# Student engagement in the context of commuter students: Student experiences: Institutional perspectives

## Background

Liz Thomas Associates has been commissioned by The Student Engagement Partnership (<http://tsep.org.uk/>) to explore student engagement in the context of commuter students. This study recognises that ‘commuter students’, who live away from the university or college and travel to attend, may experience challenges in relation to their engagement beyond the classroom. It seeks to explore how these issues are experienced by students and institutions, and what can be done to improve engagement and student outcomes.

We are using a broad understanding of commuter students, including any undergraduate or postgraduate students who travel to their higher education provider from their parental or family home (which they lived in prior to entering higher education) rather than having re-located to live in student accommodation (or close to the HEP) for the purposes of studying.

We are also using a broad understanding of engagement including:

1. **Academic**: Engagement in their own learning.
2. **Enhancement**: Engagement in co-curricular and enhancement activities (including representation, curriculum design and leadership roles) which contribute to personal and professional development; and
3. **Social**: Engagement in formal and informal sport, social and leisure activities with HE peers.

As part of the study we are exploring student perspectives through semi-structured interviews conducted by student-peer-researchers, and now we are looking for your views and experiences.

## Your views, experiences and examples of practice

We invite staff in higher education institutions to provide their views about student engagement in the context of commuter students, whether you work in a students’ union, in an academic area or a central unit, and in any role, we would welcome your views – and examples of how you engage commuter students.

If you can contribute information about any of these issues below, please write in your answers and return to [liz@lizthomasassociates.co.uk](mailto:liz@lizthomasassociates.co.uk) by 8th April.

1. **Challenges**
   1. What are the challenges higher education providers (HEPs) – including students’ unions (SUs) face in relation to the engagement of commuter students? Please think about the three types of engagement identified above, and also about different types of commuter students.
   2. What evidence do you have relating to the issues identified above? Please tell us if this is based on your experience, analysis of institutional data, or surveys or other research you have undertaken with students.
2. **Responses and examples of practice**

We are looking for examples of how you are responding to the needs of commuter students to enable their engagement and improve their outcomes. We would like to use this examples as resources to share with the sector. The information supplied may be used as part of the final project report. You and your institution will named. If you do not wish to be included in the final report please do provide details here.

Title of initiative

Aim of the initiative

Student group (year/level of study, subject, other characteristics)

Type of engagement (academic, enhancement, social)

Description (500 words)

Intended benefits for students

Evidence of impact on engagement of commuter students

Evidence of impact other outcomes

Please supply the following information correctly as this is how it will appear in the final report:

Your name

Your email

Your institution

1. **Further guidance and resources**

What further guidance or resources would help you to improve the engagement of commuter students?

Thank you for your time. Please return this pro forma to Liz Thomas ([liz@lizthomasassociates.co.uk](mailto:liz@lizthomasassociates.co.uk)) by 8 April 2016.