



**HEA** | HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY  
AN tÚDARÁS um ARD-OIDEACHAS

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**Union of Students in Ireland**  
*Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn*

# Working Group on Student Engagement in Irish Higher Education Institutions

Consultation Document -  
Background Information

13 January 2016

# Table of Contents

Table of figures .....	ii
Authors and contributors .....	ii
Executive summary .....	iv
Introduction to project .....	1
1. Student engagement - the theory .....	3
1.1 Drivers of student engagement .....	10
1.2 Conceptual approach .....	22
2 Student Engagement - the practice .....	26
2.1 European context .....	26
2.2 Irish context .....	36
3.Principles of student engagement .....	48
Conclusions .....	52
Abbreviations .....	53
Appendix 1: Possible model for student engagement at seven levels of HEI governance: .....	54
Appendix 2: International models .....	65
Appendix 3: Extracts from relevant legislation .....	83

## Table of figures

Figure 1: Arnstein's ladder of participation (1969).....	13
Figure 2: A table from Learnervoice – a handbook from Futurelab (2006: 11) .....	14
Figure 3: Possible model of lines of communication within HEI.....	21
Figure 4: Seven governance and management levels offering opportunities for student engagement .....	22
Figure 5: M. Fielding, Evaluating the conditions for student voice .....	25

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The project to develop principles of student engagement has benefitted from the expertise of a number of specialists in the field. These include the contributors and organisers of the eleven focus groups held in three institutions in autumn 2015. Thanks also goes to the contributors to the focus group up USI affiliated Student Union presidents in April 2015.

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# **Executive summary**

## **Introduction**

In 2014, the Higher Education Authority (HEA) established a representative working group to explore best practice in relation to student engagement in higher education institutions and to propose a set of principles which would assist institutions in this area. The Working Group focused specifically on student engagement practices in relation to governance, management and pedagogy. The Working Group is chaired by Professor Tom Collins, and comprises of members from the Union of Students in Ireland (USI), the Irish Universities Association (IUA), the Institutes of Technology Ireland (IOTI), Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), and Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), with support from the HEA. The Working Group held six ordinary meetings during the period April to December 2015, with further meetings to be held before the launch of the principles in May 2016. The work of the Group has been informed by extensive desk research, focus group meetings, and consultation with the sector in Ireland and abroad.

This document is being circulated for consultation with all HEA designated institutions and USI National Council. The final phase of the consultation process will take place in April 2016, with a one-day workshop of student representatives and registrars to discuss and finalise the guidelines.

## **Theories of student engagement**

Student engagement is now understood to be a two-way process. While students are ultimately responsible for their own learning, and level of engagement, student

engagement is also dependent on institutional conditions, policies, and culture that enable and encourage students to get further involved. The concept of student engagement refers to student involvement in both institutional governance and the pedagogical process. It has been defined as:

The investment of time, effort and other relevant resources by both students and their institutions intended to optimise the student experience and enhance the learning outcomes and development of students, and the performance and reputation of the institution.<sup>1</sup>

Three strands of student engagement have been identified:

1. Student engagement in Individual Student Learning
2. Student engagement with Structure and Process
3. Student engagement with Identity.<sup>2</sup>

Student engagement practices within an institution can be underpinned by two sometimes competing, ideological positions. In the so called market model, engagement is based on neo-liberal thinking and identifies students as consumers. This model gives students the rights of the consumer, but also places them as outside users of the institution, as they purchase future 'more-educated' versions of themselves. In contrast, the developmental model is based on a constructivist concept of learning, and identifies students as partners in a learning community. Here, students have both the rights and the responsibilities of citizens. Through the

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<sup>1</sup> V. Trowler and P. Trowler, *Student engagement toolkit for leaders* (Leadership foundation for higher education and Higher Education Research and Evaluation, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> V. Trowler and P. Trowler, *Student engagement evidence summary* (York: Higher education Authority, 2010).

development of a learning community students contribute to the success of their institution as co-creators of their own learning.

## **Drivers of student engagement**

Institutions tend to be influenced by three drivers in creating a culture of engagement. The HEI should be perceived as a site of democratic citizenship, as a learning community, and as a critical institution where the input of all members is expected and valued.

### **The HEI as a site of democratic citizenship**

Higher education plays an important role in building and maintaining democratic culture and democratic institutions. It is the responsibility of both the institution, and the student union, to foster a sense of civic responsibility in the student body. The importance of the HEI as a site of democratic citizenship is even more evident now than it has been in previous decades. If students are to be perceived as citizens of a learning community, then notions of citizenship and democracy determine the nature of their engagement with that community.

### **The HEI as a learning community**

Klemenčič argues that if genuine, conscientious students' involvement is to exist, 'students need to feel a certain degree of 'loyalty', defined as a strong feeling of allegiance and attachment to one's university or indeed to a collectivity or group of people within that university'. If such loyalty is fostered, students can voluntarily

seek to improve structures within the institution for all students, present and future.<sup>3</sup>

## **The HEI as a critical institution**

Academic freedom is an essential principle of higher education institutions.<sup>4</sup> Academics and universities have traditionally prided themselves on their ability, and duty, to speak truth to power. However, within higher education institutions there is a power imbalance between the student and the lecturer. HEI institutions should ensure that all members are facilitated in offering open and constructive criticism in order to develop the institution and its members.

## **Student engagement in practice**

### **The European experience**

Student participation in higher education governance in Europe is the most developed in the world. European Ministers welcomed the role of students as, ‘competent, active and constructive partners’ in the Bologna Process, who should be treated as ‘full members of the higher education community’.<sup>5</sup> The European Student Union (ESU) is committed to the notion of students as partners. Student involvement in quality review processes has been an integral element of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG) since 2005.

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<sup>3</sup> See also Carey, ‘Student engagement in university decision-making’, p. 149.

<sup>4</sup> Universities Act 1997, IoT Act 2006, DIT Act 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Communiqué of the meeting of European Ministers in charge of Higher education in Prague on May 19th 2001, <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/X2H-Xref-ViewHTML.asp?FileID=10237&lang=en> accessed 9 Dec. 2015.



## **Student engagement in Ireland**

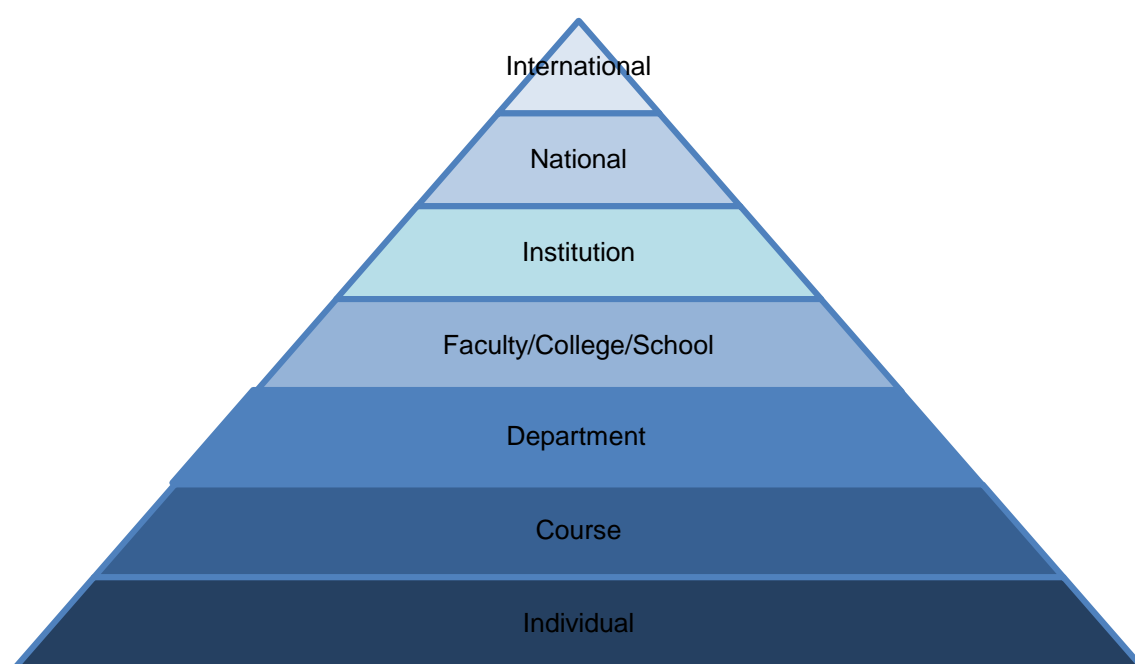
Student engagement in the management and governance of the higher education system in Ireland is reasonably similar to other European jurisdictions, and student representation is expected at institution-level governing bodies. The requirements for student representation in the governance structures of institutions in Ireland under the Universities Act, Institutes of Technology Acts and DIT Acts are being met. However, while student representation on governing authorities and academic councils is essential, it is not sufficient in developing a culture of engagement. Committee membership does not necessarily equate to high levels of engagement. Due to shorter terms of office, as well as other factors, student representatives may need additional training if they are to contribute fully to these committees. The role of the chair is also essential in facilitating the student contribution.

Representation is just one strand of student engagement, and not sufficient on its own, if there is to be a culture of engagement. Both formal and informal mechanisms, as well as 'parity of esteem' between student representatives, and staff are extremely important. There is a lack of consistency between, and within, higher education institutions Ireland in relation to the nature of student engagement. Progressive practices are not always evident. There is however evidence of some good practice in relation to student engagement in Irish HEIs, and the student-as-partner model is generally preferred. Ireland is one of six countries to have developed a national survey on student engagement. The Irish Survey of Student engagement (ISSE) engagement is managed as a collaborative partnership between the HEA, IOTI, IUA and the USI. This survey was first run on a pilot basis in 2013, and is now taken by

first and final year undergraduate students and postgraduate students in taught postgraduate programmes.

## Models of student engagement

Students in Ireland can engage with the pedagogy, governance and culture of their institution at seven different levels.



*Figure 1: Seven governance and management levels offering opportunities for student engagement*

Smaller institutions do not always have a faculty level between the institution and departmental level, while the largest could have an additional 'School' layer between faculty and departmental levels. Engagement at each level can be informal or formal. Opportunities can be provided at each level for student engagement to take the form of 'student voice', where students can give their opinion, but they must rely on others to take on board their views, and 'student in decision making roles', where students are

directly involved as change agents and partners within the system. It is essential that when 'student voice' mechanisms are used that the 'feedback loop' is closed to allow students to know how they have brought about change. Both forms of engagement can be valuable, and one or other might be more appropriate at certain times.

## **Principles of student engagement**

To assist institutions in developing a culture of engagement in the three spheres of teaching, quality enhancement and governance structures. Leadership is required by both student and institution leaders to develop a shared vision of empowerment for all members of the learning community. They are proposed within a conviction that institutional leadership – including senior management and student unions – are the *sine qua non* of an active and welcoming approach to student engagement and that they will enhance the good practices already in place in Irish institutions.

- 1. Democracy:** The institution and student union will adhere to democratic principles, and will encourage these principles in their staff and student bodies, and in wider society. It is important that both staff and students are engaged in their institution.
- 2. Student as partner:** The implications of perceiving students as partners, rather than as consumers are substantial and deep. Students being viewed, and viewing themselves, as partners is key in moving beyond legal compliance to embed a culture of engagement throughout the institution.
- 3. Inclusivity and diversity:** Institutions will actively seek to gain insights and contributions for all sectors of the academic community in their governance and

decision-making processes. This will go beyond the formal legislative requirements, to provide myriad of formal and informal engagement opportunities. Representative structures alone do not provide of themselves for inclusiveness. As institutions become more socially and culturally diverse, student unions will work to ensure that the diverse nature of the student population is represented among executive officers. Committee membership should be gender-balanced, and reflect a range of student backgrounds. The start and end dates of students' terms of office will be taken into account.

- 4. Transparency:** Institutions will be transparent in the life-cycle of their decision-making processes, while student unions will be transparent in their internal lines of governance, and in the relationship between elected officers and permanent staff. They will ensure that suitable measures are in place to facilitate knowledge transfer from year to year.
  
- 5. Students as co-creators:** Students have responsibility for their own learning. Irish HEIs will embrace innovative learning techniques which incorporate the student as creator of their own learning.
  
- 6. Collegiality and parity of esteem:** In light of encroaching consumerism in higher education internationally, Irish HEIs and student unions will enhance collegiality between staff and students across the institution. This will involve informal engagement practices at a local level within institutions. Central to collegiality is the development of an open and trustful relationship between individual staff and students within the institution. Student representatives should have a good working relationship with their equivalent staff member (e.g. student department representative and head of department). Institutions and student unions are

responsible for ensuring that such a communicative relationship exists, and may need to provide a database of staff and student representatives, or specific training for staff and students.

**7. Professionalism and support:** Students and their representatives will contribute fully and act in a professional manner when they are involved in the structures and processes of the HEI. This professionalism is the joint responsibility of the institution and student union, and all responsibility cannot be placed on the individual student. The institution will recognise that staff and student members on committees may have different life experiences and areas of expertise. Students should be provided with extra supports to ensure that they are able to contribute fully in formal and engagement practices. Different students (for example full- and part-time students) may have differing requirements if they are to contribute fully, and should be accommodated accordingly. Training will also be arranged as required for committee chairs and other staff to facilitate to assist them in facilitating meaningful engagement.

**8. Feedback and feedback loop:** Institutions will welcome and encourage open and prompt feedback from students. Suitable measures will be put in place across the institution to ensure that students are facilitated in providing feedback on modules and the institution in a safe and valued manner. Feedback practices will be transparent and the feedback loop will be closed in a timely fashion.

**9. Self-criticism and enhancement:** Student unions and institutions will continue to be self-critical of their student engagement practices, they will use evidence-based techniques to assess the value of various initiatives towards the aim of

building a culture of engagement, and will continuously work together to enhance the above principles.

**10. Consistency of values:** Institutions and student unions will ensure that consistent values are in place across the institution, and may put procedures in place to allow departments to share good practice measures.

## **Introduction to project**

In 2014, the Higher Education Authority (HEA) established a Working Group to explore best practice in relation to student engagement in higher education and to propose a set of principles which would assist institutions in this area. The Working Group focused specifically on student engagement practices in relation to governance, management and pedagogy. The Working Group was chaired by Professor Tom Collins, and comprised of members from the Union of Students (USI) in Ireland, the Irish Universities Association (IUA), the Institutes of Technology Ireland (IOTI), Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), and Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), with support from the HEA.

## **Programme of work**

The Working Group has held six ordinary meetings during the period April to December 2015, with further meetings to be held before the launch of the principles in May 2016. The Group has been informed by both international research (including site visits to further interrogate the models developed by Student Partnership in Quality Scotland (sparqs) and Birmingham City University (BCU)) and consultation with the sector in Ireland.

In April 2015, for instance, a focus group was held with all student union presidents who are members of USI. Further meetings were held with the presidents of University College Dublin (UCD) and University of Limerick (UL) student unions, as they are not members of USI.

To capture the breath of experiences and practices within the Irish higher education system the group conducted three full day site visits at three institutions in Ireland. Four focus groups were held at each institution to gain the opinions of members of senior management, quality and administration, teaching staff, students and their representatives. Students, teaching staff, and management, were invited to separate sessions in an effort to ensure that all could feel free to speak openly. The meetings were conducted anonymously with the understanding that no individual or institution would be identified in the future activity of the Working Group.

The present document is being circulated to all academic councils, and USI's National Council, and feedback arising from that consultation process will be incorporated into the final report.

The final stage of the consultation process will take place in April 2016, when an international expert on student engagement will be invited to speak at a one-day workshop of student representatives and registrars as they discuss and finalise the principles drafted below.

The final principles will be launched in May 2016.



# 1. Student engagement - the theory

Trowler and Trowler define student engagement as:

the investment of time, effort and other relevant resources by both students and their institutions intended to optimise the student experience and enhance the learning outcomes and development of students, and the performance and reputation of the institution.<sup>6</sup>

The concept, as is clear from the above definition, refers to student involvement in both institutional governance and the pedagogical process.

Student engagement with all aspects of HEI life is now understood to be a two-way process. Students need both 'the agentic possibility (*"power"*) and agentic orientation (*"will"*)' to make meaningful contributions'.<sup>7</sup> While students are ultimately responsible for their own learning and level of engagement, student engagement is also dependent on institutions and staff generating conditions, policies, and culture that enable and encourage students to get further involved.<sup>8</sup>

Three strands of student engagement may be identified:

1. 'Student engagement in Individual Student Learning'

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<sup>6</sup> V. Trowler and P. Trowler, *Student engagement toolkit for leaders* (Leadership foundation for higher education and Higher Education Research and Evaluation, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> M. Klemenčič, 'Student involvement in quality enhancement' in J. Huisman et al. (eds), *The Handbook of Higher education Policy and Governance*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

<sup>8</sup> McCormick *et al.* 2013, Kuh 2003.

2. 'Student engagement with Structure and Process'
3. 'Student engagement with Identity'.<sup>9</sup>

There are two, sometimes competing, ideological positions in relation to enhancing student engagement practices. In the so called 'market model', engagement is based on a view of the student as consumer. In contrast, the 'developmental model' is based on a constructivist concept of learning, and sees students as partners in a learning community.<sup>10</sup> Klemenčič has observed that the interactions of students with their institution is defined by the culture of the institution. Interactions can be underpinned 'by authoritarian-paternalistic, democratic-collegiate or managerial-corporate behaviour schemata, each of which invokes different conceptions (or metaphors) of students, such as students as pupils, as constituency, or as customers.'<sup>11</sup>

It is widely held that the challenge of increasing student engagement demands an institution-wide cultural focus:

Student engagement cannot be successfully pursued at the level of the individual teacher, school or faculty but must be pursued holistically in a 'whole-of-university' approach and with a common understanding of what it is the institution seeks to achieve.<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, Coates and McCormick have argued that the culture of an institution is vital in the development of meaningful student engagement, and conclude that students

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<sup>9</sup> V. Trowler and P. Trowler, *Student engagement evidence summary* (York: Higher education Authority, 2010).

<sup>10</sup> Higher education Academy, 2010 quoted in 'Aspire Recognition of Excellence in Student engagement in a Medical, Dental and Veterinary School: an introduction'.

<sup>11</sup> M. Klemenčič, 'Student involvement in quality enhancement' in J. Huisman et al. (eds), *The Handbook of Higher education Policy and Governance*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

<sup>12</sup> Baron, P. and Corbin, L., Student engagement: rhetoric and reality. *Higher Education Research and Development* vol. 31, no. 66 (2012), pp. 759 – 772: 769.

should be expected and encouraged to engage 'by participating in the various formal and informal architectures that shape engagement like governing and representative bodies, and various quality assurance structures.'<sup>13</sup>

The student-as-consumer relationship was consciously developed in the late twentieth-century, and is the model most commonly utilised in private colleges. It assumes that a contract is entered into between the student and institution upon payment of fees, and the institution has a duty to provide the expected level of education to the student. This model is particularly popular in North America, where HEIs have been developing increasingly close relationships with corporate bodies since the 1970s. However it is also becoming more popular in Europe, and has been adopted by the Browne Report in the UK.<sup>14</sup>

The critical theorist of education, Michael Peters, has observed that embedded in the designation of students as customers or clients is the conception of students as 'autonomous choosers' in the educational products market. It is arguably pedagogically and politically emancipatory for students as they are 'granted rights as consumers of a service – which they did not have in the traditional model of the teacher as the official "in charge" of their learning'.<sup>15</sup> Students, or their parents, buy a future, more-educated version of themselves from education providers. Supporters of this viewpoint would argue that 'students are the products and consumers of

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<sup>13</sup> H. Coates and A.C. McCormick, 'Emerging Trends and Perspectives' in Coates and McCormick, *Engaging university students: international insights from system-wide studies*, (London: Springer, 2014), pp. 151-158: 156.

<sup>14</sup> Lord Browne of Madingley *et al.*, *Securing a sustainable future for higher education: an independent review of higher education funding & student finance* (12 Oct. 2010), [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/422565/bis-10-1208-securing-sustainable-higher-education-browne-report.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/422565/bis-10-1208-securing-sustainable-higher-education-browne-report.pdf) accessed 9 Dec. 2015.

<sup>15</sup> Michael Peters, *Poststructuralism, politics and education* (London: Bergin & Garvey, 1996), quoted in J. A. Newson, 'Disrupting the "student as consumer" model: the new emancipatory project', *International Relations*, Vol. 18 No. 2, pp. 227-239: 230.

education,' and as such are ideally placed to know what improvements are required in the system.'<sup>16</sup> The notion of the student-as-consumer places the student in a complex relationship with their institution. In one sense, the consumerist approach places the student outside the HEI community, but at the same time, enshrines the rights of the student within that community.

The debate around the consumerisation of third-level education is a fundamental one for the direction of the higher education system. When students perceive themselves as consumers it places them very much as somewhat detached, external service-users rather than internal members of the HEI. Such a perception does not encourage close collaboration or working relationships between staff and students.

Students, however, generally prefer to see themselves as members of a learning community. Surveyed students in the UK were more likely to self-identify as partners in a learning community, rather than consumers wanting a say in the educational product, while staff often expected students to identify as consumers more than they actually did. The National Union of Students in the UK has argued that if students are engaged in a consumerist manner merely to increase satisfaction ratings, it becomes easy to 'lose sight of the responsibility of educators to challenge and stretch students'.<sup>17</sup> The work of the European Student Union (ESU), firmly reiterates the student desire to be 'treated as equal partners and not treated merely as consumers' in all aspects of governance of HEIs.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Student Voice Initiative, <http://studentvoicel.org/mission-statement/> accessed 15 June 2015; Browne Report, Foreword, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> NUS, *Manifesto for partnership* (2012).

<sup>18</sup> 'Student participation in higher education governance', in *Bologna with Student Eyes*, 2012, pp. 139-140.

The developmental perspective sees students as citizens or partners in an academic community. Higher education is perceived as a public good and so is paid for, at least in part, by the state. It is expected that institutions will foster democratic principles in their students, who will in turn make civic and economic contributions to society following graduation. Their education is a benefit not only to themselves, but also to the state.<sup>19</sup>

Students who are viewed, and view themselves, as members of an academic community gain both rights responsibilities to that institution. It is believed that a partnership approach allows both the student, and the institution, to reach their full potential.<sup>20</sup> Student-as-partner engagement has the potential to be more democratic. The communiqué adopted by the Bologna Ministers at the Prague Higher Education Summit in 2001 supports the notion of student as partner stating that ‘higher education should be considered a public good and is and will remain a public responsibility (regulations, etc.), and that students are full members of the higher education community.’<sup>21</sup>

Proponents of the ‘student as partner’ criticise engagement techniques that involve ‘listening to the student voice’, such as ‘you said, we did’ campaigns. They suggest that these ‘implicitly if not deliberately – support the perspective of student as “consumer”’. The students cannot affect decision-making directly, but are dependent on others to take their views on board. ‘Having a ‘voice’ is important, but may remain

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<sup>19</sup> M. Klemenčič, ‘Student involvement in quality enhancement’ in J. Huisman et al. (eds), *The Handbook of Higher education Policy and Governance*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

<sup>20</sup> R. Wenstone, ‘Foreword’ In QAA and NUS, *Understanding the barriers to student engagement: information and good practice for higher education institutions and students on the barriers to engaging students in their learning experience* (London, NUS, 2012).

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in S. Bergan, ‘Higher education as a “public good and public responsibility”: what does it mean?’ in Weber L. and S. Bergan (eds), *The public responsibility for higher education and research* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2005), p. 13.

a passive experience in comparison to being given the opportunities to drive and lead change initiatives.<sup>22</sup>

The European Students Union (ESU) is committed to the development of student engagement with governance structures and processes. It firmly rejects the notion of the student as consumer. The ESU has produced valuable research and toolkits to help students and institutions to develop better engagement practices. It presents its preferred partnership approach as follows:

A partnership implies an equal relationship between two or more bodies working together towards a common purpose and respecting the different skills, knowledge, experience and capability that each party brings to the table. Decisions are taken jointly among those organisations and they cooperate to varying degrees in implementing the consequences of those decisions. In the case of tertiary education, it is an effective working relationship between an institution and its students, as individuals and through its collective representative body, working towards an education of the highest quality possible. What do we mean by partnership? A partnership goes far beyond the mere consultation, involvement, or representation of students in decision-making processes. Where a partnership exists, students do not only identify areas that could be enhanced, but they help to identify ways in which that enhancement can be carried out, as well as to help facilitate the implementation process wherever possible. Above all, a true partnership means that neither party acts unilaterally but rather that there is an active collaboration between the two. Each party must recognise what the other brings to the table and must value that contribution for the cooperation

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<sup>22</sup> Elisabeth Dunne and Roos Zandstra, *Students as change agents: new ways of engaging with learning and teaching in Higher education* (Bristol: ESCalate, 2011), p. 4.

to work. In this way, a partnership can be seen as opposed to a transactional or consumerist relationships. Students actively participate in shaping and co-producing their education, rather than merely receiving it passively. This includes the effort that students put into their learning process in the classroom, but also the work that students are increasingly doing to shape their experience at the course, departmental, institutional and national levels.<sup>23</sup>

In the early 1990s, Ernest Boyer argued that as higher education institutions changed and grew, in many ways for the better (no longer controlling all aspects of students' lives), there was a danger that they would cease to be a community at all. He developed seven principles by which he felt an academic community should model itself. It should be:

**Educationally purposeful**—a place where faculty and students share academic goals and strengthen teaching and learning on campus.

**Open**—a place where free speech is protected and civility powerfully affirmed.

**Just**—a place where the sacredness of each person is honoured and where diversity is aggressively pursued.

**Disciplined**—a place where individuals accept their obligations to the group and where well defined governance procedure guide behaviour for the common good.

**Caring**—a place where the wellbeing of each member is sensitively supported and where service to others is encouraged.

**Celebrative**—a place where the heritage of the institution is remembered and where rituals affirming tradition and change are shared.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> ESU, 'Students as Partners', *Quest for quality for students*, <http://quest.esu-online.org/Students+as+partners> accessed 10 Dec. 2015.

<sup>24</sup> E. Boyer, Foreword, in The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, *Campus Life: In Search of Community*, (Princeton, New Jersey; 1990).

## 1.1 Drivers of Student engagement

The literature suggests, as shown, that the issue of student engagement should be underpinned by three drivers:

1. The HEI as a site of democratic citizenship
2. The HEI as a learning community
3. The HEI as a critical institution

### **The HEI as a site of democratic citizenship**

Governance, properly exercised, ensures that higher education systems are capable of answering the questions that society puts to them, and that they do so in a way that is both efficient and effective, on the one hand, but also equitable and transparent on the other. So understood, governance is at the heart of the story of higher education.

- Interviewee quoted in Royal Irish Academy, *Issues of Higher education Institutional Governance* (Dublin, 2012).

One of the main purposes of education, according to the Council of Europe, is the preparation of the students for life as active citizens of democratic societies.<sup>25</sup> Higher education plays an important role in building and maintaining democratic culture and democratic institutions. Fielding argues strongly for the importance of integrating democratic practices into education institutions:

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<sup>25</sup> M. Klemenčič *et al.*, 'Preface', *Student engagement in Europe: society, higher education and student governance*, (Council of Europe, 2015), p.5.



If democracy matters it must be seen to matter. Its aspirations require the dignity and eloquence of articulation; its legitimacy requires enacted practical arrangements and humane dispositions which embody its living reality... Democracy as a means of living and learning together cannot be left to chance or the vain belief it will follow inevitably or dutifully in the wake of arrangements which lack the will or imagination to name and require its priority.<sup>26</sup>

As with the wider state, legislation and institutions are essential within the HEI, but they are not sufficient. Institutions and laws alone do not make a democracy, as these cannot function without a culture of democracy within society.<sup>27</sup> An underpinning culture of participatory governance which recognises the uniqueness of the higher education institution would aim to ensure that all members of that community are actively engaged in shaping that community. The driver of the HEI as a democratic entity is therefore wider than student engagement, it also relates to staff engagement, and the equal involvement of staff and students in decision-making processes.

The HEI has a responsibility to protect and encourage democratic practices. Sjur Bergan of the Council of Europe has produced an edited collection which analyses the concept of the university as a site of democracy. He argues that:

Democratic practice can certainly be studied and it deserves to be, but it cannot be learned from books and in auditoriums alone. Democratic practice can be internalised only by actually practising it and participating in it. Therefore,

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<sup>26</sup> M. Fielding, 'Student Voice as Deep Democracy' in C. McLaughlin (ed.), *The Connected School - a design for well-being supporting children and young people to flourish, thrive and achieve*, p.4-5.

<sup>27</sup> S. Bergan, 'Democratic culture, education, and student engagement', in Klemenčič *et al.*, *Student engagement in Europe*, p. 361.

teaching and studying democratic governance in theoretical terms at higher education level is of limited value unless institutions also reflect democratic practice and values in their internal life, in particular in their governance structures.<sup>28</sup>

He further posits that:

As Europe has moved from elite to mass higher education, the civic role of the university is more important than ever. This role must be one of teaching and learning through active participation, and it must lead by example and by learning rather than teaching or preaching. Mass higher education faces many of the same problems as modern mass society, the least of which is a loss of interest in the public sphere and a concentration on the private sphere; a lack of faith in the importance of working for the community and not only on the private good. This is no small challenge, but it is one to which higher education must rise. Failing to do so could have detrimental consequences for the next generation of Europeans.<sup>29</sup>

It is the responsibility of both the institution, and the student union, to foster a sense of civic responsibility in the student body. If students are to be perceived as citizens of a learning community, then notions of citizenship and democracy determine the nature of their engagement with that community.

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<sup>28</sup> S. Bergan (ed.), 'A word from the editor' in *The University as Res Publica: Higher education governance, student participation and the university as a site of citizenship* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2004), p.7.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

Arnstein noted ‘a critical difference between going through the empty ritual of participation and having the real power needed to affect the outcome of the process.’<sup>30</sup> She devised an eight-step ladder to illustrate her eight-levels of participation; from the lowest rung, where the ‘have-nots’ are manipulated, to the top rung, citizen control, where the ‘have-nots’ become ‘haves’.

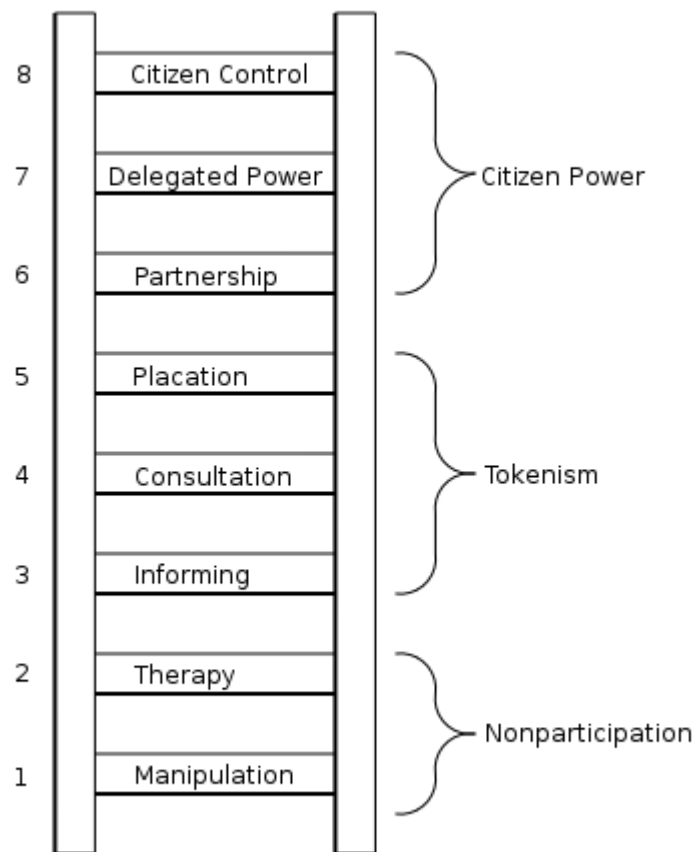


Figure 1: Arnstein's ladder of participation (1969)

Others have developed similar maps which describe the levels of participation and partnership available to students and their institutions. Aontas, the National Adult

<sup>30</sup> S.R., Arnstein, ‘A Ladder of Citizen Participation,’ *JAIIP*, Vol. 35, No. 4, July 1969, pp. 216-224.

Learning organisation provides a valuable chart which maps the potential range of student engagement in learning environments. Institutions that assure student participation, and student organisations that organise this participation can be seen as 'schools of citizenship' and 'agents of development.'<sup>31</sup>

## ‘LADDER’ OF PARTICIPATION

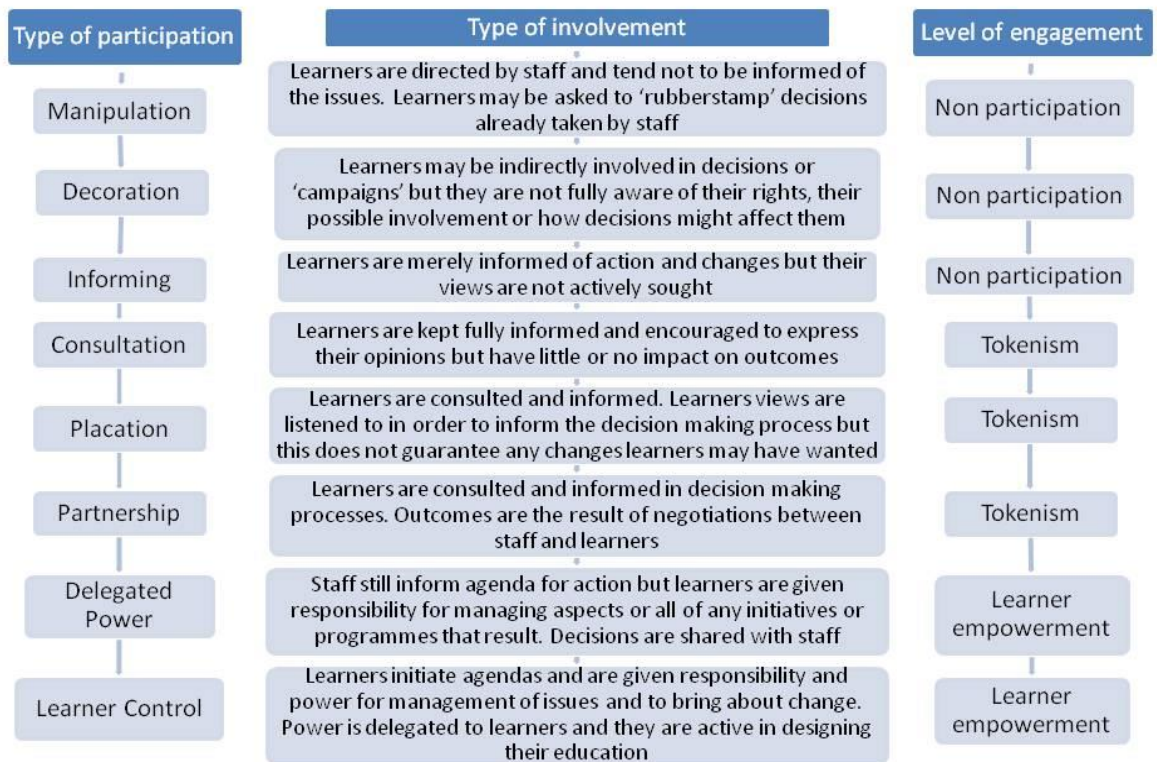


Figure 2: A table from *Learnervoice – a handbook from Futurelab* (2006: 11). Authors Tim Rudd, Fiona Colligan and Rajay Naik

<sup>31</sup> Paulo Fontes BPC-ESIB, Seminar Rapporteur. Final Version, Athens, June 2003. <http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Seminars/030612-14SummaryConclusions.pdf> accessed 13 Jan. 2016.

## The HEI as a Learning Community

Authentic Education is not carried out by A for B or by A about B, but rather by A with B, mediated by the world – a world which impresses and challenges both parties, giving rise to views or opinions about it.

- Paulo Freire<sup>32</sup>

Students who are viewed, and view themselves, as members of an academic community gain, not only rights, but also responsibilities to that institution. It is believed that a partnership approach allows both the student, and their institution, to reach their full potential.<sup>33</sup> Dunne and Zandstra have observed that ‘the more collaborative the relationship between student and teacher, or the student and the broader institution, the greater the knowledge and expertise that will be developed by both parties.’<sup>34</sup>

Peter Senge has observed that a learning organisation exhibits four main characteristics: Personal Mastery, Mental Models, Shared Vision and Team Learning. These can be applied meaningfully to the HEI as a Learning Community. According to Senge, people with high levels of personal mastery are continuously learning. From this quest for continual learning comes the spirit of their learning organisation.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972 [London, Penguin, 1996]), p.66.

<sup>33</sup> R. Wenstone, ‘Foreword’ In QAA and NUS, *Understanding the barriers to student engagement: information and good practice for higher education institutions and students on the barriers to engaging students in their learning experience* (London, NUS, 2012).

<sup>34</sup> Elisabeth Dunne and Roos Zandstra, *Students as change agents: new ways of engaging with learning and teaching in Higher education* (Bristol: ESCalate, 2011), p. 4.

<sup>35</sup> P. Senge, *The fifth discipline: the art and practice of the learning organisation* (New York, 1990), p.125.

Within a HEI staff and students learn from each other, and from their shared work. By working together in this way, towards a common goal, team learning and a shared vision is developed. By empowering individuals who are members of an aligned team with a shared vision, empowers not only the individual, but also the whole team or institution. HEIs pride themselves on their ability to make the familiar strange, and to challenge mental models, or the assumptions held by individuals and organisations. Such mental models can be a barrier to innovation as they limit people to familiar ways of thinking and acting. By being agile and open to change, the culture of the HEI can be open to learn from all of its members, and therefore to face new and changing challenges. Student-led initiatives, or those developed through a partnership of staff and students have led to innovations internationally.<sup>36</sup>

A fundamental cultural and structural component of Senge's learning organisation is a well-functioning 'feedback loop.' An organisation where this is lacking will persist in practices and on a course unaware of the environmental risks. Such an organisation will inevitably fail to adapt and respond either to emergent threats or opportunities.

Sparqs recognises students as experts in their own learning.<sup>37</sup> Klemenčič has elaborated on how students can contribute to quality within an institution:

students possess resources – *student capital* - that are salient for the purposes of enhancing university quality. Students have first-hand experience of, and thus valuable insights into, educational processes and learning environments. As such, students – individually, by proxies, or collectively – can bring to university

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<sup>36</sup> Sparqs and BCU.

<sup>37</sup> SPARQS, *A student engagement framework for Scotland*  
<http://www.sparqs.ac.uk/upfiles/SEFScotland.pdf> accessed 13 Jan. 2016.

administrators information and expertise for the purposes of quality enhancement. Individual students can be a source of raw data on experience, satisfaction or behaviour, which is collected through student surveys. Students can act as expert advisors to university administrators in advisory committees. They obtain such roles either by being elected student representatives, or by being handpicked by administrators to play this role, or simply by offering input even if they do not participate in student representation. Student representatives participate in university governing bodies in strategic planning and policy making.<sup>38</sup>

In order for students to contribute conscientiously to changing their institution for the better, either by filling out a survey, or sitting on governing body, or by other means, more than mere structural possibilities are required. It is necessary for the institution to foster a community culture where such involvement is considered “appropriate”, that is, natural, expected and legitimate for each and every student’.<sup>39</sup> Klemenčič argues that if genuine, conscientious students’ involvement is to exist, ‘students need to feel a certain degree of ‘loyalty’, defined as a strong feeling of allegiance and attachment to one’s university or indeed to a collectivity or group of people within that university’. If such loyalty is fostered, students can voluntarily seek to improve structures within the institution for all students, present and future.<sup>40</sup>

When the higher education institution is a learning community with open and valuable relationships, it is possible to foster democratic citizenship. As Fielding has observed;

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<sup>38</sup> M. Klemenčič, ‘Student involvement in quality enhancement’ in J. Huisman et al. (eds), *The Handbook of Higher education Policy and Governance*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> See also P. Carey, ‘Student engagement in university decision-making: policies, processes and the student voice’, unpublished PhD thesis, Lancaster University, 2013, p. 149.

‘Relationships matter intrinsically and fundamentally. They also matter instrumentally, quietly and necessarily because they provide the conditions in which rights become real.’<sup>41</sup>

## **The HEI as a Critical Institution**

[Student engagement is] not simply about introducing new structures, such as student councils, or about providing other occasional opportunities for students to speak their mind or have their say. It is about forming more open and trustful relationships between staff and students.

- D. Hargreaves, *Personalising learning 2: student voice and assessment for learning* (London, 2004).

Academic freedom is an essential principle of higher education institutions.<sup>42</sup> Academics and universities have traditionally prided themselves on their ability, and duty, to speak truth to power. However, within higher education institutions there is a power imbalance between the student and the lecturer. The lecturer occupies the more powerful position as they design, write, deliver, assess and mark their own modules. The *National Strategy for Higher education to 2030*<sup>43</sup> has stated that; ‘higher education institutions should put in place systems to capture feedback from students, and use this feedback to inform institutional and program management, as well as national policy.’<sup>44</sup> HEI institutions should ensure that all members are facilitated in

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<sup>41</sup> Fielding, ‘Student voice as deep democracy’, p.4.

<sup>42</sup> Universities Act 1997, IoT Act 2006, DIT Act 2006.

<sup>43</sup> Department of Education and Skills, *National strategy for higher education to 2030* (Dublin: Department of Education and Skills, 2011).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.



offering open and constructive criticism in order to develop the Institution and its members.

This feedback does not need to be adversarial, 'but rather a rich and complex process whereby teachers, students and others engaged in the education process work together to ask about, explain and listen to each other's' perspectives'.<sup>45</sup> This has been termed by Fielding as 'intergenerational learning as lived democracy'.<sup>46</sup> Mockler and Groundwater-Smith have argued for the value of such feedback techniques: 'Ethical and democratic classroom practice ... engages students consistently in discussion of the processes and practices of learning, supports their metacognitive capacities and their capacity to make good decisions about their learning, and builds trust and respect between students and teachers'.<sup>47</sup> This is in contrast to the consumer-based satisfaction rating encouraged by such websites as [www.ratemyprofessors.com](http://www.ratemyprofessors.com) which allows students to rate their teachers on such consumer-driven traits as 'easiness' and 'hotness'.<sup>48</sup> The consumerist feedback model has been found to be prone to biases in favour of male teachers.<sup>49</sup>

The integration of the student voice within the critical institution can foster the development of a learning community and so democratic principles:

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<sup>45</sup> N. Mockler and S. Groundwater-Smith, *Engaging with the student voice in research, education and community: beyond legitimation and guardianship* (London: Springer, 2015), p. 6.

<sup>46</sup> M. Fielding (2011), referenced in Mockler and Groundwater-Smith, *Engaging with the student voice*, p. 6.

<sup>47</sup> Mockler and Groundwater-Smith, *Engaging with the student voice*, p. 6.

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.ratemyprofessors.com/> <http://www.ratemyprofessors.com/About.jsp> accessed 13 Jan. 2016.

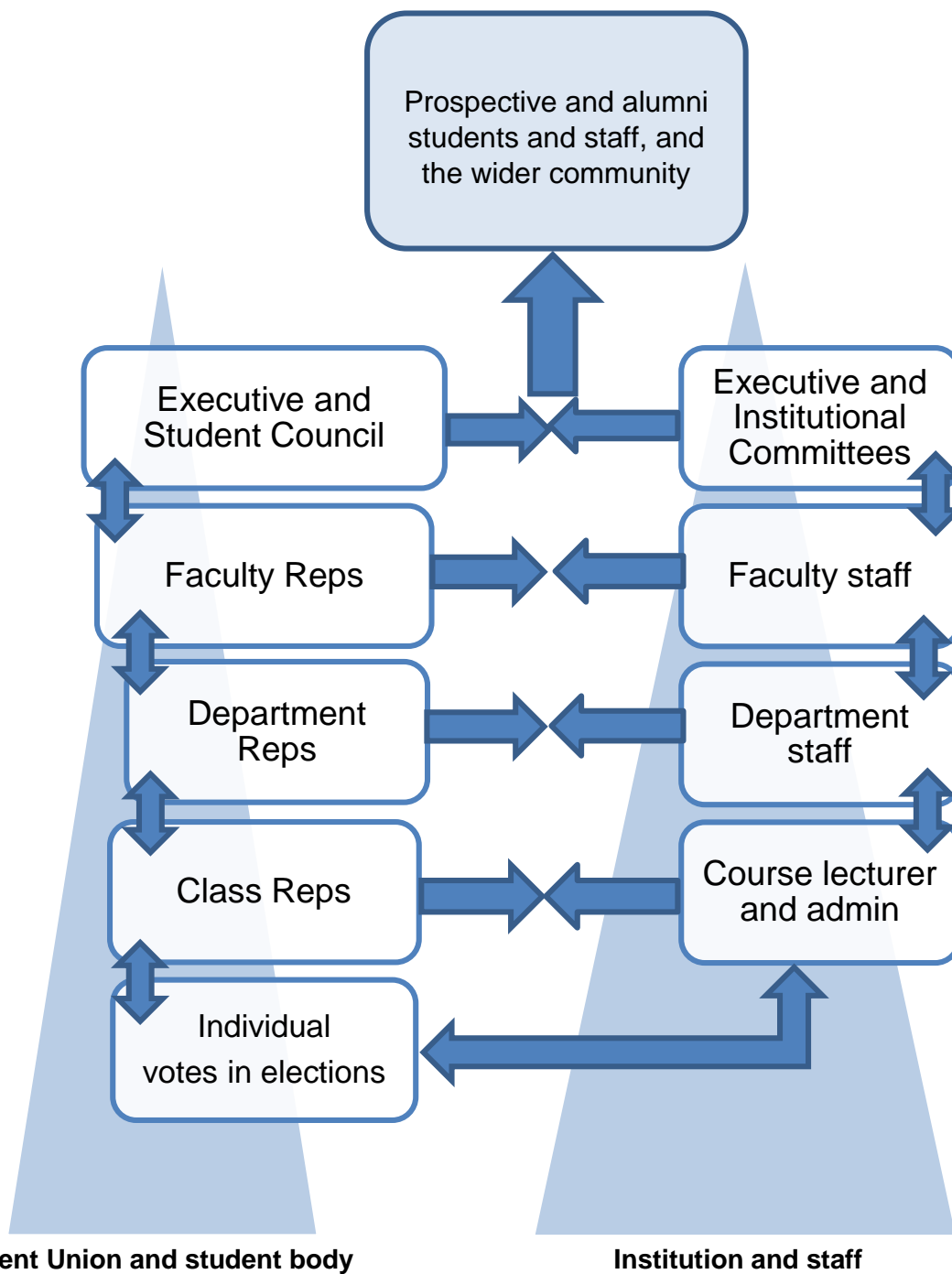
<sup>49</sup> F. Jenkins, 'Which part of the story does unconscious implicit bias capture?' *Gender Summit* 7, Berlin, 6 Nov. 2015.

the authentic and consistent integration of students' voice is both a marker of and an obligation for schools that aim to function as person centred learning communities. We believe strongly that the 'community' dimension implies and ongoing dialogue on the part of all community members, an understanding that different individuals play different roles within the community, but also a willingness to be open and respectful of the voices of those who might otherwise wield less power despite having at least as much invested in the educative process as others.<sup>50</sup>

All of the responsibility for positive student engagement procedures does not fall on the staff of the institution. This transparency should be extended to students unions. It is also essential that there are good governance structures within the local student union, and that measures are in place to ensure adequate knowledge transfer between incoming and outgoing executive officers, and between all levels of student representatives. A model of communication within an institution could work as follows:

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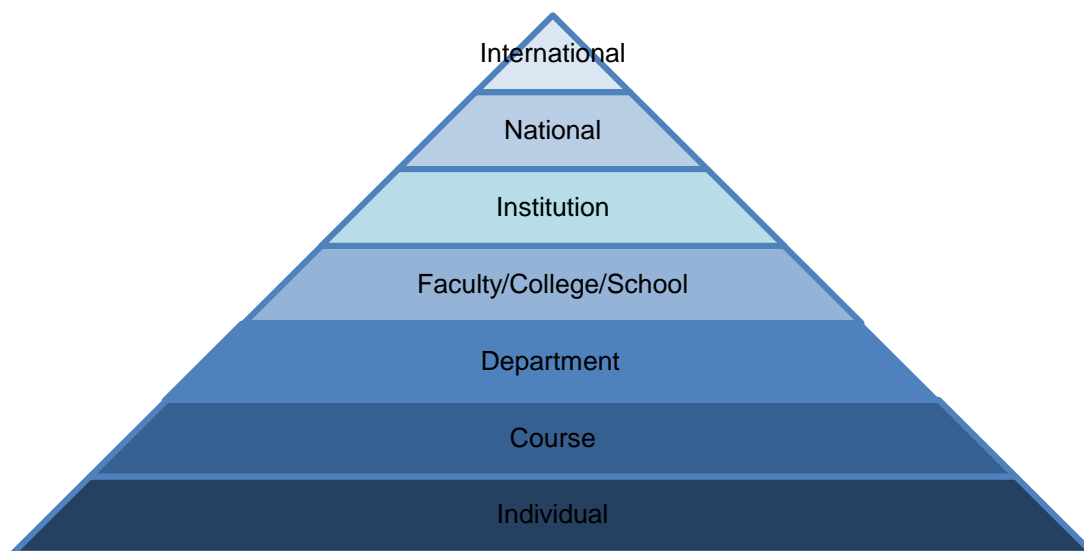
<sup>50</sup> Mockler and Groundwater-Smith, *Engaging with the student voice*, p. 8.



**Student Union and student body** **Institution and staff**  
 Figure 3: Possible model of lines of communication within HEI.

## 1.2 Participation – a conceptual framework

Students in Ireland can engage with the pedagogy, governance and culture of Higher Education at seven different levels, five of which lie within the institution itself:



*Figure 4: Seven governance and management levels offering opportunities for student engagement*

Smaller institutions do not always have a faculty level between the institution and departmental level, while the largest could have an additional ‘School’ layer between faculty and departmental levels. Engagement at each level can be informal or formal. Opportunities can be provided at each level for student engagement to take the form of ‘student voice’, where students can give their opinion, but they must rely on others to take on board their views, and ‘student in decision making roles’, where students are directly involved as change agents and partners within the system. It is essential that when ‘student voice’ mechanisms are used that the ‘feedback loop’ is closed to allow students to know how they have brought about change. Both forms of engagement can be valuable, and one or other might be more appropriate at certain times.

Market-driven and partner-driven student engagement procedures can engage in similar practices. However, a different culture is developed depending on the ideological framework behind the practices. Fielding has elaborated a hierarchy of interaction between adults and young people in educational contexts. The typology, entitled *Patterns of partnership: how adults listen to and learn with students in schools* ranges from 'students as data source – in which staff utilise information about student progress and well-being' to 'intergenerational learning as lived democracy – in which there is shared commitment to / responsibility for the common good.'<sup>51</sup> These forms of engagement are not an either/or alternative but offer the possibility of an and/and approach when used within a learning community.

A teacher working within a market-driven approach might be preoccupied with test scores and performance data (students as data source) but a teacher working within the more holistic tradition of democratic fellowship would seek a wider frame of reference, and expand his/her interactions with the students to include other forms of engagement.<sup>52</sup> Likewise, students who perceive themselves as consumers would be eager to provide satisfaction ratings on the service provided, while a student who self-identifies as a member of a learning community would engage in opportunities to develop that community for all. This would encourage them to complete surveys, but also to instigate their own changes within the institution.

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<sup>51</sup> M. Fielding, 'Patterns of Partnership: Student Voice, Intergenerational Learning and Democratic Fellowship' in N. Mockler and J. Sachs (eds) *Rethinking educational practice through reflexive research: essays in honour of Susan Groundwater-Smith* (Springer, 2011), pp.61-75, p. 67.

<sup>52</sup> Fielding, 'Student voice as deep democracy', p.6.

A useful tool in looking beyond the question of ‘what are the practices in place?’ to the question ‘what is the nature of engagement?’ has also been developed by Fielding. His work addresses student engagement in the secondary school setting, but the questions can still be valuable in the process of evaluating the nature of student engagement, particularly as it relates to pedagogical practices. It could be especially useful when examining committees in practice, as it may be necessary to provide greater training for staff and students to ensure that student representatives are valued, heard and supported. Fielding’s framework for evaluating the conditions for student voice is presented through a series of questions which need to be answered to probe what he calls the ‘rhetoric and realities of student voice’.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Fielding, ‘Beyond the rhetoric of student voice: new departures or new constraints in the transformation of 21st century schooling’, *Forum for promoting 3-19 comprehensive education* (January, 2001), p. 3-19, referenced in J. Manefield *et al.*, *Student voice a historical perspective and new directions*, State of Victoria, Australia, Department of Education, Paper No. 10, April 2007, p.11.

### *Evaluating the Conditions for Student Voice*

Speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Who</i> is allowed to speak?</li> <li>• <i>To whom</i> are they allowed to speak?</li> <li>• <i>What</i> are they allowed to speak about?</li> <li>• <i>What language</i> is encouraged / allowed?</li> </ul>
Listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Who</i> is listening?</li> <li>• <i>Why</i> are they listening?</li> <li>• <i>How</i> are they listening?</li> </ul>
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the skills of dialogue <i>encouraged and supported</i> through training or other appropriate means?</li> <li>• Are those skills understood, developed and practised within the <i>context of democratic values and dispositions</i>?</li> <li>• Are those skills <i>transformed</i> by those values and dispositions?</li> </ul>
Attitudes & Dispositions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do those involved <i>regard each other</i>?</li> <li>• To what degree are the <i>principle of equal value</i> and the <i>dispositions of care</i> felt reciprocally and demonstrated through the reality of daily encounter?</li> </ul>
Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>How often</i> does dialogue and encounter in which student voice is centrally important occur?</li> <li>• <i>Who decides</i>?</li> <li>• How do the systems enshrining the value and necessity of student voice mesh with or <i>relate to other organisational arrangements</i> (particularly those involving adults)?</li> </ul>
Organisational Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do the <i>cultural norms and values</i> of the school proclaim the centrality of student voice within the context of education as a shared responsibility and shared achievement?</li> <li>• Do the <i>practices, traditions and routine daily encounters</i> demonstrate values supportive of student voice?</li> </ul>
Spaces & the Making of Meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Where</i> are the public spaces (physical and metaphorical) in which these encounters might take place?</li> <li>• <i>Who controls</i> them?</li> <li>• <i>What values</i> shape their being and their use?</li> </ul>
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What action</i> is taken?</li> <li>• <i>Who feels responsible</i>?</li> <li>• <i>What happens</i> if aspirations and good intentions are not realised?</li> </ul>
The Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do we need <i>new structures</i>?</li> <li>• Do we need <i>new ways of relating to each other</i>?</li> </ul>

Figure 6: M. Fielding, *Evaluating the conditions for student voice*<sup>54</sup>

A possible model of student engagement practices which explores both ‘student voice’ and ‘student in decision-making roles’ is provided in Appendix 1.

<sup>54</sup> Fielding, ‘Beyond the rhetoric of student voice: new departures or new constraints in the transformation of 21st century schooling’, *Forum for promoting 3-19 comprehensive education* (January, 2001), p. 3-19.

## 2 Student Engagement - the practice

### 2.1 European context

Klemenčič has observed that 'student participation in HE governance within the European Higher Education Area – be it in formal terms or according to actual influence – is arguably the most developed in the world.'<sup>55</sup> Student involvement in European HEI governance is not a new phenomenon. In the medieval Bologna University, students were organised into 'nations', modelled on the guild system for tradesmen. These nations eventually wrested control of the academic affairs of the university, and created a university where the institution was controlled by the students.<sup>56</sup> Such a student-led HEI model has not existed since. More common was the Parisian university model, where the HEI was controlled by the guild of professors. By the sixteenth century, student involvement in university governance had virtually collapsed. Students re-emerged as actors in HEI governance with the foundation of student associations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>57</sup> Today, provision is generally made for student involvement in HEI governance in HEI governance, though there can be wide variation in what this actually means in practice.

The Council of Europe recommends that students are involved in HEI governance for the benefit of institutions and societies. Strategy at a European level reflects the

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<sup>55</sup> M. Klemenčič, 'Student participation in European higher education governance: principles and practice, roles and benefits', in Egron-Polak et al. (eds), *Handbook on leadership and governance in higher education: leadership and good governance of HEIs. Structures, actors and roles* (Berlin: RAABE, 2011), pp. 1-26: 21.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. 1-18: 3.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 4-5.



growing agreement on this.<sup>58</sup> Student representatives were not invited to the summit which produced the Bologna Declaration in 1999 to work towards the creation of the European Area of Higher Education. However, two years later a fundamental shift had occurred when Ministers gathered again in Prague in 2001, to make new commitments within the Bologna Process. This time the European Students Union (ESU, then ESIB), was officially present during the summit. The resulting communiqué recognised that students are full members of the higher education community, and should participate in and influence the organisation and content of education at universities and other higher education institutions. Ministers welcomed the role of students as, 'competent, active and constructive partners', who should be treated as 'full members of the higher education community'.<sup>59</sup> In practice, this has led national governments to increasingly subscribe to the new public management approach in public policy governance, where policymaking is 'less hierarchical, with policy decisions being negotiated and mediated among several stakeholders rather than simply imposed by public authorities'.<sup>60</sup> It is usual for national governments to have laws on the representation of students within a national HE council or governing body.<sup>61</sup>

Student involvement in quality review processes is now more widely accepted in Europe, and has been an integral element of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher education (ESG) since 2005. The recently revised

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<sup>58</sup> Council of Europe, 'Higher education Governance between democratic culture, academic aspirations and market forces: considerations and recommendations' (2005), available at: [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/Governance/GOV\\_recommendations\\_EN.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/Governance/GOV_recommendations_EN.pdf) accessed 13 May 2015; H.F. de Boer, and J. File, *Higher education governance reforms across Europe* (Brussels: ESMU, 2009).

<sup>59</sup> Communiqué of the meeting of European Ministers in charge of Higher education in Prague on May 19th 2001, <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/X2H-Xref-ViewHTML.asp?FileID=10237&lang=en> accessed 9 Dec. 2015.

<sup>60</sup> Klemenčič, 'Student representation in Western Europe: introduction to the special issue', in *European Journal of Higher education*, June 2012, pp. 2-19: 5.

<sup>61</sup> Persson, 2004, and *Ibid*.

ESG, as approved by Ministers at their EHEA meeting in May 2015, further strengthens this involvement.<sup>62</sup>

It is usual for national governments to have laws on the representation of students within a national higher education council or governing body.<sup>63</sup> In general, the most common legal or constitutional mechanism of student participation in national policymaking are:

- laws on the representation of students within a national HE council or other decision-making,
- advisory or evaluating bodies relevant to HE;
- rules governing consultation procedures or meetings with the Ministry responsible for HE.

A desire to develop and improve the role of students in higher education governance was observed at a Bologna process seminar in Oslo in 2003. The seminar was attended by 100 representatives from ministries, institutions, European organisations and students' organisations (Including Irish representatives).<sup>64</sup> According to Paulo Fontes, the ESU rapporteur, the seminar concluded that:

1. Further involvement of students is needed at all levels of decision making, this involvement should not only be legally permitted but effectively encouraged in the formal and informal areas of governance.

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<sup>62</sup> <http://www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg/>

<sup>63</sup> Persson, 2004, and Klemenčič, 'Student representation in Western Europe: introduction to the special issue', in *European Journal of Higher education*, June 2012, pp. 2-19: 5.

<sup>64</sup> These were: 1.Students: Partners or Consumers?; 2.Impact of Internationalisation on student participation; 3. In which issues of HE governance should students be involved and how can they be motivated to participate; 4.The support of the international community for students' participation

2. This encouragement could include mechanisms of recognition and certification of the experience and of the competences and skills acquired by being a student representative, while also encouraging the student body to participate in elections.
3. Further involvement brings further responsibilities and demands. Mechanisms of assuring accountability, transparency and the flow on information to other students should be prioritized.
4. An ethical obligation of handing over the knowledge acquired while a student representative should exist independently of who is going to be the next legitimate student representative.
5. Usually the higher the level of representation the higher the demand level also is. Students' Organizations should be supported in obtaining the financial, logistical and human resources necessary for creating a situation of equality on participation.
6. Universities that assure student participation and student organisations that organise this participation must be seen as schools of citizenship and agents of development ... students cannot be considered as simply consumers or clients.<sup>65</sup>

A 2003 survey of representatives of students, academics and relevant government ministries from thirty-six countries European countries returned a desire for increased student influence in higher education governance (90% of students, 70% of ministry and 72% of academic representatives).<sup>66</sup> The questionnaire enquired into attitudes

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<sup>65</sup> Prepared by Paulo Fontes BPC-ESIB, Seminar Rapporteur. Final Version, Athens, June 2003.

<sup>66</sup> A. Persson, 'Student participation in the governance of higher education in Europe: results of a survey', in S. Bergan, *The university as Res Publica: higher education governance, student participation and the university as a site of citizenship* (Council of Europe, 2010), pp. 33, 38. No

towards, and perceptions of, the existing framework of student engagement in governance; from the numbers who voted in elections to their involvement in committees. While it may be that those interested in student engagement would be more likely to take the time to reply to this survey, the majority is still considerable. Reasons given for increased student participation and influence included the fact that students make up the largest group in HEIs, and therefore deserve representation. Participants also believed that student influence enhances the quality of higher education. The results of the survey can be summarised as follows:

- Student representation and participation at both national and at departmental level, is weaker, and less regulated, than at institutional level, where it is generally ensured by law. A majority reported that a policy on student participation existed at institutions in their country.
- Formal provisions and actual practices at each level of governance can differ considerably: when formal involvement is weak, it may still be strong in practice, and the opposite can also be true.
- The role of student organisations, and the low participation in student representative elections need to be examined.
- Information about the rights and influence of students needs to be disseminated more successfully, as sometimes people are unaware of the role of students, or of the extent of influence which they have had achieved. Students perceived their influence as less than it was perceived by both academics and ministries.

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answer was received from eleven countries: six were none-EU countries, but also included France, the United Kingdom, and unfortunately for this paper, Ireland.

The Berlin Communiqué, 2003, demonstrated full approval of student participation in higher education governance:

Ministers note the constructive participation of student organisations in the Bologna Process and underline the necessity to include the students continuously and at an early stage in further activities. Students are full partners in higher education governance. Ministers note that national legal measures for ensuring student participation are largely in place throughout the European Higher Education Area. They also call on institutions and student organisations to identify ways of increasing actual student involvement in higher education governance.<sup>67</sup>

Students are represented at a European level by the European Students' Union (ESU), an umbrella organisation of 45 national unions of students from 38 EU and non-EU countries.<sup>68</sup> National unions are permitted to join only if they adhere to democratic practices and are open to all students in their respective country regardless of political persuasion, religion, ethnic or cultural origin, sexual orientation or social standing. The aim of ESU is to represent and promote the educational, social, economic and cultural interests of students at the European level towards all relevant bodies and in particular the European Union, Bologna Follow-Up Group, Council of Europe and UNESCO. Through its members, ESU represents over eleven million students in Europe and focuses on influencing the European policy framework (like the Bologna process and ET2020). It is a consultative member of the Bologna Follow-Up Group and co-chair of the Social Dimension Working Group. It was also a

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<sup>67</sup> "Realising the European Higher Education Area", Communiqué of the conference of ministers responsible for higher education, Berlin, 2003.

<sup>68</sup> 'About us', <http://www.esu-online.org/about/aboutus/> accessed 15 Dec. 2015.

member of the E4 group, which carried out the revision process for the European Standards and Guidelines and works on other important aspects related to quality assurance in Europe. The influence enjoyed by ESU is a result of the highly competent individuals who have represented them in recent years. These have succeeded in increasing the credibility of student-bodies at a European level.<sup>69</sup>

Student representative bodies are not without their problems in Europe. There has been some questions raised that by entering into partnership agreements, the societies cease to become movements, and change to interest groups. Bragg has noted a somewhat problematic result of the incorporation of the 'student voice'. As it becomes normalised, 'it can perhaps no longer be seen as a radical gesture that will necessarily challenge educational hierarchies.'<sup>70</sup> However, student unions have led the decision to become incorporated into the higher education system. In Scotland, where partnerships have been forged between institutions or national body and a student body, the results are seen as positive for all concerned.<sup>71</sup> Such partnership developments are seen as important developments for the student representative movement:

The thing that makes a student representative nowadays different from 100 or even 40 years ago is the fact that students are now, for the first time, being engaged in reshaping the whole education system, and making sure that the

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<sup>69</sup> Sjur Bergan, 'Higher education Governance and Student Citizenship', 2010 on Powision blog <http://www.uni-leipzig.de/~powision/wordpress/magazin/ausgabe-7-engagier-dich/bergan-sjur/>

<sup>70</sup> Bragg, 'Student voice and governmentality: the production of enterprising subjects?' *Discourse studies in the cultural politics of education*, Vol. 28, No. 3, pp.343-358: 353.

<sup>71</sup> See appendix two.

changes experienced in higher education are directed towards benefiting students.<sup>72</sup>

A second issue for unions is the challenge of working with an apathetic student body. As Bergan observes: 'The basic act of democracy is voting. Even if it may be argued that restricting one's democratic participation to voting at periodic intervals is an insufficient commitment to democracy, democracy is inconceivable without fair elections.' It is therefore problematic that turnout in student elections is rarely higher than 50 per cent, with the 16-30 per cent range the most frequently participation rate reported in Persson's Europe-wide survey.<sup>73</sup> Similar low turnouts have been observed in other studies.<sup>74</sup> Some studies suggest that the 'mainstream' student can be intimidated and bewildered by the formal structures of representation.<sup>75</sup>

It may be that it is only traditional students who have the time and interest to engage fully with the institution. Or it may be that engagement practices, as they currently stand, stealthily exclude the poorer, more disadvantaged, more personally burdened or less-confident student. Student engagement in governance demands articulate and confident students, which could lead to isolation and under-engagement and representation from minority groups.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> R. Santa, "An Insider's View: Student Representation through the Eyes of a New Student Representative", *The Student Voice. The Monthly Newsletter of the European Students' Union*, (June 2009).

<sup>73</sup> S. Bergan, 'Higher education Governance and Student Citizenship', 2010 on Powision blog <http://www.uni-leipzig.de/~powision/wordpress/magazin/ausgabe-7-engagier-dich/bergan-sjur/>

<sup>74</sup> Martín (2007), González (2007), Basart (2011) and Soler (2009), all referenced in Planas, 'Student participation in university governance', p. 4.

<sup>75</sup> Planas, 'Student participation in university governance', p. 8; Carey, 'Student engagement in university decision-making', pp. 2,147.

<sup>76</sup> Carey, 'Student engagement in university decision-making', pp. 150-151.

In Ireland, there does seem to be a gender, age, and ethnicity bias towards young, white, and male sabbatical officers in most of the country's individual student unions. This is even the case in institutions where the student population is predominately female. In 2013, only 21% of student union presidents were female.<sup>77</sup> This predominance of male representatives may be an expression of the lack of women in leadership positions in wider society, and indeed in the microcosmic academic community, where there is a dearth of women in positions of power, despite women now making up the majority of graduates.<sup>78</sup>

It may be that students who do not fit the young, male, white, settled, middle-class, childless profile may need additional supports if they are to become full and active citizens of their learning community. An Australian study, for example, has observed that those students who engage in paid work spend less time on campus, and are more likely than their non-employed peers to have seriously considered dropping out, while disadvantaged students are less likely to do well academically.<sup>79</sup> It might even be the case that student unions and institutions must ask of themselves Fieldings' self-evaluation questions; 'Do we need new structures? New ways of relating to each other?'<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> 'USI Congress rejects gender equality motions', <http://www.universitytimes.ie/?p=15504> accessed 29 June 2015.

<sup>78</sup> European Commission, *She Figures 2012: Gender in Research and Innovation* (Luxembourg: European Union, 2013), 5–6, [http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/document\\_library/pdf\\_06/she-figures-2012\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/document_library/pdf_06/she-figures-2012_en.pdf); Source: HEA statistics.

<sup>79</sup> K.L. Krause, 'Understanding and promoting student engagement in university learning communities' presented as a keynote address: 'Engaged, inert or otherwise occupied?: Deconstructing the 21st century undergraduate student' at the James Cook University Symposium, 2005, *Sharing Scholarship in Learning and Teaching: Engaging Students*, James Cook University, Townsville/Cairns, Queensland, 21-22 September 2005.

<sup>80</sup> M. Fielding, 'Evaluating the conditions for student voice' (2001, 2010) reproduced in N. Mockler and S. Groundwater-Smith, *Engaging with the student voice in research, education and community: beyond legitimation and guardianship* (London: Springer, 2015), p. 97.



ESU now ensures that 50% or more of their committee positions are filled by women. Some HEIs have tried to combat the issue of low participation rates among under-represented groups through giving credit for volunteer activity, or paying students to work on campus or for their involvement in quality, management, and governance processes.<sup>81</sup> This facilitates students who need to work to support their education to get involved, and can blur the line between staff and student, thus potentially making student participants feel more valued, and more like partners in an equal process.

Finally, the experience of some specific cases looked at abroad suggests that while formal representation has been provided for in legislation, it is also necessary to embed formal and informal student engagement actions on committees and groups further down the governance chain. The lifecycle of a decision in an institution often spends much of its development away from the Governing Body and Academic Council, where student engagement is protected by law. Good practice examples abroad such as sparqs (Student partnership in quality Scotland) and BCU (Birmingham City University) where student representation and engagement was well embedded, shows that both formal and informal mechanisms were in place resulting in a culture of engagement. 'Parity of esteem' between student representatives and the other members of boards and committees at meetings was viewed as extremely important. Two-way communications between the HEI management and students regarding the strategic planning processes within institutions and students' unions was identified as an area for improvement.

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<sup>81</sup> See example of BCU in appendix two below.

## 2.2 Irish context

Higher education in Ireland (within the state sector) is offered by the seven universities, fourteen institutes of technology, seven colleges of education, and a number of small specialised institutions. Approximately 60% of students in higher education attend the university sector with 40% attending institutes of technology and other sectors. Higher education institutions in Ireland are relatively small by international standards, ranging from approximately 5,000 students in the smallest to over 20,000 students in the largest.<sup>82</sup> The HEI sector in Ireland has undergone significant change in recent decades, with student numbers increasing dramatically.<sup>83</sup> HEIs are funded through the Higher Education Authority which is an intermediary body between the HEIs and the Department of Education and Skills.

In Ireland, quality assurance is primarily the responsibility of the higher education institution. QQI is responsible for ensuring that the quality assurance procedures of providers are effective. Students contribute to the quality assurance of the higher education system in Ireland through their membership of the Board and committees of Quality and Qualifications Ireland, which was established in 2012. Consultation with students in quality enhancement processes is protected through the Act which founded QQI. This state agency validates education and training programmes and is responsible for maintaining standards, safeguarding the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), and carrying external quality assurance reviews, including institutional reviews. The Board of ten members is to include 'At least two learner

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<sup>82</sup> J. Drennan, et al., 'The Irish Survey of Student engagement', pp. 109 - 126: 110.

<sup>83</sup> Higher education Authority, *Higher education: Key facts and figures* (Dublin: Higher education Authority, 2013).

representatives; one nominated by the Union of Students in Ireland'.<sup>84</sup> QQI engages with learners in governance structures through consultation with representative groups; and through their involvement in review and accreditation processes. Feedback from students to institutions is an explicit requirement of QQI's statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines. In addition to the presence of two representatives on the QQI board, students are involved in all Institutional Review teams. During reviews, the team meet with students and reps. Institutions also involve students in their self-evaluation process prior to review.

Individual student unions in Irish institutions are recognised in the relevant legislation. The Universities Act of 1997 states:

“Student Union” means a body established to promote the general interests of students of a university and which represents students, both individually and collectively, in respect of academic, disciplinary and other matters arising within the university.<sup>85</sup>

There is only one national student representative body in Ireland, - Union of Students in Ireland (USI) - although not all individual student unions belong to it. This is different from some other European countries, where there are multiple unions. Students are represented at a national level by the USI, covering both HE and FE sectors. USI is a confederal organisation comprised of its member students' unions. It is led by paid officers who hold their position for one year, and also has the benefit of a more permanent support staff. 'The supreme authority of the Union is the Congress, which is representative of each affiliated students' union, apportioned according to the size of the student body in each union. Each union also sends one

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<sup>84</sup> 'QQI Board' <http://www.qqi.ie/Pages/QQI-Board.aspx> accessed 19 May 2015.

<sup>85</sup> Universities Act, 1997, Pt. I S.3.

voting member to the National Council – the executive body of the organisation.<sup>86</sup>

The USI represents the students of twenty five HEIs in the Republic of Ireland, as well as ten in Northern Ireland (in partnership with the British National Union of Students). The president of USI sits on the board of the Higher Education Authority and USI is represented on the Board of the National Forum for Teaching and Learning. USI may also be represented on other national ad hoc groups.

The executive officers of USI hold office for a term of one year from the first of July annually, having been elected in March. This means that there is a quick turnover of officers who must learn how to manage the various committees on which USI sit. Pressure is particularly heavy on the president, as s/he sits on many high-level committees. This can lead to some criticism of student representatives as they struggle to juggle numerous demands. Similar challenges face institution-level student union officers. One student union president was a member of twenty-eight institution-level committees outside of their own student-union committee work. The President was the only student representative on ten of these committees, so had to bear the full responsibility for representing the needs of students faithfully.

Student representation in the governance structures of Irish Higher education institutions is provided for in the Irish Universities Act (1997), the Institutes of Technology Act (2006) which amended previous Regional Technical Colleges Acts, and the Dublin Institute of Technology Acts dating back to 1992. The internal decisions of both universities and institutes of technology are governed by: The governing authority (governing body/board), a chief officer (president/ provost/ director), and an academic council. Students sit on both the governing body and the

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<sup>86</sup> 'About USI <http://usi.ie/about-usi/> , accessed 15 May 2015.

academic council. The Universities Act (1997) states that the governing body will include:

- iv. **‘not less than two or more than three students of the university who are elected officers of the Students Union or other student representative body in the university recognised by the governing authority, and**
- v. **one post-graduate student elected by the post-graduate students (emphasis added).’**

**The Regional and Technical Colleges (Amendment) Act (1994)** and **The Regional and Technical Colleges (Amendment) Act (1994)** stipulate that one student representative should be a woman and one a man.

Significantly, it is also enshrined in law that members of the governing body must act at all times in the best interest of their institution, rather than merely as representatives of their individual interest group. The Universities Act states in Section 8 (3):

‘A member of a governing authority of a university shall at all times act, as a member, in the best interests of the university and shall not act as a representative of any special interest provided that nothing in this paragraph shall restrict a member from representing at meetings of the governing authority the views of those by whom he or she has been elected or to restrict the freedom of expression of that member’.

Student members hold office for a shorter period of time than other members. Unless re-elected for a second term, a particular student will only sit on a governing body or academic council for a period of one year.

There is no reason to believe that institutions are not adhering strictly to these requirements. However, student representatives are limited in what they can achieve in these formal settings as they sit for a much shorter term than their colleagues, and might only have the opportunity to attend a handful of meetings. Like all members of the governing body, they are limited in the extent to which they can act in a representative capacity. There is a likelihood therefore of a gap developing between the opportunities for student involvement and actual engagement.

There is a potential discrepancy between:

1. **Opportunity:** where students are presented with the opportunity to attend meetings and events
2. **Attendance:** where students take up those opportunities and attend meetings and events
3. **Engagement:** where students not only take up the opportunities presented by the institution, but are able to make an effective contribution.<sup>87</sup>

In Irish universities, students can potentially account for anything from 25 per cent of governing body members (if four students sit on a governing body of twenty), reducing to 7.5% if three students sit on a body of maximum size. The proportion of students on the governing bodies in institutes of technology (IoTs) can be higher

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<sup>87</sup> D. Cockburn, *Report of the higher education mapping exercise of student involvement in quality assurance and enhancement processes*, (sparqs, 2005).  
<http://www.sparqs.ac.uk/upfiles/HE%20Mapping%20Report.pdf> accessed 13 Jan. 2013.

owing to their smaller size. Some institutions facilitate larger numbers of students than legislation demands on their governing committees, while others allow for informal meetings between the student representatives and the executive.

A number of issues emerge here. Some concern has been expressed, for example, by the USI, that there is a need for greater access to this informal consultation in some institutions.<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, with only three members elected by the student body, it is legitimate to query whether such members can successfully represent the views of a diverse student body. Student members may also suffer from a lack of committee-experience as a result of shorter life experience. It can be difficult for students to get into the working of the committee in the short time available to them. It is required of the Governing Bodies to present all new members with an information pack, but this may not be enough for student representatives. The legislation does not take account of the possible need for additional training for incoming student representatives. Some institutions have implemented valuable training for student representatives, and allow newly elected student representatives to observe meetings before taking up their position officially. Student representatives can also receive training from the USI, and their individual student union.

There are no national guidelines on student participation on committees such as the finance committee, teaching and learning committee, research committees or library committees. Still, in many institutions student representatives are members of these committees. There is a potential challenge for the sabbatical officers of the students union in learning how these committees work in practice. It can be difficult to offer

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<sup>88</sup> USI, 'A protocol for student engagement in higher education institutions', 2014.

meaningful contributions in the space of a year, which in many cases will equate to only a small number of meetings for each committee.

Committee membership does not necessarily equate to high levels of engagement. There must also be a culture of engagement. The student representative needs to be actively engaged in the process, while other members must be open and receptive to the student voice. The role of the chair of the governing body and of the academic council is very important in ensuring that space is made for the student voice in these meetings. The Royal Irish Academy has criticised the nature of governing body and academic council meetings, and it is clear that in certain circumstances, much of the decision making process takes place away from the governing body, either at committee level, or in an informal setting.<sup>89</sup> Klemenčič has demonstrated that formal representative structures do not automatically ensure that students 'have any real influence in policy process ... regular and frequent informal interactions' are also required.<sup>90</sup> There appears to be consistency nationally within Ireland in terms of adherence to legal requirements, but there is significant variation in the levels of student participation in pedagogy and decision making regarding the pedagogical aspect of their institution. Further avenues of meaningful participation are therefore required if a pattern of generalised and comprehensive engagement is to be developed.

Ireland is one of six countries to have developed a national survey on student engagement modelled on a privately funded initiative in the United States in the late

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<sup>89</sup> Royal Irish Academy, 'Issues of Higher education Institutional Governance' (2012), p.23.

<sup>90</sup> Klemenčič, 'Student representation in Western Europe: introduction to the special issue', in *European Journal of Higher education*, June 2012, pp. 2-19: 13.



1990s which developed into the National Survey for Student engagement.<sup>91</sup> Nationally adapted versions of NSSE are now in use in Canada, Australia and New Zealand (AUSSE), South Africa (SASSE), China (CCSS), and Ireland (ISSE), and more countries are involved in developing or piloting their own versions. These surveys have student learning at their heart, and seek to help higher education institutions to improve their engagement with the student body.

The Irish Survey of Student engagement (ISSE) is the first national systematic effort here, to measure the quality of the student experience in Irish HEIs.<sup>92</sup> The decision to develop and implement this survey was influenced by both the Bologna Process, as one of the Bologna Process priorities for 2012-2015 is to ‘to involve students and staff in governance structures at all levels<sup>93</sup>, and the *National Strategy for Higher education to 2030*<sup>94</sup>, which stated that; ‘higher education institutions should put in place systems to capture feedback from students, and use this feedback to inform institutional and program management, as well as national policy.’<sup>95</sup>

The Irish Survey of Student engagement is managed as a collaborative partnership between the HEA, IOTI, IUA and the USI. This survey was first run on a pilot basis in 2013, and is now taken by first and final year undergraduate students and postgraduate students in taught postgraduate programmes. The results of the survey will allow the HEI system in Ireland to enhance the quality of student engagement.

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<sup>91</sup> George D Kuh., ‘Foreword’, in H. Coates and Alexander C. McCormick (eds), *Student engagement – a window into undergraduate education*, pp. v-viii: v.

<sup>92</sup> Jonathon Drennan et al., ‘The Irish Survey of Student engagement’, in H. Coates and Alexander C. McCormick (eds), *Student engagement – a window into undergraduate education*, pp. 109 – 126: 112.

<sup>93</sup> EHEA (2012), p. 5.

<sup>94</sup> Department of Education and Skills, *National strategy for higher education to 2030* (Dublin: Department of Education and Skills, 2011).

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

Positive student engagement at an individual level is an essential first step if there is to be meaningful engagement in governance structures and processes in the higher education system.

## **Observations from focus groups in some Irish HEIs**

The focus groups referred to earlier highlighted a number of issues in relation to the practice of student engagement in Irish HEIs. Consistency of practice was a recurring issue. Good practices exist, but are not consistent across institutions or across departments within institutions. The focus groups demonstrated a need for a set of principles which would guide the sector in developing more coherent practices. Some commendable practices and initiatives are in place, and in some places, the culture has been altered by key actions. This however, is not the case in all institutions, or even in all departments. The key issues emerging from the focus groups can be summarised as follows:

### ***Feedback loop:***

In all cases looked at, students are routinely invited to provide feedback on their coursework.

Nonetheless,

- Students who were not provided with some form of evidence that their feedback was taken on board were more likely to be frustrated, and to disengage from the feedback process.

- There may be some issues surrounding the processes used in collecting the feedback at course level, and some improvement could be made in the extent to which the feedback loop is closed.
- It was repeatedly suggested that it is not sufficient to look for student feedback at the end of a module or course, and that feedback should be taken at the midpoint, as well as at the end, to allow recommended changes to be taken on board, and to allow students to see that their feedback was acted upon.

***Communication:***

- The importance of transparency and communication was emphasised. The transparency surrounding decision-making had an important impact on the culture of the institution.
- Staff and students can occasionally have different expectations, it is necessary to communicate early to ensure that both staff and students know of any obstacles.
- It is also necessary to ensure that there are clear lines of communication at all levels between staff and students. This is not always the case.
- Clear communication channels are required within the student union structure, and the institution structure to ensure feedback can be relayed up and down the lines of governance and management.

The case for parity of esteem between staff and students at similar levels of governance was argued.

- It was agreed that there is a time-lag between the first germ of an idea, and actual change within an institution leading to a lack of alignment in the

developmental lifecycle of a policy initiative and the terms of office of student representatives. It was suggested that this lag should be acknowledged and communicated, so that all involved are kept up to date.

- Students can suffer from information overload in the first weeks of term. It was suggested that this information must be easily accessible throughout their time at the institution.

### ***Consistency:***

- Consistency of practice was a recurring issue. Good practices exist, but, as stated, there were marked inconsistencies within and between institutions.
- The sharing of good practice was emphasised.

### ***Representation:***

- The importance of both formal and informal representation and engagement was stressed.
- The challenge for student members of governing body was highlighted as they are required to act as members of the governing body, rather than as sectoral representatives. It was agreed that the formal representation provided for in legislation is insufficient on its own; it is also necessary to include student representation on committees further down the governance scale.
- It was argued that when student representation is limited to high-level governance it can have a negative impact on the culture of engagement throughout the institution.

- Various groups drew attention to practical actions which could improve the quality of student engagement at governance levels. This included ensuring that meetings are held during the academic year, it is also normal practice in some areas that the attendance of student representatives is a requirement if some department-level meetings are to occur.

### ***Power dynamic:***

- The unequal power dynamic between staff and students was repeatedly discussed. It was acknowledged that there can be issues when a single staff member has complete control over the design, delivery, assessment and marking of a course. This can lead to problematic issues, particularly if the relationship breaks down.

### ***Student development***

- Students in Year One or Year Two were rarely found to take an active role in engagement practices.
- The valuable activities of clubs and societies was also noted.
- It was agreed that training is very important, for both executive student union members, but also for class representatives and other reps. Chairpersons and other staff members must ensure that students are facilitated in meetings.

### ***Memory Transfer***

- The issue of memory transfer was a recurring theme. The short duration of the executive officers' time in office was lamented particularly by staff. It was

suggested that incoming student executives join meetings as soon as they are elected, so they have a grasp of proceedings before the beginning of their term.

- The issue of the power-dynamic between permanent staff and elected representatives within students unions was also discussed.

The issue of staff engagement was also raised, and it was suggested that if there is to be a learning community, it is important that each member of that community feels valued. The physical spaces of an institution were also deemed important in fostering engagement. It is now commonplace for institutions to have multiple campuses, this can lead to challenges in fostering engagement and identity with the institution. The design of learning spaces is an important consideration, as this can impact on the nature of the relationship between student and teacher.

### **3. Principles of student engagement**

Considering the literature reviewed above and the narrative of the focus group discussions a range of principles which might guide an institutional approach to student engagement emerge.

These are proposed within a conviction that institutional leadership –including senior management and student unions- are the sine qua non of an active and welcoming approach to student engagement. The value-based principles below will enhance the good practices already in place in Irish institutions.

- 1. Democracy:** The institution and student union will adhere to democratic principles, and will encourage these principles in their staff and student bodies,

and in wider society. It is important that both staff and students are engaged in their institution.

- 2. Student as partner:** The implications of perceiving students as partners, rather than as consumers are substantial and deep. Students being viewed, and viewing themselves, as partners is key in moving beyond legal compliance to embed a culture of engagement throughout the institution.
  
- 3. Inclusivity and diversity:** Institutions will actively seek to gain insights and contributions for all sectors of the academic community in their governance and decision-making processes. This will go beyond the formal legislative requirements, to provide myriad of formal and informal engagement opportunities. Representative structures alone do not provide of themselves for inclusiveness. As institutions become more socially and culturally diverse, student unions will work to ensure that the diverse nature of the student population is represented among executive officers. Committee membership should be gender-balanced, and reflect a range of student backgrounds. The start and end dates of students' terms of office will be taken into account.
  
- 4. Transparency:** Institutions will be transparent in the life-cycle of their decision-making processes, while student unions will be transparent in their internal lines of governance, and in the relationship between elected officers and permanent staff. They will ensure that suitable measures are in place to facilitate knowledge transfer from year to year.

- 5. Students as co-creators:** Students have responsibility for their own learning. Irish HEIs will embrace innovative learning techniques which incorporate the student as creator of their own learning.
- 6. Collegiality and parity of esteem:** In light of encroaching consumerism in higher education internationally, Irish HEIs and student unions will enhance collegiality between staff and students across the institution. This will involve informal engagement practices at a local level within institutions. Central to collegiality is the development of an open and trustful relationship between individual staff and students within the institution. Student representatives should have a good working relationship with their equivalent staff member (e.g. student department representative and head of department). Institutions and student unions are responsible for ensuring that such a communicative relationship exists, and may need to provide a database of staff and student representatives, or specific training for staff and students.
- 7. Professionalism and support:** Students and their representatives will contribute fully and act in a professional manner when they are involved in the structures and processes of the HEI. This professionalism is the joint responsibility of the institution and student union, and all responsibility cannot be placed on the individual student. The institution will recognise that staff and student members on committees may have different life experiences and areas of expertise. Students should be provided with extra supports to ensure that they are able to contribute fully in formal and engagement practices. Different students (for example full- and part-time students) may have differing requirements if they are to contribute fully, and should be accommodated accordingly. Training will also



be arranged as required for committee chairs and other staff to facilitate to assist them in facilitating meaningful engagement.

**8. Feedback and feedback loop:** Institutions will welcome and encourage open and prompt feedback from students. Suitable measure will be put in place across the institution to ensure that students are facilitated in providing feedback on modules and the institution in a safe and valued manner. Feedback practices will be transparent and the feedback loop will be closed in a timely fashion.

**9. Self-criticism and enhancement:** Student unions and institutions will continue to be self-critical of their student engagement practices, they will use evidence-based techniques to assess the value of various initiatives towards the aim of building a culture of engagement, and will continuously work together to enhance the above principles.

**10. Consistency of values:** Institutions and student unions will ensure that consistent values are in place across the institution, and may put procedures in place to allow departments to share good practice measures.

## **Conclusions**

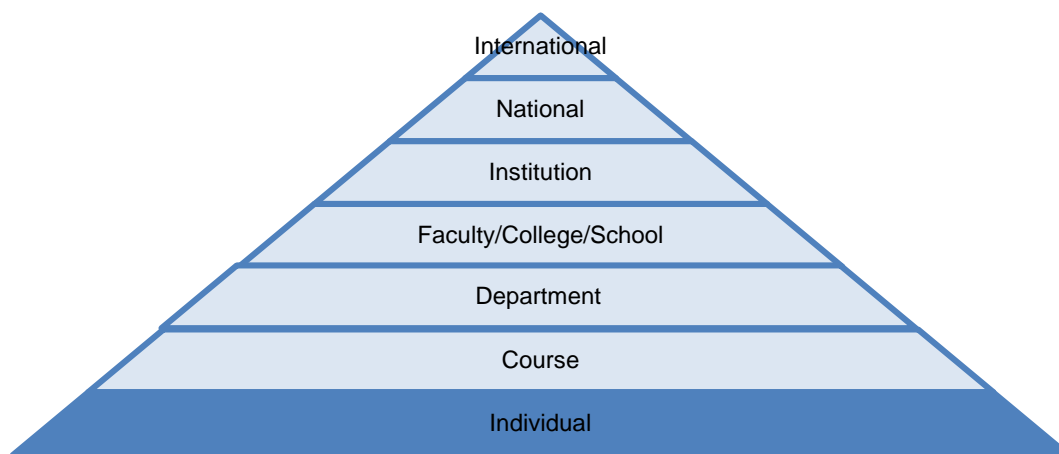
It is anticipated that the above value-based principles will lead to a number of actions within the Irish higher education system. USI, together with QQI and the HEA, will work to increase the capacity of student representatives and their institutions in the development of a national training programme for class representatives, in conjunction with Sparqs. This will assist both the students and the institutions in developing a culture of engagement. The initiative will be centred on the provision of an annual structured training programme for students and students' representatives.

## Abbreviations

DIT	Dublin Institute of Technology
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ESG	European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher education
ESU	European Students' Union
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEA	Higher Education Authority
IOT	Institute of Technology
IOTI	Institutes of Technology, Ireland
ISSE	Irish Survey of Student Engagement
IUA	Irish Universities Association
NSSE	National Survey of Student Engagement
NUS	National Union of Students (Britain)
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
RIA	Royal Irish Academy
TSEP	The Student Engagement Partnership
Sparqs	Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland
SU	Student Union
UCD	University College Dublin
UL	University of Limerick
USI	Union of Students in Ireland

## Appendix 1: Possible model for student engagement at seven levels of HEI governance:

### Individual



### *Possible forms of engagement at individual level:*

Student Voice	Student in decision-making role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voting in class representative elections</li> <li>• Having the freedom and necessary information to decide if they would like to stand for election</li> <li>• Electing sabbatical officers</li> <li>• Attending public meetings</li> <li>• Receiving feedback on their input to the ISSE and other surveys</li> <li>• Bringing concerns and suggestions to class representative</li> <li>• Contribute to focus groups used to gain the views of students on specific matters</li> <li>• Completing Irish Survey of Student engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employed within university as peer tutor, tutor, disability support worker, library assistant, orientation guides, housing assistants, student centre, etc.</li> <li>• Developing research or teaching project with staff</li> <li>• Working in administrative role in the HEI</li> <li>• Taking on student union duties</li> <li>• Sports Clubs and Societies committee membership</li> <li>• Student journalist in student union media</li> <li>• Working with staff member in curriculum design</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contacting the relevant SU sabbatical officer</li> <li>• Attending organised feedback events</li> <li>• Committing to staff-student agreement binding each to their rights and responsibilities within the constitution</li> <li>• Informally engaging with staff inside and outside the classroom</li> </ul>	
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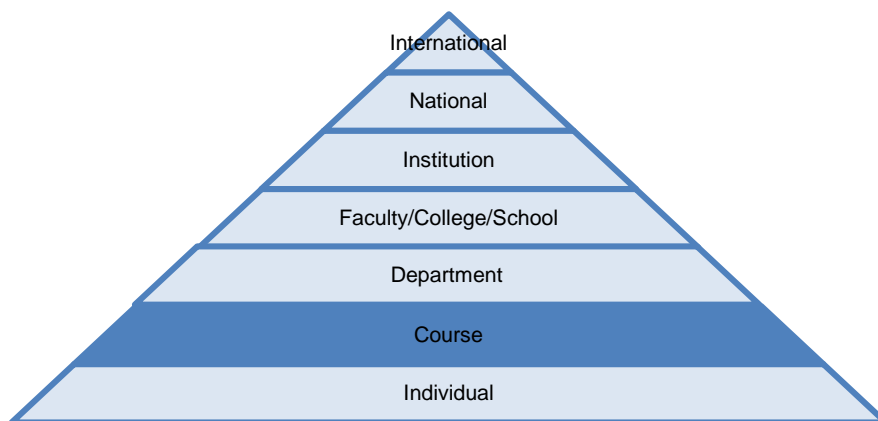
***Possible benefits to student and institution arising from engagement at this level:***

- A culture of engagement at this level can foster a sense of satisfaction among students and staff, and develop chances for engagement further up the scale.
- Students leave the Institution with a sense of belonging

***Possible challenges to student engagement at this level:***

- Lack of information on opportunities for engagement
- Lack of understanding of power of students and their representatives to be change agents in the HEI
- Lack of training opportunities to develop relevant skills to engage with existing opportunities
- Unable to give extra time to voluntary activities due to financial necessity
- Unable to give extra time to voluntary activities due to family/caring commitments
- Distance learner who does not regularly visit campus
- Lack of desire to engage
- Spending little time on campus due to family, work, or other commitments
- Poor relationship between student and their institution
- Lack of encouragement from staff

## Course



### ***Possible forms of engagement at Class-Rep level:***

<b>Student Voice</b>	<b>Student in decision-making role</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring concerns and suggestions of students to staff</li> <li>• Communicate information from staff to students</li> <li>• Select department representative</li> <li>• Member of staff-student liaison committee</li> <li>• Receive training</li> <li>• Bring concerns and suggestions to department representative</li> <li>• Attend student council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sit on quality review committee</li> <li>• Sit on course-development committee</li> <li>• Provide training to other representatives</li> <li>• Develop training for other representatives</li> <li>• Organise events to build sense of community between staff and students</li> <li>• Develop, with staff, student engagement policy for course</li> </ul>

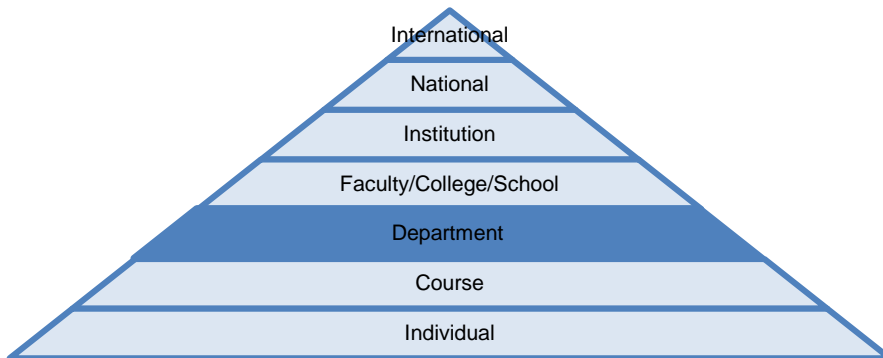
### ***Possible benefits to student and institution arising from engagement at this level:***

- Awards for students
- Greater sense of satisfaction for staff
- Better lines of communication within Student Union and within department
- Students sensing that they are gaining skills for their future career
- Higher quality courses

***Possible challenges to student engagement at this level:***

- Poor training
- Lack of information about the scope of the role
- Poor sense of purpose
- Little sense of achievement
- Lack of culture of engagement
- Little organisational memory and continuity
- Lack of information and training for staff on purpose of class rep
- Lack of conscious and coordinated decision on purpose of class rep system between institution and student union
- Confused sense of ownership of class rep system between student union and institution
- Lack of peer support and opportunities to engage with other reps
- Lack of supports after initial training
- No formal arena for communication between staff and students
- Too much pressure on student representative to initiate communication

## Department



### ***Possible forms of engagement at department level:***

<b>Student Voice</b>	<b>Student in decision-making role</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select faculty representative</li> <li>• Bring concerns and suggestions to staff</li> <li>• Meet with head of department to discuss concerns of staff</li> <li>• Gauge opinion of students with questionnaire</li> <li>• Listen to needs of individual students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sit on department-level committees</li> <li>• Sit on department-level quality-review committees</li> <li>• Sit on student council</li> <li>• Sit on staff-student liaison committee</li> <li>• Chairing committees</li> <li>• Train other student representatives</li> <li>• Develop questionnaires for students in department</li> <li>• Organise engagement events and processes within the department in partnership with staff</li> <li>• Develop engagement procedures for department with Head of Department, staff and course reps</li> <li>• Develop teaching and learning strategies with staff</li> <li>• Develop student support strategies with staff</li> </ul>

### ***Possible benefits to student and institution arising from engagement at this level:***

- Greater sense of community within department
- Stronger relationship between staff and students

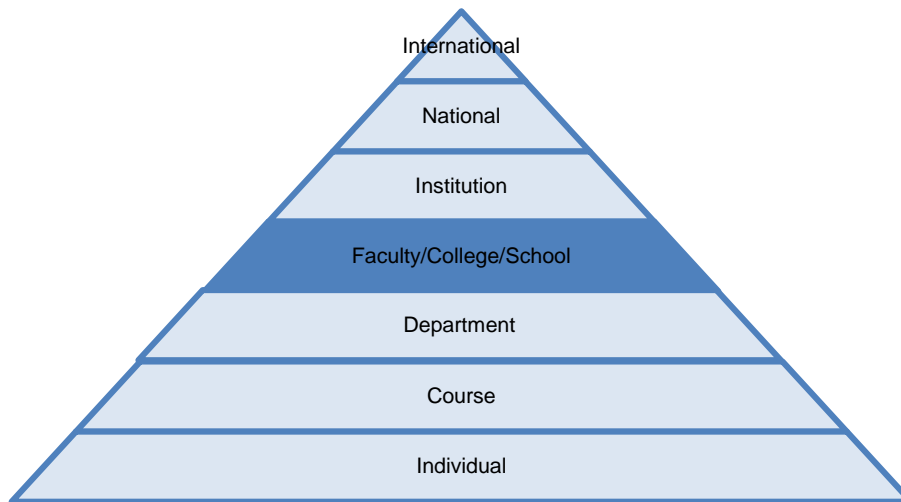


- Greater satisfaction among staff and students
- Students gain skills for later careers

***Possible challenges to student engagement at this level:***

- Lack of information on the role in advance
- Poor training for students and staff
- A sense that the role is reserved for a chosen few, or members of a certain clique
- Lack of understanding of the role within the department
- Lack of supports from student union and department
- Time pressure
- Lack of organisational memory
- Lack of diversity among representatives, making it potentially exclusive to those who are not young, white, and male full-time students.

## Faculty



### ***Possible forms of engagement at institution level:***

<b>Student Voice</b>	<b>Student in decision-making role</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting with department reps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sit on executive of student union</li> <li>• Sit on faculty-level committees</li> <li>• Sit on faculty-level quality-review boards</li> <li>• Chairing committees</li> <li>• Developing policy with staff</li> <li>• Developing training</li> </ul>

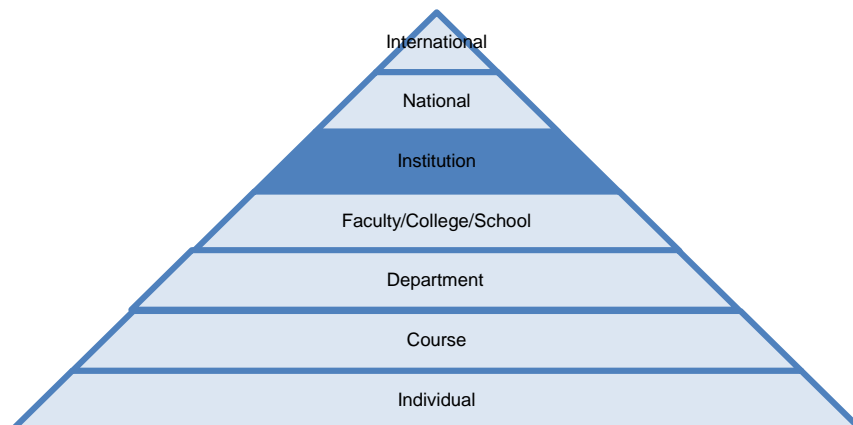
### ***Possible benefits to student and institution arising from engagement at this level:***

- Greater sense of community within faculty
- Stronger relationship between staff and students, and between departments in school
- Greater satisfaction among staff and students
- Students gain skills for later careers

### ***Possible challenges to student engagement at this level:***

- Lack of clear role
- Lack of supports
- Lack of training
- Lack of training for chairs and staff on how to facilitate student contribution at committees
- Poor culture of engagement

## Institution



### ***Possible forms of engagement at institution level:***

<b>Student Voice</b>	<b>Student in decision-making role</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organise protests and campaigns</li> <li>• Support students through exams appeal process</li> <li>• Vote for national student representatives</li> <li>• Meet with HEI Executive</li> <li>• Sit as non-speaking members on HEI committees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Run student council</li> <li>• Sit on student executive</li> <li>• Sit on governing authority</li> <li>• Sit on academic council</li> <li>• Sit on HEI sub-committees</li> <li>• Chairing committees</li> <li>• Work with relevant committees to develop high-level strategies on engagement, student services, teaching and learning etc.</li> <li>• Develop policy and procedures with staff</li> <li>• Work with national-level bodies</li> </ul>

### ***Possible benefits to student and institution arising from engagement at this level:***

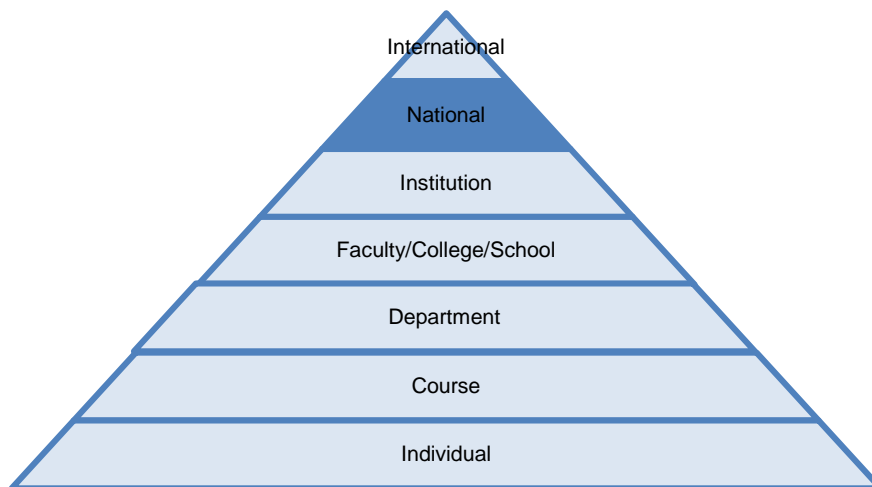
- Serious failure in communication is avoided
- A strong sense of a mutually beneficial relationship
- A strong sense of belonging to an academic community for both staff and students

### ***Possible challenges to student engagement at this level:***

- Lack of appropriate training for representatives
- Lack of clear lines of communication with student body
- Lack of mandate due to small numbers voting in elections
- Lack of diversity among representatives

- Lack of understanding of diverse student experience
- Lack of understanding of mandate and role of student representatives on behalf of institutions
- Lack of financial support and challenges in gaining funding
- Challenge for student representatives to learn how to navigate committees in practice
- A real or perceived sense that their opinions and inputs are not valued
- Difficulty in accessing the places where decisions actually get made
- Lack of training for chairs and staff on how to facilitate student contribution at committees

## National



### ***Possible forms of engagement at national level:***

Student Voice	Student in decision-making role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Run campaigns and protests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two student representatives are members of Irish Higher education Quality Network. All the participating organisations chair the Network in turn. Chairperson begins in October and finishes in September.</li> <li>The president of USI sits on the board of the HEA</li> <li>Run Union of Students in Ireland</li> <li>Develop policies on student engagement etc. with IUA, IOTI, DIT and government agencies</li> </ul>

### ***Possible benefits to student and institution arising from engagement at this level:***

- Serious engagement at this level can filter down to the five lower levels, allowing individual Institutions and student unions to feel that their engagement efforts are valued and encouraged.

### ***Possible challenges to student engagement at this level:***

- USI are not an entirely representational body as they do not represent all HEIs in the country
- Lack of training.

- Challenge for representatives in managing the workload associated with numerous committee memberships.
- Managing to achieve aims in one-year term office.
- Perception among some that USI is a cliquish organisation.
- Perception among some that USI do not always operate professionally.

## Appendix 2: International Models

### **sparqs**

Sparqs, was founded in 2003 as 'Student participation in quality Scotland, but changed its name in May 2015 name to include the word 'partnership'. The agency is designed 'help universities and colleges develop the best possible structures and cultures for student engagement' while also developing the student voice at a national level. It is built on the principles that:

- Both students and institutions are more successful when they work together in partnership.
- Work with students is not just about seeking their feedback for problem solving, but on working together to develop solutions and build strategies to meet the challenges of the future.
- Students and staff working together in this way will help colleges and universities continually strive to provide the very best experience possible.<sup>96</sup>

It is funded by the Scottish Funding Council, and hosted on their behalf by the National Union of Students (NUS) Scotland, and directed by a steering group with sector-wide membership. Sparqs is primarily interested in student engagement in quality enhancement procedures. Their mission is to 'Ensure that students are able to engage as partners at all levels of quality assurance and enhancement activities'.<sup>97</sup> In 2011, Sparqs developed 'A Student engagement Framework for Scotland' which was endorsed

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<sup>96</sup> <http://sparqs.ac.uk/upfiles/About%20sparqs%20leaflet%20-%20single%20pages%20version.pdf>

<sup>97</sup> Sparqs, Strategic Plan, 2013-18, p.5.

by sector agencies and representative bodies in the university and college sectors. The framework was designed to help institutions and student associations as they develop and plan their own student engagement activities. Sparqs provide training and consultancy to institutions and students associations in developing their student engagement practices. They have designed training for new class representatives which is delivered by student trainers, as well as for senior student officers in universities.

Their work includes training 3,000 class reps per year, as well as faculty reps and senior student officers, and student trainers. The organisation also provides guidance on creating Student Partnership Agreements, guidance on how best to provide accreditation and awards for student representatives, and professional development resources for staff about student engagement.<sup>98</sup> Their 'Toolkit on developing departmental representation' addresses the issue that 'Institutions and students' associations often find the department the most challenging and least developed level of student engagement'.<sup>99</sup> It provides step-by-step assistance on how to increase this engagement. It also discusses the merit of different methods of selecting suitable representatives, allowing each institution, department, and student union, to decide on what is the best method for their individual situation. The toolkit can be found here: <http://www.sparqs.ac.uk/upfiles/DPREP%20toolkit.pdf>

The self-assessment questions on the structure of staff-student liaison committees are helpful to an institution deciding how they would like their student engagement procedures to work in practice:

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<sup>98</sup> <http://www.sparqs.ac.uk/aboutus.php>

<sup>99</sup> <http://www.sparqs.ac.uk/upfiles/DPREP%20toolkit.pdf> accessed 10 Dec. 2015.



<b>Formal or informal?</b>	
<p>The departmental council takes place in a meeting room and is formally minuted so that there is a clear record of what's been discussed and what action points have been agreed, Papers are called and circulated in advance so people can prepare for the meeting thoroughly. There is a chair elected at the first meeting of each academic year.</p>	<p>The departmental council meets in a common room or social space, with lunch or light snacks provided. Although there is one person to facilitate the meeting, conversation tends to be relaxed with no real structure to the deliberations other than the issues brought forward on the day by those who turn up.</p>
<p>Your view:</p>	

<b>Staff-led or student-led?</b>	
<p>The chair and minute clerk of the departmental council are members of staff. This spares students the responsibility and means that continuity is provided in the way the council operates.</p>	<p>The departmental council's chair is the departmental representative or another senior student officer, and the minute clerk is another class rep. It's the students' meeting so they alone are responsible for its conduct and success.</p>
<p>Your view:</p>	

<b>Reactive or proactive?</b>	
<p>The departmental council is a useful “focus group” for the teaching staff and management in the department to get a snapshot of what reps think of key issues. Sometimes group work is used to allow reps to think deeply about the issues the staff want to ask them about. Ultimately, though, the real decision-making power lies in the course and departmental committees, and this is only a sounding board.</p>	<p>Class reps have not only a right but a responsibility to steer the agenda of the departmental council. They’re not just there to pass comment on issues the staff ask them about, but to get the staff to pass comment on issues and suggestions they as students want to raise. Decisions that come out of the meetings inform the agenda and priorities of other formal committees and the school’s operational plan.</p>
<p>Your view:</p>	

<b>Issue-led or themed?</b>	
<p>Departmental council agendas are shaped purely by the issues that are raised by those attending. That means that meetings are very responsive and could end up discussing a whole range of issues all at once, time-permitting, that can’t be predicted beforehand.</p>	<p>Departmental council meetings are themed – so each meeting explores only one particular topic in depth, for instance the library and IT; the curriculum and timetabling; assessment, and so on. Relevant staff make introductory presentations to spark debate.</p>
<p>Your view:</p>	

<b>Student-led or a partnership?</b>	
<p>The departmental council is all about the class reps – they must have the space and freedom to talk about what they want. A very small number of staff are there only to answer specific questions, and only at the invitation of the students.</p>	<p>The departmental council exists to foster partnership. Therefore a wide range of management, teaching and administrative staff attend, so that reps can learn more about their work, and can inform lots of staff at once about student views.</p>
<p>Your view:</p>	

<b>Limited or inclusive?</b>	
<p>The departmental council is for class reps and the departmental representative to share their views with each other and with staff, and attendance is in the reps' job descriptions. No other students need (or are expected) to attend.</p>	<p>The departmental council is for anyone. All students have valid views and it doesn't even matter whether the class reps turn up – just as long as there are plenty students there and the discussions are informative and engaging.</p>
<p>Your view:</p>	

Frequent or infrequent?	
The departmental council should meet at least monthly. It is important for there to be regular exchange about the learning experience in the department, and it helps everyone to get to know each other and build good relationships.	The departmental council only needs to meet once a term. That way there is less time commitment, and discussions can be deep and rich. In any case, course committees exist besides this, so it's important not to overload students.
Your view:	

Uniform or flexible?	
The departmental council should have a single model across the institution. It is important to get a consistent and comparable quality of student views from across the institution.	Each department has its own culture and dynamic, so should run its council however it chooses. There should even be devolved choice as to whether a department ought to have one at all.
Your view:	

When Sparqs was first set up, they recognised a difference between the opportunity for student involvement and actual engagement. The three stages they observed were:

1. **Opportunity:** students are presented with the opportunity to attend meetings and events

2. **Attendance:** students take up those opportunities and attend meetings and events
3. **Engagement:** students not only take up the opportunities presented by the institution, but are able to make an effective contribution.<sup>100</sup>

The questions asked were as follows:

*Student representation on and at institutional committees*

1. What can institutions do to encourage their cohort of students to become involved in representing the views of their fellow students?
2. What can institutions change about their own procedures to encourage student representatives to engage further with the business of institutional committees?
3. How can institutions ensure that students on the Court or Governing Body of the institution feel more comfortable about their position?
4. Is there clear agreement between institutions and between management and student representatives on the type of institution committees that it is inappropriate for students to sit on?

*Student representation on and at faculty-level committees*

1. How can institutions improve the attendance of student representatives at faculty-level committees?
2. Should faculty representatives be chosen from amongst the course representatives or through students' association?

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<sup>100</sup> D. Cockburn, *Report of the higher education mapping exercise of student involvement in quality assurance and enhancement processes*, (Sparqs, 2005).  
<http://www.sparqs.ac.uk/upfiles/HE%20Mapping%20Report.pdf>

3. Is there agreement on the type of faculty-level committee that it is appropriate and inappropriate for student representatives to sit on?
4. Can the format and/or business of faculty-level committees be amended so as to encourage student representatives to make a better informed and more useful contribution to such committees?

*Student engagement at the department or programme level*

1. Can institutions and students' associations make the role and remit of course representative clearer to all connected with the system?
2. How can institutions and students' associations involve distance-learning students, international students, postgraduate and part-time students more effectively within their student representative structures?
3. How can institutions and students' associations encourage students to communicate with their representatives and representatives to better communicate with each other?
4. How can institutions and students' associations use the resource held in their course representatives in other ways to feed back information on the wider student experience?
5. How can institutions and students' associations find out how effective the course representative system actually is across various departments?

*Informal links between student representatives and institutional staff*

1. How can institutions encourage informal contact from their student representatives, particularly at institutional level?
2. How can students associations encourage informal contact with institutional management?
3. How can informal contact between students' associations and management at the faculty level be more meaningful?
4. How can informal contacts and working relationships be embedded so that they continue when student representatives or institutional managers are replaced?

*Student involvement outside the committee structures*

1. What are the benefits of student involvement in internal subject reviews, disciplinary, appeals and complaints committees?
2. Are there further means by which students can be involved in internal subject reviews, disciplinary, appeals and complaints committees?
3. Are the "miscellaneous" mechanisms for generating student involvement at some institutions transferable to other institutions?
4. How do these "miscellaneous" mechanisms relate to existing student representative structures?

*Mechanisms in place to respond to student views*

1. How can we encourage staff-student liaison committees to discuss *learning* as well as *teaching*?
2. How can institutions better report back to students on how they have responded to student feedback and comment at staff-student liaison meetings?
3. Should staff-student liaison committees discuss broader issues of academic success, for example the impact of support services on the teaching and learning within a department or programme?
4. Do staff-student liaison committees have a wider role in feeding back information about the student experience to institutional and academic management at the centre of the institution?

*Views and opinions expressed about student representation*

1. How do we encourage communication between student representatives to strengthen the positions and contribution of student representatives sitting on institutional committees?
2. How can we encourage student representatives to emphasise the positive learning experiences as well as the negative?
3. How might we raise awareness of the whole student body about the course representative system?
4. What ways are there to ensure that the “change-over” of both sabbatical and non-sabbatical student officers has a minimal effect on effective student involvement?



*Support and training provided to course representation*

1. What systems of support are necessary to assist course representatives to discharge their responsibilities more effectively?
2. How can institutions and students' associations work together to support course representatives?
3. What responsibilities for supporting course representatives belong to the institution and which belong to the students' association?
4. How might students' associations communicate with course representatives more effectively?

*Incentives and recognition for student representatives*

1. What are the appropriate incentives for student representatives – how do we get the balance right between incentives and recognition?
2. How can institutions and students' associations encourage those who want to make a difference to become proactive representatives?
3. How can institutions and students' associations assist student representatives to articulate the skills they have developed through their representative functions?
4. Is it appropriate to accredit the role of student representatives with academic credit?

### *Engagement of students in national quality mechanisms*

1. How can we encourage more student representatives to engage with national quality structures?
2. How do student representatives benefit from engagement with national quality structures?
3. Should we be encouraging more student representatives to be honest at their meetings with Enhancement-led institutional review panels, and if so how?

### **Birmingham City University (BCU)**

BCU is held up as a model of student engagement practices in England. In 2008, it embarked upon a student engagement programme to combat the culture of non-engagement, where students attended lectures but spent limited time on campus. In 2010 BCU won the Times Higher education Award for Outstanding Support for Students and in 2012 acted as consultants to the 'Students as Partners' national initiative of the Higher education Academy. BCU is a large university of 24,000 students which has recently moved from eight disparate campuses to one central campus. BCU is very proud of its engagement practices, and went so far as to produce a book co-written by staff and students on this process of empowerment.

<sup>101</sup> The book suggests that 'both institutions and student representative bodies alike need to question some of the long held dogma on how universities and students should interact'.<sup>102</sup> They consciously sought to change the existing culture to the extent that engagement has become embedded, and students became 'active

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<sup>101</sup> C. Nygaard et al (ed.), *Student engagement – identity, motivation and community* (Oxfordshire: Libri, 2013).

<sup>102</sup>

citizens' of the academic community, rather than consumers involved in a transaction.

Some of the practices at BCU are revolutionary. The Student Academic Partners Scheme (SAP) scheme employs students as active members of learning and teaching project teams to ensure students engage with staff partners. So far, the institution has supported over 160 projects with the scheme. A pamphlet written by the student union describes their success:

The SAP Scheme offers an opportunity for paid employment (for up to 100 hours of work) to enable students to be active members of project teams, to work in equal partnership with faculties to strengthen the learning and teaching development of the University. Students engaged in the scheme are partners not assistants as many projects are initiated and led by students. The initiative is run in partnership with Birmingham City Students' Union, Students are paid through the Students' Union and all SAP information is hosted on the SU website at [www.bcusu.com/saps/](http://www.bcusu.com/saps/) . The Students' Union has played a pivotal role in this development from the initial design phase and continues to be a force in its on-going development.<sup>103</sup>

Another project, Student Academic Mentoring Partnership Scheme (StAMP), was launched in 2011 with the intention 'of creating student-led interventions that would better support faculties seeking to improve the progression and achievement of their students.' Students and staff work together to design a variety of peer-based support. In its first year the programme employed 64 students spread across the University.

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<sup>103</sup> Birmingham City Students' Union, *Student engagement: a state of mind*

The project is seen to help both mentor and mentee as teaching others is seen as a good tool in learning.

Probably the most innovative initiative at Birmingham City University is the OpportUNlty project. This sees students being employed in administrative positions in the university. The project was named and branded by a student through a competition. The idea is that: 'Students as service users will become the service providers and designers to ensure high student satisfaction and integration. Therefore, students will be able to deliver, lead and support all aspects of the learning experience from administrative to research and mentoring roles.' The Head of Learning Partnerships, Luke Milliard, has stated:

The vision is to see students employed in every aspect of the University's operations so that academics and students can't help but bump into each other. The mantra we use is that we want to make the informal conversations of staff and students normal, discussions in the café, in the library, in the finance office. I see student concerns, which could become major problems being intercepted through informal conversations created through these engagements.

If we are really about learning and teaching then we should have students working with us. Everything we do should be about improving the student learning experience. It is one of the key reasons why we have so many students working with us within CELT. The student intern team, which works with me, refreshes my perspectives as they come in with new ideas, challenge existing practices and I think create a more dynamic office. It also supports our work as the students have direct access to their fellow students

and can utilise this network across the University, a network which I could never possibly access and this is proving invaluable.<sup>104</sup>

His vision is that in five years 'a prospective student will phone up the University to find out about a course and will talk to a student. What better way for students to find out about this University than talk to other students. Everywhere you go in the University you will see students working whether it be in the admissions office or in the Students' Union.'

### **National Union of Students (UK)**

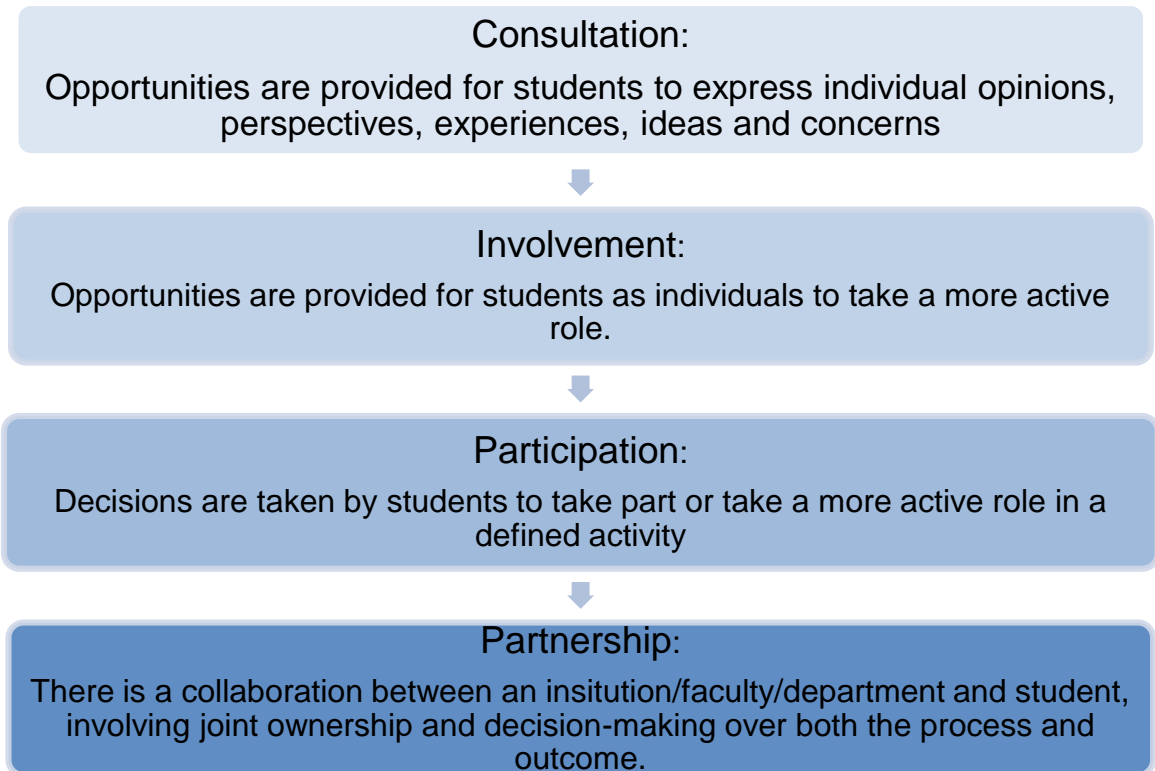
The National Union of Students in Britain and the British Higher education Academy have developed a student-engagement toolkit which looks at student engagement in quality review practices, as well as lower-level governance. The areas explored are:

1. Gathering, evaluating and responding to module feedback
2. The cycle of student representation
  - a. Awareness raising and recognition of the role
  - b. Nominations and elections
  - c. Training for the role
  - d. Undertaking the role
  - e. Monitoring and reviewing effectiveness
3. Involving students in curriculum design

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<sup>104</sup> Centre for the enhancement of teaching and learning and Birmingham City students union, 'Student engagement: a state of mind' (Birmingham), p.5.

Like Arnstein's ladder, the toolkit advises that there are levels of engagement, they describe four:



105

The toolkit asks institutions and individual student unions to look at their engagement practices and create SMART goals as required to move those practices further towards 'partnership'.

All of the responsibility for positive student engagement procedures does not fall with the staff of the institution. It is also essential that there are good governance structures within the local student union. The National Union of Students in Britain have undertaken a 'Good Governance Project'. This comprehensive study surveyed all HEIs and student unions in England and received a 70% response rate from

<sup>105</sup> <file:///C:/Users/moriordan/Downloads/SET%20BOOKLET%2002.pdf>

Student Unions and 63% from HEIs. One of the results was a self-assessment toolkit to allow individual student unions to assess how they measured up to the seven high-level principles of:

1. Democracy
2. Openness and Accountability
3. Clarity about the role of the Board
4. Effective Trustees and Board Performance
5. Delivering Organisational Purpose
6. Exercising Control
7. Integrity

The project also developed a template relationship agreement supported by the National Union of Students and several academic partners including the Academic Registrars Council and the Committee of University Chairs in the UK.<sup>106</sup> The toolkit is designed to help institutions and their student unions to develop a relationship based on the principles of:

1. Strategic partnership
2. Student centred
3. Respect and understanding
4. Openness and trust
5. Mutual support and commitment
6. Independence
7. Accountability

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<sup>106</sup> [http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/pageassets/goodgovernance/guidance/CUC-Guide\\_March2011.pdf](http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/pageassets/goodgovernance/guidance/CUC-Guide_March2011.pdf)

## 8. Diversity and Equality

The National Union of Students has also produced guidance for members of governing bodies on student engagement. This project is supported by the Committee of University Chairs and recommends ten actions for all governing bodies in the UK. It recommends that procedures are put in place to allow for 'reciprocal involvement in the strategic planning processes of both higher education institution and students' union'. It recommends a number of measures to assist student members of governing bodies including a thorough induction, a mentoring scheme, appointing a named member of the governing authority to champion excellent working relationships with the student union, and that Governing Bodies undertake an annual audit of the relationship with the student union, measuring it against the 'Relationship Agreement' developed and signed by the Institution and the student union.



## Appendix 3: Extracts from relevant legislation

All emphases have been added by the author

### Institutes of Technology Act 1992-2006

...

#### **Governing bodies.**

6.—(1) There shall be a governing body of a college and the governing body, save as otherwise provided by this Act, shall perform the functions conferred on the college by this Act.

4.—(1) Upon the expiration of the term of office of a governing body, the ordinary members shall be appointed by the Minister, on the recommendation of the vocational education committee, in accordance with the following provisions:

- (a) six persons of whom at least three shall be members of a local authority shall be nominated by the vocational education committee;
- (b) if the region served by the college includes all or part of the functional area of one or more than one vocational education committee other than the vocational education committee in whose functional area the college is situated, the Minister may direct that one or more, but not more than four in all, of the persons to whom paragraph (a) relates, shall be nominated by such of those other committees as the Minister may specify;
- (c) two persons, one of whom shall be a woman and one a man, being members of the academic staff of the college who are employed on a permanent, full-time basis or who are required, during the period

beginning on the 1st day of September preceding the election and ending on the following 31st day of August, to teach not less than 280 time-tabled hours in the college, or such other number of hours as the Minster may from time to time specify, shall be elected by that staff in accordance with regulations made by the governing body;

(d) one person, being a member of the staff (other than the academic staff) of the College who are employed on a permanent, full-time basis or who are required, during the period beginning on the 1st day of September preceding the election and ending on the following 31st day of August, to work not less than 50 per cent of the number of hours which a full-time member of such staff is required to work, shall be elected by that staff in accordance with regulations made by the governing body;

(e) two persons, one of whom shall be a woman and one a man, being registered students of the college, shall be chosen in accordance with regulations made by the governing body; and for the purposes of this provision registered students shall include full-time officers of the Students Union or other student representative body recognised by the governing body for that purpose;

(f) one person shall be nominated by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions;

(g) five persons shall be nominated by the vocational education committee from among persons nominated to that committee by such organisations as the college, on the recommendation of the academic council considers require representation having regard to the particular courses provided by the college, excluding interests otherwise represented on the governing body. Such organisations shall be representative of industry, agriculture, commerce, the professions and other interests as appropriate to the activities of the college.

(2) In making recommendations to the Minister pursuant to subsection (1), the vocational education committee shall—

(a) ensure that not fewer than seven of those so recommended are women and not fewer than seven are men, and

(b) make such recommendations subject to such directives as may be issued by the Minister from time to time, including directives relating to an appropriate gender balance among the persons nominated by the vocational education committee under paragraph (a) of subsection (1).

“Functions of governing bodies.

7. — (1) The functions of the governing body of a college shall be, in pursuance of the functions of the college under section 5 but within the constraints of the college’s budget under section 13—

(a) to control and administer the land and other property of the college,

(b) to appoint the Director and such other staff as it thinks necessary for the purposes of the college, and

(c) to perform such other functions as are conferred on it by this or any other

Act.

(2) For the purpose of the appointment of the Director under subsection (1)(b), the governing body shall develop such interview and other procedures as in its opinion will best ensure participation in the selection process by candidates of a high calibre from both within and outside of the college and shall publish such procedures in such manner as it considers appropriate.

(3) A governing body has, subject to this or any other Act, such powers as are necessary for the purposes of performing its functions.

(4) A governing body may, from time to time, appoint such and as many committees, consisting either wholly or partly of members of the governing body, as it thinks necessary to assist it in the performance of its functions and may assign to those committees such of its functions as it thinks fit.

(5) A committee appointed under subsection (4) shall operate in such manner as the governing body may direct and its acts shall be subject to confirmation by the governing body, unless the governing body otherwise directs.

(6) In performing its functions a governing body, or, where appropriate, a committee shall—

(a) comply with such policy directions as may be issued by the Minister from time to time, including directions relating to the levels and range of programmes offered by the college,

(b) have regard to the promotion and use of the Irish language as a language of general communication and promote the cultivation of the Irish language and its associated literary and cultural traditions,

(c) have regard to the attainment of gender balance and equality of opportunity among the students and staff of the college and shall, in particular, promote access to education in the college by economically or socially disadvantaged persons, by persons who have a disability and by persons from sections of society significantly under-represented in the student body,

(d) ensure as far as it can that the college contributes to the promotion of the economic, cultural and social development of the State and to respect for the diversity of values, beliefs and traditions in Irish society, and

(e) have regard to the statutory responsibilities of other education providers.”.

...

Equality policy.

21D.— (1) A governing body shall, as soon as practicable but not later than 12 months after the commencement of this section and at such other times as it thinks fit, require the Director to prepare a statement of the policies of the college in respect of—

(a) access to education in the college by economically or socially disadvantaged persons, by persons who have a disability and by persons from sections of society significantly under-represented in the student body, and

(b) equality, including gender equality, in all activities of the college,

and the Director, in preparing the statement, shall have regard to such policies on those matters as may from time to time be determined by the Minister.

(2) A governing body may either approve the statement prepared under subsection (1) without modification or, after consultation with the Director, approve the statement with such modifications as it thinks fit; in exercising its powers under this subsection the governing body shall have regard to the resources available to the college.

(3) A college shall implement the policies set out in the statement as approved under subsection (2).

Dispute resolution.

21E. — (1) A governing body shall establish procedures for the resolution of disputes that arise in the college.

(2) Subsection (1) shall not apply to industrial relations disputes, which shall be dealt with through normal industrial relations structures operating in the college.

(3) Procedures established under subsection (1) shall—

(a) be embodied in writing,

(b) be established following consultation with recognised staff associations and trade unions representing the staff of the college and with the students union or other student representative body, and

(c) provide for consideration of issues in dispute by an independent person or persons, as appropriate.

## **Dublin Institute of Technology Act, 1992 And 2006**

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH AN INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING TO BE KNOWN AS INSTITIÚID TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA BHAILE ÁTHA CLIATH OR IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AS THE DUBLIN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, TO DEFINE ITS FUNCTIONS AND TO PROVIDE FOR OTHER MATTERS CONNECTED WITH THE FOREGOING. [19th July, 1992]

Membership of Institute.

4.—(1) The members of the Institute shall be—

- (a) the members of the Governing Body,
- (b) the members of the Academic Council,
- (c) the members of the staff,
- (d) the registered students of the Institute,
- (e) the graduates of the Institute,
- (f) such other persons as the Governing Body may appoint to be

members.

(2) Membership of the Institute under subsection (1) (f) shall continue until the Governing Body otherwise declares.

Governing Body.

6.—(1) There shall be a Governing Body of the Institute and the Governing Body, save as

otherwise provided by this Act, shall perform the functions conferred on the Institute by this Act.

**(2) The Governing Body shall consist of—**

- (a) the Chairman and 18 ordinary members, and
- (b) the President of the Institute.

(3) The first members (other than the Chairman and the President) of the Governing Body shall be persons appointed by the Minister on the recommendation of the Vocational Education Committee and the ordinary members shall be recommended in accordance with the provisions of subsection (4) (a), (e), (f) and (g), together with five other persons nominated by the Minister as ordinary members and shall hold office for a period of one year from the date of their appointment.

(4) Upon the expiration of the term of office of the first ordinary members, the ordinary members of the Governing Body shall be appointed by the Minister, on the recommendation of the Vocational Education Committee, in accordance with the following provisions:

- (a) six persons shall be nominated by the Vocational Education Committee;
- (b) two persons, being members of the academic staff of the Institute, shall be elected by that staff, in accordance with regulations made by the Governing Body;
- (c) one person, being a member of the staff (other than the academic staff) of the Institute, shall be elected by that staff in accordance with regulations made by the Governing Body;



(d) two persons, being registered students of the Institute, shall be elected by the registered students in accordance with regulations made by the Governing Body;

(e) one person shall be nominated by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions;

(f) one person shall be nominated by the University of Dublin;

(g) five persons shall be nominated by such organisations as the Vocational Education Committee considers require representation having regard to the particular courses provided by the Institute, excluding interests otherwise represented on the Governing Body. Such organisations shall be representative of industry, agriculture, commerce, the professions and other interests as appropriate to the activities of the Institute.

...

#### **Functions of Governing Body.**

7. — (1) The functions of the Governing Body shall be, in pursuance of the functions of the Institute under section 5 but within the constraints of the Institute's budget under section 14—

(a) to control and administer the land and other property of the Institute,

(b) to appoint the President and such other staff as it thinks necessary for the purposes of the Institute, and

(c) to perform such other functions as are conferred on it by this or any other Act.

(2) For the purpose of the appointment of the President under subsection (1) (b), the Governing Body shall develop such interview and other procedures as in its opinion will best ensure participation in the selection process by candidates of a high calibre

from both within and outside of the Institute and shall publish such procedures in such manner as it considers appropriate.

(3) The Governing Body has, subject to this or any other Act, such powers as are necessary for the purposes of performing its functions.

(4) The Governing Body may, from time to time, appoint such and as many committees, consisting either wholly or partly of members of the Governing Body, as it thinks necessary to assist it in the performance of its functions and may assign to those committees such of its functions as it thinks fit.

(5) A committee appointed under subsection (4) shall operate in such manner as the Governing Body may direct and its acts shall be subject to confirmation by the Governing Body, unless the Governing Body otherwise directs.

(6) In performing its functions the Governing Body, or, where appropriate, a committee, shall—

(a) comply with such policy directions as may be issued by the Minister from time to time, including directions relating to the levels and range of programmes offered by the Institute,

(b) have regard to the promotion and use of the Irish language as a language of general communication and promote the cultivation of the Irish language and its associated literary and cultural traditions,

(c) have regard to the attainment of gender balance and equality of opportunity among the students and staff of the Institute and shall, in particular, promote access to education in the Institute by economically or socially disadvantaged persons, by persons who have a disability and by

persons from sections of society significantly under-represented in the student body,

(d) ensure as far as it can that the Institute contributes to the promotion of the economic, cultural and social development of the State and to respect for the diversity of values, beliefs and traditions in Irish society, and

(e) have regard to the statutory responsibilities of other education providers.”

**Academic Council.**

11.—(1) The Institute shall have an Academic Council appointed by the Governing Body to assist it in the planning, co-ordination, development and overseeing of the educational work of the Institute and to protect, maintain and develop the academic standards of the courses and the activities of the Institute.

...

**Equality policy.**

21D.— (1) The Governing Body shall, as soon as practicable but not later than 12 months after the commencement of this section and at such other times as it thinks fit, require the President to prepare a statement of the policies of the Institute in respect of—

(a) access to education in the Institute by economically or socially disadvantaged persons, by persons who have a disability and by persons from sections of society significantly under-represented in the student body, and

(b) equality, including gender equality, in all activities of the Institute,

...

**Dispute resolution.**

21E— (1) The Governing Body shall establish procedures for the resolution of disputes that arise in the Institute.

(2) Subsection (1) shall not apply to industrial relations disputes, which shall be dealt with through normal industrial relations structures operating in the Institute.

(3) Procedures established under subsection (1) shall—

(a) be embodied in writing,

(b) be established following consultation with recognised staff associations and trade unions representing the staff of the Institute and with the students union or other student representative body, and

(c) provide for consideration of issues in dispute by an independent person or persons, as appropriate.

## **Universities Act (1997)**

“student”, in relation to a university, means a person registered as a student by the university or a full-time officer of the Students Union or other student representative body in the university recognised by the governing authority who was first elected or appointed to his or her office while he or she was a registered student of the university;

“Student Union” means a body established to promote the general interests of students of a university and which represents students, both individually and collectively, in respect of academic, disciplinary and other matters arising within the university;

## **PART III**

### **Universities Generally**

#### **Chapter I**

#### **Objects and functions**

#### **Objects of university.**

12.—The objects of a university shall include—

- (a) to advance knowledge through teaching, scholarly research and scientific investigation,
- (b) to promote learning in its student body and in society generally,
- (c) to promote the cultural and social life of society, while fostering and respecting the diversity of the university's traditions,
- (d) to foster a capacity for independent critical thinking amongst its students,
- (e) to promote the official languages of the State, with special regard to the preservation, promotion and use of the Irish language and the preservation and promotion of the distinctive cultures of Ireland,
- (f) to support and contribute to the realisation of national economic and social development,
- (g) to educate, train and retrain higher level professional, technical and managerial personnel,
- (h) to promote the highest standards in, and quality of, teaching and research,
- (i) to disseminate the outcomes of its research in the general community,
- (j) to facilitate lifelong learning through the provision of adult and continuing education, and

(k) to promote gender balance and equality of opportunity among students and employees of the university.

...

## **Chapter II**

### **Governance**

#### **Governing authority.**

15.—(1) Subject to section 21 , each university shall have a governing authority established in accordance with this Act which shall be known by whatever name the governing authority decides.

(2) Subject to this Act, the functions of a university shall be performed by or on the directions of its governing authority.

(3) All acts and things done by a governing authority, or in the name of or on behalf of the university with the express or implied authority of the governing authority, shall be deemed to have been done by the university.

(4) The Third Schedule shall apply to the governing authority.

#### **Composition of governing authority.**

16.—(1) Subject to this Part, a governing authority shall consist of such members, being not less than 20 or more than 40, as determined in accordance with this Chapter.

(2) The members of the governing authority shall include—

(a) the chief officer,

(b) a person appointed under section 17 (3) as the chairperson (if so appointed),

(c) at least one but not more than two senior officers of the university having responsibility to the chief officer for academic, financial or administrative affairs, appointed by the governing authority, one of whom shall be the senior officer having responsibility for academic affairs, and

(d) the following members elected in accordance with regulations made under subsection (11):

(i) not less than two or more than six members of the academic staff of the university who are Professors or Associate Professors, elected by such staff;

(ii) not less than three or more than five permanent or full-time members of the other academic staff of the university elected by such staff;

(iii) at least one but not more than three permanent or full-time employees who are not members of the academic staff of the university elected by the non-academic staff;

**(iv) not less than two or more than three students of the university who are elected officers of the Students Union or other student representative body in the university recognised by the governing authority, and**

**(v) one post-graduate student elected by the post-graduate students.**

(3) Subject to subsection (7), in addition to the persons chosen and appointed pursuant to subsection (2), but included in the maximum number of members specified in subsection (1), there shall be—

(a) at least one but not more than four persons, chosen by a committee of the governing authority comprising the chief officer and two other members, from among nominations made by such organisations as are representative of employers, trade unions, agriculture, fisheries, community organisations, Irish language and Gaeltacht organisations, the professions, business and industry as the governing authority considers appropriate, of whom at least one shall be chosen from those nominated by organisations representative of business or industry,

(b) where by or under an Act there is established a body for a region in which the university is located a function of which is to advise the Minister in relation to the planning and co-ordination of education services at primary and post-primary levels, at least one but not more than two persons who are not members of the governing authority or employees of any other university, the Dublin Institute of Technology established by section 3 of the Dublin Institute of Technology Act, 1992 , or a regional technical college established by or in accordance with section 3 of the Regional Technical Colleges Act, 1992 ,

...

#### Chapter IV

#### Dispute resolution.

26.—(1) A governing authority shall establish procedures for the resolution of disputes which arise in the university, other than disputes to be dealt with through normal industrial relations structures operating in the university or appeals conducted in accordance with section 27 (2)(e).



(2) Procedures established under subsection (1) shall—

(a) be specified in a statute,

**(b) be established following consultation with trade unions and staff associations representing employees of the university and with the students union or other student representative body, and**

(c) provide for consideration of issues in dispute by an independent person or persons, as appropriate, one of whom, in the case of a constituent university, shall be a nominee of the Chancellor of the National University of Ireland.

(3) Subsections (1) and (2) shall not apply to Trinity College

## Chapter V

### Academic Council

27.— (1) Each university shall have an academic council which shall, subject to the financial constraints determined by the governing authority and to review by that authority, control the academic affairs of the university, including the curriculum of, and instruction and education provided by, the university.

(2) Without limiting the generality of subsection (1), the functions of the academic council shall include, within those constraints and consistent with the functions of the university and those applying to its academic council immediately before the commencement of this Part—

(a) to design and develop programmes of study,

- (b) to establish structures to implement those programmes,
- (c) to make recommendations on programmes for the development of research,
- (d) to make recommendations relating to the selection, admission, retention and exclusion of students generally,
- (e) to propose the form and contents of statutes to be made relating to the academic affairs of the university, including the conduct of examinations, the determination of examination results, the procedures for appeals by students relating to the results of such examinations and the evaluation of academic progress,
- (f) to make recommendations for the awarding of fellowships, scholarships, bursaries, prizes or other awards,
- (g) to make general arrangements for tutorial or other academic counselling,
- (h) to perform any other functions, not in conflict with this Act, which may be delegated to it by the governing authority, and
- (i) to implement any statutes and regulations made by the governing authority relating to any of the matters referred to in this subsection.

**Composition of academic council.**

28.—(1) The majority of members of the academic council shall be members of the academic staff of the university and, subject to subsection (2), the numbers, composition, selection, appointment and terms of office of members shall be provided for in a statute, which statute shall contain provisions for the inclusion on the academic council of—

- (a) the senior member of staff having responsibility to the chief officer for each academic discipline, school or department as the governing

authority determines, or, in the case of Trinity College, the senior member of staff having responsibility to the chief officer for each faculty,

(b) members from what, in the opinion of the governing authority, is an appropriate range of levels of other academic staff from an appropriate range of academic disciplines, and

**(c) an appropriate number of students.**

(2) The composition and terms of office of members of an academic council to be first appointed under this Act shall be determined in consultation with the members of the academic council of the relevant university, constituent college or Recognised College holding office immediately before the commencement of this Part or, in the case of an educational institution established under section 9 as a university after that commencement, with the members of the academic council (by whatever name known) of that institution holding office immediately before the date on which the educational institution was so established as a university.

(3) The chief officer and the senior officer of the university responsible to the chief officer for academic affairs shall be, ex officio, members of the academic council.

## **Chapter VI**

### **Charters and Statutes**

#### **Charters and supplementary charters.**

31.—(1) A university may have a charter, not in conflict with this Act, setting out all or any of the

(a) its objects and functions in respect of its academic and administrative affairs;

(b) the arrangements it has for the promotion and use of the Irish language and the promotion of Irish cultures;

(c) the composition of the governing authority and its functions;

(d) the rights of its employees and students and their responsibility towards the university and the responsibility of the university towards them;

(e) the arrangements for review of, or appeals against, decisions of the governing authority or the academic council which affect employees or students;

(f) its policy in respect of the promotion of equality of opportunity among students and employees;

(g) its policy in respect of adult and continuing education and the arrangements in place for the provision of that education, including part-time and evening courses; and

(h) any other matters the governing authority may consider relevant.

(2) In preparing a charter, the governing authority shall consult, in such manner as it thinks appropriate, with the academic staff and other employees of the university, any recognised trade union or staff association, any recognised student union or other student representative body, or with any other person or group, both within and outside of the university, it considers should be consulted.

...

## Chapter VII

### Planning and Evaluation

...

#### Equality policy.

36.—(1) A governing authority shall, as soon as practicable but not later than 12 months after it is established under this Act and at such other times as it thinks fit, require the chief officer to prepare a statement of the policies of the university in respect of—

(a) access to the university and to university education by economically or socially disadvantaged people, by people who have a disability and by people from sections of society significantly under-represented in the student body, and

(b) equality, including gender equality, in all activities of the university, and the chief officer, in preparing the statement, shall have regard to such policies on those matters as may from time to time be determined by the Minister.

(2) A governing authority may, having regard to the resources available to the university, either approve the statement prepared under subsection (1) without modification or, after consultation with the chief officer, approve the statement with such modifications as it thinks fit.

(3) A university shall implement the policies set out in the statement as approved under subsection (2).

## **Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012**

...

Charter of Institute of Technology.

82.— (1) An Institute of Technology to which authority to make an award has been delegated under section 53 shall have a charter.

(2) The Minister may make regulations for the purposes of specifying the matters to be included in a charter referred to in subsection (1).

(3) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (2), regulations made under that subsection may specify all or any of the following:

(a) arrangements for consultation and co-operation with the community, including commercial and industrial interests in that community, in the region served by the Institute of Technology concerned;

(b) criteria for determining the level of demand for particular programmes of education and training;

(c) policy in respect of adult and continuing education and the arrangements established for the provision of such education, including part-time and evening programmes;

(d) arrangements for the implementation of procedures for access, transfer and progression in relation to learners approved by the Authority under section 56 ;

(e) arrangements for the promotion and use of the Irish language and the promotion of the distinctive cultures of Ireland;

(f) quality assurance procedures the Institute of Technology has in place for its programmes of education and training;

(g) any other matter which the Minister considers appropriate for the purposes of a charter.

(4) Regulations made under subsection (2) may contain such incidental, supplementary and consequential provisions as appear to the Minister to be necessary or expedient for the purposes of those regulations.

(5) In preparing a charter, the governing body of an Institute of Technology—

(a) shall consult with the Authority in such manner as the Authority directs,

(b) shall consult, in such manner as the governing body thinks appropriate, with the academic council, the academic staff and other staff of the Institute, any recognised trade union or staff association, and any recognised student union or other student representative body, and

(c) may consult with any other person which the governing body considers appropriate.

...

#### **Functions of Authority.**

9.— (1) The general functions of the Authority shall be to—

(a) promote, maintain, further develop and implement the Framework,

(b) advise the Minister in relation to national policy on quality assurance and enhancement in education and training,

(c) review and monitor the effectiveness of providers' quality assurance procedures,

- (d) validate programmes of education and training, and review and monitor the validated programmes,
- (e) establish the standards of knowledge, skill or competence to be acquired by learners before an award can be made by the Authority or by a provider to which authority to make an award has been delegated,
- (f) make awards, delegate authority to make an award where it considers it appropriate and review and monitor the operation of the authority so delegated,
- (g) determine policies and criteria for access, transfer and progression in relation to learners, and monitor the implementation of procedures for access, transfer and progression in relation to learners by providers,
- (h) establish a code of practice for the provision of programmes of education and training to international learners,
- (i) authorise the use of the international education mark by a provider that complies with the code of practice,
- (j) establish, maintain and develop a database providing information on awards recognised within the Framework, programmes of education and training which lead to awards recognised within the Framework and any other programmes the Authority thinks appropriate,
- (k) establish and maintain the register,
- (l) advise and consult with the Minister, or any other Minister, on any matter which relates to its functions, at that Minister's request,
- (m) co-operate with international bodies on qualifications and quality assurance policies and their implementation and in particular to—
  - (i) liaise with awarding bodies outside the State for the purposes of facilitating the recognition in the State of awards of those bodies, and
  - (ii) facilitate the recognition outside the State of awards made in the State,



(n) ensure arrangements for the protection of learners are in place where learners have begun but not completed a programme of education and training where a provider ceases to provide the programme before completion,

(o) assist enrolled learners in finding alternative programmes of education and training where providers cease to provide a programme before completion, and

(p) collect any information relating to the performance of its functions it considers appropriate.

(2) The Authority in the performance of its functions shall—

(a) inform itself of the education, training, skills and qualifications requirements of industry, agriculture, business, tourism, trade, the professions and the public service, including requirements as to the level of knowledge, skill or competence to be acquired by learners,

(b) promote practices in education and training which meet the requirements referred to in paragraph (a),

(c) inform itself of practices outside the State in respect of matters relevant to its functions,

(d) have regard to such policies of the Government relating to education and training as are notified in writing to the Authority, by the Minister, and

(e) consult, as it considers appropriate, with providers, professional recognition bodies, staff and learner representatives, An tÚdarás um Ard-Oideachas, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, the State Examinations Commission and any other persons or bodies the Authority considers appropriate.

...

## **PART 6**

### **Protection of Enrolled Learners**

**Interpretation.**

64. — This Part applies to a programme of education and training of 3 months or longer duration.

Arrangements by providers for protection of enrolled learners.

65. — (1) Before—

- (a) making an application under section 44 for validation of a programme of education and training,
- (b) submitting a request under section 52 for delegation of authority to make an award in respect of a programme of education and training, or
- (c) notifying the Authority of a proposal under section 53 (7) in respect of a programme of education and training,

a provider shall put arrangements in place, in accordance with subsection (4), for the protection of enrolled learners who have paid moneys to, or on whose behalf moneys have been paid to, the provider for a programme of education and training where—

- (i) the provider does not provide the programme for any reason including by reason of insolvency or winding up of that provider, or
- (ii) enrolled learners have begun but not completed the programme and the provider ceases to provide the programme before that programme is completed for any reason, including by reason of the insolvency or winding up of that provider.

(2) A provider shall submit details of the arrangements the provider has in place in accordance with subsection (4) to the Authority in writing when making an application, submitting a request or notifying the Authority of a proposal referred to in paragraph (a), (b), and (c) of subsection (1).

(3) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1), a provider shall be taken to cease to provide a programme of education and training where the Authority withdraws validation of the programme under sections 36 (7), 47 , or 59 (7).

(4) The arrangements referred to in subsection (1) are—

(a) an agreement between the provider of the programme and at least 2 other providers that an enrolled learner may transfer to a similar programme of those other providers, or

(b) where the provider considers, with the agreement of the Authority, that it is not practicable to comply with paragraph (a), that provider has arrangements in place which enable that provider to refund to an enrolled learner, or to the person who paid the moneys on behalf of the enrolled learner, the moneys most recently paid in respect of the programme concerned for—

- (i) tuition fees,
- (ii) registration fees,
- (iii) examination fees,
- (iv) library fees,
- (v) student services fees, and
- (vi) any other fees which relate to the provision of education, training and related services.

## **SCHEDULE 1**

### **Qualifications and Quality Assurance Authority of Ireland**

#### **Section 8.**

...

2. (1) The Authority shall consist of 10 members including the chief executive.

(2) The members of the Authority, other than the chief executive, shall be appointed by the Minister.

(3) The Minister shall, in appointing the members of the Authority, ensure that the members are persons who have experience of, and expertise in relation to, the functions of the Authority, and shall include among those members—

(a) at least one person who has international experience related to those functions, and

(b) at least 2 people who are representatives of learners, one of whom shall be a person nominated by the body known as the Union of Students in Ireland.