



# Evidence for Enhancement: Improving the Student Experience

## Responding to student voice

**Charlie Kleboe-Rogers** (DUSA)

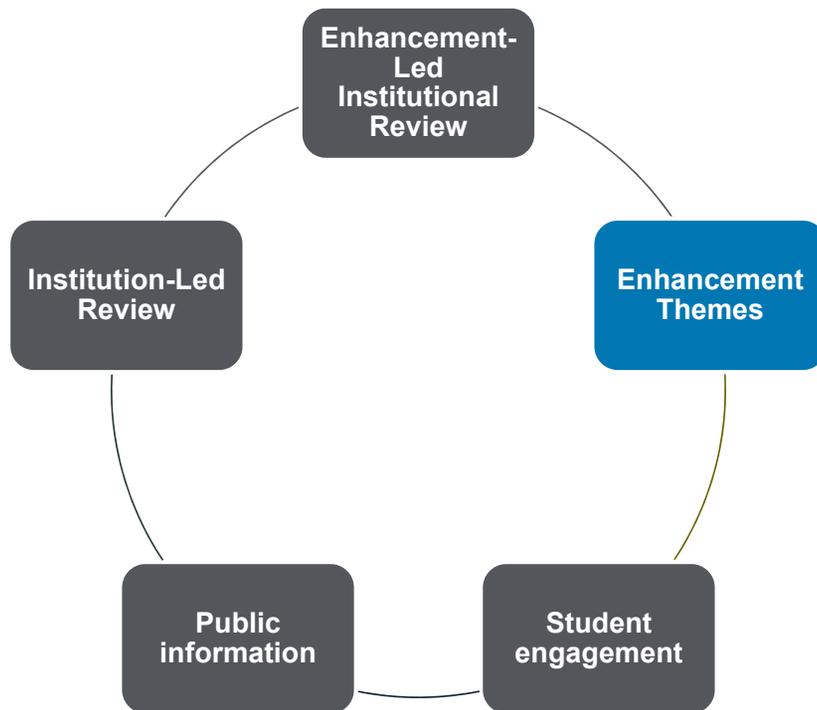
**Clare Parks** (QAA Scotland)

sparqs International Delegates day | 27 March 2019



[@themestweets](https://twitter.com/themestweets)

# Quality Enhancement Framework



## The Enhancement Themes

- Key element of the QEF
- Distinctive aspect of Scottish HE
- Theme chosen and delivered by sector in collaboration with QAA Scotland
- Fosters partnership and collegiality
- Allows us to achieve things collectively that we might not be able to do individually
- Focus on developing strategies, shaping policies and innovative practice

# The Enhancement Themes

## 14 Years of Enhancement Themes



- Assessment and Integrative assessment (2003-04)
- Responding to student needs (2003-04)
- Employability (2004-06)
- Flexible delivery (2004-06)
- First year: engagement & empowerment (2005-08)
- Research-teaching linkages: enhancing graduate attributes (2006-08)
- Graduates for the 21st century (2008-11)
- Developing and supporting the curriculum (2011-14)
- Student Transitions (2014-17)
- **Evidence for Enhancement: Improving the Student Experience (2017-20)**



## What makes a good Theme?

- Relevance to students and staff at all levels
- Inspires people to make a real difference
- Timely response to major issues in HE
- Resonates across the UK and beyond



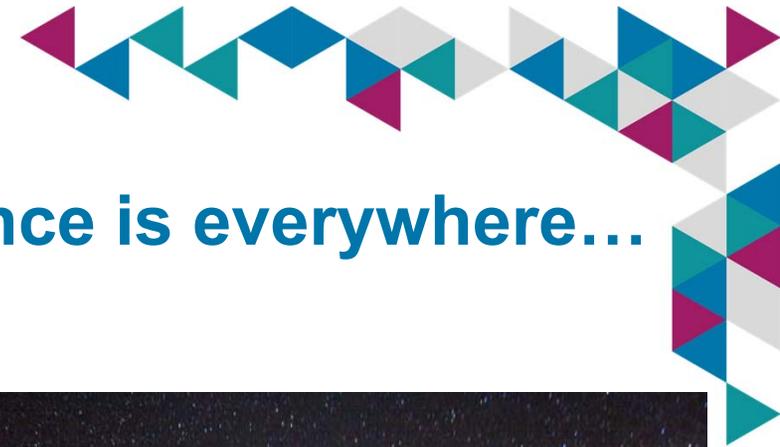
## How does it work?

- Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee – VPs (Learning and Teaching)
- Theme Leaders' Group (TLG) – staff and students
- Institutional teams



[https://cdn.pixabay.com/photo/2015/11/09/03/22/surfer-1034603\\_640.jpg](https://cdn.pixabay.com/photo/2015/11/09/03/22/surfer-1034603_640.jpg)

**and there's lots of it!**



**Evidence is everywhere...**



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA](#)

**Evidence for Enhancement: Improving the Student Experience**

# Evidence for enhancement: Improving the student experience

- What information is useful to help us identify and understand what we do well and what could be improved?
- Do we use the information we have in the best way possible?
- Do we have the right information?



# Evidence for enhancement: Improving the student experience



## Why is this a compelling Theme now?

- Increase in the availability and visibility of data and evidence: LEO, TEF, WA, UCAS...greater granularity
- Universities transforming practice and policy at all levels through use of new systems that generate data about student performance, including learning analytics
- This 'data revolution' is affecting everyone and the system as a whole
- Aligns with Scottish Government priorities but also has relevance for the English HE landscape and the prominence of data for OfS regulation



## Vision for this Theme

- Help Scottish sector enhance student experience by improving how it uses data and evidence
- Keep student engagement pivotal - students involved from the outset in scoping the Theme and agreeing the title, and there is a student leader of the Theme
- Demonstrate impact for our students and other key stakeholders
- Ultimately it is about enhancement of Scottish HE for the benefit of our students



**Supporting Programme Leaders**  
Edinburgh Napier University



**Learning analytics**  
University of Strathclyde



**Creative disciplines**  
Glasgow School of Art



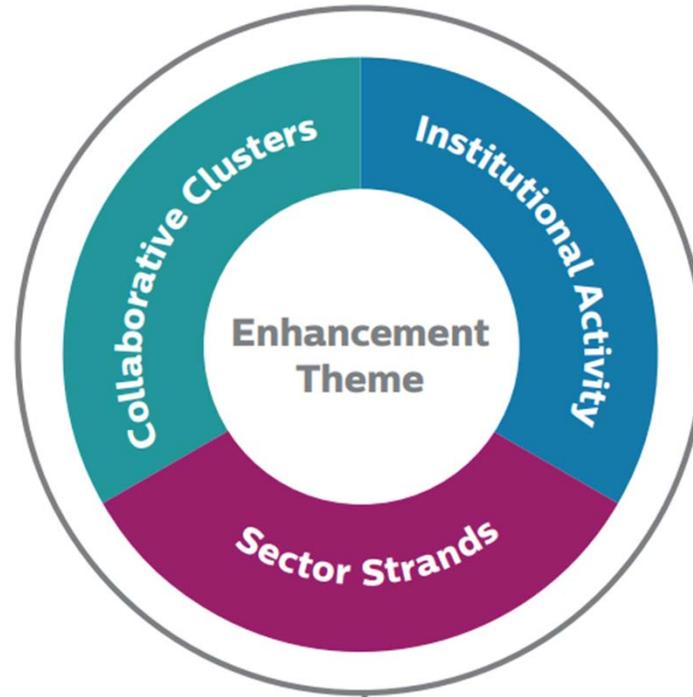
**Distance learning**  
Queen Margaret University



**Measuring beyond metrics**  
Abertay University



**Graduate employment**  
University of Dundee



**19 Institutions pursuing projects across the following areas:**

- The nature of evidence
- Approaches to evaluation
- Staff upskilling and empowerment
- Learning analytics and dashboard development
- Quality assurance processes
- Student characteristics
- Student success, retention and employability
- Student engagement and belonging
- Learning space and curriculum development
- Digital technology, learning, teaching and assessment

**Optimising the use of existing evidence**

**Student engagement**

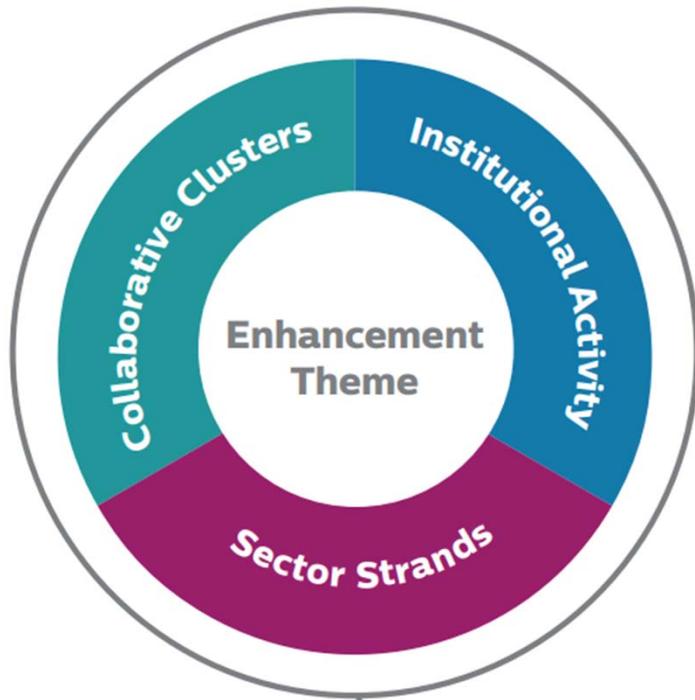
**Student demographics, retention, and attainment**

# Outline

- Student engagement across the Enhancement Theme
- The student-led project
- Year 1: Responding to student voice
- Year 2: Students and the data landscape



## Student engagement across the Theme



- **Student-led projects**
- **TLG and SHEEC membership**
- **Key element in Collaborative Clusters** (e.g. student interns working on Learning Analytics across the sector)
- **Members of all institutional teams**
- **Leading institutional projects** (e.g. SRUC Students' Association 'speak week' initiative)

# Student Engagement across the Theme



**Core element** of Theme organisation and activity, a **mechanism** and **focus** for change.

Specific student engagement strand with supported **student-led project**:

- 2017-18 Responding to Student Voice
- 2018-19 Students and the data landscape

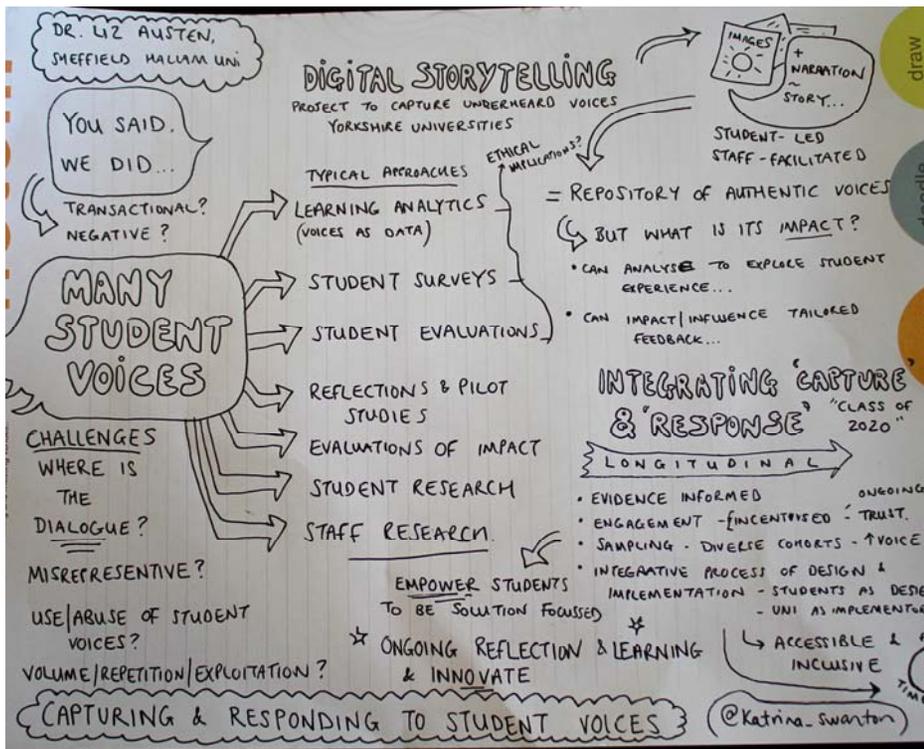
# Student-led project

2017-2018

**Responding to student voice: communicating impact**



# Responding to student voice



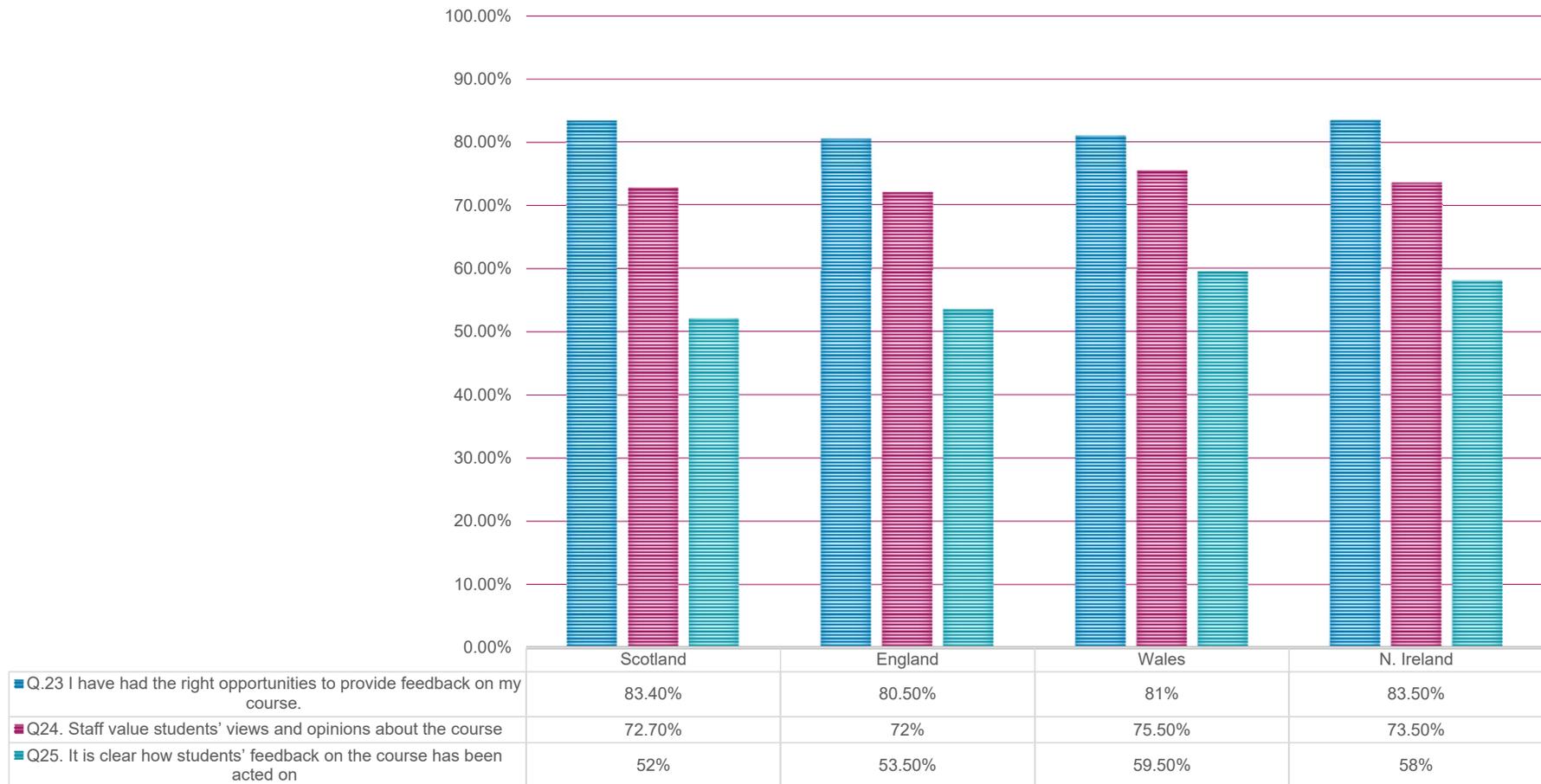
- Partnership approach
- Student-led
- Aim was to develop policy, practice, resources and networks around student voice and how institutions and students' associations respond to it.
- Students and staff worked together to develop a set of core principles which could underpin policies and practices relating to responding to student voice in a range of contexts.



Student opinion is an increasingly important arbiter of teaching quality in higher education environments, gradually being institutionalised as a valid comparative performance measure on such things as the quality of teachers and teaching, programmes and assessment, and levels of institutional support.

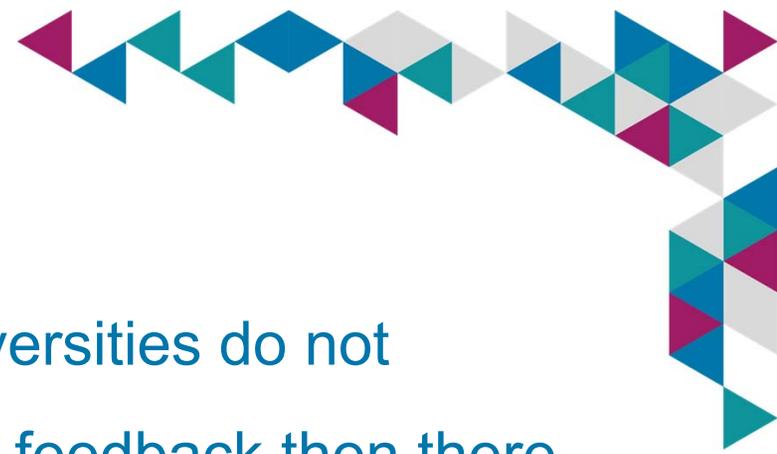
Darwin (2016: vii)

## UK NATION AVERAGES FOR 'STUDENT VOICE' QUESTIONS (NSS 2017)



# UK NATIONS AVERAGE SCORES FOR 'STUDENT VOICE' QUESTIONS (NSS 2017)

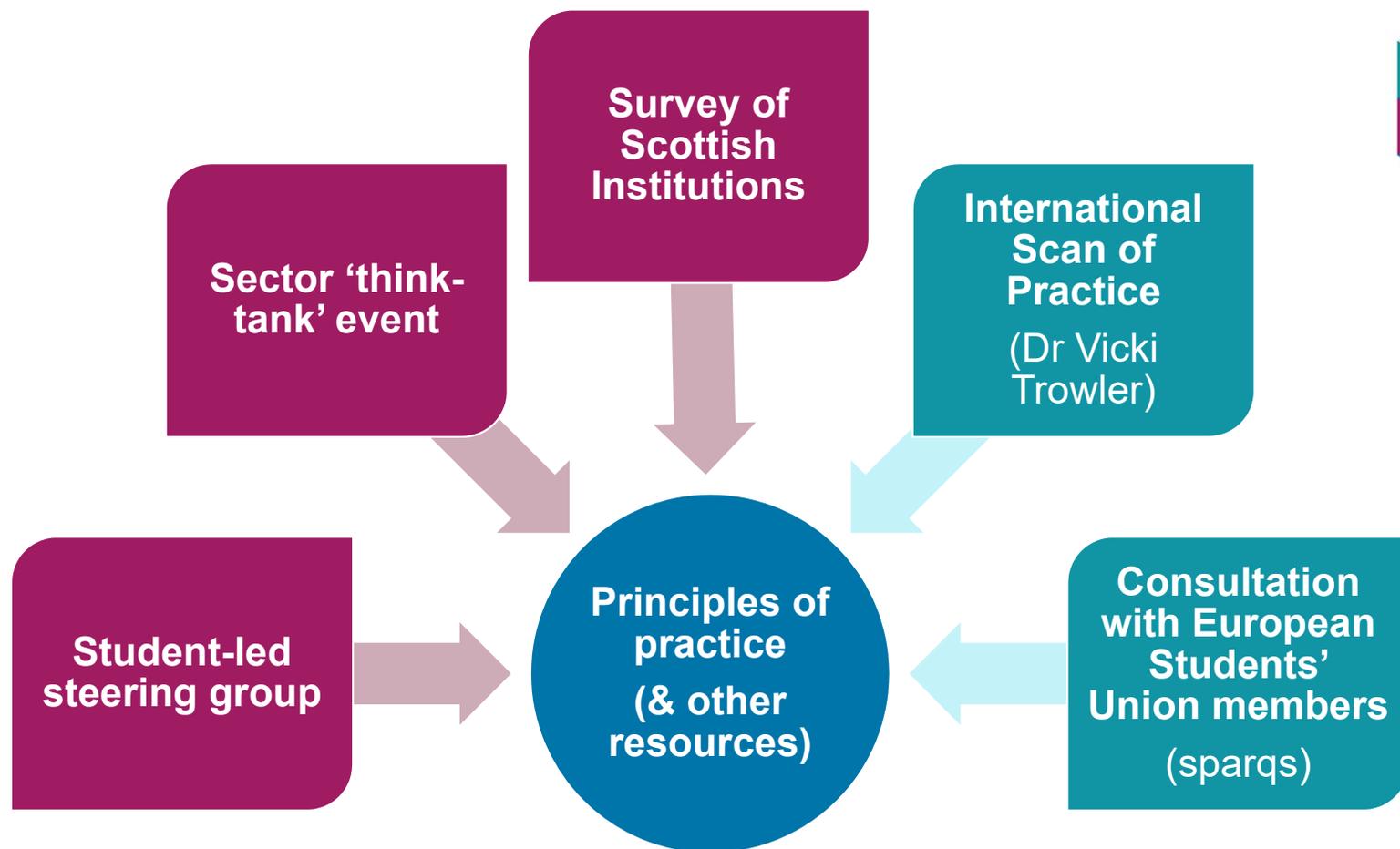




Previous studies have shown that if universities do not systematically close the loop on student feedback then there are manifold risks including declining response rates, poor student engagement in feedback process, and lack of trust between universities, students, and academics on improvements as a result of their voice.

Shah *et al* (2017: 119)

## Process: sector-wide and student-led



## RESPONDING TO STUDENT VOICE: PRINCIPLES OF PRACTICE

In responding to student feedback, **institutions** and **students' associations** should...



WORK IN  
PARTNERSHIP



UTILISE  
REPRESENTATIVE  
SYSTEMS



ENCOURAGE  
DIALOGUE



BE TIMELY



ENSURE  
TRANSPARENCY



EMBED ETHICS



SUPPORT  
ENHANCEMENT-LED  
APPROACHES



CELEBRATE  
ACHIEVEMENT



## **WORK IN PARTNERSHIP**

Empower staff and students to participate fully and meaningfully in student feedback cycles.



## **UTILISE REPRESENTATIVE SYSTEMS**

Continue to engage with and evolve student representative structures as a framework for meaningful discussions on student feedback



## **ENCOURAGE DIALOGUE**

Encourage respectful and open-ended dialogue between staff and students to ensure feedback cycles are dynamic and inclusive.



## **ENSURE TRANSPARENCY**

Provide accessible and clear explanations of feedback processes and information about who is responsible for these processes.



## **EMBED ETHICS**

Adhere to all relevant ethics standards and procedures when processing student feedback and communicating outcomes realised through this activity.



## **BE TIMELY**

Process feedback efficiently and share outcomes emerging from this activity at a time which will benefit students.



## SUPPORT ENHANCEMENT-LED APPROACHES

Approaches to responding to student feedback should be regularly evaluated and reviewed with a view to supporting continuous improvement.



## CELEBRATE ACHIEVEMENT

Ensure achievements emerging from actions taken as a result of student feedback are shared and celebrated.

### Responding to Student Voice: Principles of Practice

Responding to student voice involves paying attention to how student feedback is processed and how the impact of this activity is communicated back to students. These principles of practice were designed by staff and students working in partnership to help you improve the policies, processes, and practices that shape how you respond to student feedback.



#### WORK IN PARTNERSHIP

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## RESPONDING TO STUDENT VOICE



### ENCOURAGE DIALOGUE

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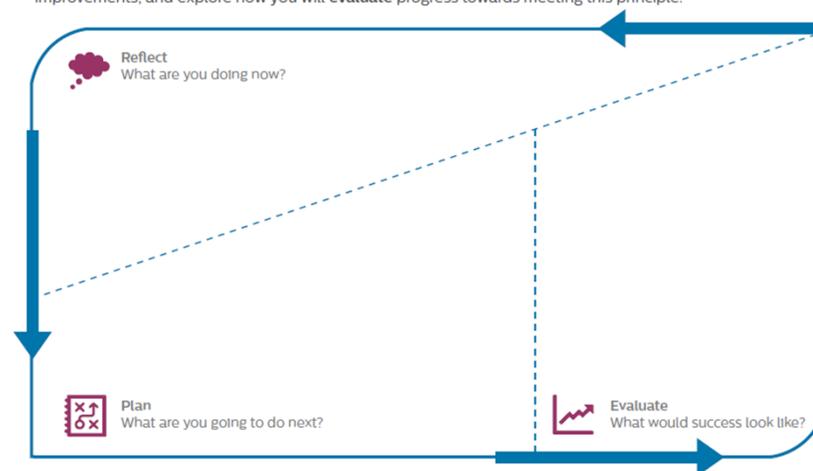
#### Something to think about...

- Q: Which of your current policies and practices encourage open-ended dialogue?
- Q: Do you think that students feel their feedback is part of an ongoing conversation?
- Q: When communicating the impact of changes made as a result of feedback, do you encourage further engagement from students?

## PRINCIPLE: ENCOURAGE DIALOGUE



**ACTION:** Use the boxes below to **reflect** on your current policy and practice, **plan** how you will make improvements, and explore how you will **evaluate** progress towards meeting this principle.



## RESPONDING TO STUDENT VOICE: PRINCIPLES OF PRACTICE



**ACTION:** Using the table below and the notes you have made on the back of each principle card, you could produce a summary of proposed actions, interventions and enhancements.

Principle	Summary of actions/next steps			Review point(s)	Owner(s)
	Objective	Activities/Outputs	Success/Impact Indicators		
Work in partnership					
Utilise representative systems					
Encourage dialogue					
Be timely					
Ensure transparency					
Embed ethics					
Support enhancement-led approaches					
Celebrate achievement					

## WHEN CAN I USE THE CARDS?



The principle cards can be used by individuals or groups in formal and informal contexts. Ultimately, the cards should be used in an active way rather than simply consulted as a check-list. You should write on them, annotate them, use them as a stimulus for discussion, and as mechanism for planning changes. Here are some suggested uses, offered by students involved in the project which delivered these cards:



To audit Institutional or Students' Association policies



To gauge consistency and difference across Institution or Students' Association



As a framework for establishing student views



In staff development sessions



During programme or module review exercises



To identify, evaluate, and share effective practice



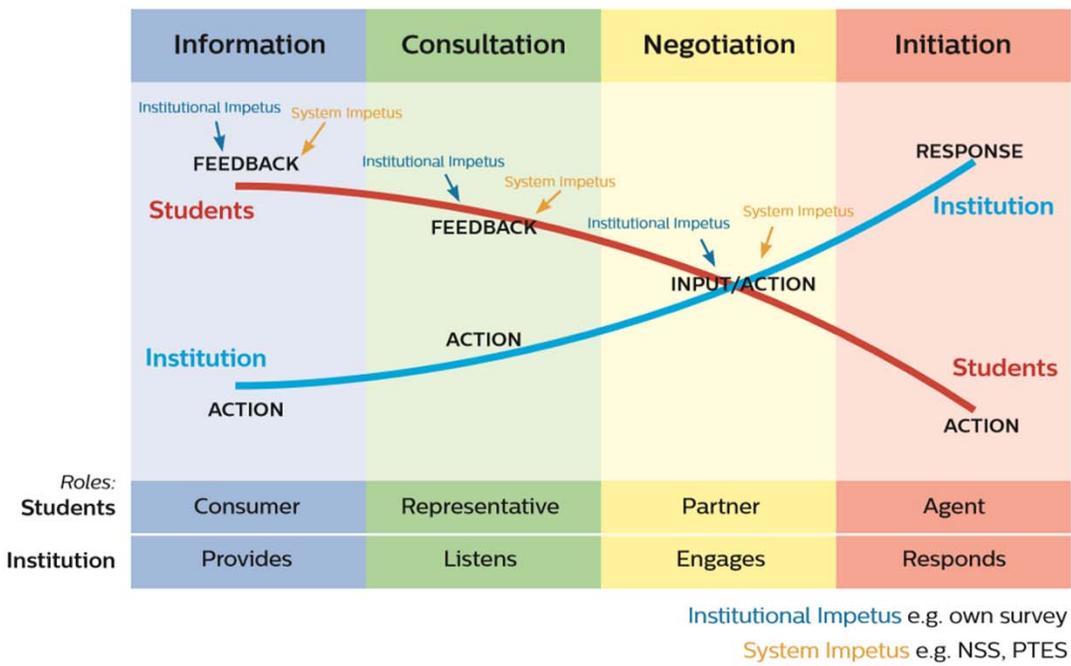
In workshops with students and/or staff



In staff and student representative inductions

Using the notes on the back of each principle card, the A3 planning grid sheet included in the pack can be used to plot activities and interventions across the principles.

### The Student Voice Continuum: Mapping Relationship Possibilities



### Responding to Student Voice: Insights into international practice

Dr Vicki Trowler  
with Professor Paul Trowler and Professor Murray Saunders  
2018





### Context matters

- Simply reproducing a practice that was reported as successful in one context, in another context, provides no guarantee of success. Adapting rather than adopting practices, informed by an understanding of one's own institutional context, offers a better chance of success  
*The example on p21 about using student media at INT3 which did/could not work at INT5, illustrates this*



### Try to work with existing systems

- New practices that are congruent with existing practices are more likely to be adopted and to be sustainable.  
*See the example of RUK1 on p31*



### Build rapport

- Building good rapport based on respect, and putting relationships at the centre, is important  
*RUK3, on p25, illustrates this; see also Arthur 2009; Smyth 2006*



### Timing makes a difference

- Consider the effects of time: whether it involves being prompt in responding, taking the time a process needs, or harnessing the "right moment"  
*See section 5.3, pp 12-5, in "Together We Changed": Responding to Student Voice. Voices from the Field*



### Honesty matters

- Be honest about what is and is not within one's power (as student association or institution) to deliver  
*See Buckley 2012; Seale 2016; Shah et al 2016; INT3 on p 10 of "Together We Changed": Responding to Student Voice. Voices from the Field*



### Be clear

- Be clear about the purpose for collecting input, and relate feedback given to that  
*See Young et al. 2011; Brennan et al. 2003*



### Ethics

- Proceed ethically and protect students' interests: process matters as much as outcomes  
*See Seale 2016; Campbell et al 2007; Taylor & Robinson 2009*



### Power

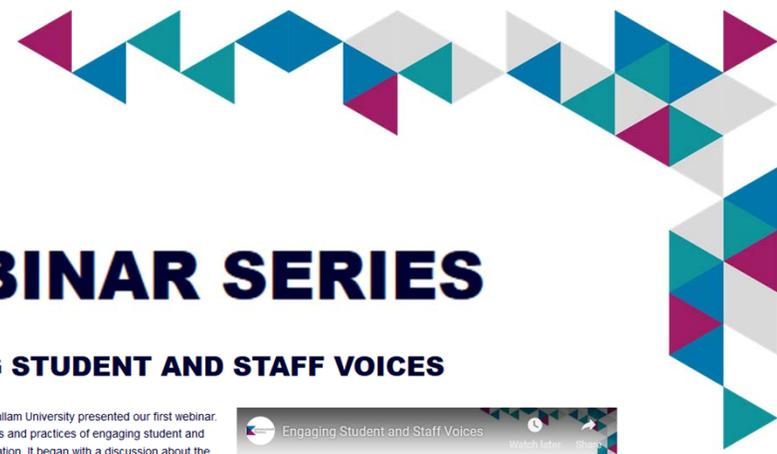
- Be honest and mindful about issues of power concerning students and be careful about student voice being co-opted  
*See Campbell et al 2007; Carey 2013; Hall 2017; also RUK3 on p 26, Seale 2016; Canning 2017; section 5.4, pp 15-6, in "Together We Changed": Responding to Student Voice. Voices from the Field*



### Student role

- Be clear about the boundaries of students' roles  
*See Seale 2016; Buckley 2012*

# Student voice resources online



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Student Life

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## Student Voice

Share your student voice and make a difference

**If it's important to you, it's important to us.**

Whether you want to tell us what's working well or have an idea on how things could be improved, we want to hear about it – the good, the bad and the ugly!

We are proud of our partnership with students and believe that working together is the best way to ensure that students can fulfil their potential and make the most of their time at university.

The time you take to share your views and opinions is highly appreciated and your feedback will be used to make improvements to all aspects of the student experience.

Read our **'Your Student Voice Making A Difference'** booklet to learn more about the exciting student experience

## WEBINAR SERIES

### ENGAGING STUDENT AND STAFF VOICES

Dr Liz Austen from Sheffield Hallam University presented our first webinar. It explored the scope, principles and practices of engaging student and staff voices within higher education. It began with a discussion about the scale and type of current methods and a plea to consider more innovative, inclusive and empowering approaches. There was a specific focus on the use of digital storytelling for engaging staff and students along with suggestions for integrating student and staff voices within methodologies. The webinar also highlighted the ethical considerations within this type of work.

Engaging Student and Staff Voices

Watch Later Share

### Evidence for Enhancement: Engaging Student and Staff Voices

Dr Liz Austen  
Sheffield Hallam University  
October 2018

DUISA

2018-2019

# Student Voice

Your voice matters. Here's how...

University of Dundee

UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH

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## Student voice: a guide for staff

At Plymouth we value student voice as part of enhancing and improving our practice.

### Learning from student feedback

Our students' feedback is vital in developing and improving the experience we offer both now and in the future. We need to learn from students and respond to their voice to ensure that we maintain a high quality student experience.

The University of Plymouth gathers the student voice both formally and informally through multiple mechanisms. The insights drawn from different sources help us to understand and reflect on the student experience and to prioritise where our actions should be made when seeking to develop new initiatives and make enhancements to current services and provision.

It is vital for staff to communicate with students about the actions that have

### Four stage approach

Teaching and Learning Support suggest the following four stage approach:

- Stage one – Listening to the student voice
- Stage two – Reviewing the data
- Stage three – Action
- Stage four – Communicating a response

### RESOURCES

**ENGAGING STUDENT AND STAFF VOICES**

Publication Date: 19 Oct 2018

View details Download

**HOW TO PRODUCE DIGITAL STORIES WITH STUDENTS AND STAFF IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Publication Date: 19 Oct 2018

View details Download

**DIGITAL STORYTELLING - EXAMPLE PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM**

Publication Date: 19 Oct 2018

View details Download

**DIGITAL STORYTELLING - ETHICAL CHECKLIST**

Publication Date: 19 Oct 2018

View details Download

## Capturing and responding to student voices: exploring innovative alternatives

Dr Liz Austen  
Sheffield Hallam University  
QAA 'think tank' 26<sup>th</sup> April 2018

## How to win module feedback and influence practice?

Dr Julie Blackwell Young  
26 April 2018

abertay.ac.uk

## PARTNERSHIP at RGU

Work in Progress:  
Celebrating enhancements 'Achieved in partnership',  
at school and course levels

Kerry Harrison  
President (Education and Welfare)  
RGU:Union

Kirsty Campbell  
Learning Analytics and Partnership Lead  
DELTA

"BUT NOTHING EVER  
GETS DONE"

Demonstrating The Impact Of The  
Student Voice

MATT ADIE  
UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING  
STUDENTS' UNION





## References

- Darwin, S. (2016) *Student Evaluation in Higher Education: Reconceptualising the Student Voice* (Springer, Switzerland).
- Shah, M., Cheng, M. and Fitzgerald, R. (2017) Closing the loop on student feedback: the case of Australian and Scottish universities, *Higher Education* **74** (1): 115-129.
- Trowler, V., with Trowler, P., and Saunders, M. (2018) *Responding to Student Voice: Insights into international practice* (QAA Scotland)

# Student-led project

2018-2019

**Students and the data landscape**



# Students and the data landscape



- Students as agents (not **only** subjects)
- Evidence and data play a key role in work of students working with institutions and students associations
- What kinds of support is required?
- Project aims to explore this issue through:
  - Gathering examples of practice
  - Networking and developing practice event
  - (Students') Guide to the data landscape
  - Practical guide to using evidence

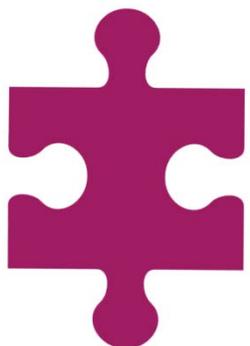


## Discussion

- What data and evidence are student representatives using in their work at your institutions and/or students' association/union?
- Do students have access to all of the data and evidence they might find useful?
- What support and development opportunities are they offered to help them use data and evidence effectively?



**A** student's guide to the Higher Education  
**D**ata Landscape



**A** student's guide to using evidence



# Questions?

Get in touch: [w.hasty@qaa.ac.uk](mailto:w.hasty@qaa.ac.uk) or [c.parks@qaa.ac.uk](mailto:c.parks@qaa.ac.uk)

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