

# WHAT DOES EMPATHY LOOK LIKE TO YOU? INVESTIGATING STUDENT AND STAFF OPINIONS

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Empathy is a key factor in successful human interaction. Many contemporary issues can be linked to a lack of ability for individuals to truly understand the perspectives of those that they interact with. In the context of teaching and learning, if teaching staff cannot truly understand the complex lives of their students, it is likely that students will be unable to reach their full potential and proceed into society as fully realised members of their respective communities (Levin et al., 2012; Robertson et al., 2015; Tudor, 1993). As such, any intervention that increases the ability of teaching staff to connect to the students, benefits not only the student but also the workforce they go on to contribute to (Haertel et al., 1981).

What is unknown, however, is how teaching staff perceive their role in this empathic relationship, especially in the sciences (chemistry, biology, physics, etc.). It is additionally unclear how these perceptions are affected by either subject area or the teaching staff's previous teaching and life experience. This project would seek to interview teaching staff across a range of disciplines in order to unpack their views around empathy and how best to employ it in their teaching practices. Large scale questionnaires undertaken with undergraduate students would allow a comparison between the perceptions of students with the teaching staff. Ideally, the results of this project would allow for a better understanding of how empathy can best be supported and embedded into the practices of teaching staff both within a university context but also into all teaching practices across society.

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