



sparqs  student participation in quality scotland

Annual Report 2013

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Introduction

sparqs is one of the foundation stones of the Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework. It is one of the elements that attracts most world-wide interest: sparqs is usually the topic of the most frequently asked questions when working with international colleagues. Effective student engagement is increasingly identified as being at the heart of a high quality student experience. The role of sparqs in supporting student engagement has never been more widely recognised, and this role continues to be vitally important.

It is a time of unparalleled change and challenge for the sector in Scotland - such as, the changing financial climate; important developments in learning approaches and technologies; college regionalisation; and the increasingly global context within which our institutions operate. In such a complex environment, the effective engagement of students is crucial to the success of our students and our institutions.

The new Student Engagement Framework for Scotland developed by sparqs provides us with an important new tool for shaping and evaluating our policy and practice. This report illustrates how it is already influencing our work in developing a culture within which we support students, their institutions and the overall sector.

As Chair of sparqs Steering Committee, I never cease to be amazed at the quantity and quality of the achievements of the sparqs team. I welcome this opportunity to record my thanks for their dedication and unstinting efforts in keeping Scotland at the forefront of this key area.

I hope you enjoy reading this brief summary of some of the highlights of 2012-13. I am delighted to commend this report to you.

Professor Norman Sharp OBE
Independent Chair of sparqs Steering Committee

2012-13 has been an eventful year for sparqs. The development of our new strategic plan and the publication of our two celebration reports has been an excellent opportunity to reflect on our work over the last ten years, consolidating and building on our strengths, as well as identifying new challenges for the next five years. The celebration reports reflect on the achievements of so many people in the sector and my warm thanks go out to everyone who has helped shape all of this work. It is edifying to consider just how far we have come in developing student engagement.

I trust this report will give you a flavour of the work we have been doing over the last year. We are pleased not only with the great feedback on the new Student Engagement Framework for Scotland, but also with the speed with which people have started to use it to help develop strategies and activities – including internationally, with interest from both South Africa and Australia. Our work on Student Partnership Agreements has been really important to us and it is great to see the enthusiasm with which many institutions have approached their development. Supporting student engagement within

the regionalisation process, through Partnerships for Change, has been a significant piece of work for us. There have been many achievements, as well as challenges, and the potential benefits stronger students' associations will bring to student engagement in colleges makes the work vitally important. The project has demanded even more energy and enthusiasm from the sparqs team than usual and their commitment to the project is something I am really proud of. Thank you, team!

There are many more highlights. Our dynamic new website presents a great opportunity for us to reach a wider audience; the success of the Institutional Associate Trainer scheme in increasing institutional capacity is great news and we are pleased to be working with ENABLE to deliver course rep training to students in supported education. But that is only a selection of the work we have been doing. Do read on to find out more about this work and how we have worked with the sector to ensure Scotland remains world leading in ensuring students can shape and influence the quality of the student experience.

Eve Lewis
Head of sparqs

About sparqs

Strategic plan

Throughout 2012-13 sparqs created and launched a new strategic plan with the support and involvement of the sector. It takes us from 2013 to 2018, giving us a new vision, mission and four strategic aims.

Our strategic aims, while ambitious, are practical and rooted in the experiences of students and institutions; and we intend through our new strategic plan to deliver meaningful, useful support to universities, colleges, students' associations and sector agencies. The plan will provide the

resources, advice and research that can underpin truly effective student engagement and real changes and enhancements to the learning experience throughout Scotland.

There is a level of excitement within the sparqs team as we get down to the business of planning how we will put the plan into action and meet the challenges of the next five years.

You can read our strategic plan in full on our website.

This annual report highlights our work this past year through the prism of our four new strategic aims.

Vision

Students making a positive and rewarding difference to their own and others' educational experience, helping shape the nature of learning and contributing to the overall success of Scotland's universities and colleges

Inspires



Mission

Ensure that students are able to engage as partners at all levels of quality assurance and enhancement activities, including:

Commenting on, improving and shaping their own learning experience

Taking an active part in formal student engagement mechanisms, including quality assurance and enhancement processes and strategic decision making

Shaping the development of the student experience at a national level

Achieved via



Strategic Aims

Strategic Aim 1
Supporting Students

Strategic Aim 2
Supporting Institutions

Strategic Aim 3
Supporting the Sector

Strategic Aim 4
Developing a Culture



Shapes

How we will work



Shapes

Our values and approaches

How we work

sparqs is funded by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and you can see details of how that money is spent on the following page.

The agency is managed on SFC's behalf by the National Union of Students (NUS) Scotland, and it takes its strategic direction from a Steering Committee. Chaired by an independent member, our Steering Committee includes representation from all the main sector agencies plus student

membership from both NUS Scotland and the university and college sectors.

sparqs employs ten members of staff, hosted by NUS Scotland in their Edinburgh office and by Inverness College. We also employ a team of Associate Trainers – students who work for us part-time for an academic year to deliver course rep training, among other work.

You can see details of our staff on our website.



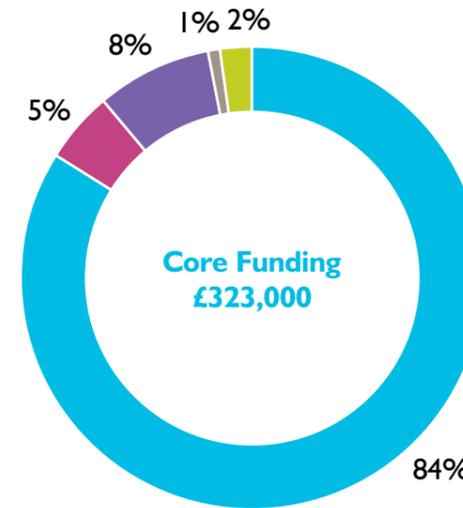
Finance

In 2012-13, additional funding from external projects was used to support our core activities. This allowed us to invest in new activities such as the development of a new website and produce new publications. We were also able to increase efficiencies and minimise costs, eliminating the

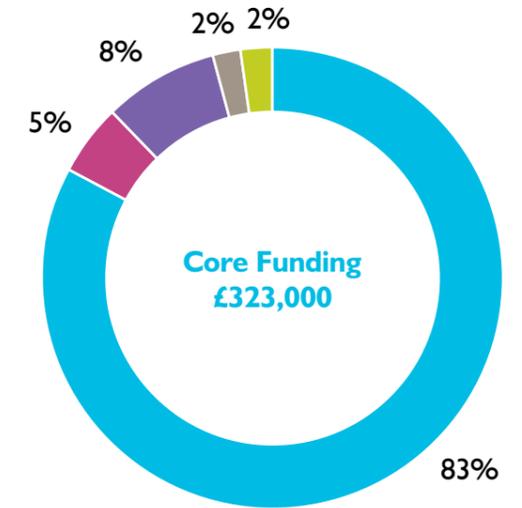
need to rely on additional funding to meet our core business function costs.

Efficiencies have also been found in introducing new financial procedures and systems. Development of a new client relationship management system enables us to maintain better information about institutions.

2012/13 Actual Spend



2013/14 Budget



Key

- Staff Costs
- Overheads
- Course Rep Scheme
- Events/Meetings
- Media and Resources

Strategic Aim 1 – Supporting Students

Support students to engage at all levels in enhancing their educational experience

Overall during 2012-13, a total of 3,305 students undertook Course Rep Training – 1,430 reps were trained by sparqs and 1,875 reps were trained via the IAT scheme, which is explained further below. This is an approximate increase of 30% in comparison with delivery through the AT scheme alone, evidencing a successful increase in capacity, one of the main aims of the scheme.

Course Rep Training

Continuing to be one of our largest areas of work, sparqs has delivered 149 sessions to 1,430 course reps in colleges and universities across Scotland in 2012-13.

As usual, this training is delivered by our team of Associate Trainers, students recruited from across the sector who hold and develop a vast range of experience as trainers and student representatives.

Our training continues to be very highly rated, and evaluation data tells us that:

- 98% felt able to participate in the training.
- 91% found the training useful or very useful.
- 96% would recommend the training.
- 92% rated our trainers as at least very good, and 40% as outstanding.

- Prior to training 47% of participants were unsure about their role as a course rep. This decreased to 6% after completing the training.
- Prior to training 68% of participants were unsure about engagement mechanisms within their institution. This decreased to only 9% after the training.

Institutional Associate Trainer (IAT) schemes

We are helping institutions to develop a stronger ownership over the content and delivery of their Course Rep Training and continue to grow our Institutional Associate Trainer scheme. Through this, universities and colleges are supported to recruit and manage their own training team of students. In 2012-13, four institutions joined the scheme, bringing the total to seven, and this will increase in following years – rising to ten institutions in 2013-14.

The scheme has created significant capacity within institutions to deliver their own training. For instance, at the University of Aberdeen this past year, 355 course reps have been trained – 90% of the total number of reps at the university.



Having a team of Academic Rep trainers (IATs) at Edinburgh has helped ensure class reps receive training which is relevant and dynamic. The feedback from class reps about the trainers is very positive and the numbers of class reps attending training has risen dramatically. The scheme has offered class reps and trainers alike a great opportunity to develop skills and local academic representation has been strengthened as a result.

Rachael King, Academic Representation Co-ordinator, Edinburgh University Students' Association

The 'Developing your Course Rep Training' event was a great chance to share best practice around Scotland and brainstorm new ideas on how to make the class representative system stronger, more rewarding, and more engaging for students.

Teddy Woodhouse, Director of Representation, University of St Andrews

Student officer training events

We have continued to provide training for senior student officers with roles in governance and quality in both sectors, through our Supporting College Student Governors programme and our university event, That's Quality! There has been a continued re-focus on using quality systems for change. These events were attended by sixty-one delegates from across twenty-seven institutions.

Training development

sparqs offers a range of training and consultancy tools to help universities and colleges to customise their own training materials to meet local needs. Work in this area has included:

- Developing your Course Rep Training day – attended by nineteen delegates from fifteen institutions. Speakers from across the UK presented on their innovative practices, including linkages between a university and local colleges; using the IAT scheme to tailor training to specific schools within an institution; and using evidence gathered from reps to inform an enhancement agenda. sparqs also launched the 'Developing Course Rep Activities' set of resources which aims to support institutions identify areas for improvement.
- The development of in-house training for student members of internal review teams, allowing materials to be institutionally relevant. Covering core communication and negotiating skills this course also has a practical element where students review internal review documents and sit on a review panel to interview staff. Three institutions have taken this forward and we plan to roll it out across other institutions this coming academic year.
- Development of Course Rep Training materials for students in supported education and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) students.

The 'Supporting College Student Governors' residential event was the most valuable training I attended as President of Langside College. At the time, I had been in office for less than two weeks and had poor understanding of the regionalisation agenda and how this was going to take over my life!

The training helped me to hone my arguments, establish exactly who I needed to consult for help and perhaps most importantly provided a platform for networking with the other Scottish college officers. As a direct result of this training, the newly merged students' association of Glasgow Clyde College is one of the best resourced in the country. We could not have achieved that without this crucial training.

Vonnie Sandlan, Student President (2012-13), Langside College (now Glasgow Clyde College)

Strategic Aim 2 – Supporting Institutions

Support the development of practices and activities in institutions and their students' associations that encourage and support student engagement

Consultancy

We have continued to offer consultancy to institutions and students' associations, working to support their priorities in student engagement. This has been done at both an individual level, working with a certain institution to develop and implement a project, and at a collective level, bringing groups together where sectoral or shared interests make it worthwhile.

Projects we have undertaken in the past year include:

- Beginning work with the University of the Highlands and Islands to develop a customised approach to their course rep system, in terms of both embedded delivery and customised content.
- Contributing to staff development weeks at a number of institutions, with presentations and workshops on the importance of student engagement to quality.
- Engaging many institutions in discussions about how to use the Student Engagement Framework for Scotland in the development of their own strategies and activities for student engagement.
- Creating materials to help support the engagement of students and student reps in supported education programmes through training and ongoing activities, and running a webinar through Colleges Scotland to promote the use of this material.

The tailored training materials not only helped reps in supported learning gain a greater understanding of the role, but also increased their confidence in carrying out the role and improved engagement with the students' association throughout the 2012-13 session.

Scott Dorman, Learner Feedback Assistant, Clydebank College (now West College Scotland)

The training [tailored for students in supported education programmes] was very interesting! It was a good opportunity to meet and get to know all the other reps and was very relaxed and calm. It is important that we are involved!

David Riddell, Course Rep at Clydebank College (now West College Scotland)

- Developing and publishing guidance for universities and students' associations on how to capture representative activity within the Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR) and undertaking some individual work with institutions on how to use them.



Napier Students' Association is piloting recognition for our School Reps this year in partnership with sparqs. Our School Reps are twenty-four students (three per our eight schools) who will be given additional training and opportunities to take forward some student-led projects. The sparqs guidance on HEAR will be used to help us monitor and evaluate their engagement and we believe that it will be a very helpful tool in this respect. Evaluation of the guidance and its effectiveness will be available at the end of the process.

Maxine Wood, Student Engagement Officer, Edinburgh Napier University Students' Association

- Holding initial discussions with a number of institutions around the engagement of part-time and distance learning students, with a view to planning future work at both institutional and sectoral level.
- Developing Course Rep Training and student engagement materials for students on ESOL courses.

Our college was struggling to train our ESOL class representatives effectively because of issues related to language. sparqs created a user-friendly training pack, and we have achieved the most positive engagement of ESOL students in both course and college matters as a result.

Daljit Kaur, ESOL Lecturer/Teaching and Learning Advisor, Clydebank College (now West College Scotland)

Staff development

We have begun major plans to develop our support to staff in universities and colleges in their approaches to student engagement. With different staff roles in mind – from teaching staff to quality teams – we have initiated explorations into the impact of student engagement on staff development needs. While doing this we have continued to offer and review our staff workshop on student engagement in quality, offered to universities and

colleges as a useful addition to staff development programmes. During 2012-13 we delivered workshops to around 150 staff.

We are looking to embed the Student Engagement Framework for Scotland in all of our staff development activity, so that staff can be equipped and supported to take forward the framework as part of their work with students.

Annual Support Visits

As a way of gaining a more accurate understanding of institutions' priorities and how we can support them, in 2012 we introduced Annual Support Visits. These visits have allowed us to meet with key staff and student officers, summarise our activities and services, and explore in depth how sparqs can best meet the needs of individual student engagement activities within institutions, for instance with respect to strategy development, engagement tools or review preparation.

Due to the complex demands on the time of college staff and student officers as a result of regionalisation, these have initially been conducted in the university sector only.

Both our Annual Support Visits and our work on college regionalisation (see pages twelve and thirteen) have allowed us to provide named points of contact within the sparqs team for each institution, allowing a richer and more informed basis for institutional support.

Strategic Aim 2 (continued)

College Regionalisation

Background

The Scottish Government's move to regionalise the college sector represents the biggest change in the sector for a generation. At a time of increasing focus on student engagement, it was both necessary and desirable that students would be put at the heart of this process – not only in terms of shaping the regionalisation of their own college, but also through leading on the regionalisation and development of their own structures of representation and engagement.

The 2012 *Report of the Review of Further Education Governance in Scotland** by Professor Russel Griggs, commissioned by the Scottish Government, recommended that “Student participation and representation become a commitment across the college sector. Students’ associations should be strengthened and become appropriately funded, autonomous and sustainable.”

sparqs has worked closely this past year with SFC, NUS Scotland and of course colleges and students’ associations themselves, to support the achievement of these aims.



Partnerships for Change

Jointly with NUS Scotland, sparqs has secured funding for Partnerships for Change (PfC). This is a project funded and commissioned by SFC to ensure that student engagement is at the heart of the regionalisation process and to support the development of strong, autonomous regional students’ associations.

The funding has allowed sparqs, in partnership with NUS Scotland, to provide an in-depth programme of consultancy, support and training to colleges and students’ associations, helping them to work in partnership to shape decisions together and create effective regional student representation structures.



 sparqs’ guidance and support as part of Partnerships for Change has been invaluable during the merger of our two students’ associations. Our consultant attended joint events, and supported students and staff to establish a ‘fit for purpose’ students’ association model for the new college which gained approval from the Partnership Board. There was a great deal of confidence in the joint partnership working between the two colleges and our PfC consultant, who was considered a key member of our team.

Cath Ferrie, Director of Curriculum Support and Development, Angus College



Sector-level activities

Through PfC, sparqs has worked with sector agencies and practitioners to ensure that colleges and regions are able to share experiences, challenges and effective practice on student engagement in the process. It has, for example, worked in the following areas:

- A presentation to the College Development Network’s Quality Managers’ event on students’ associations and regionalisation. This explored achievements and next steps of student engagement in regionalisation and included the input of a senior student officer.
- Informing the Principals’ Forum of the work of PfC, and arranging a presentation from the perspective of a multi-site college in England.
- Working with the College Development Network to design and deliver training for board members about how to engage student board members effectively in regional boards.
- Training being delivered at the start of the new year for college staff on working with elected officers.
- Creating the Future: Students’ Associations and College Partnerships - an event held in August 2013 to bring college staff and students together at a national gathering. The event was attended by around 100 students and staff from almost all Scotland’s regions as well as key agency staff including SFC, Education Scotland and the College Development Network.

Local activities

PfC’s main area of work is one-to-one support and consultancy services offered to college regions. sparqs staff have taken these consultancy roles and have engaged in a variety of work to provide support and advice to colleges and students’ associations. Examples include:

- Applications to the SFC transitional fund for funding to support student engagement and students’ association development. Approximately £1,805,000 has been allocated to this purpose across the sector.
- Providing information on regionalisation to student representatives through sparqs’ own training programme, such as training for course reps and student governors.
- Supporting students’ associations to plan and develop structures for 2013-14 through, for example, facilitating planning days and providing assistance in drafting business cases.
- Supporting students’ associations to address areas of recognised weaknesses. For example, volunteer presidents struggled to cope with the demands of regionalisation on top of their courses and paid work. There will be approximately forty-five paid student officers in post in 2013-14 across the thirteen college regions – twenty-four of them full time sabbaticals. That’s more than double the nineteen paid officers who were in post in 2012-13.
- Supporting students’ associations to develop and implement a variety of methods to engage and consult students on regionalisation, such as the Fife Communication Ambassadors who have gathered feedback from hundreds of students.

 Partnerships for Change has been vital in emphasising the importance of the student role in regionalisation and has helped student reps in many ways. For example, the project has assisted reps across Highlands and Islands to develop a common understanding of the way forward for representation and has been very valuable in supporting me in my acting board role.

Craig Keys, Acting FE Student Representative, Highlands and Islands Shadow Regional Board



* R.Griggs, *Report of the Review of Further Education Governance in Scotland* (January 2012)

Strategic Aim 3 – Supporting the Sector

Support student engagement with national sector agencies and policy developments

Sector committee engagement

Student representatives from across Scotland sit on various national committees which make decisions about education provision within colleges and universities. Working with NUS Scotland, sparqs facilitates communication between these representatives, providing briefings on important issues of the day, as well as reporting back on decisions taken in committees.

We have co-ordinated student attendance at over forty regular sector level meetings, ensuring students could contribute to discussions as wide as approaches to 'Mastersness', how to develop a curriculum for a growing diverse student population, and outcome agreements in colleges such as KPIs relating to governance and the effectiveness of public information.

In addition to this, sparqs also sits on over a dozen national committees to advise the sector on how best to engage students in its initiatives and decision making processes. sparqs is also regularly invited to sit on short life working groups, sector conference planning committees and other similar groups.

The involvement of sparqs in the Colleges' e-Assessment Group has ensured that the value of the learner voice has been incorporated into our plans for greater use of technology in learning and assessment to enhance the learner experience.

Martyn Ware, Head of eAssessment and Learning, SQA

Student Partnership Agreements

The 2011 Scottish Government report *Putting Learners at the Centre – Delivering our Ambitions for Post-16 Education* introduced Student Partnership Agreements. Over the past year, we have worked with the sector to create a guidance report on the development and implementation of a Student

Partnership Agreement, for use by colleges and universities.

The guidance will support colleges and universities to hold an institutional conversation about the nature of the relationship between students and their institution and set out a plan of work to be agreed and implemented in partnership with their students' association.

Discussions around this topic have been warmly received by institutions and students' associations. The first Student Partnership Agreement was formally agreed at the University of the Highlands and Islands in July 2013 and there are plans in place to develop them at the Open University in Scotland and The Robert Gordon University. Many other universities have expressed an interest in developing one when the final version of the guidance is released. sparqs will support this work and the development of the project into colleges through our consultancy work.

The sparqs SPA guidance is very clear and practical. The two-section structure is a very useful way to recognise both the longer term relationship, and shorter term, annual action areas. I look forward to using it with our students' association during the coming session.

Alan Davidson, Dean, The Robert Gordon University

College national student engagement survey

This year, sparqs has facilitated sector-level conversations about a joint survey for students at all colleges across Scotland. Discussions begun with staff and students have extended to SFC through its thematic group on quality and there is greater awareness of and buy-in to the concept amongst key influencers. We look forward to continuing this dialogue over the next academic year with SFC and sector partners.



Enhancement Themes

In the university sector, sparqs has continued to engage students as fully as possible in the Enhancement Themes. Work this past year has included:

- A new leaflet aimed at course reps to help get them more involved in the current theme 'Developing and Supporting the Curriculum' (DSC) – delivered to all universities and used at numerous course rep training conferences.

I think changes will be seen through our student reps as they will be better aware of how to raise the DSC theme at Student/Staff meetings, and as outlined in the leaflet, some staff may not be fully aware of enhancement themes and this is a great opportunity for reps to raise the general awareness of the theme.

Claire Lumsden, Student Representation Co-ordinator, University of the West of Scotland Students' Association

- A strong presence at the International Enhancement Themes Conference in Glasgow in June 2013. sparqs presented a workshop around the elements of the Student Engagement Framework for Scotland, chaired a plenary session and supported student chairs of presentation sessions.
- Student engagement being a key topic discussed at every DSC Steering Committee.

- Two Student Network events which brought together students on the institutional committees to strengthen their engagement in the current theme, discuss and evaluate their involvement so far and make suggestions about how their role could be improved and more thoroughly supported.

sparqs offers invaluable support for student representatives on the Developing and Supporting the Curriculum Enhancement Theme steering committee and works closely with the QAA Scotland team in supporting the Theme student network. sparqs have played a key role in 'de-mystifying' quality enhancement and creating communications streams suitable for all students, allowing for increasing student engagement in DSC activity.

Dr Claire Carney, Head of Enhancement, QAA Scotland

Subject-level engagement

sparqs, in partnership with The Higher Education Academy, have commissioned some initial research to map existing subject-based groups with a student membership. This has identified some interesting opportunities that we will explore over the coming year to support more national subject-based student engagement.

Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR)

Following on from our work with the quality update last year and after feedback from the university sector, we have produced comprehensive guidance for students' associations to engage with the ELIR process, encouraging participation and use of quality processes throughout the four-year cycle.

QAA Quality Code – Chapter B5: Student Engagement

sparqs was an active member of the working group that developed the chapter on student engagement of the QAA Quality Code, helping to ensure it met the needs of Scotland whilst encouraging institutions to use it alongside a range of more challenging and aspirational practices and policies in Scotland.

Strategic Aim 4 – Developing a Culture

Support the development of a culture of student engagement across Scotland

A Student Engagement Framework for Scotland

Having led the sector through discussions about the meaning and implication of the term “student engagement”, sparqs has produced five elements and six features that form a sector-owned Student Engagement Framework. This framework, launched in December 2012, allows institutions, students’ associations and sector agencies to consider in detail how to address various aspects of student engagement, including:

- Identifying next steps in developing student engagement within your institution.
- Identifying specific actions within an area of activity that could be developed and finding resources to help you.
- Negotiating developments in line with a shared view of student engagement in Scotland.
- Referencing other policies, regulations and guidance across the range of work related to student engagement.
- Exploring principles and ideas and contributing to debate and development.
- Celebrating and publicising activities and successes.
- Accessing the work and resources of a range of agencies working on student engagement.

The framework has been a useful springboard for sector practitioners and agencies as well as individual students’ associations and institutions to think in a methodical and structured way about their student engagement.

 In developing the Learner Engagement Strategy at Forth Valley College, we have considered the five key elements of student engagement outlined in the nationally agreed framework developed by sparqs. We have had excellent feedback and input from class representatives and the Learning and Teaching Committee who have used the framework as the basis for identifying and developing our future developments within the college.

**Jean Duff, Student Services Manager,
Forth Valley College**



QUEST

Promoting student engagement internationally

2012-13 has seen sparqs run two more QUEST workshops, in Brussels and Bucharest, as well as contribute to a QUEST conference in Malta, all of which were attended by student officers from across Europe. International training events to disseminate the work of the project were delivered by sparqs trainers during Summer 2013, and the culmination of the project will result in the launch of the QUEST website and publication of a QUEST handbook, developed by sparqs. The website will be both a repository for the research element of the project and provide online resources to allow students from across Europe to engage in the quality agenda.

sparqs continues to receive regular requests to be involved in European projects. We are currently awaiting the outcome of several funding bids



in conjunction with other European agencies to participate in projects relating to student engagement.

Now becoming an annual feature, sparqs delivered workshops at the international EQAF (European Quality Assurance Forum) conference in both 2011 and 2012 and will have a presence at the 2013 conference in Sweden.

Celebration reports

Student engagement has progressed considerably in recent years and so sparqs has undertaken a major exploration of developments and good practice in a range of student engagement work. Two reports, published in 2013, highlight a range of excellent case studies, key developments and continuing challenges in each of the university and college sectors.

Framed around the Student Engagement Framework for Scotland, the reports allow the sector to see in detail the progress made across the elements of the framework as well as in the management and development of student engagement generally.



Parliamentary event

To celebrate successes in student engagement across nearly a decade of sparqs’ existence, a large event was held in December 2012 at the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh, attended by over 100 people from across the sector. Speakers included Michael Russell MSP (Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning), Liam Burns (NUS President) and Anne-Marie Docherty (student and sparqs Associate Trainer).



Mr Russell spoke of how the government needs to think about how it can support student engagement through working with sparqs to support its strategic plan and areas of work, such as Student Partnership Agreements.



Website

The new sparqs website went live in July 2013, creating a more dynamic resource which we have been gradually improving over the last year, including the introduction of Twitter. These changes have increased the number of visitors to our site by 25%, including an increase in international visitors. Stats show that visitors now stay on the site longer and visits made via links from Twitter or other websites have increased by 300%.

The new site is more engaging and is built around the key aims of our strategic plan. This structure provides easier navigation and more relevant content for users and with additions like the new resource library we hope that our new site will be an authoritative resource for students and staff around student engagement.

Resource library

As part of the website revamp we have collected a wealth of good practice examples from across the sector and the resource library will be a vibrant hub of case studies, reports and materials which can inspire and encourage the sharing of experience between staff and student representatives.



Visit the sparqs website to find out more about all the areas of work mentioned in this report. The website contains a range of materials and resources to assist your student engagement activities, including our resource library.

Details of our staff and Associate Trainers can be found on the 'Our staff' page under the 'Home' menu.

You can also sign up to receive news articles about our work and emerging practice in student engagement.

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Follow us on Twitter to get up to date information about what the sparqs team is doing across Scotland.

www.twitter.com/sparqs_scotland

