

Supporting student engagement practitioners: resilience, professionalism and sustainability in representation and student voice

International Enhancement Conference, Wednesday 14th June 2023

Simon Varwell, Senior Development Consultant
sparqs



@sparqs_Simon @sparqs_Scotland #ETConf23

Who are we?




- student **partnerships** in **quality Scotland**.
- Full-time staff in Edinburgh and Inverness.
- Works with all institutions and students' associations in the university and college sector.
- Scottish Charity - members all sector agencies.
- Main funding from the Scottish Funding Council.
- Various international consultancy work.
- www.sparqs.ac.uk



@sparqs_Simon @sparqs_Scotland #EYFE2023

Student engagement in our sector






Enhancement-led institutional review

The process we use to review and report on all Scottish higher education institutions, which is enhancement-led in its approach.


[View more >](#)



Enhancement Themes

We manage this national programme of work that encourages the sharing of good practice. It helps generate ideas for innovation in...


[View more >](#)



Institution-led review

Institutions in Scotland carry out internal subject reviews. Outcome reports are sent to the Scottish Funding Council with analyses...

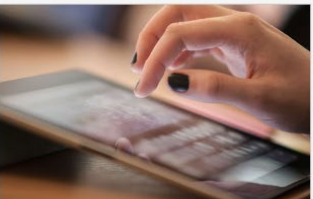
[View more >](#)



Student engagement

We aim to give students a greater voice in higher education quality activities. Students are encouraged to work in partnership with staff.

[View more >](#)



Public information

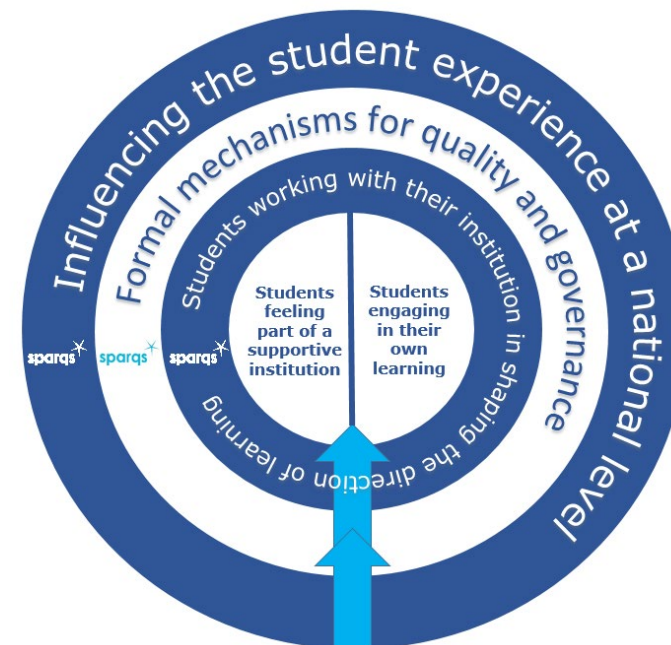
We ensure information given to the public about quality is accurate and accessible, based on the differing needs of stakeholders.

[View more >](#)

Focus on enhancement and change

Appropriate resources and support

Responding to diversity



Valuing the student contribution

A culture of engagement

Students as partners



@sparqs_Simon @sparqs_Scotland #EYFE2023

Developing student engagement

- Student engagement strategies.
- Student Partnership Agreements.
- Content in strategic plans.
- Quality enhancement activity.



- Students' association staff and officers.
- Institutional quality, student experience or student engagement teams.
- ...and maybe all staff?

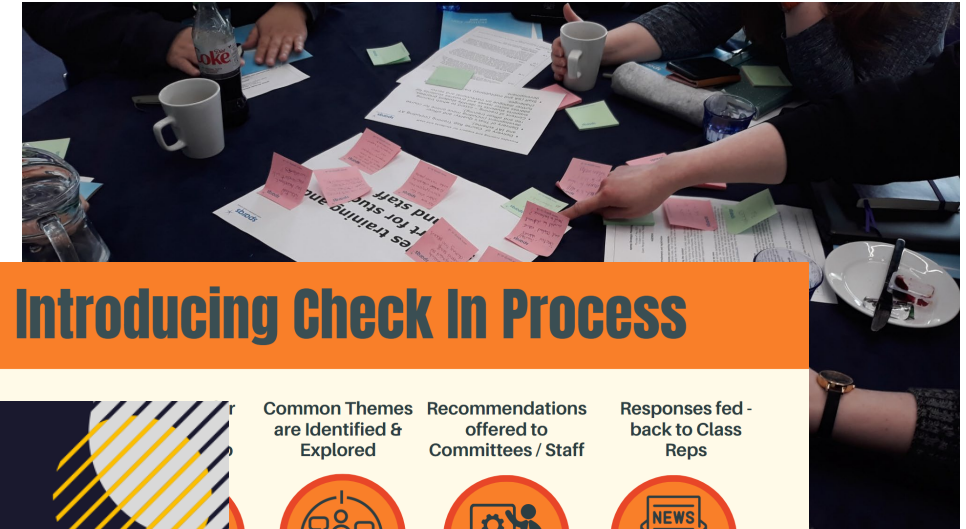
- Student engagement working groups.
- Institution-students' association forums.
- Shared partnership committees.



Student Engagement Staff Network



- Meets online and in-person.
- “Learn, share, develop”.
- Jiscmail group for conversation.
- Buddy scheme piloted in 2023.



Introducing Check In Process



@sparqs_Simon @sparqs_Scotland #EYFE2023

Buddying scheme development



- Created through practitioner feedback.
- 12 pilot participants, paired to ensure complementary experiences and roles.
- Encouraged to meet two or three times over six months, in-person and online.
- Mutually beneficial conversations, and even shadowing of work.
- All participants want continuation, but with more structure for conversations.

sparqs Student Engagement Staff Buddying Scheme

sparqs has launched the SES Buddying Scheme based on feedback from our SESN members. The aim of this scheme is to put you in touch with another practitioner who shares many of the same challenges and questions in their role. By having a buddy, you have the opportunity to connect with someone who have a mutual interest in student engagement and is working either in a college or in a university in Scotland. You will have the opportunity to learn from other contexts and this may lead to cross-institutional collaborations, should you wish to. It is up to the pair to decide how often you will be in touch, whether you want to meet in person or only online. sparqs suggests you could meet at least twice in an academic year, with an initial meeting to set up goals, understandings, talk about expectations from the scheme.

sparqs will receive the information you share on the form and use them internally to select a matching buddy, based on your answers. Details will not be shared externally.

The scheme will last one academic year, until the end of June 2023. sparqs will be in touch after this period of time to have a chat about your experience so we can evaluate how to improve the scheme.

1. Full name
2. Email
3. Which institution do you work at?
4. How long have you worked in your current position?



@sparqs_Simon @sparqs_Scotland #EYFE2023

Buddying scheme feedback



“It was a lovely idea to set up a buddying scheme because the world of student engagement can feel awfully lonely. It sometimes feels like you and your colleagues against the world, and I think expanding our networks to other associations is always for the better.”

“I have found all of these meetings to be incredibly useful, as I am still quite new into role and new to Students’ Associations it’s been invaluable to see how other institutions work and how they are working with their student community.”




“I found these talks to be so beneficial, especially as during a lot of this time I was without a manager, so I really enjoyed talking through ideas.”

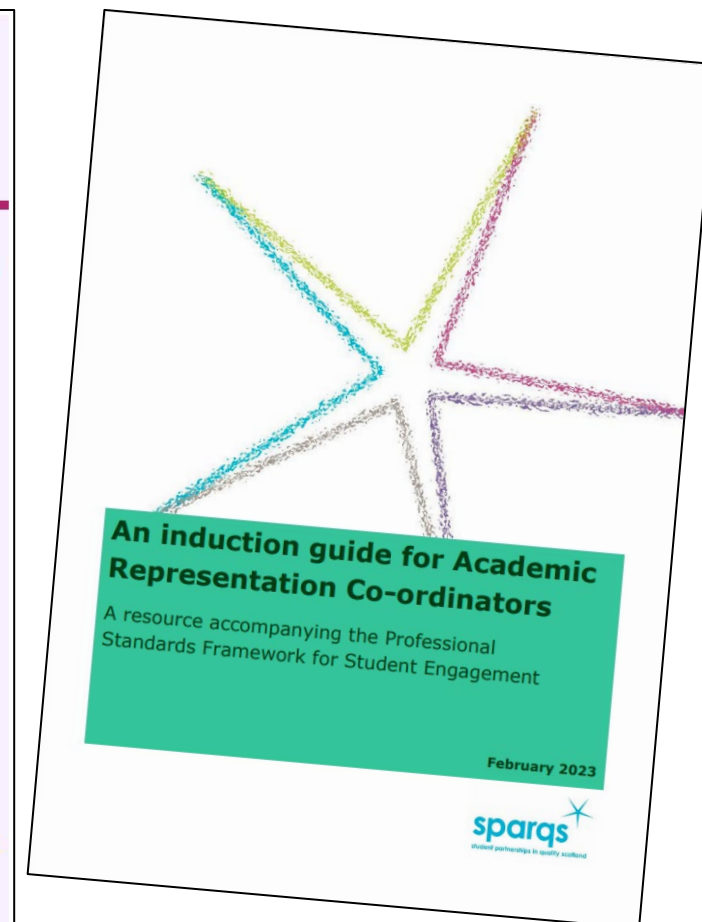


@sparqs_Simon @sparqs_Scotland #EYFE2023

Professional Standards Framework for Student Engagement



Values 	Knowledge 	Activities 
<p>V1 A belief in education as a positive, inquisitive and liberating force for wider societal change.</p> <p>V2 Placing the student voice at the heart of continuous enhancement and co-creation of the student learning experience.</p> <p>V3 Recognition of the centrality of equality, diversity, liberation and inclusion to student engagement.</p> <p>V4 A belief in students' associations as vital collective, democratic contributors to institutional life and students' experiences.</p> <p>V5 A commitment to transformative partnership as an underpinning aspect of work with staff and students.</p>	<p>K1 The implications of the diversity and intersectionality of the student population in its demography, pedagogy and geography.</p> <p>K2 How institutions manage and develop learning and teaching.</p> <p>K3 The role of evidence and data in effective student engagement in quality enhancement and assurance.</p> <p>K4 The purpose, role and dynamic structures of students' associations.</p> <p>K5 How the national and international policy and agency landscape affects, and is shaped by, students.</p> <p>K6 Policies, theories and strategies relating to student engagement, feedback and partnership in quality.</p>	<p>A1 Empowering all students to own and shape their learning.</p> <p>A2 Supporting and enabling academic representative systems.</p> <p>A3 Facilitating and promoting the recognition of student engagement activities.</p> <p>A4 Working with, supporting and developing student officers as they engage in strategic decisions about learning and teaching.</p> <p>A5 Informing and advising decision-makers on students' views and priorities.</p> <p>A6 Enabling the generation and use of data about the learning experience.</p> <p>A7 Championing partnership-based collaborations between staff and students.</p> <p>A8 Acquiring, sharing and applying knowledge about student engagement policy and practice.</p>



@sparqs_Simon @sparqs_Scotland #EYFE2023

"What do you do for a living?"



"Student engagement roles have a **unique** position... and are **central to building partnership** between staff and students and between institutions and students' associations... **regularly connect operational support for student representation and feedback, with strategies** for learning, teaching and wider institutional functions."

"...roles that drive engagement and partnership can **often be hard to define and understand**. At the same time, they are **exciting, rewarding positions** that, with appropriate support, have **immeasurable impact on learning** and the wider student experience."

(PSFSE)

Values	Knowledge	Activities
<p>V1 A belief in education as a positive, inquisitive and liberating force for wider societal change.</p> <p>V2 Placing the student voice at the heart of continuous enhancement and co-creation of the student learning experience.</p> <p>V3 Recognition of the centrality of equality, diversity, liberation and inclusion to student engagement.</p> <p>V4 A belief in students' associations as vital collective, democratic contributors to institutional life and students' experiences.</p> <p>V5 A commitment to transformative partnership as an underpinning aspect of work with staff and students.</p>	<p>K1 The implications of the diversity and intersectionality of the student population in its demography, pedagogy and geography.</p> <p>K2 How institutions manage and develop learning and teaching.</p> <p>K3 The role of evidence and data in effective student engagement in quality enhancement and assurance.</p> <p>K4 The purpose, role and dynamic structures of students' associations.</p> <p>K5 How the national and international policy and agency landscape affects, and is shaped by, students.</p> <p>K6 Policies, theories and strategies relating to student engagement, feedback and partnership in quality.</p>	<p>A1 Empowering all students to own and shape their learning.</p> <p>A2 Supporting and enabling academic representative systems.</p> <p>A3 Facilitating and promoting the recognition of student engagement activities.</p> <p>A4 Working with, supporting and developing student officers as they engage in strategic decisions about learning and teaching.</p> <p>A5 Informing and advising decision-makers on students' views and priorities.</p> <p>A6 Enabling the generation and use of data about the learning experience.</p> <p>A7 Championing partnership-based collaborations between staff and students.</p> <p>A8 Acquiring, sharing and applying knowledge about student engagement policy and practice.</p>



@sparqs_Simon @sparqs_Scotland #EYFE2023

Discussion



1. Who are the SE practitioners in your institution?
2. Where and how do you work with them?
3. How much of the PSFSE do you recognise in your own role?
4. How much does student engagement shape your own practice, and your institution's strategy?
5. Could sparqs help you in these reflections?



@sparqs_Simon @sparqs_Scotland #EYFE2023

References, links and contacts



- [Student Partnership Agreements.](#)
- [Student Engagement Framework for Scotland.](#)
- [Student Engagement Staff Network.](#)
- [Professional Standards Framework for Student Engagement.](#)
- Brown, M., Varwell, S. (2023, February 6). *National student engagement: creating and developing spaces for partnership*. European Learning and Teaching Forum, Bilbao, Spain.
<https://www.eua.eu/resources/publications/1056:national-student-engagement-creating-and-developing-spaces-for-partnership.html>
- Varwell, S. (2022, July 1). A professional standards framework for student engagement. *Wonkhe*.
<https://wonkhe.com/blogs/a-professional-standards-framework-for-student-engagement/>
- More on sparqs' website: www.sparqs.ac.uk.
- simon.varwell@sparqs.ac.uk



@sparqs_Simon @sparqs_Scotland #EYFE2023