

From Co-Creation to Student Leadership: Designing and Interpreting Academic-Style Roles within QMCUR

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QMCUR integrates undergraduates into research to initiate their development as emerging researchers. To strengthen operational capacity and Centre's output, four undergraduates were recruited into key leadership roles with academic titles. These roles are pedagogically designed to extend co-creation toward student leadership [1,2] through learner autonomy, role clarity, and structured responsibility, enabling meaningful contributions to the Centre's development.

Roles, Visions and Key Contributions

Role 1: Development & Engagement Lead (Umaiza Bhatti, 2nd Year Biomedical Engineering)

Vision: Designing structures that forge student researchers.

Key contributions: i) designed induction package, project logbook, opportunities tracker; ii) developed an academic module for managing complex delivery; iii) coordinated selection for conferences participation.

Role 2: Partnerships Convenor (Umer Asif, 2nd Year Aerospace Engineering)

Vision: Building bridges that enable student-led research collaborations.

Key contributions: i) partnership with University of Westminster on a collaborative student-led research, involving undergrads, Masters and PhD students; ii) set partnership for transnational projects.

Role 3: Publicity & Outreach Officer (Rafi Weston, 2nd Year Mechanical Engineering)

Vision: Amplifying Centre's visibility via disseminating students' achievements and engagement

Key contributions: i) leads publicity of student research outcomes in newsletters for QMCUR and SEMS websites; ii) leads targeted outreach on professional platforms; iii) relates with external bodies (i.e. Gradcracker).

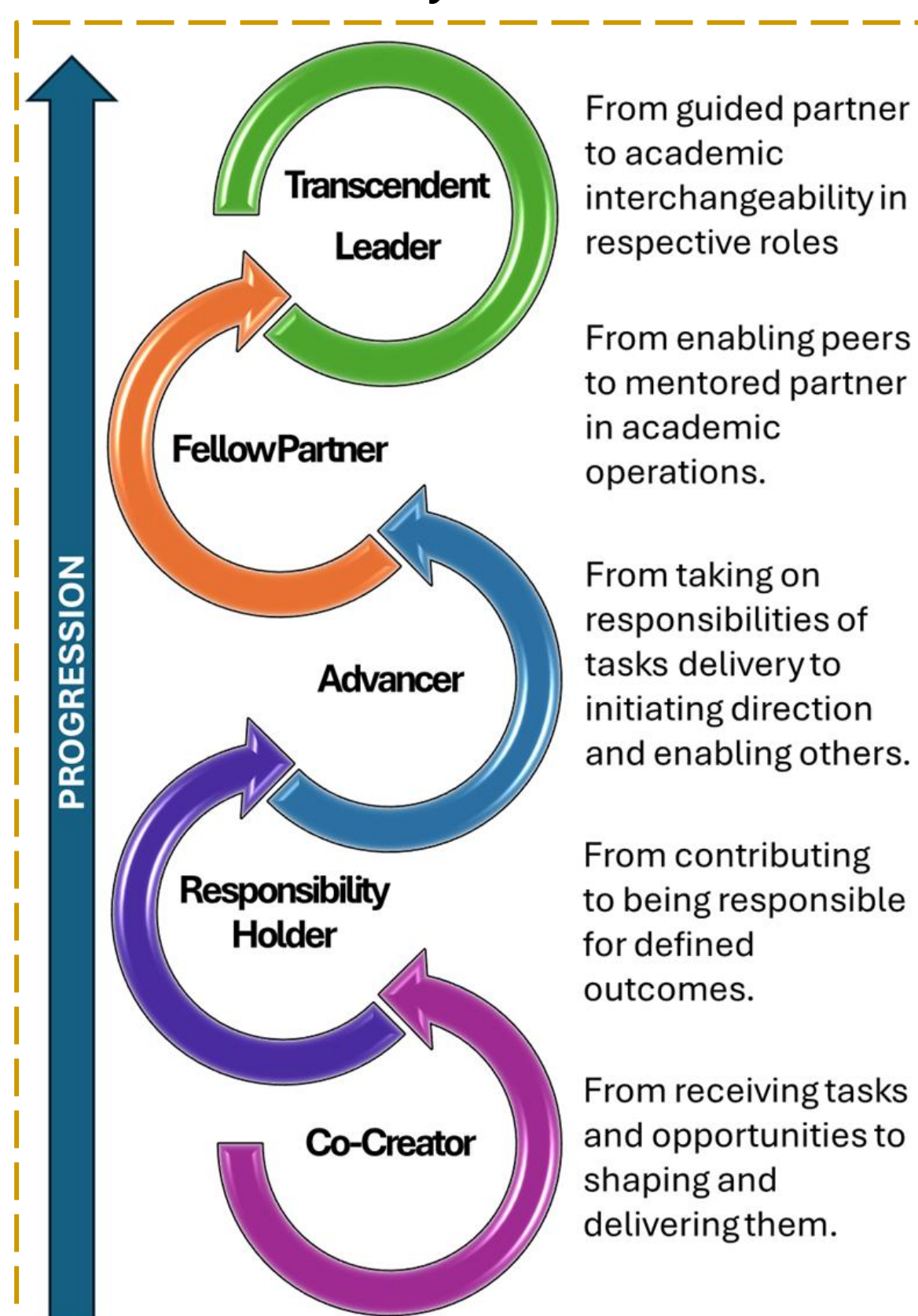
Role 4: Events & Logistics Planner (Marriyam Irfan, 1st Year Aerospace Engineering)

Vision: Showcasing undergraduate research to the wider world.

Key contributions: i) maintains an events calendar; ii) leads logistics for external conferences (submission and travel); iii) leads the organisation of major events such as ILF and the next BCUR held at QMUL.

The QMCUR C.R.A.F.T. Taxonomy

Reflections on designing and interpreting the above roles allowed identifying a taxonomy for student academic leadership: a progression from co-creation to structured responsibility, enabling, partnership, and indistinguishable leadership. The progression is facilitated by phenomenology and hermeneutics [3,4]; hence, the taxonomy assumes a non-linear, helicoidal character, to embed hermeneutical cycles [5], which can be pitched depending on effective roles interpretation, invested efforts and mentorship inputs.



Mapping the C.R.A.F.T. progression: self-assessment and pivotal moments

Stage	Role 1	Role 2	Role 3	Role 4
C	Early co-creations: induction package, project logbook, opportunity tracker.	Participated in conducting interviews for collaborative projects with UoW.	Supported peers in publicising their posters and research.	Co-created and maintained a calendar of events.
R	Coordinated selection and submission process for Posters in Brussels.	Coordinating and monitoring collaborative project with UoW as main point of contact.	Managed LinkedIn publicity and released periodical spotlights.	Lead logistics for registration and travel to conferences. Breakeven for hosting BCUR.
A	Acted as a reviewer and provided feedback on conferences submissions.	Selecting student profiles for students-led, transnational projects with NPU.	Created research spotlights to advance members' careers.	Updating students about events and deadlines.
F	Developed a module on Managing Complex Schedules and designed relative assessments.	Talents scouting for collaborative projects with partners that can produce output with minimal supervision.	Secured a Gradcracker page for student employability. Publicised QMCUR at an international meeting at Riga Technical University (Latvia).	Presented QMCUR at a T&E workshop (29 th Jan 2026, QMUL) to about 40 academics from various JAIs.
T	Built sustainable systems for future role-holders.	Expanding external network for forging new partnerships.	Shaped long-term society strategy in leadership meetings.	Met organizing committee of BCUR2026 from University of Glasgow to plan BCUR2027.

Mapping enables leadership progression through action, reflection, and reinterpretation, constructing leadership via participation and lived experience [6]. The current taxonomy excludes mentorship effects on progression and mentor's evolution through the process (future work).

References

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