself (as President of the General Assembly, Secretary-General, Secretariat members, other delegations, etc), means that students are required to form collaborative and interactive working relationships with teaching staff that are deeper and richer than is the normal in traditional lecture/seminar style undergraduate teaching and learning. This qualitative improvement in staff–student interaction has a beneficial impact on the delivery of concurrent and subsequent modules in the programme, encouraging the development of collegiate working relationships that bridge the gap between teacher and learner.

Model United Nations has also played a key role in contributing to many other internal institutional objectives. It forms a key feature of recruitment exercises and literature in the School of Social Sciences, providing a way of showcasing our embrace of the Student as Producer project and its unique curriculum to prospective undergraduates and their families. The explicit focus on issues of diplomacy, international affairs and transnational organisation, the module’s requirements for students to represent and understand countries, opinions and policies other than their own, together with the participation of students from a range of degree programmes, contributes to core objectives and desired graduate outcomes in the field of internationalisation. The high levels of student satisfaction in the module, evidenced in annual module evaluation surveys, have the potential to contribute to improved scores on national evaluation processes such as the National Student Survey.

On the external front, the fact that Model United Nations is delivered as an assessed core module provides a key way of differentiating the University of Lincoln’s social sciences programmes in general, and international relations programmes in particular, from those of its key competitors. Model United Nations as it is delivered at Lincoln is one of the very few worldwide that is offered as a taught and assessed undergraduate module, providing scope for the university to be recognised as a key national and international leader in the higher education sector. It offers a key point of distinctiveness for the university and the school to leverage in their public relations, marketing and branding exercises.

The involvement of local, national and transnational bodies in the definition and delivery of the programme indicate the extent to which the Model United Nations programme contributes to the Student as Producer project objective of having impact beyond the higher education sector. Our key partner in this regard is the Democratic Services section of Lincolnshire County Council. The council generously provides access to its debating chamber for the running of the simulation each year as part of its broader educational outreach and democratic services projects. Similarly, the range of materials utilised from bodies such as the United Nations Associations of the United Kingdom and the United States of America, as well as from the United Nations organisation itself, are testimony to the ways in which the Model United Nations project enables teaching staff to draw on teaching and learning materials from non-traditional sources well beyond the higher education sector.

The Student as Producer evaluation framework also looks forward to potential longer-term influences arising from adoption of this model. While Model United Nations has only been running for three years, some predictions in this area can be made. Certainly the Model United Nations has encouraged students to meet in small learning groups in various locales around the campus, including IT labs, library spaces and formal and informal learning landscapes. Information technology, especially on mobile platforms, plays a key role in supporting these learning groups and students move seamlessly between face-to-face interaction, group work, interaction on university-supplied virtual learning environments and engagement with each other in online social networks. These outcomes are envisioned by the Student as Producer project and it does not seem premature to point to the fact that Model United Nations has played a key role in bringing them into

existence. Similarly, many of the transformations in student attitude and experience predicted by the evaluation framework seem remarkably congruent with the experiences derived from the implementation of Model United Nations. The framework speaks of students being excited, stretched and engaged, all descriptions that apply to the students engaged in the Model United Nations module. Similarly, the framework speaks of encouraging the institution to develop unique, high-quality undergraduate teaching and learning, praised as best practise by regulators; comments that have been echoed by external examiners of the Model United Nations module.

## Conclusions

This institutional-level evaluation demonstrates the key values of the student as producer approach but also highlights the extent to which its successful delivery is dependent on institutional resourcing and infrastructure, collaborations with the wider community and the significant investments of staff time and enthusiasm in order to deliver innovative, research-engaged programmes. This latter point should not be taken lightly: staff involved in simulation-based teaching must be prepared to allocate significantly greater amounts of time and energy to the module than is the case in a traditionally conceived (lecture/seminar) module. This is particularly acute in the early stages of introducing and delivering such a module.

As a consequence of this, it may be appropriate and practical to align degree programmes rather than individual modules/units with the requirements of the Student as Producer programme or to take a longer-term view of the broader implementation of Student as Producer requirements. Not all modules can, or should, be delivered in the ways explored in this paper and not all modules will necessarily embed all of the principles of the Student as Producer framework. Students learn in a variety of ways and staff may be more or less comfortable with different delivery techniques (especially where these involve major reconceptualisations of the relationship between lecturer and student). It is important that degree programmes reflect and reward this diversity, providing space for research-informed teaching (more traditionally conceived) as well as the delivery of required disciplinary knowledge.

Change, however, may not be as dramatic as many might perceive it to be. As this paper has demonstrated, existing modules in a higher education context – especially those that have been introduced in the wake of the expansion of British higher education after 1992 and informed by new developments in pedagogic research – may already have high degrees of congruence with the outcomes and processes of Student as Producer. The Lincoln Model United Nations, while not explicitly conceived of as an exemplar of student as producer teaching and learning, nonetheless operates to successfully embed the principles of the model in the School of Social Sciences undergraduates programmes. It is therefore possible that many other existing modules at institutions implementing Student as Producer (or programmes similar to it) may well already reflect many of its priorities. The Student as Producer documentation provides a convenient diagnostic framework for evaluating existing programmes, many of which may only require minor modification in order to be brought into alignment. The framework also guides academic staff to consider many recent developments in pedagogic practice and the study of higher education when conceiving and delivering academic programmes.

However, the discussion here also indicates a number of areas which may require greater consideration in future revisions of the Student as Producer policy framework. Most obviously, Student as Producer might pay far closer attention to the pedagogic value and challenges inherent in delivery of simulation-based teaching and learning, which currently do not feature in the documentation or analysis. As has been shown, simulation and role-playing have significant educational value. They support the acquisition of skills and curricular content as well as embedding core skills of academic and future vocational relevance, including knowledge production,

research and analysis and collaboration. The existing documentation may therefore require an expansion of Student as Producer's existing notion of student voice in order to encompass the benefits of role-play in encouraging students to work in and represent unfamiliar paradigms, viewpoints and beliefs. The broader documentation may also wish to consider the value of simulation-based learning in providing a structure within which the Student as Producer goals may be realised.

Paralleling the introduction of Student as Producer has been a growth in awareness of the importance of internationalisation in higher education. The authors view internationalisation more broadly than simply a way of explaining the growing numbers of international students studying in the UK and justifying the attention paid to international student recruitment. Internationalisation encompasses the need to prepare undergraduates (irrespective of their degree or national origin) for a culturally diverse and globally oriented workplace and for a world marked by the encounter with difference and an increasing demand for cross-cultural communication skills. Model United Nations embeds internationalisation in this broader sense and encourages students to regard internationalisation and intercultural awareness as key personal attributes gained through their studies. While to some extent this is reflected in the Student as Producer programme's attention to employability and graduate attributes, the authors recommend that far greater emphasis be placed on the desirability of this broader notion of internationalisation throughout the various strands of Student as Producer. In a world where knowledge is produced and debated in global contexts, this has never been more relevant or necessary.

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