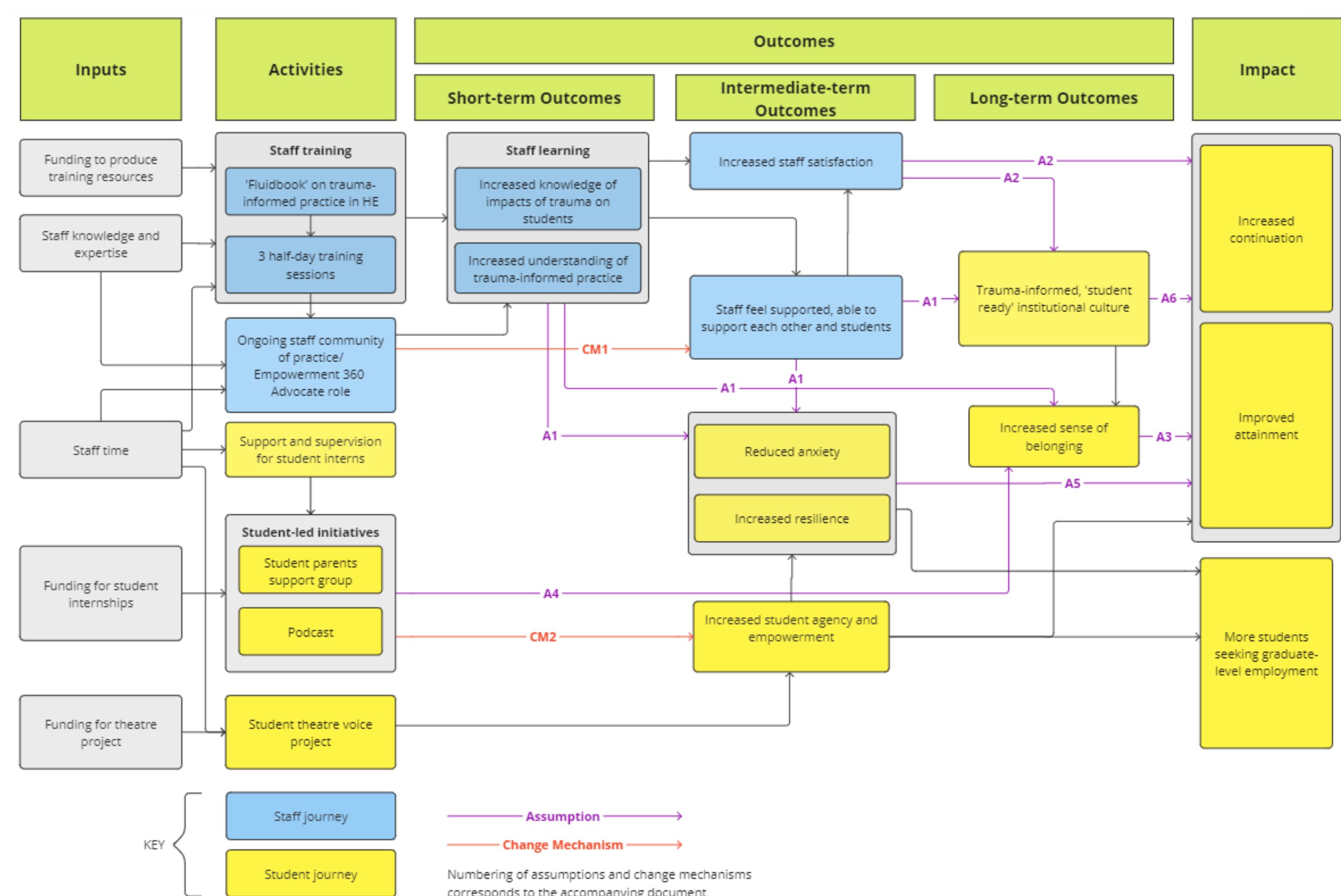


Working in partnership to evidence the impact of staff development and organisational change

Empowerment 360

Aims

Empowerment 360 is an institution-wide, student- and staff-led project to co-create a university environment in which students can flourish and succeed. It is based on principles of trauma-informed practice (e.g. Scottish Government, 2021), and informed by evidence that UEL students have a high incidence of adverse childhood experiences, which can impact negatively on projected confidence in completing their degrees (Davies et al., 2022).



Evaluation Strategy

Many elements of this project are directed at staff and organisational culture. Our planned evaluation of these involves:

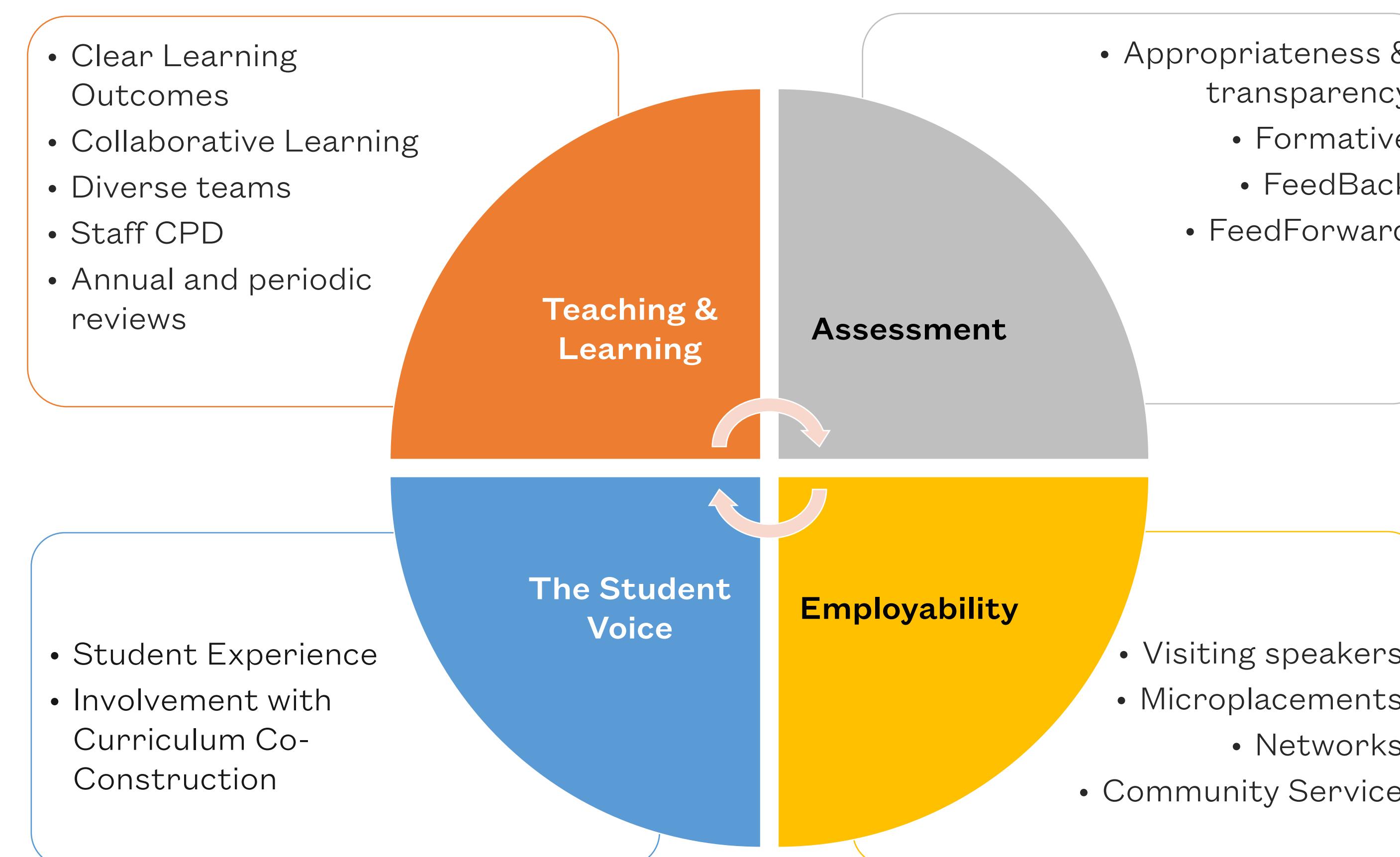
- Use of a validated staff survey tool, the ARTIC scale (Baker et al. 2016)
- Interviews with staff, exploring their application of trauma-informed principles and testing our ToC
- Comparison of student continuation and attainment according to the level of staff engagement with Empowerment 360 within a student's School, with a repeated cross-sectional design incorporating baseline data.

Inclusive Curriculum Review

Aims

Inclusive Curriculum Review is a staff and student-led project that aims to determine and address factors that may be impeding the inclusivity of academic curricula. It is based on rationale that a transparent and inclusive curriculum can lead to a reduction in progression, continuation and award gaps.

ICR is a bespoke instrument which is developed to support module review. It consists of a series of questions designed to probe four key aspects: teaching and learning, assessments, employability, and the student voice.



Evaluation Strategy

- In advance of the curriculum review and data collection process, training was provided to the curriculum review interns on inclusive teaching & learning and utilisation of the Inclusive Curriculum Framework and Tool.
- The ICR toolkit involves ongoing reflection as lecturers revisit and then change, adapt or re-evaluate an aspect of their module based on the framework content.
- Review findings and associated action plans were disseminated to academics at the EDI Away Day. The recommended changes are to be implemented once approved by the Dean, DEE, Quality Enhancement team and the Centre for Excellence in Learning & Teaching.

Challenges

- Where interventions do not engage with students directly, it is difficult to demonstrate impact on student outcomes. We have begun to investigate possible solutions involving analysis at School or module level, but some challenges remain.
- When implementing a 'bottom-up' initiative in a large, complex organisation, it can be challenging to achieve and sustain institution-wide change. For example, not all lecturers were initially open to using the ICR toolkit.
- The lack of a shared definition was identified as a potential barrier to changing practice, impacting on Schools being able to have 'difficult or challenging' EDI conversations with staff.

The Role of Partnership

Working in partnership has helped to address some of these challenges. Partnerships have taken various forms:

Staff with students:

- Partnerships between staff and student interns, informed by bell hooks' (1994) concept of 'engaged pedagogy', have shaped the direction of Empowerment 360 and made this a meaningfully co-created project.
- ICR: In terms of volunteering/ community placements, student placements were built into the Mental Wealth programme framework. It is flexible, and it is done in collaboration with staff. The toolkit is a reflective exercise where different aspects are explored in depth while others may be deemed irrelevant.

Staff with colleagues:

- Working relationships - often informal - between academic and professional services staff in different areas of the University have extended the reach and strengthened implementation of interventions.
- Strong relationships between academics leading and implementing the intervention, and professional services staff tasked with evaluating it, have helped us to develop an evaluation strategy for Empowerment 360 - though some challenges remain due to the nature of the initiative.

External partnership:

- Collaboration with TASO has strengthened the evaluation of Empowerment 360. With TASO's support, we developed an 'enhanced' Theory of Change, surfacing key assumptions and change mechanisms to be tested through evaluation.
- UEL has collaborated and partnered with other institutions to bring the Inclusive Curriculum Review toolkit to multiple universities.