



Heeding the Student Voice

Introduction to sparqs

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Who are we?



- **Student Participation in Quality Scotland**
- 10 staff in Edinburgh and Inverness
- Works with all institutions(19 universities and 26? Colleges) and students' associations.
- Led by a Steering Committee formed by all sector agencies
- www.sparqs.ac.uk

Our **Vision** is of:



Students making a positive and rewarding difference to their own and others' educational experience, helping shape the nature of learning and contributing to the overall success of Scotland's universities and colleges.



To make this **Vision** a reality our **Mission** is to



Ensure students are able to engage as partners in all levels of assurance and enhancement activities including:

- Commenting on and shaping their own learning experience.
- Taking an active part in formal student engagement mechanisms, including quality processes and strategic decision making.
- Shaping the development of the student experience at national level.



Student Engagement - not a new thing



- 1986 – NUS produced first class rep training pack.
- 1990's – professionalisation of student academic representative function.
- Mid 1990's – enterprise in Higher Education project led to more staff development and further focus on training.
- 1994 – Student Union reform – need to strengthen the case for what we do
- 1996 – 30 SU staff supporting educational representation
- 2002 – Quality Enhancement Framework – student engagement a key pillar.
- 2003 – sparqs.



Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework



- Enhancement Led Institutional review.
- Institutional Led Subject review.
- Student Engagement.
- Enhancement themes.
- Public Information.

Underpinned by academic infrastructure which includes subject benchmarks, codes of practice and external examiners plus external quality measures, e.g. professional accreditation.



Student Engagement



- A good institution works to increase student engagement – part of the judgement.
- Formal role in external process – student reviewer.
- Training for class reps and membership of committees (mapping report).
- Cultural Change – Learning from ELIR, raising the bar, advocating student engagement, Student Engagement Framework, Celebration Reports.



ELIR - 2004



'The University and the Students'
Representative Council might want to
reflect on how they could most
effectively work together to help
sustain a partnership that actively
contributes to the development of a
policy for the enhancement of student
learning'



ELIR 2010



` Partnership(with the SRC) has delivered significant developments in policies and provision. All of which contribute positively to the student learning experience'



Colleges

- sparqs worked from inception with colleges
- 2007 - joint approach to quality
- 'How well are learners engaged in enhancing their own learning and the work and life of the college?'



2010 external evaluation – college sector



'The most notable signs of improvement were observed in the area of learner engagement.....All research interviewees were highly supportive of the concept of learner engagement and usually committed to ensuring the learner voice is central to decision making'



Our Work

- Support Students
- Support Institutions
- Support Nationally
- Develop a Culture



Building Blocks for Student Involvement in Quality Assurance

Informed voice

Recognition and reward

Training and support

External monitoring

Feedback mechanisms

Opportunities to participate in review

Effective representative structures

Development and sharing of practice

Joint commitment and understanding

Opportunities to participate in decision making

Equal access to evaluative and management information

Impacts



- 3000 student reps trained each year
- Culture change
- Students influence local and national policies and developments
- Student Engagement Framework



Just Scotland?

- UK level - QAA quality code – student engagement chapter, funding for English unit, student reviewers
- Europe – European Standards and Guidelines require SE, in institutional quality processes, in external review, in governance/ direction of agency and methods – QUEST for quality for students

