



Beyond "Diminishing Resources" - Quality Enhancement and Student Engagement

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**A TRADITION OF
INDEPENDENT
THINKING**



University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Policy Context

Student involvement in quality review processes has been an integral element of the ESG since 2005

HEA (2016) *"representation is just one strand of student engagement and not sufficient on its own"*


NStEP, launched in 2016 by QQI and Students Union of Ireland

"Student engagement in quality assurance is a fundamental cornerstone of the Irish higher education system. However, the quality of that engagement requires support for learners in discovering how they can engage most effectively with institutions"

(Dr Padraig Walsh at the launch of NStEP)



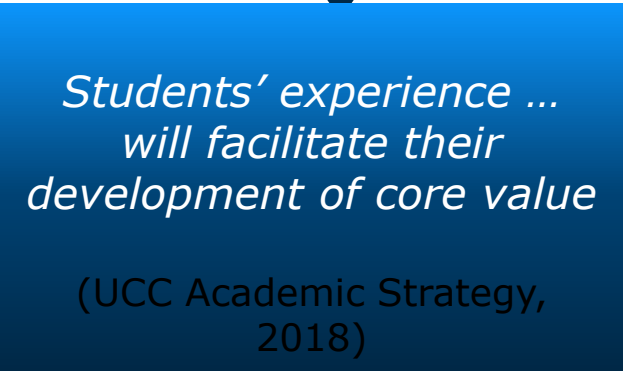
INDEPENDENT THINKING
SHARED AMBITION



*Deliver an outstanding,
student-centred
teaching and learning
experience with a
renewed, responsive
and research-led
curriculum at its core*
(UCC Strategic Plan, 2017)

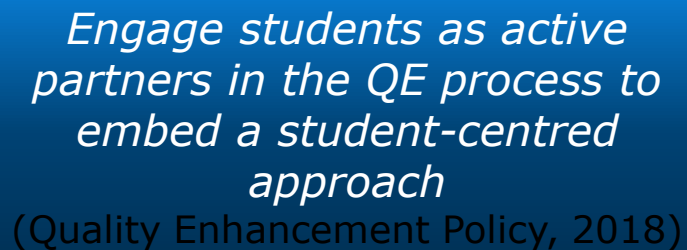


*We support our
students to
collaborate with us as
full partners in every
aspect of their
education to improve
our University*
(Student Engagement
Mapping, UCC, 2017)



*Students' experience ...
will facilitate their
development of core value*

(UCC Academic Strategy,
2018)



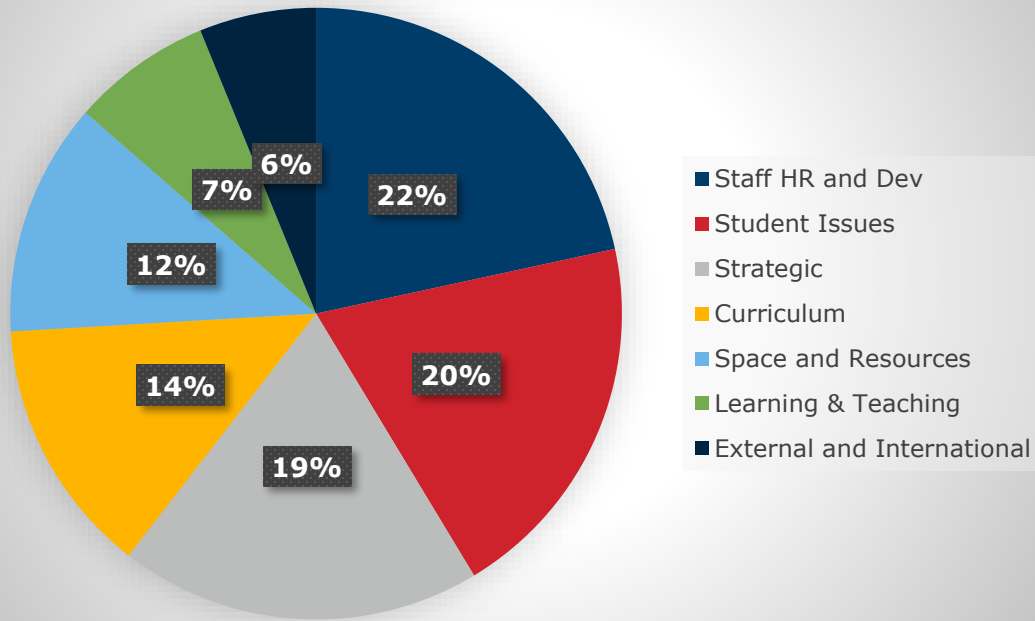
*Engage students as active
partners in the QE process to
embed a student-centred
approach*
(Quality Enhancement Policy, 2018)



Beyond “Diminishing Resources”

Panel Recommendations (Academic)

All Recommendations



Mean Score and Rank of Themes

Theme	Recommendations		
	No of Recs	Mean Score & Rank	
Strategic	31	2.4	1 st
Space and Resources	20	5	2 nd
Staff HR and Dev	35	6	3 rd
Curriculum	22	7.8	4 th
External and International	10	9.8	5 th
Student Issues	32	10.4	6 th
Learning & Teaching	12	12.2	7 th
Totals	162		

Student Reviewers at UCC

- 'Although there is evidence of some good practice...there is a lack of consistency both between and within institutions... and progressive practice is not always evident' (HEA, 2016)
- Students participating as full panel members in all quality reviews since 2015
- QEU works with the Students Union (particularly the Education Officer) to recruit student reviewers
- Students receive training prior to their participation
- Students are remunerated for their participation as reviewers
- Student participation is recognised by a micro-credential since 2018



EMBEDDING THE HEA PRINCIPLES OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

1. Democracy
2. Student as partner
3. Inclusivity and diversity
4. Transparency
5. Students as co-creators
6. Collegiality and parity of esteem
7. Professionalism and support
8. Feedback and feedback loop
9. Self-criticism and enhancement
10. Consistency

http://www.hea.ie/sites/default/files/principles_student_engagement_insert_final_web_version_0.pdf

The Student Reviewer consistently drew us back to the main enterprise – namely student learning
(Panel Chair)



The student reviewers brought valuable insights and perspectives on student issues ... The Panel commended the insightful contribution made by the student representatives to the review process."
(Panel Report)

What Panel Members said

Your student representative ... was well prepared, remained fully engaged throughout, contributed significantly, was appropriately measured and constructive. This is a really positive aspect of your process
(External Reviewer)



Graduate Attributes

The environment created during this review process nurtured my confidence and I will strive to create similar positive working environments in my future work ... I'm now attempting this in my clinical placements

Voices of Student Reviewers – Institutional Enhancement

Transparency
We see how the department deals with student issues or in some cases fails to deal with issues – how well the “shop” is run

Self-Criticism and Enhancement

Our University needs to look at the student experience from the higher level

Feedback and feedback loop

- More peer to peer engagement around reviews
- Increase meeting time between students and Panels
- Preparation for student reps meeting the Panels

Collegiality and parity of esteem
You get to meet with the President and have your views heard by other major stakeholders

Core Values

With this task also came moral responsibility ... maintaining integrity in the process and standing for the most common voice of students to the best of one's ability



Voices of Student Reviewers - Personal/Professional Development

Leadership

Having a chance to represent students at a higher level is rewarding, especially when you can make a difference to student life

Change

The challenges faced by students on a daily basis are very different to those of 20 years ago

Empowerment

It is an empowering opportunity to be given a chance to really contribute to decision-making

Confidence

I learnt to value my perspective and not hold back from asking questions or contributing in the best interests of students

Final reflections

- *"Engaging students as active partners in the quality enhancement process to embed a student-centred approach"*
- *'agentic possibility ("power") and agentic orientation ("will")' to make meaningful contributions'* (Klemenčič, 2015)
 - Training for student reviewers
 - Student focus groups
 - Peer to peer consultation and support
 - "Advertise how to get involved and what power you actually have"
- Students as partners?
- Students as co-creators?
- How do we measure the impact of student involvement in quality reviews?



References

- Higher Education Authority (HEA), (2016) *Enhancing Student Engagement in Decision-Making*. Dublin: HEA
- Klemenčič, M. (2015) 'Student involvement in quality enhancement' in J. Huisman et al. (eds), *The Handbook of Higher Education Policy and Governance*, (Palgrave Macmillan)
- Quality Qualifications Ireland (QQI), (2016) '*Quality in an Era of Diminishing Resources*': *Irish Higher Education 2008 – 15*, Dublin: QQI
- University College Cork (UCC), (2017) *Independent Thinking: Shared Ambition; Strategic Plan 2017 – 2022*
- University College Cork (UCC), (2018) *Mapping Student Engagement at UCC. Report to the University Management Team (Strategy)*

Questions

1. What are the key challenges in building student capacity as active and effective agents in the quality review process?
2. Is parity of esteem really possible between academic reviewers and student reviewers on quality review panels?
3. In relation to institutionally-based training for student reviewers - is there a danger of promoting hegemonic practices rather than facilitating a transformative process which enables students to, where relevant, challenge the "established orthodoxy"?

