Briefing note to student officers

sparqs

SFC Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability

sparqs continues to work closely with the Scottish Funding Council to support student engagement in the SFC Review. So far, we have produced two briefing notes: one for student officers that explores how they can support their own and their fellow students' engagement, and one for institutional staff that offers suggestions on how to include students in the review process. This third briefing note further explores how students can engage in the review as we move into this third and final stage, in particular, how students can engage in more detailed discussions relevant to the workstreams that have been established by SFC, which are detailed below:

Workstream One: **Integrated, connected tertiary and skills eco-system**
Workstream Two: **Accountability Frameworks**
Workstream Three: Relationship with Employers
Workstream Four: Research and Innovation
Workstream Five: **Digital**
Workstream Six: Financial Sustainability
Workstream Seven: Sustainability and climate change
Workstream Eight: **Non-core Funds**

Immediate actions: Digital Workstream

Whilst we know all of the workstreams are equally important, sparqs and the SFC are aware that the digital learning environment has impacted every single student studying at a college or university in Scotland over the last 12 months and there is still much to understand and consider in terms of what this means for the future use of technology in our learning and teaching practices across the sector. Below are some discussion points you might want to consider discussing with your students and feeding back to the review team at the SFC:

- What have both the institution and students' association learned this year from teaching in an online environment? What has worked well and what challenges have there been?
- How have staff been aware of students' needs and supported these, such as access to equipment, or awareness of different learning settings?
- How have both the institution and students' association been able to understand what the student learning experience has been like; what tools and mechanisms have you used to engage student feedback online?
- Are institutions aware of the technological challenges students are experiencing using different platforms?
- What can or has been done to tackle online learning challenges, such as digital fatigue, or loneliness and isolation?
- What has been the impact on the confidence and capabilities of students and staff learning and teaching online? How have they been supported?
- What has been the effect on the quality of the learning and teaching experience?
- How have students felt about being a student learning in the digital world?
- What role do you see online learning having on the student experience post-COVID?

Plans for Future Engagement

As the review enters this third and final stage, there will be further opportunities arising to feed into the other workstreams and engage in discussions that explore specific outcomes for the review. This may include setting up student panels specifically to engage with the review, seeking volunteers with specific interests or expertise to be involved in different discussions, or inviting student officers to take part in conversations around key themes. Both sparqs and the SFC are keen to ensure that this engagement is a positive, meaningful and impactful experience for all.

We know that both student officers and students have intense workloads right now, further exacerbated by the pandemic, but it would be useful to think about how to weave the review into existing spaces for discussion with students, such as students' association general meetings, course rep conferences, student-staff committees or lead rep catch-ups. This will ensure you are ready to contribute to these discussions when the time comes, placing the student voice at the heart of the conversation. Below are some suggested questions relevant to a few of the workstreams, that you could ask students, enabling a better understand of how students feel about the different themes that the review is exploring.

Integrated, connected tertiary and skills eco-system

- Given students' experiences and journeys from school/employment to college and/or university, what works well and what could work better?
- How could the transitions between school/college and university be improved?

Development of Skills Alignment

- Are you aware of the apprenticeships on offer at your institution? Do you see apprenticeships as a key feature of an integrated education system?
- How is your college or university providing you with skills for the future?

Investment in Research & Innovation

- How are you supported to take on further research/undertake research activities in your institution?

Relationship with employers

- How does your institution engage with employers and does this impact on the education provided to you? Do you think this could be improved?

Accountability

- The SFC allocates £1bn of public funds to institutions. What areas should the SFC hold institutions to account for?
- Are institutions delivering what you expected? Where could improvements be made?
- Do you think the courses and qualifications offered by your institution are of a good quality?

Further information

For further details and to provide feedback visit the SFC Review webpage and read the sparqs' news article on the review.   If you would like to discuss any of this further, please contact Stef Black, Senior Development Consultant – stef.black@sparqs.ac.uk.