

1.2.4. How university faces new challenges.

Stake-holders

While students and professors are the most visible, they are only two of the many stakeholders in higher education. Alumni, donors, parents, other institutions or providers, accrediting bodies, providers and suppliers, researchers, employers, taxpayers, NGOs, government and academic personnel, whether individually or collectively, are also important stakeholders. There are as well other organized groups and participants, such as trade unions and advocacy groups considered to be part of what influences university life and benefits of it (Marshall, 2018a).

Regardless of which category they fall into, the changes our society needs are made by people. In this chapter, we describe the main tasks that students, teachers, researchers, staff, employers and policymakers need to accomplish in order to bring about real change in university life.

To bring about meaningful change in education, each stakeholder must set clear and measurable goals. Students, teachers, researchers, staff, employers and policymakers need to work together to identify specific goals that can bring about meaningful and beneficial change. This target-setting process should be data-informed and evidence-based, using research and data to identify the most effective reform targets. It is important that all stakeholders are involved in the process to ensure that the goals of reform are realistic, achievable and beneficial to all stakeholders. Ultimately, this will significantly improve the quality of education.

Facing challenges in education requires the sustained efforts of all involved, from students and teachers to researchers, staff, employers and policymakers. Students and teachers need to work together to set and achieve clear goals, while researchers and staff should work to better understand learning dynamics and outcomes. Policymakers must work to drive positive reforms while adapting the system to the changing needs of students and teachers. Ultimately, a collaborative approach must be adopted, leveraging the collective expertise of all stakeholders to improve educational outcomes.

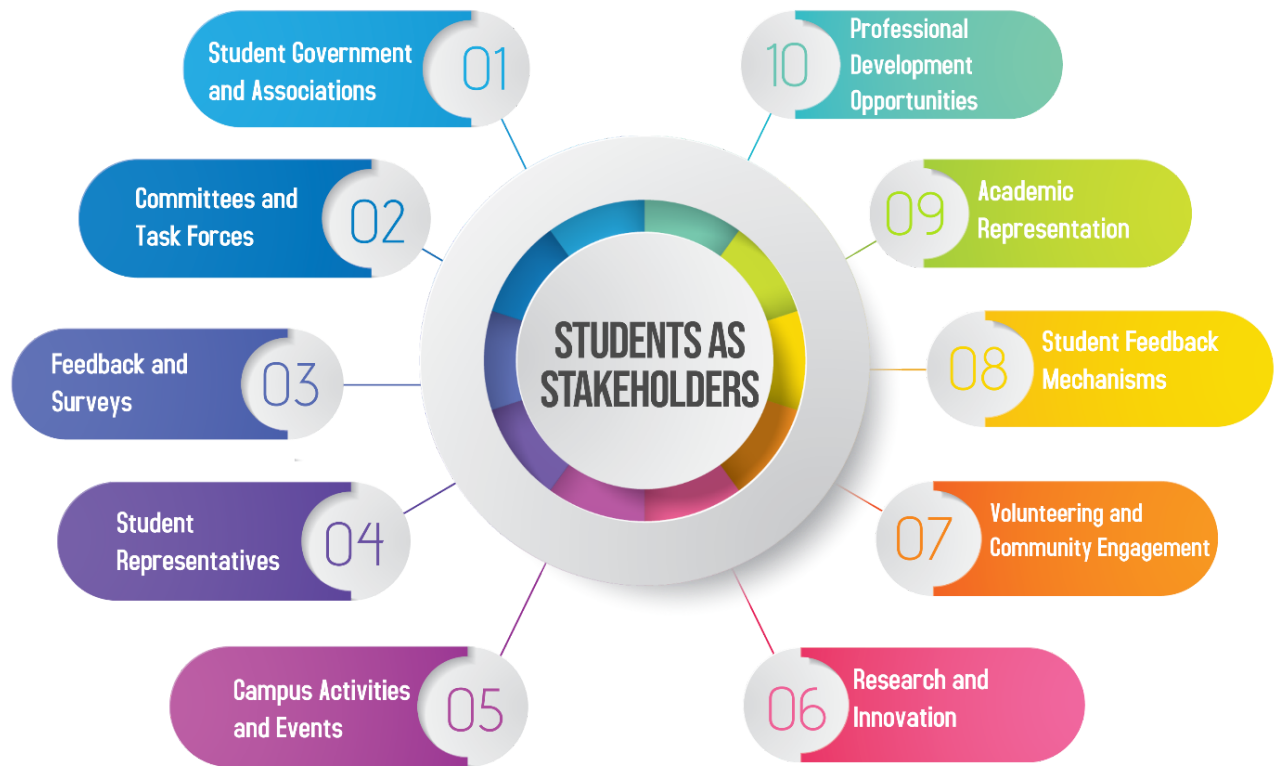
Each stakeholder can help university faces new challenges. In the next part we will illustrate how students, teachers, researchers, staff, employers and policymakers can engage in this process in the benefit of all.

Students

The best way for students to contribute in a helpful way is for them to participate actively in the learning process, seek out new opportunities for growth and development, and provide feedback to teachers and administrators.

Figure 1. presents how, at a macro level students can participate as stakeholders and help universities face new challenges (Cheng et al., 2021; Yin et al., 2021, Mainardes, 2012; Marshall, 2018b; Wagner et al., 2010)

Figure 1. Students as stakeholders in helping university face new challenges



- Getting involved in student government or associations that represent student interests and concerns. These organizations provide a platform for students to voice their opinions, organize events, and advocate for their needs.
- Joining committees and working groups set up by University management to work on or make decisions on specific topics. This may include committees focused on curriculum development, campus policy, diversity and inclusion, or sustainability initiatives. By participating in these groups, students can directly influence college decisions.
- Providing feedback to university management, faculty and staff through surveys, focus groups or public forums. Sharing experiences, concerns, and suggestions helps shape policies, programs, and services to better meet the needs of students.
- Serving as a student representative on faculty meetings, departmental committees, or advisory committees. These positions facilitate the expression of the views and interests of fellow students directly to decision makers.
- Participating in campus events, events and seminars organized by the university. This engagement provides an opportunity to network, foster relationships and socialize with faculty, staff and other students.
- Engaging in a university research project, innovation initiative or entrepreneurship initiative. This enables students to contribute to the advancement of knowledge and have a tangible

impact on the university community and beyond.

- Taking part in volunteer programs or community engagement initiatives facilitated by the university. This involvement demonstrates social responsibility and allows students to positively impact the local community.
- Advocating for the establishment or improvement of student feedback mechanisms within the university. Encourage the development of channels where students can express their concerns, provide suggestions, or report issues.
- Participating in academic committees and boards that oversee curriculum development, assessment methods, and academic policies. Contribute to discussions on how to enhance the quality of education and ensure the curriculum aligns with student needs.
- Take advantage of professional development programs, career fairs, and networking events provided by the university. This helps students gain valuable skills, explore career paths, and establish connections with potential employers.

The micro level of participation is also important when talking about students as stakeholders with the indirect focus to help universities face new challenges (Baik et al., 2019; Jones et al., 2021; Tough, 2006). Every day, every interaction is an opportunity to participate in this direction. Students can help by engaging in class discussions and by being an active participant in classroom discussions by asking questions, sharing ideas, and contributing to the conversation. This demonstrates genuine interest and helps for a better understanding on all subject matters. Also, by taking initiative or taking responsibility for one's own learning, by actively seeking out resources and opportunities for growth. Looking for additional readings, online courses, workshops, or seminars related to their field of interest. Explore different perspectives and ideas to broaden understanding.

Setting goals and establishing specific learning goals is another micro action that students can take in order to indirectly, but significantly contribute to bringing freshness into university's perspective that will further help facing challenges to come. Identify areas to improve in and create a plan to achieve goals.

Getting used to collaborating with peers, is another way. Engaging in group projects, study groups, or peer learning sessions. Collaborating with classmates allows to learn from one another, share ideas, and gain different perspectives. Also, taking time to reflect on what is learned and how it relates to one's own experiences and future goals. Regularly review notes, summarize key points, and consider how can what is learned apply in real-life situations.

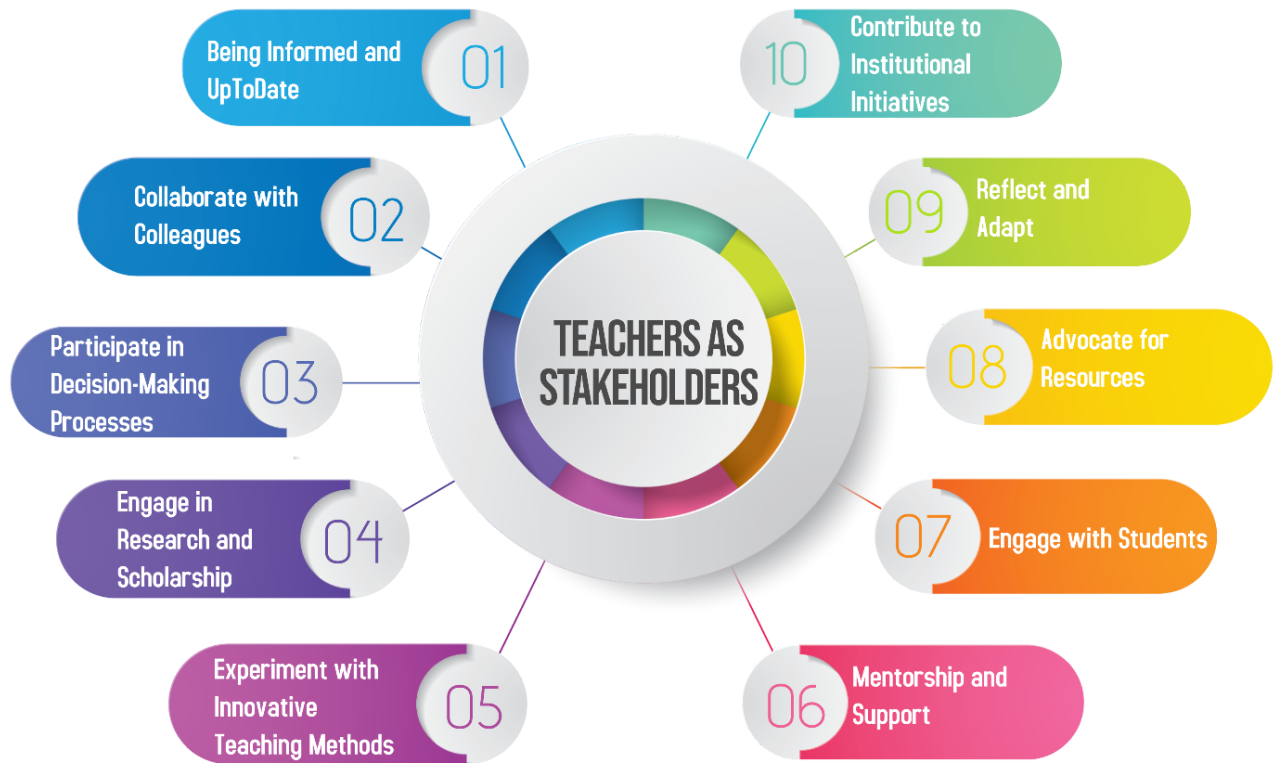
Students can actively seek feedback from teachers and administrators. Ask for clarification when needed and take advantage of office hours or extra help sessions. This shows dedication to understanding the material and willingness to improve. Providing constructive feedback if there are suggestions or feedback regarding the teaching methods or course content, communicate it respectfully and constructively to teachers or administrators. Sharing insights can contribute to improvements in the learning experience for oneself and others.

Students may be the first ones to embrace challenges. Being willing to step outside comfort zone and embrace challenging tasks or assignments. Pushing to overcome difficulties helps foster growth and development. Also, students can be the ones cultivating a growth mindset that views challenges as opportunities for growth and believes in the ability to improve. Embrace mistakes as learning experiences and use them as stepping stones to success.

Teachers

Obviously participating as stakeholders and with direct and subtle participation, teachers can help universities face the new challenges by continuously update their knowledge and skills, implement evidence-based teaching practices, and foster a positive learning environment that supports student success (Aleixo et al., 2018; Leal Filho, Shiel, et al., 2019; Leal Filho, Skanavis, et al., 2019; Lozano et al., 2015; Pereira et al., 2020; Sharma et al., 2023).

Figure 2. Teachers as stakeholders in helping university face new challenges



If they want to help the university keeping thing on a good track, teachers need to stay updated on emerging trends, developments, and challenges in higher education. They need to really engage in professional development activities, attend conferences, and read relevant literature to stay informed about the changing landscape.

Foster collaboration and communication with fellow teachers and faculty members is a must. Engage in discussions, share insights, and collaborate on innovative approaches to address challenges collectively. Teachers nowadays need to seek opportunities to participate in decision-making processes at the department, program, or university level. Offer input and perspectives on policies, curriculum development, and institutional strategies that address new challenges.

Conducting research and contributing to the scholarship of teaching and learning is also presented as mandatory. Explore pedagogical approaches, assessment methods, and curriculum design that address emerging challenges and promote effective teaching and learning practices. In this process, embracing innovative teaching methods and technologies that can help address

new challenges. Explore blended learning, flipped classrooms, online learning platforms, and other tools to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes.

Teachers need to open up and offer mentorship and support to colleagues, especially early-career teachers. Share experiences, insights, and strategies to help navigate the challenges they may face. Also, foster meaningful relationships with students by actively engaging with them inside and outside the classroom. Encouraging open dialogue, provide feedback, and create opportunities for student input in the learning process.

Without getting tired, teachers need to advocate for necessary resources, such as funding, technology, and professional development opportunities, that can support teachers in addressing new challenges effectively. Regularly reflect on teaching practices, assess student feedback, and adapt instructional strategies to meet evolving needs. Embracing a growth mindset and be willing to adapt and improve teaching approaches as necessary.

In order for teachers to contribute to institutional initiatives that aim to address new challenges, they need to participate in task forces, committees, or working groups focused on specific areas such as digital transformation, student support services, or diversity and inclusion.

Researchers

Researchers carry on a more prestigious impact on understanding the process and augmenting decision in the university life. They conduct rigorous studies to identify effective education policies and practices, and disseminate their findings to educators and policy makers.

Educational research has become an increasingly valuable educational asset. By understanding the past, present, and future of educational practices, institutions, and policies, researchers gain insight into the most effective and beneficial strategies for student success. Through in-depth research, education practitioners are able to identify and implement the most effective methods of teaching, assessing and supporting students of all ages. For example, research has shown that technology-based instruction can be used to personalize the learning experience for students and help them grasp difficult concept. Additionally, research on effective classroom management techniques can be beneficial in helping teachers create and maintain a positive learning environment in the classroom. Ultimately, research in the field of education can lead to meaningful changes in the way that students learn and achieve their goals.

Penuel and Fishman (2007) argue that implementation is a critical part of the research process and must be addressed through effective strategies. They recommend that the strategy should include a comprehensive action plan that considers all necessary elements, including resources and human resources, required to implement the plan.

In addition, they stress the importance of setting clear actions, goals, objectives and expectations for intervention, as well as setting timelines and monitoring the progress. Furthermore, they suggest that all stakeholders should be aware of the possibility of resistance to change and be prepared to address these issues to ensure successful implementation. In conclusion, Penuel and Fishman believe that it is important to evaluate the research results and use the results as a basis for future research and implementation. The authors stress that successful implementation

requires a thoughtful and well-designed strategy that takes into account all potential issues and concerns.

Figure 3. Researchers as stakeholders in helping university face new challenges



Researchers can undertake research projects that address the emerging challenges faced by universities. Focus on areas such as educational technology, pedagogical innovations, organizational change, student success, diversity and inclusion, or sustainability. They can generate evidence-based insights and recommendations to inform decision-making and policy development.

This is not possible without collaborating with university administrators and leaders to identify research needs and areas where research can support strategic initiatives (Leal Filho, Skanavis, et al., 2019). Engaging in discussions, provide input, and aligning research efforts with the university's priorities. Also, fostering collaborations with colleagues across disciplines and departments to tackle complex challenges. Establishing interdisciplinary research teams to bring together diverse perspectives and expertise.

Taking an active role in securing external funding by contributing to grant proposals that address pressing challenges is a must if researchers want to help. Engage in collaborative grant writing efforts and leverage research networks to access funding opportunities. Researchers need to disseminate research outputs to relevant stakeholders, including university administrators, policymakers, and practitioners, to inform evidence-based decision-making.

Engaging with practitioners within and beyond the university to bridge the gap between research and practice, will keep the researchers grounded. Collaborate with faculty, staff, and

administrators to apply research findings and develop practical strategies for addressing challenges.

Engaging with policymakers and advocate for evidence-based policies and practices that address emerging challenges in higher education is a challenge for researchers. But participating in policy forums, contribute to policy briefs, and engage in discussions to influence decision-making at the institutional and governmental levels is almost mandatory if they keep the intention to help (Lozano et al., 2015).

Staff members

The staff of the university is also a key stakeholder. They directly benefit from the fact that a university is adapting to changes and overcoming challenges. The key point regarding them is actually to make all staff members be aware of their role in the process.

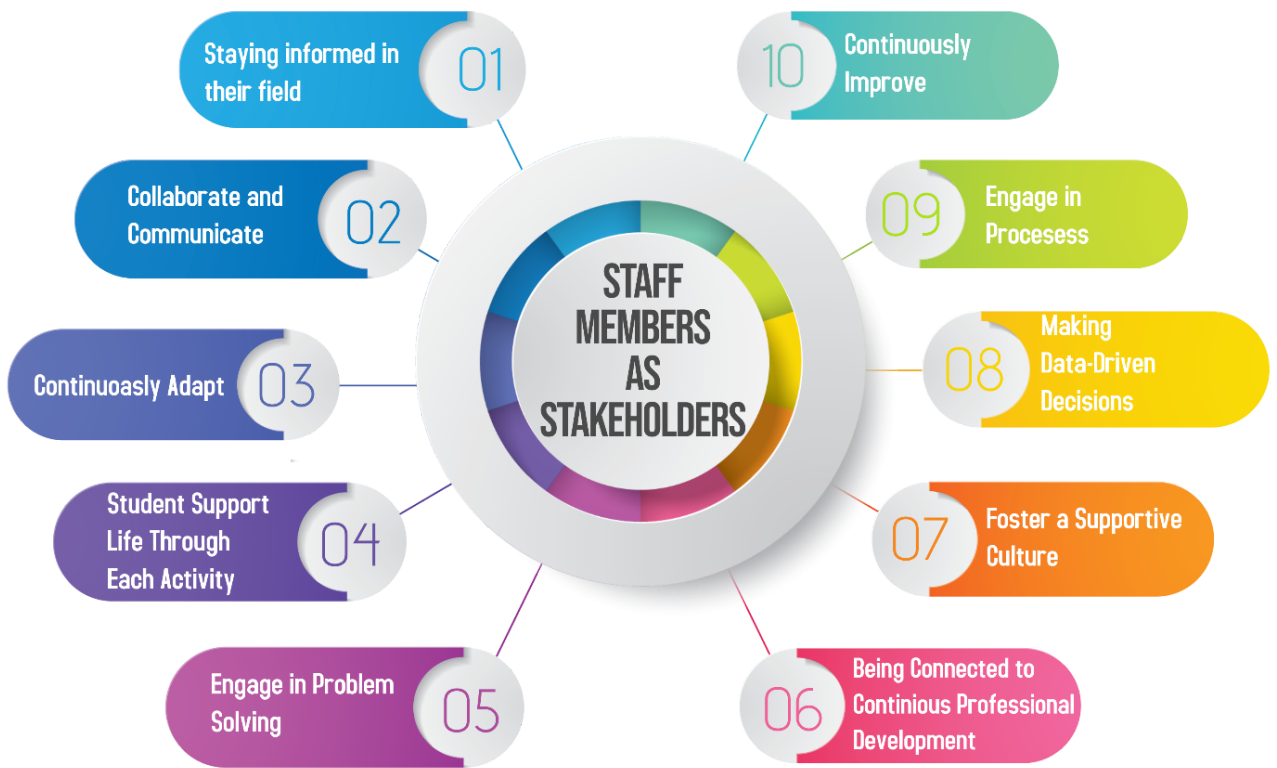
Here are four main ways staff members can contribute (Chapman et al., 2014; Gappa et al., 2007; Glazer et al., 2019; Jongbloed et al., 2008; Lane, 2011; Pedro et al., 2020; Ramalho Luz et al., 2018; Singh & Gupta, 2015):

- Staff members should stay informed about the latest developments and trends in higher education. They can actively participate in professional development events, attend conferences, and participate in seminars related to their area of expertise. This will help them gain knowledge and insights that they can apply when tackling new challenges. Effective communication and collaboration are critical in times of change. Employees should encourage open communication with colleagues, administrators and students.
- Universities face challenges such as technological advances, changing student demographics or evolving teaching methods. Staff should be open to new technologies, innovative teaching methods, and management practices to enhance the overall learning experience. You can actively participate in pilot projects or programs to test and implement new approaches. Staff who interact directly with students, tutors and support services play a vital role in helping students overcome challenges. They can provide students with advice, resources and guidance to help with academic, personal or financial difficulties.
- Employees should be actively involved in problem solving activities. They can contribute by sharing expertise, conducting research, or participating in working groups or committees working on specific challenges. Collaborative problem solving can help find creative solutions and foster a sense of ownership and engagement among employees.
- Employees can actively participate in data collection, analysis, and reporting. By collecting and analyzing relevant data, they can provide university administrations with valuable insights for informed decision-making. This data-driven approach can help identify emerging challenges and develop evidence-based strategies to address them.

In general, Universities should invest in the professional development of their staff. By offering training programs, workshops and seminars on relevant topics, employees can acquire the skills and knowledge needed to deal effectively with new challenges.

Figure 4 illustrates five ways for staff members to be actively involved in the university life, helping it face challenges.

Figure 4. Staff members as stakeholders in helping university face new challenges



Employers

Employers can play a key role in helping universities meet new challenges. Employers can partner and collaborate with universities to address specific challenges (Leisyte & Westerheijden, 2014). These could be joint research projects, internship and co-op programmes, industry advisory boards or mentorship programmes. By actively engaging with universities, employers can contribute their expertise, resources and real-world insights to help address the challenges facing their institutions.

By being actively involved in the development of courses and programs, employers can help universities to the changing needs of the labor market. They can provide advice on the skills and competencies required in different industries and offer placements, apprenticeships or traineeships. By working closely with universities, employers can help bridge the gap between academia and industry and ensure graduates are well prepared for the job market (Coll et al., 2002; Kinash et al., 2017).

Employers can provide professional development opportunities for university faculty and staff. This can include workshops, workshops or conferences on industry trends, new technologies or best practices. By sharing knowledge and providing training, employers can enhance the skills and expertise of university staff and help them better meet new challenges (Leisyte & Westerheijden, 2014).

Employers can support the university's research and innovation activities (Barrie, 2004). This may include funding research projects, providing access to industry data or facilities, or collaborating on applied research. By investing in research, employers can contribute to the advancement of knowledge and support universities in overcoming complex challenges with innovative solutions.

Providing feedback and assessment on graduate readiness and skills is an important feedback employers can offer to universities. This can help universities assess the relevance of their courses and make necessary adjustments to meet industry needs (Barnett, 2009; Boud, 2000). Employers can actively participate in advisory committees or provide feedback through surveys or interviews to ensure that the university's educational offerings are aligned with market needs.

Employers can actively participate in campus recruiting activities, attending job fairs or career events. You can offer internships, co-op positions or work opportunities for students and graduates (Bai, 2006). By building strong recruitment and placement pipelines, employers can help students make a successful transition from academia to the workplace.

Also, employers may join or establish industry advisory committees at the university. These institutions provide a platform for employers to share insights, consult and collaborate with university administrators, faculty and staff.

Policy makers

Policymakers have the power to shape the environment in which universities operate. Here is how (Avci et al., 2016; Hayduk, 2022; Patatas et al., 2020; Turner et al., 2017):

- providing funding,
- developing flexible regulations,
- fostering partnerships,
- ensuring curriculum relevance,
- encouraging innovation,
- addressing accessibility and affordability,
- collecting data,
- ensuring quality assurance and
- supporting lifelong learning

Policymakers can allocate appropriate funds and resources to universities. Increased funding could help universities invest in infrastructure, technology, research, faculty development and student support services. By providing adequate resources, policymakers can enable universities to respond effectively to new challenges (Hayduk, 2022).

Policymakers can create a regulatory environment that allows universities to adapt to new challenges and introduce innovation. They can review and modify existing regulations to increase flexibility and responsiveness, and enable universities to introduce new teaching methods, develop interdisciplinary projects or engage in collaborative research programmes.

This category of stakeholders can encourage partnerships and collaboration among universities, industry, and other stakeholders (Avci et al., 2016). You can create policies that encourage universities to work with business, government agencies and community organizations to

address challenges. Such partnerships can provide opportunities for applied research, experiential learning and knowledge sharing.

Policymakers can work with universities to ensure that curricula remain relevant to the changing needs of society and the labor market. You can establish mechanisms for ongoing dialogue among policymakers, industry representatives and university faculty to identify new skills and areas of knowledge (Turner et al., 2017). This collaboration can help shape course development and ensure graduates have the skills they need. Also, policymakers can develop incentives and funding programs to encourage universities to embrace innovation and address new challenges. These incentives may include research and development grants, funding for interdisciplinary programs or recognition for innovative teaching practices. By fostering a culture of innovation, policymakers can inspire universities to respond proactively to emerging challenges.

Policymakers can support the collection and analysis of higher education-related data. This may include gathering information on research findings, employment rates, graduation rates and demographic trends. With access to accurate and comprehensive data, policymakers can make informed decisions and develop policies to address the specific challenges universities face.

Establishing quality assurance mechanisms is an important task for policy makers in order to ensure the excellence and integrity of higher education institutions. These mechanisms may include accreditation processes, program reviews, and institutional reviews. By maintaining high standards, policymakers can foster accountability and trust in education systems, which are critical in the face of new challenges (Moraru, 2012).

Policymakers can promote lifelong learning programs and programs that encourage individuals to upskill and reskill throughout their careers. You can support the University in providing flexible study options, online education and professional development opportunities for those already in work. By prioritizing lifelong learning, policymakers can help universities adapt to the changing needs of the workforce and encourage continuous learning.

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