

sparqs Conference 2019: Workshop and Presentation Outlines

This document outlines the workshops and presentations running across three sessions during the conference. Some of the sessions comprise two or three presentations which complement one another.

Session 1

Session 1.1: Workshop – What does Student-Led Teaching Award data tell us and how can we use it at a national level?	
<p>Facilitated by: William Hasty (Quality and Enhancement Specialist, QAA Scotland) and Stef Black (Development Consultant, sparqs)</p>	<p>Student-Led Teaching Awards (SLTAs) are well established within the Scottish higher education sector as a way to recognise and celebrate teaching excellence. With an emphasis on qualitative rather than quantitative evidence, SLTAs can provide a valuable insight into students’ views on teaching.</p> <p>This workshop will present the summary of a project which drew on an analysis of SLTAs with a specific focus on student views on feedback from assessment. We will present a summary of findings, organised around three key themes emerging from the research, lead a discussion around what SLTA data can tell us, and explore what students believe is valuable feedback practice in each of these areas. We will also explore future opportunities for SLTA data, looking at a new data-driven project - led by sparqs, and delivered in partnership with the sector - which considers what other possibilities there are to use, share and understand SLTA data, from the creation of a cross-sector network or community, to the formation of national themes identified and analysed by the sector.</p>

Session 1.2: Presentations – A² - Engaging apprentices and articulating students

(a) Apprentice engagement at Forth Valley College

Presented by: Eve Lewis (Director, sparqs), Rob McDermott (Quality Manager, Forth Valley College) and Liam Williams (Student President, Forth Valley College)

Within the Scottish education system, there are a number of types of apprenticeships, ranging from Foundation Apprenticeships, to Modern Apprenticeships and newly formulated degree-level Graduate Apprenticeships. They all share an approach to learning which offers work-based opportunities.

Apprentices often have quite a different learning experience to full-time or other part-time students. Colleges, universities and students' associations can face a number of challenges in hearing the voice of apprentices - but doing so is essential to ensuring we meet their needs.

Forth Valley College has created a hive of activity in this area over the last 18 months to ensure they have robust systems in place for apprentice representation. Working with apprentices themselves via a new induction programme and training, they have developed the capacity of apprentices to feed back on issues related to enhancing their experience. Whether this is making sure their college curriculum lines up with the needs of their employer, or ensuring that they receive the best possible careers support, the college is working hard to ensure that the apprentices get the most out of their time with Forth Valley.

We would like to share the journey, challenges and successes, and talk about the next steps.

(b) Let's work together – an insight into partnership degrees

Presented by: Muriel Alexander (University Partnerships Officer) and Jessie Henderson (student), Forth Valley College; and Tracey Kerr (Widening Participation Manager) and Alan Buchan (student), University of Stirling

In this session, representatives from the University of Stirling and Forth Valley College will look at the levels of partnership working involved across both their institutions, from both staff and student perspectives, in the delivery of partnership degree programmes. These integrated degrees offer a blend of academic and practical skills to create 'work ready' graduates, where students spend the first two years of their course studying at Forth Valley College before completing their degree programme at the University of Stirling. An added benefit is that the students have full university status from day one, so they can get involved in all aspects of university life - such as joining students' union clubs, societies and sports teams - even while they are studying at the college, helping them to feel part of the university community and easing the transition between institutions.

Session 1.3: Presentations – Developments in partnership working in Scotland’s colleges

(a) A new approach to Student Partnership Agreements through a dynamic, flexible and responsive online platform

Presented by: Kevin Ward (Students' Association Liaison Officer), Madeline Jean (Students' Association Digital Officer) and Milea Leone (Student President), City of Glasgow College

(b) Students as partners: Creating a collective responsibility for course evaluation and improvement

Presented by: Cat Meighan (Student Engagement Officer, Inverness College UHI)

City of Glasgow College and its Students' Association have taken a different approach to creating a Student Partnership Agreement (SPA). While the SPA does recognise all of the formal processes of obtaining and responding to student feedback and ensuring active engagement, it differs in how it seeks to establish partnership working. In this session, we explore our use of an online platform (My Voice) to gather student suggestions on topics based on elements of our Student Experience Strategy. We will look at the process of taking these ideas and refining them through a range of mechanisms, including our Student Representative Council and the City Partnership Forum, and explain how these ideas form the basis for developing partnership projects. Our SPA subsequently reflects these ideas and thereby establishes a way of working that remains relevant to our student body and supports timely interventions with concrete outcomes.

As part of a focus on partnership and staff-student relationships at Inverness College (UHI), we have recently:

- Re-framed our Student Partnership Agreement (SPA) to reflect a focus on working with our students as experts and able members of a learning community.
- Included work streams on student representation, evaluation and feedback in our Enhancement Plan - as part of our work with sparqs on HGIOC (How good is our college?).
- Revised our approach to self-evaluation, including Course Committee Meetings, promoting a shift towards collective responsibility for all stages of the enhancement process, at both FE and HE levels.

In this session, we present initial findings of research exploring to what extent these interventions have facilitated empowerment and engagement of students and ultimately enhanced the student experience.

Session 1.4: Presentations – Reviewing provision and engagement for key student groups

(a) Thematic review of student support

Presented by: Brian Connolly (Academic Policy Officer, The University of Edinburgh) and Isabella Neergaard-Petersen (Black and Minority Ethnic Officer, Edinburgh University Students' Association)

This presentation will explore how we have engaged students in Thematic Reviews, which consider the student experience in relation to a particular 'theme'. One of our recent reviews focused on support for mature students, and student parents and carers. The theme was proposed by Edinburgh University Students Association, in response to student concern at the inconsistent levels of support for these under-served student groups. Students were involved in setting the review's scope and activity, as well as participating as reviewers and providing evidence to the process. This approach has allowed us to harness the experiences of diverse student groups and make recommendations to the University addressing specific, practical problems faced by our students.

(b) Turning up the volume on the distant learner voice

Presented by: Dr Susie Schofield (Academic Lead for Blended and Distance Learning, University of Dundee) and Stewart Squire (Democratic Support & Policy Co-ordinator, Dundee University Students' Association)

The importance of the student voice at all stages of development and delivery of higher and further education provision is increasingly recognised. Monologic, tutor-created module evaluations have given way to much more sophisticated and effective approaches through partnerships, leading to transformative learning experiences for all involved. However, full engagement with one group of students continues to be challenging across the sector – the distance learner. These students tend to be part-time, balancing study with heavy time commitments elsewhere. Historically, many institutions have used their on-campus student representatives' model for distance learners, with limited success. Challenges have included difficulties motivating student representatives to apply, involving them with training and support, and communication channels between the rep and the students they represent. This paper reports on a partnership developed between Dundee University Students' Association (DUSA) and University of Dundee staff. A working group was created with the remit: *'to review and enhance distance learning student representation to ensure distance learners have an appropriate voice in improving their student learning experience.'* We present the ensuing internal audit of the distance learning experience, our engagement with the sparqs' Distance Learning Toolkit, different models being used across our distance learning programmes, and how the partnership is evolving.

Session 1.5: Presentations – Student engagement with quality processes in different national contexts

(a) Student Engagement Project at Artesis Plantijn University College, Belgium

Presented by: Anika Hendrickx (Policy Advisor Student Participation), Elise Beeckmans (President of the General Student Council) and Dries Meerts (Vice President of the General Student Council), Artesis Plantijn University College Antwerp, Belgium

(b) Responding to the lack of student engagement, participation and voice in the quality assurance (QA) process at Stellenbosch University (SU), South Africa

Presented by: Maya Sutherland (Manager Quality Assurance, Stellenbosch University, South Africa)

This interactive session explored the student engagement project at Artesis Plantijn University College Antwerp, outlining their fantastic course rep system and the progress made over the last few years due to the excellent training and processes implemented to ensure the voices of all students are heard.

[A massive thanks to Anika, Elise and Dries, who stepped in at the very last minute to deliver in place of a late cancellation. Not only did they present an engaging and interesting session in a second language, they also prepared an interactive presentation within a few hours' notice on the evening before the conference! Sincere thanks to you all, on behalf of the sparqs' team!]

In a national context of student unrest, and where student engagement and participation is not the norm, this session presents a case study of recent work undertaken to engage students meaningfully in the quality assurance (QA) process at Stellenbosch University. We will demonstrate how creating opportunities and encouraging the student voice brings benefits to both the institution, which gains an insight into what matters most to students about their learning, and the students involved, who learn to reflect on their own educational experiences. We will outline how the outcomes and feedback from students who participated in our workshops support the case for strengthening the student voice, and demonstrate how our findings can help develop student engagement at both an institutional and national level.

Session 1.6: Presentations – Student-led design supporting transitions

(a) The student-led year-long induction

Presented by: Gary Donaldson (Lead Widening Participation ambassador and current sparqs Associate Trainer), Liz Scott (Head of Widening Participation) and Shelby Brown, Anjali Samar and Emily McTaggart (Widening Participation Ambassadors), Edinburgh Napier University

(b) Student-led curriculum innovation projects:

- **Creation of resources to aid the transition of international students**
- **Bridging the gap between student and researcher: the development of the Research Skills MSc project module**

Presented by: Lindsey Vest and Ben Howie (Final Year Undergraduate Students, School of Chemistry), and Dr Frances Docherty and Dr Beth Paschke (Academic Teaching Staff, School of Chemistry), University of Glasgow

Over the past two years, students within Edinburgh Napier University, in conjunction with its Widening Participation Team, have strengthened early student engagement by building a sense of community amongst incoming widening participation students even before their first day on campus. The aim is to foster a sense of belonging, which we hope will ultimately have a positive impact on retention. We are currently developing this project one step further, with our plan to create the 'year-long induction'. This presentation will explore how the project has evolved, successes we have enjoyed, challenges we have faced and how students leading engagement projects within the sector can benefit everyone involved.

This session explores two student-led curriculum innovation projects at Glasgow University's School of Chemistry. The projects focus on different cohorts of students – international students and PGT students – but share the aim of smoothing transitions and supporting these students to develop their full potential. As the undergraduate developers involved in these two projects, we would like to share with you our experiences in supporting students through transitions with learning and integration. We will also explore the opportunities that being involved in this work has given us to develop positive graduate attributes: work-related learning, problem-solving, collaboration, organisation and communication.

Session 2

Session 2.1: Workshop – Tackling the FE attainment challenge: small changes, big impact!

Facilitated by: Elizabeth Shevlin (Improvement Advisor, Scottish Government) and Stef Black (Development Consultant, sparqs)

The College Improvement Project (CIP) launched in 2017 with the aim of improving retention and raising attainment in FE in colleges through taking a quality improvement approach to developing evidence-based practice. The CIP is aligned with the new quality arrangements, 'How good is our college?' led by Education Scotland and the Scottish Funding Council, to target improvements for the learner where they are most needed. The five colleges involved in the project formed improvement teams for the initial phase (AY17-18/18-19), pioneering the use of improvement techniques to enable a positive impact on learner retention and attainment. Students are an invaluable part of each project team; their insight and involvement keeps teams focused on the student experience and helps to shape change that will be effective and lasting - with the support of sparqs, the project seeks to enhance and expand the engagement of students from across colleges. The project will continue to identify the issues and challenges that often contribute to students not gaining a qualification – or, indeed, dropping out.

This workshop will provide insight into the project so far, including examples of the changes implemented by the colleges, and the initial impact they have seen as a result, as well as hearing how student engagement in the project can be best supported for valuable contributions. We will also explore the future of the project, and how other colleges can take away the learnings of the CIP to assist them in improving their own attainment and retention figures.

Session 2.2: Workshop – Engaging the diversity of students: developing inclusive engagement practices

Facilitated by: Hannah Goddard (Student Engagement Consultant, TSEP), Tania Struetzel (Quality Enhancement Officer (Student Engagement), Middlesex University London) and Jordan Lewis (Advocacy & Policy Manager, Middlesex Students' Union)

The Black attainment gap – where white students are more likely to gain upper-second or first class degrees than BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) students – is a high profile issue for UK government and should become an increasingly important area for institutions to address. Using our expertise as student engagement professionals, this session will explore how student engagement can play a role in improving the experiences and attainment of BME students in HE.

We believe that implementation of change will require a whole institution approach, with student engagement practitioners as key agents to facilitate change. As such The Student Engagement Partnership (TSEP) is currently running a project on using race-conscious research to inform thinking around how student engagement practices can be made more inclusive with and for BME students. Middlesex University and Middlesex Students' Union are one of the participating groups, with their research focusing on establishing how representative their student representatives are of the Middlesex student body, what barriers to engagement might exist for BME students, and how they can mitigate these in the future.

This session will share insights from existing literature alongside key learning from Middlesex University's approach to reflecting on its practices and encourage reflection and action planning between participants.

Session 2.3: Presentations – The pupil voice: hearing from children and young people in schools and colleges

(a) Young Inspectors' Programme: "Because kids know what schools should be like for kids"

Presented by: Steph Kirkham (Development Consultant, sparqs), Maxine Jolly (Senior Education Officer, Education Scotland) and Matthew Reid (Pupil Participation and Supporting Rights Respecting Schools Development Officer, Aberdeen City Council)

As part of the Scottish Government's educational strategy it is developing a Young Inspectors' Programme, in order to engage even more with children and young people and listen to their views about how to improve Scottish education. The Scottish Government is committed to the rights of Scotland's children and young people to share their views about what is important to them in their lives and, central to this, is developing opportunities for them to help shape improved educational experiences for all of Scotland's children and young people.

Working in teams, the Young Leaders of Learning have been looking at activities within their own and other schools, so they can learn from one another. By talking, visiting and sharing information with each other, we hope that each participating school will be able to create an action list for improvements and share best practice.

Education Scotland and sparqs have been working in partnership to roll out the pilot of the project. Starting in Aberdeen, we have been working with multiple schools, both primary and secondary. During this session, we will share some of the amazing work that's been happening, talk about the positive impact it is having and consider the next steps for the programme.

(b) Listening to the pupil voice in college setting

Presented by: Eve Lewis (Director, sparqs)

The pupil voice in schools, colleges and universities will become increasingly important as Scotland looks to address the challenges presented by the Learner Journey Review and other sector initiatives.

This presentation will give an overview of sparqs' work in schools and colleges in this area.

Session 2.4: Presentations – Student–staff collaborations in enhancing learning and teaching

(a) Decolonising through co-curricula

Presented by: Diva Mukherji (Vice President Education, Edinburgh University Students' Association)

This session will outline the principles of decolonising the post-16 education system, and the role co-curricula play within the overall movement. Rather than only viewing co-curricula and decolonisation in the context of curricula creation, this session will highlight the importance of co-curricula as a decolonial action in and of itself. The session will explore an understanding of decolonisation in the context of post-16 education, and how student-staff collaboration is key to the movement. By highlighting a wide variety of existing co-curricula models within The University of Edinburgh, the session will offer suggestions of how other institutions can implement models of co-curricula which contribute to the wider decolonisation movement.

(b) Reverse mentoring - Students mentor senior staff at Dublin City University

Presented by: Helena McCanney (Learning and Development Officer, Dublin City University)

Reverse mentoring is where a younger person mentors a more experienced individual. At Dublin City University (DCU), it involves matching a student with a head or dean. The student mentor shares apps and sites they use to acquire and create learning and knowledge, as well their experiences of learning in their level, with the staff mentee.

Reverse mentoring holds potential in helping HE leaders understand the viewpoints of students and the possibilities of technology in enhancing teaching and learning. It offers a way of capturing the student voice and helps to advance the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion across universities. We are developing a toolkit of resources to capture steps in establishing a Reverse Mentoring programme, from research and matching Student Mentors and Head/Dean Mentees, through to evaluating the programme. We will share our experiences from the pilot project at DCU and explore the benefits and challenges with a view to encouraging others to establish their own reverse mentoring programmes.

Session 2.5: Presentations – Impacting on institutional and national priorities – models for success

(a) Driving institutional enhancement activity in partnership with our students

Presented by: Kirsty Campbell (Learning Analytics and Partnership Lead, Robert Gordon University)

The specific institutional approach of Robert Gordon University (RGU) and RGU:Union contributed to our TEF Gold Award of June 2017, with the panel highlighting the “systematic approach to engaging students as partners in the development of the learning experience” as an area of positive practice. Underpinning this, is the evolution of a culture which recognises the value of both meaningful metrics, and working in partnership with students, as a sound basis for ensuring quality assurance as well as driving institutional change.

This presentation will consider ways in which we work with students in the design, delivery and appraisal of evidence-based enhancement. It will outline the RGU ethos of partnership, and demonstrate tangible examples of effective collaboration between staff and students.

(b) Student as partners? Exploring student engagement in the creation of new Technological Universities in Ireland

Presented by: Dr Lynn Ramsey (Head of Teaching and Learning, Letterkenny Institute of Technology) and Dr Sharon Feeney (Head of Learning Development, Dublin Institute of Technology)

This session will critique student engagement within the context of Irish Higher Education. In particular, it will analyse the opportunity, nature and effectiveness of student engagement strategies within the foundation of the new technological universities, from both policy and practice perspectives. In so doing, this session will articulate a new conceptual module which analyses the impact of student engagement in the context of institutional and national priorities.

Session 2.6: Presentations – Engaging students in the use of data

(a) Developing co-created principles to underpin an ethical policy for the use of learning analytics

Presented by: Prof Alison Green (Dean For Teaching Quality Enhancement, University of Stirling) and Daniel Wright (Vice President Education, Stirling Students' Union)

(b) Responding to the student voice and using data: Improving the student experience by supporting students' representatives

Presented by: William Hasty (Quality and Enhancement Specialist, QAA Scotland)

Learning analytics are a key component of the explosion of data becoming available to staff and students in the HE sector. At the same time, there is limited knowledge amongst academics and students as to what is available, how this can be used and what it means. Nevertheless, the use and interpretation of this data can have a profound impact on student wellbeing; attainment and experience. Therefore at Stirling University, we have taken a student centred approach to developing knowledge and understanding of learning analytics towards the development of co-created principles which will determine how learning analytics will be used in our institution.

This session will discuss how we have approached this project and lessons learnt so far.

Given the drive for data and supporting evidence to capture the student voice, it is important to reflect on how this data is acted on as well as communicated back to students.

This session will share the outcomes, resources and learning from the first two years of the current Enhancement Themes Student-led Project. The Enhancement Themes are one of the five pillars of Scotland's Quality Enhancement Framework and are a unique feature of our sector. Each theme, typically lasting three years, reflects an ongoing or emerging priority for Scottish HE and is the basis for work at institutional and national level to research and develop practice in that priority. Students and students' associations are involved in a variety of ways in shaping the work and outputs of each theme including the Student-led Project. The current theme, 'Evidence for Enhancement: Improving the Student Experience', focuses on how students can work with institutions to gather and use data about the learning experience.

Outputs from the first year of the Student-led Project have centred around developing a collection of guiding principles for responding to the student voice, as well as highlighting good practice identified through the project. The presentation will also cover current activity, which has been focused on examining how students are (or could be) using data and evidence in their work at all levels of the representative system. We know that data is plentiful in institutions, but the project will look into how far students access and use this evidence to enhance the learning experience.

Session 3

Session 3.1: Workshop – Students as partners in colleges’ self-evaluative activity and enhancement planning

Facilitated by: Steph Kirkham and Hannah Clarke (Development Consultants, sparqs) with input from Gloria Laurini (FCSA Student Engagement Co-ordinator, Fife College Students' Association) and Al Wilson (Director, Edinburgh College Students' Association)

Student engagement in formal mechanisms for quality ensure that students can work in partnership with their institutions to enhance the learning experience at a strategic level, as well as representing individuals or groups of students in an effective manner. In Scotland’s colleges, a key facet of this is student engagement in self-evaluative activities and enhancement planning within the new formal quality arrangements introduced in 2017 (How good is our college?). sparqs has supported colleges and students’ associations to shape and develop their roles within the arrangements and we have seen progress made with students contributing to self-evaluative activities, enhancement planning and formal processes within the arrangements. However, challenges remain around developing the role of the student reviewer (Student Team Member) and the students’ association.

This workshop will consider progress up to now, and share good practice from representatives across the sector to explore how students can actively participate and how staff can facilitate and support them throughout. We will consider the use of sparqs’ tools to support developments in student engagement with self-evaluative activity and enhancement planning in colleges, as well as explore what we need to do next to take our learning forward.

Session 3.2: Workshop – NSS: I can’t get no satisfaction!

Facilitated by: Stef Black (Development Consultant, sparqs)

The National Student Survey (NSS) continues to be a stumbling block in some ways for many institutions; even after years of analysis, action and application, certain sections remain troublesome, with poor satisfaction levels, and few answers as to how to remedy these results. As the national appetite for solutions continues to grow, and with the current enhancement theme for the sector emphasising the importance of data and utilising evidence to improve the student experience, sparqs has undertaken a data-driven project to clarify our understanding of why results are the way they are, by thinking about what factors influence what results. This workshop will explore the parameters and initial outcomes of this project; from best practice around Scotland and across the UK, to alternative solutions to consider that may have longer-term impact. We will examine some of the systematic and structural issues at play, whilst drawing on the work of several institutions and what action they have taken to see significant and lasting change.

Session 3.3: Presentations – Gathering and responding to student feedback

(a) Revitalising the student surveys

Presented by: Gordon Rennie (Project Officer, Heriot-Watt University)

This session will explore work recently carried out within Heriot-Watt University on revitalising its institutionally-based student surveys. The intention of this work was to improve the gathering of evidence on student issues, and respond in a way that allows students to see change as a direct result of their feedback. The work undertaken focused on improving the entirety of the student survey process, from the way data is gathered, through to closing the feedback loop. The initial report contained 21 distinct recommendations - some of which are unique to Heriot-Watt but many of which are applicable to the whole sector - which will be implemented and tested throughout the academic year 2018/19. This session will present an evidence-base for how the sector can improve the running of student surveys. We will also discuss some common misconceptions, such as the need for completion rewards, the concept that students don't care, and the idea that a 20-30% completion rate is the best we can aim for.

(b) Student-centred learning and course evaluation tools

Presented by: Signe Tolstrup Mathiasen (Vice President of Academic Affairs, National Union of Students in Denmark)

This presentation aims to facilitate a discussion on why our current systems of student course evaluation are not having the expected results. It builds a hypothesis on the fact that, while student course evaluation is fundamental for implementing student-centred learning, the methods of course evaluations do not follow the basic principles of student-centred learning themselves. On the contrary, student course evaluation methods rarely take consideration of the needs and diversity of the different classrooms and are often standard surveys to be filled instead. During the session, we will reflect on the role that student course evaluation has, as well as on the importance of the design of this evaluation. When student course evaluation does not provide the desired results, it is often said that the reason for this is that students simply lack interest. This presentation aims to challenge that perspective, and invites participants to critically analyse the important role that the design of such evaluation tools play in those results.

(c) Driving forward the delivery of a Student Partnership Agreement (SPA)

Presented by: Karen Scaife (Student Engagement Manager, University of Aberdeen) and Donna Connelly (Education Officer, Aberdeen University Students' Association)

"We believe that, by working together, we can ensure our students benefit from the best possible educational experience" - AUSA and the University of Aberdeen. Our Student Partnership Agreement (SPA) sets out the ambition of Aberdeen University Students' Association (AUSA) and the University of Aberdeen to enhance the Aberdeen experience, creating an inclusive and supportive environment for students to reach their full potential. We will explore how we are managing the delivery of the SPA and the ways in which we are demonstrating impact on and to the student body. We will talk about listening to and responding to student feedback, as well as ensuring the SPA meets the needs of our diverse student community, and provide an example of turning a written document into a living, breathing action plan.

Session 3.4: Presentations – Developments in course rep systems

(a) Developing a new class rep system

Presented by: Helen Chisholm (Student Adviser, Borders College) and David Elder (Vice President, Borders College Students' Association)

We will outline changes to our course rep system, designed by the Students' Association and evolved through close partnership working with Senior Leaders, with the aim of introducing a system which:

- is more efficient for staff and students.
- is more representative of the experiences of all students.
- encourages better engagement with the Students' Association.
- provides greater alignment with HGIOC (How good is our college?) themes.

The session will share the process of developing this initiative in partnership, as well as sharing the impact of these changes over the first seven months of implementation.

(b) How to make West Lothian College SPARKLE – Support, Partnership, Alliance, Representation, Knowledge, Learning and Evaluation. Students as partners in evaluation and improvement.

Presented by: Micole Cochrane (Student Association Development Officer, West Lothian College)

The Student Association recognises the importance of a strong class ambassador (class representative) structure. But how do you achieve this? The Student Association researched various ways in which institutions collated learning and teaching evaluation through their class ambassador (rep) systems and how effective they were. It was concluded that a robust system should be integrated which would collect feedback from all courses and all students. It was also essential to ensure that courses without a class ambassador were represented. Considerations were made regarding our current Student Association Structure and the impact that had on the support we provided to class ambassadors, as well as the training required to create a meaningful class ambassador system where the student voice is prominent. It was also essential to develop relationships with our college management, in order to support this project and recognise students as partners.

So, what have we done, how effective has it been and how have we made it sustainable? The Student Association developed a document for class ambassadors to complete with their classes – SPARKLE (Support, Partnership, Alliance, Representation, Knowledge, Learning and Evaluation). We established a robust process where feedback would be recorded and managers would be accountable for providing actions, where appropriate, from the reported student feedback.

Has the model worked? What have we learned? Come along to find out more...

Session 3.5: Presentations – National-level developments in student engagement

(a) Working with students for students: building real partnership for quality enhancement in Australian tertiary institutions

Presented by: Kate Walsh (Project Manager for the Student Voice Pilot Project in Australia)

This presentation examines the work resulting from a Fellowship from the Australian Government which enabled a sector-wide collaboration to develop Principles and a Framework to facilitate student partnership. Known as STEPUP for quality enhancement (www.studentvoiceaustralia.com), they acknowledge the considerable value of the experience abroad, while accepting the need for it to be contextualised for the unique and diverse Australian sector.

The momentum produced by this work, combined with the increasing appetite for student voice across the sector, led to a call for the establishment of a national presence. As a result, a one-year Student Voice Pilot Project has been established with ten participant institutions. Kate Walsh is the Project Manager of this project, supported by the University of Technology, Sydney.

We will discuss the application of the STEPUP Principles and Framework to the Australian sector and the progress of the Student Voice Pilot Project.

(b) Enhancing student engagement through a national partnership in Ireland

Presented by: Cat O'Driscoll (NStEP Co-ordinator, National Student Engagement Programme, Ireland)

This presentation introduces the work of NStEP (National Student Engagement Programme}, the impacts it has made and the use of Scottish expertise in a different country, at the national and institutional level. Some challenges and advantages to staff and students working in partnership will be presented and discussion questions posed for participants to consider and share their own perspectives.

Session 3.6: Presentations – Understanding how to create inclusive learning environments

(a) Participation through the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015

Presented by: Alison Hendry (Project Development Officer, Deaf Action)

This session will raise awareness of the British Sign Language (BSL) (Scotland) Act 2015, and its importance for Deaf/Deafblind students, both current and prospective. The British Sign Language (BSL) (Scotland) Act 2015 legislates for Deaf/Deafblind individuals to be consulted within a defined planning and review cycle, and in the development of National BSL Plans and Authority (local) BSL Plans. The first National BSL Plan was published in October 2017, with Authority Plans published the following year. For education institutions, their Authority Plans will be tied to their SFC Outcome Agreements.

It is suggested that BSL users are consulted in various ways that is conducive to the language medium. Direct feedback from current and former Deaf/Deafblind students is crucial in supporting planning as they are the experts of their own situations. Geography can be a barrier to engaging with student BSL users, making it difficult to obtain feedback. To resolve this, it is suggested that the wider BSL community is consulted.

We will look at how current plans were developed through consultation and explore approaches for future engagement, as well as considering how barriers can be broken down to ensure full access for Deaf/Deafblind students.

(b) 'Silent Voices' - Exploring minority student experiences at the University of Winchester

Presented by: Maisha Islam (Centre for Student Engagement Administrator and Student Fellow for the project) and Dr Carol Shepherd (Lecturer, Sociology (Access)), University of Winchester

We will report on the findings and progress of a project, undertaken as part of the Student Fellows Scheme at the University of Winchester, which aims to give a voice to minority students within Higher Education at Winchester. The focus will be on a student's specific experience pertaining to a particular characteristic, including: race, sexuality, ethnicity, personality, mental health, physical ability, social ability, religion & faith, class, and gender, as well as exploring the intersectionality of these characteristics.

Our session will shed light on the experiences of university students who may come from 'non-traditional' backgrounds, or students who have 'hidden' characteristics that may affect the way they experience university, thus supporting the creation of better and more inclusive HE spaces and learning and teaching environments.

We also welcome feedback to better improve our research approach and journey.