

**Introduction**

As part of a collaborative enhancement project, funded by QAA on "Enhancing Assessment Literacy: Balancing staff expectations with students' effort and time" a student-staff partnership was created. Several students as partners were recruited during the duration of the project, embodying the student-staff partnership model that promotes shared responsibility and co-creation in learning (Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2014). This approach empowered students to contribute meaningfully towards the project's outputs relevance and accessibility. As Bovill (2020) highlights, such collaboration leverages diverse perspectives, leading to more inclusive and effective educational outcomes. In the midway point of the project 2 student-partners and the project lead engaged in an in depth core reflection in order to evaluate the partnership. The Onion Model of Reflection (Korthagen, 2022) is a structured framework that helps individuals deeply reflect on their roles, behaviours, and values by exploring seven interconnected layers (Figure 1); and supports teaching professionals in developing self-awareness and intentional practice by encouraging reflection on both external actions and internal drivers (Korthagen, 2022).

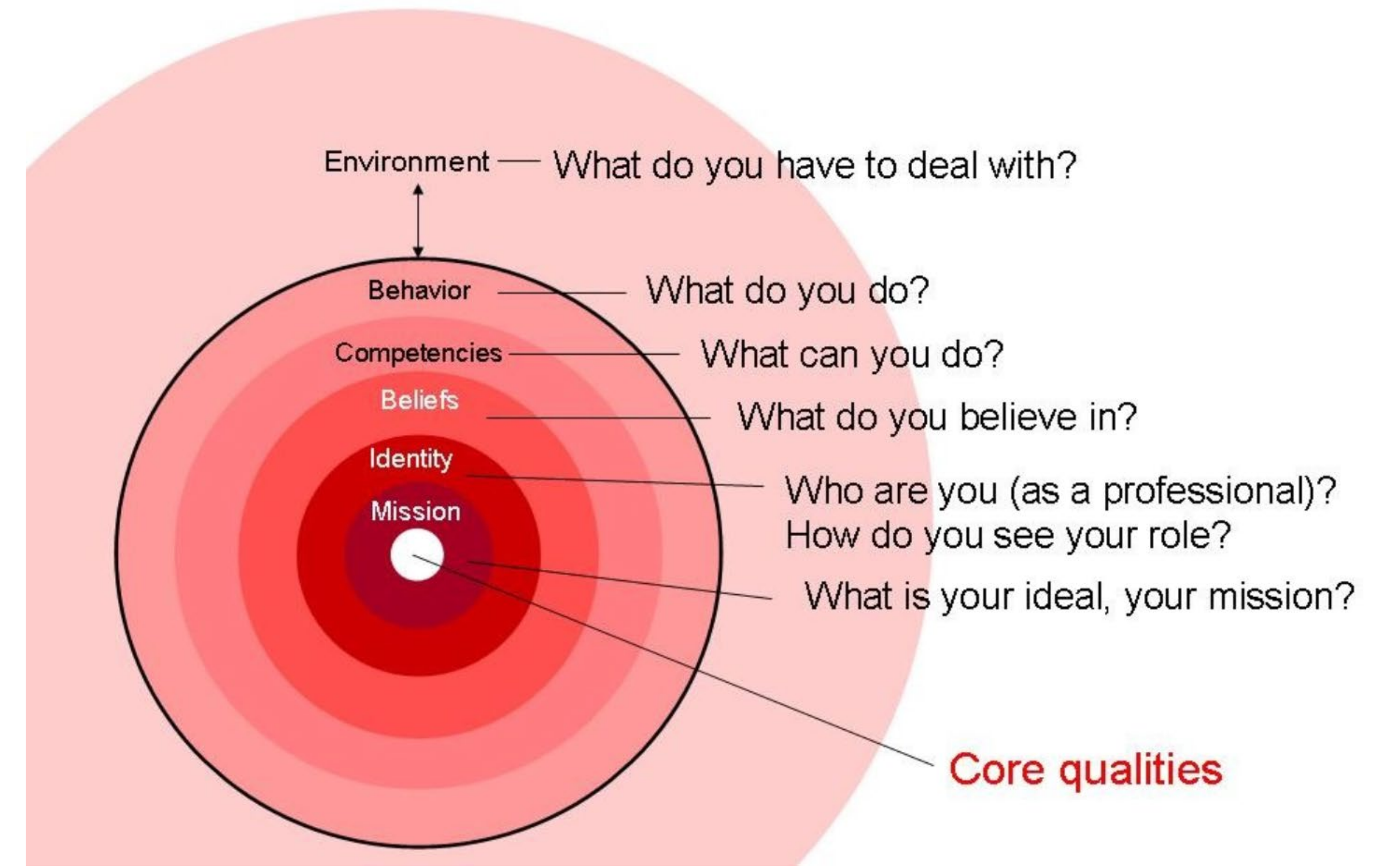


Figure 1: The onion model of reflection (Korthagen, 2025)

**THE REFLECTION PROCESS**

**STEP ONE**  
Individual writing

We started by individually writing reflections on our experiences during our partnership, using the Onion Model as a framework

**STEP TWO**  
Reflective Dialogue

We met several times to share and collectively discuss our individual reflections.

**STEP THREE**  
Reflection outcomes

A range of diverse and unique perspectives emerged, which helped us identify our professional and personal growth, and reveal our underlying ideals and core values

**STEP FOUR**  
Our Agreement

Our collaboration moving forward:

- Open, honest and timely communication
- Upholding equality through inclusive and respectful partnership
- Regular reflection opportunities

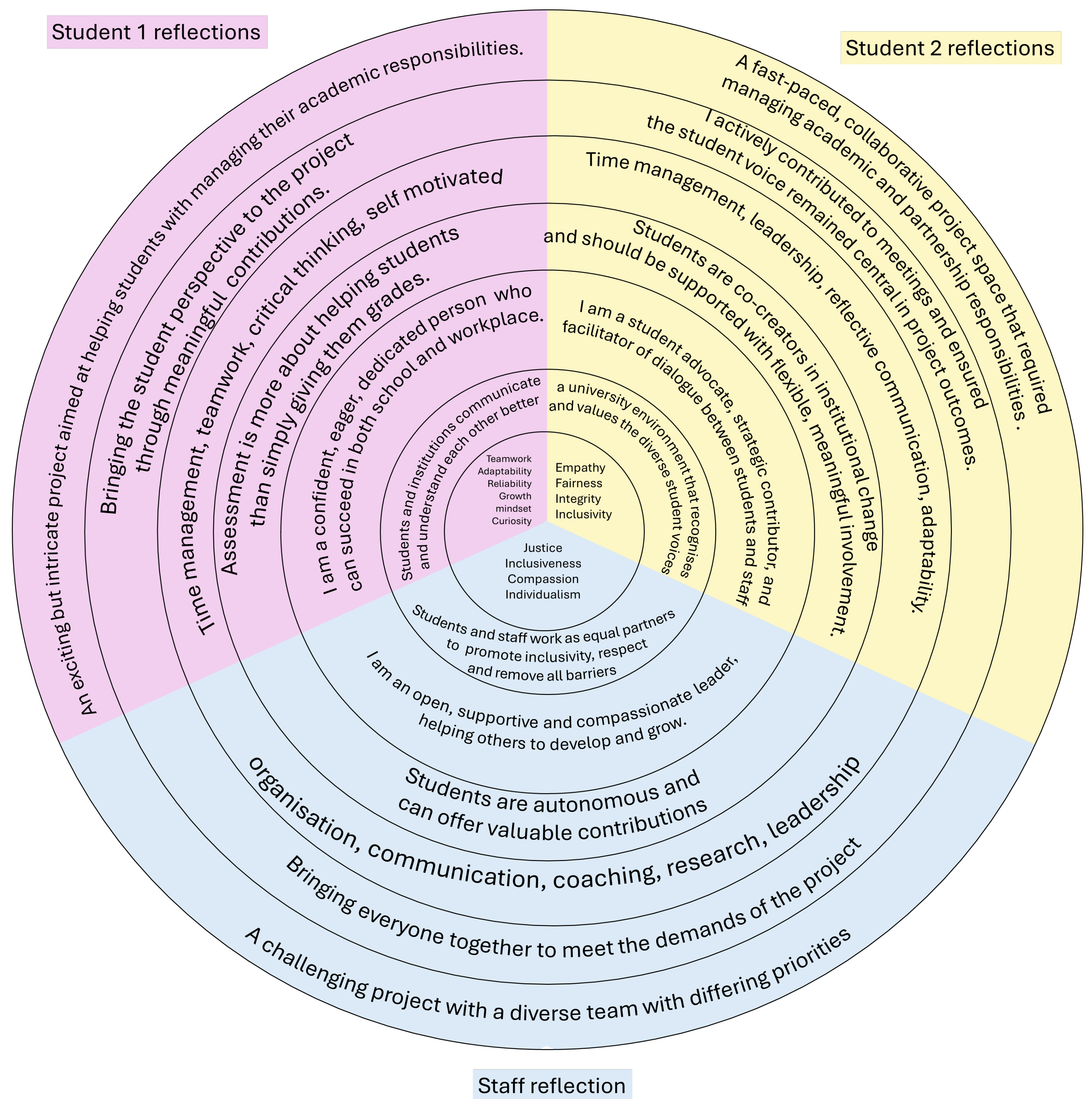


Figure 2: A summary of our reflections. The layers of the circle follow the onion model with the most external layer indicating the first layer (environment) and the most inner layer representing the core layer of the onion model (core values)

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, engaging with the core reflection model has helped both staff and student-partners to evaluate their personal and professional growth. Therefore, we would encourage colleagues and students in student-staff partnerships to maintain the principles of **relational pedagogy** (Hickey & Riddle, 2023) within the partnership by:

- **prioritising the people's needs** over project's output, when possible
- **Allocating sufficient time** for creating a safe environment, while building rapport for open and honest communication, which will enable realistic expectations for all parties.
- **Offering opportunities to pause** and reflect for evaluating the strengths of the partnership, celebrating successes and openly discussing challenges.

"Enhancing Assessment Literacy: Balancing staff expectations with students' effort and time" is a Collaborative Enhancement Project supported and funded by QAA membership. The project is led by Coventry University in partnership with Aston University, International University of Applied Sciences, Germany, University of the West of Scotland, and University of West London. Find out more about Collaborative Enhancement Projects on the [QAA website](#).

**References**

Bovill, C. (2020). Co-creation in learning and teaching: The case for a whole-class approach in higher education. *Higher Education*, 79(6), 1023–1037. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-019-00453-w>

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Hickey, A., & Riddle, S. (2023). Proposing a conceptual framework for relational pedagogy: pedagogical informality, interface, exchange and enactment. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 28(13), 3271–3285. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2023.2259906>

Korthagen, F., & Nuijten, E. (2022). Figure 5.1: The onion model . In *The Power of Reflection in Teacher Education and Professional Development: Strategies for In-Depth Teacher Learning*. Routledge. <https://korthagen.nl/en/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Figure-5.1.pdf>