



Student Involvement in Quality Enhancement at National and Institutional Levels in Scotland

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what is sparqs?

- established in 2003 to support student involvement in quality enhancement processes in higher education institutions & vocational education and training colleges
 - **supporting students**: through training of student representatives;
 - **supporting students' associations**: through assisting them to become more effective in representing all students' opinions
 - **supporting institutions**: to involve students more effectively in their quality processes
- full-time staff of 6.5 supported by team of 14 student trainers who are employed and paid to deliver training to student representatives





student involvement: an overview

Institutional Level

- membership of key committees
- involvement in key processes
- staff-student liaison committees at departmental/programme level
- use of surveys and focus groups
- use of student representatives and heavy involvement from students' association

National Level

- guidance on student involvement from Scottish Funding Council
- student reviewers in external institutional review (ELIR)
- longitudinal survey of graduates
- support for students, students' associations & institutions through a national body - sparqs





the scottish quality enhancement framework

- developed in 2002-03 as a new approach to quality, currently being reviewed
- development took place in **partnership** between:
 - Universities Scotland (national rectors' conference)
 - NUS Scotland (national union of students)
 - QAA Scotland (national quality assurance agency)
 - Scottish Funding Council (the funder, on behalf of government)
- current review (chaired by a student) is discussing 3 key principles of a quality system:
 - high quality learning
 - student engagement
 - quality culture





student engagement (draft)

- that colleges and universities support the development of students as co-creators of their learning who take responsibility for their own learning;
- that colleges and universities actively support, encourage and push students to become more active learners, more interested and engaged with their learning, and hungrier for more learning throughout their lives;
- that institutions, particularly at course team level, engage with students to obtain feedback, perspectives and insights that will help them learn how to serve their students better in the future;
- that students are involved in decision-making about their curricula, teaching and learning, and all aspects of the student experience;
- that students are central to the college and university sectors' approaches to quality and quality enhancement.





student involvement: the institutional level (i)

- developing conception of partnership between students and institutions
- student membership of key institutional committees
 - governing bodies and their sub-committees
 - major (and minor) academic committees
- student involvement in key processes, for example:
 - internal subject reviews (programme accreditation)
 - academic appeals and complaints panels
 - appointment of senior staff





student involvement: the institutional level (ii)

■ student involvement in departmental & programme level committees

- students elect course representatives to attend meetings and feed back comments on their courses to staff
- students and staff come together in staff-student liaison committees to meet (usually at least one a term) to discuss learning and teaching issues
- some departments have students on their departmental committee alongside staff

■ additional mechanisms to collect student feedback:

- end of unit/programme questionnaires
- focus groups
- informal conversations & dealings with students



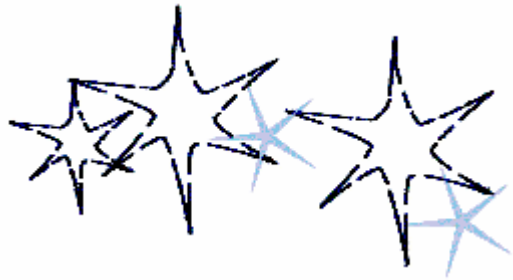


structure of students' associations

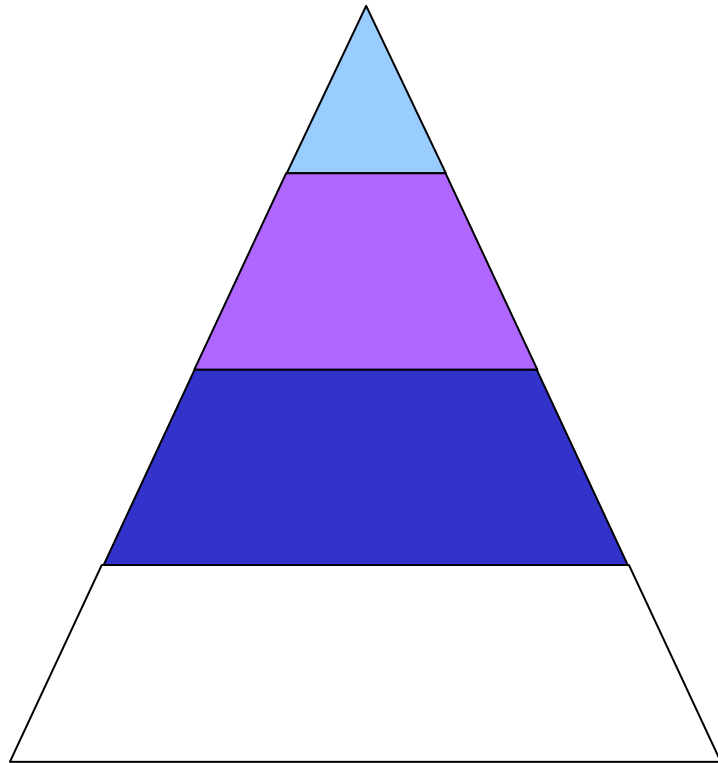
■ students' associations in Scotland have:

- a wide remit (academic representation, welfare services, volunteering, societies, sports clubs & bars)
- elected students form an executive committee who are trustees of the organisation
- 'sabbatical' presidents and vice-presidents who take a year out of studies and are paid a minimal salary
- permanent staff employed by the institution on the behalf of the students' association or by the students' association
- budgets provided by the institution for non-commercial activities
- automatic membership of the students' association unless students choose to opt-out





structure of students' associations



sabbaticals (and non sabbatical officers)
institutional committees and working groups

school/departmental representatives
school/departmental boards

course representatives
staff-student liaison committees

students
providers of feedback





student involvement: the national level (i)

■ guidance from the Scottish Funding Council

- students expected to be on key committees – institutions are expected to be clear as to why students should not be members
- students' feedback on their learning experience to be incorporated into all quality assurance/enhancement processes
- procedures to be reviewed between senior institutional staff and student representatives each year

■ student involvement with external institutional review

- students met with as part of the review
- students involved in the construction of institutional reflective analysis submitted as part of the review process
- student members of review panels (full members)





student involvement: the national level (ii)

- **longitudinal survey of the student learning experience**
 - “class of 2004” cohort of students leaving with qualifications
 - surveys undertaken in 2004, 2005, 2007 & 2009
 - provision of richer information than a “final destination survey”
 - new cohort “class of 2007” recently identified
- **sparqs (Student Participation in Quality Scotland)**
 - recognition of the existing work by students’ associations & institutions to involve students
 - desire to establish a national baseline in support for students
 - aim to share practice at effectively involving students





sparqs: a quick introduction

■ **work strand 1: embedding support for representatives**

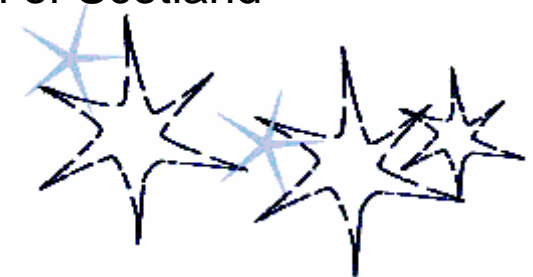
- core and end of year course representative training
- other training for student representatives
- support materials and resources
- staff workshops in both colleges and universities

■ **work strand 2: facilitating sector-level collaboration**

- briefings to student officers (HE officers & college student governors)
- support to staff on effective representative systems
- national conference on student involvement (April 2008)
- clearing house of information on student involvement

■ **work strand 3: supporting individual institutional agendas**

- pilot programme to support 20 institutions in the North of Scotland





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further information:

www.sparqs.ac.uk

