

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN UNIVERSITY DECISION MAKING AND GOVERNANCE: TOWARDS A MORE SYSTEMICALLY INCLUSIVE STUDENT VOICE

AN OLT STRATEGIC PRIORITY COMMISSIONED PROJECT LED BY
PROFESSOR SALLY VARNHAM, FACULTY OF LAW, UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY



APPENDICES TO THE FINAL REPORT 2016

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SUBMITTED DRAFT

Appendix A: Certification by Deputy Vice-Chancellor

I certify that all parts of the final report for this OLT grant provide an accurate representation of the implementation, impact and findings of the project, and that the report is of publishable quality.

Name: Professor Shirley Alexander

Position: Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students)



Signature:

Date: 3 November 2016

SUBMITTED

Appendix B

Evaluation Report for SP14-4595 – University of Technology Sydney

Student Engagement in university decision-making and governance – towards a more systemically inclusive student voice

Background

The aim of this project was working towards enhancing the student experience by the development of a more systemic inclusion of student voice in decision making and governance in Australian universities. It investigated the case for deeper engagement of the views of diverse student bodies in order to consider how this may be achieved at many levels and facets. Ultimately, it aimed to provide mechanisms for better defining student expectations in the evolving new higher education environment as an inclusive culture embracing student participation in decision making is essential to the development of citizens and leaders in a democratic society. This project explored how the student voice has been championed internationally and used that experience to provide universities with the tools and knowledge to implement processes to facilitate and embed effective student participation. It worked towards building inclusive and responsive universities which value the student voice, and enhance the student experience by understanding and meeting student expectations.

The intended deliverables were all achieved and include:

- Research report of international research and experience and identifying good practices.
- Review report of Australian practices in student engagement in university decision making and governance.
- Case studies, frameworks and resources developed from pilots in a range of Australian universities.
- State and symposia and national workshop to engage the sector in adopting new practices.

The project was allocated an evaluator from the independent evaluation team for all Strategic Commissioned Projects by the then Office for Learning and Teaching. The role of the evaluator was to conduct formative evaluation activities throughout the life of the project as well as providing summative evaluation of the project at its conclusion informed and based by the ALTC Project Evaluation Resources designed to assist projects in achieving success and impact.

The summative evaluation that forms the basis for this report has been guided by the following questions:

- Was the project managed and conducted in ways that contributed to project success?
- Did the project achieve its stated outcomes?
- Did the project achieve as much impact as it should have?
- How could the processes associated with the project be improved and replicated?

Evaluation Reflections

This project team and the evaluation team were first introduced at the OLT opening workshop in March 2015 for all 2014 Strategic Commissioned Projects. The 21st Century student experience cluster was comprised of four project teams, including this project led the University of Technology Sydney, by Professor Sally Varnham, with project team members Katrina Waite, Bronwyn Olliffe and Project Manager Ann Cahill.

This project team was slightly different than other strategic commissioned projects as there was only one university involved, but the team had clear strategies in place to interact with, and gather feedback from a number of Australian and International Universities. By the time of the March workshop, the project was already underway with ethics approval and had commenced data gathering from relevant international institutions. A key strength of this project was the strong leadership of the project lead who was highly experienced in student governance and a dedicated and committed Project Manager, Ann Cahill.

Formative Evaluation Strategies

In order to determine that the project's aims were achieved and outcomes delivered, formative and summative evaluation strategies were undertaken throughout the project. The independent evaluator was welcomed as a member of the Project Team and external Reference Group and included in all project team communications. The evaluator was provided access to the project team's shared document Dropbox space and participated in virtual and face to face project meetings, reference group meetings and inter-cluster meetings. During the project lifecycle, the evaluator provided ongoing advice and feedback for progress reports, development of reports, and development and refinement of case studies. The evaluator met one on one regularly with the Project Manager and Project leader.

Project Management

It has well known that effective project management practice incorporates principles that:

- Identify project requirements
- Establish clear and achievable outcomes

- Balance the competing demands for quality, scope, time and cost
- Manage the expectations of various stakeholders
- Adapt plans to overcome challenges

This project clearly evidenced these project management principles. In particular, the project was tightly managed with clearly defined outcomes and deliverables, realistic timelines and flexibility to fine tune and make adjustments to accommodate challenges. A wide range of stakeholder groups were involved in the project as sources of data including the advisory reference group and were provided with extensive opportunities to contribute a strong voice. The team was also proactive in making links and forming collaborations with other project teams in the 21 Century Student Experience cluster of 2014 Strategic Commissioned Projects. The combined experience of the project leader and manager previously working together was also an obvious asset and strength in their abilities to keep the project performing on scope, time and to high quality.

Achievement of Outcomes

This project has successfully interacted with almost 250 individuals (181 in Australia and 85 internationally). In terms of sector engagement and reach, 12 institutions were represented in the reference group, 40 institutions engaged in symposiums, 14 student leaders responded to student survey and 11 case studies were created. The forms of interaction included surveys, interviews, workshops and symposiums. The findings indicate that there are pockets of good practice in Australia but no systemic response to the importance of partnering with students in decision-making and governance processes.

The key findings were that in order to encourage student engagement in university policies and procedures a sincere culture of partnership must be developed and visibly committed to respecting student voices. Communication is critical, including student representative opportunities within the university and through these opportunities the views of student representatives are integral to decision making.

The 11 case studies involved interviews and/or focus groups with the senior university personnel and students. A pilot of course representative staff/student liaison committee model was run in a faculty which had not previously utilised such a mechanism. Training was provided for those participating in the successful pilot.

Impact

The project adopted an embedded dissemination strategy and broad communications were aimed at establishing awareness and interaction with the project, particularly as this was a single institution project. Social media was used throughout the project and three project magazines were distributed widely and are available on the project website.

There was a workshop conducted late October 2015 involving students and university staff. A national forum in early September 2016 with over 100 attendees, involved both international and national speakers including students and as this project ends, impact will be extended through a national fellowship.

The project achieved the intended deliverables as illustrated below.

Outcomes	
Final Report	1
Good Practice Guide	1
Case Studies	11
Conference Presentations	12
Project Magazines	3
Workshops/Symposiums	2

Summary

The project activities ensured that a large number of stakeholders (students, academics and university leaders) were not only consulted in developing the findings, but were also engaged with the critical question of why is student engagement in decision making important to the student experience in today's higher education environment.

This project was a pleasure to work with due to the experience, respect and willingness of the team to engage with and learn from others. It was a highly competent and well led team that achieved not only its project outcomes but has also extended impact in a range of areas and ways. The relationships that have been formed during this project are a key strength and will be an asset for the endurance of the project work already commenced into the future through the Australian Teaching and Learning National Senior Teaching Fellowship awarded to Professor Sally Varnham, this project's leader.

Appendix C Impact Plan

	Anticipated changes at:			
	Project completion	Six months post-completion	Twelve months post-completion	Twenty-four months post-completion
(1) Team members	Knowledge about student engagement in UK, Europe and New Zealand. Empirical evidence regarding status of student voice in Australian university governance. Authorship of good practice exemplars, and conference presentations	Published papers	Published papers Further research and roles in developing student engagement	Further research and roles in developing student engagement
(2) Immediate students	Benefitting from increased knowledge of good practice in relation to student engagement	Benefitting from increased knowledge of good practice in relation to student engagement	Greater engagement with student representation opportunities and/or articulation of opinions to student representatives	Improved student experience, continuing enhanced student engagement
(3) Spreading the word	Exemplars, Reports, Conference presentations, Social media, Web	Social media, Web, Published papers	Social media, Web, Published papers	Social media, Web
(4) Narrow opportunistic adoption	Attendees at conferences and symposia trying specific practices identified as potentially beneficial in presentations delivered by the team	Attendees at conferences and symposia trying specific practices identified as potentially beneficial in presentations delivered by the team	Change at UTS (adopting evidence based best practice)	Embedded protocols at UTS
(5) Narrow systemic adoption	UTS, reference and pilot institutions trying specific practices identified as beneficial in the project	UTS, reference and pilot institutions trying specific practices identified as beneficial in the project	Other universities participating in the project adopting evidence based best practice and credit recognition	Embedded protocols at other universities
(6) Broad opportunistic adoption	Interaction of adopters with managers from other institutions encouraging broader adoption	Universities moving towards credit recognition and organised training	Universities embracing credit recognition and organised training	Universities embedding and improving credit recognition and organised training
(7) Broad systemic adoption	[not expected at this stage]	Recognition of the need for change	Development of recommendations based on research and early adopters	National review mechanism Higher education threshold standards National credit recognition

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REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH FINDINGS
(APPENDIX D)

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Executive summary

At the beginning of 2015, through the UTS Professional Experience Program (PEP), chief investigator Sally Varnham had the opportunity to conduct research into student engagement in the United Kingdom, Belgium and New Zealand. Interviews and focus groups were conducted and these were analysed in the first stage of this OLT project. The importance of a culture or ethos of student partnership emerged as a dominant feature. Student representation beginning at class/subject/course level stood out as key to this development. This process helps to build knowledge, experience and expertise in students who act as representatives, as well as helping other students to see the value of participating in decision-making. It helps to develop a culture of student voice. It was seen that student representatives in senior roles typically started out as class representatives and progressed through the ranks.

Also clearly evident in this research was the centrality of strong student leaders who saw themselves in professional roles acting in partnership with the university to facilitate student engagement at all levels.

Training, coaching and support are important aspects of how student representation is managed and promoted. Student leaders in the universities visited and in the interviews conducted generally saw their leadership role in student representative terms. In particular, they were in partnership with the universities in training, mentoring and support of student representatives at all levels in the university. A central concern was how to engage with different student groups, particularly those groups who are under-represented or whose needs may differ significantly from those of most students. A further question concerned whether all institutions should approach student voice in the same way and the need for flexibility to accommodate different types of institutions and differing student demographics.

Access to the practitioners interviewed in this study also opened up a vast array of documentary evidence around the practice and development of student engagement in these countries and this information is considered here also.

This report details the project findings relating to how student engagement in university decision making and governance operates in comparative sectors internationally. The goal is to inspire a sector-wide conversation and ultimately, a collaboration to agree a set of principles and a framework for good practice in Australian universities.

Student engagement

The concept of student engagement in higher education is used to cover activities ranging from those within the realm of learning and teaching such as active participation in learning to those that extend into other aspects of student life such as how students interact with institutional structures, strategy and processes (Carey 2013). Here the term is used in the latter context to mean 'engagement through representation' and 'partnership through engagement'. More particularly it is used to denote student participation in decision-making processes and representation at different levels within universities, including on university committees and governance bodies.

Student participation in this context includes less formal interactions such as representation at the class and course level widely used in the United Kingdom and New Zealand (the term course is used to denote a collection of subjects fulfilling the requirement for award of a particular qualification). Representatives may engage with lecturers, subject coordinators, head of schools and faculty representatives as appropriate to their particular role. It also includes highly formal interactions as elected faculty and university wide representatives who participate at senior levels of decision making and governance on councils and boards. The latter is a feature of student engagement in the United Kingdom, Belgium and New Zealand which also exists to varying degrees in Australia. In the sectors studied students may be representatives within student associations, unions or guilds or student representative councils or they may be elected separately to decision making bodies. The survey of Australian higher institutions conducted in the OLT project show that student representative bodies in Australia are diverse - some are tied in with the prevailing student union, association or guild but others are independently elected student representative councils or are appointed or elected independent of these types of structures. In the sectors studied, representation may also extend beyond specific campuses and institutions to state and national student bodies that lobby on behalf of university students across institutions, and to membership of national quality agencies.

The Student Engagement Framework for Scotland, discussed in more detail below, identifies the elements of student engagement as:

1. Students feeling part of a supportive institution
2. Students engaging in their own learning
3. Students working with their institution in shaping the direction of learning
4. Formal mechanisms for quality and governance
5. Influencing the student experience at national level

In turn the features that guide the elements of engagement are:

- A culture of engagement
- Students as partners
- Responding to diversity
- Valuing the student contribution

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- Focus on enhancement and change
- Appropriate resources and support (sparqs, 'Celebrating student engagement, successes and opportunities in Scotland's university sector', 2013).

Project rationale

International research reported here formed a basis for the OLT project: *Student Engagement in University Decision-making and Governance: towards a more systemically inclusive student voice*. Ultimately the project aimed to provide mechanisms for student voice for enhancement of course quality and the student experience in the evolving higher education environment in Australia. Focusing on policy and practices in comparative international sectors provides valuable assistance for the investigation into the case for deeper engagement of the views of diverse student bodies and consideration of how this may be achieved at many levels and in many facets. In addition to the benefit to universities, there are suggestions also that an inclusive culture embracing student participation in decision making is essential to the development of critical thinkers, innovators, leaders and citizens in a democratic society.

The examination of international experience with student engagement was undertaken to provide Australian universities with the tools and knowledge to implement processes for facilitation and the embedding of effective student participation. Ultimately the project works towards building inclusive and responsive universities which value the student voice, and enhance the student experience by understanding and meeting student expectations. This report relates to the findings from the international research and is appended to the project report.

What the study involved

Interviews were conducted in England, Belgium and New Zealand with representatives from university management and student bodies as well as higher education agencies. The selected participants were from groups that had experience with developing student engagement and the purpose in interviewing them was to establish what comprises good practice in this field.

Acknowledged limitations

Available resources have necessarily limited the range of institutions and people within those institutions that were available for consultation. Where possible the information gathered through interview has been supplemented with information sourced from publicly available reports and information published by the universities.

Ethics approval

The research is the subject of ethics approval provided by the University of Technology Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee under approval number HREC 2012-459A.

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Institutions and other bodies involved in this study

University of Bath

University of Antwerp

Katholieke Universiteit Leuven

Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand

Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

Massey University, New Zealand

Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education in the UK, Reading

National Union of Students (NUS) London

Oxford Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies, New College, Oxford, UK

Quality Assurance Agency UK

Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)

Student partnerships in quality Scotland

New Zealand Union of Students' Associations

Interviews

Interviews with key people were recorded. These recordings were made with the permission of the people interviewed who provided informed consent for their interviews to be recorded. The interviews were semi-structured. Semi-structured interviews use a series of prompt questions but maintain flexibility with respect to question order and whether all questions need to be asked at each interview. The use of a semi-structured format enhances the exploration of the interview subject matter (Bryman and Bell 2003). In carrying out the interview the aim is to prompt the interviewee to address each issue and provide their views unhampered by an overly structured series of questions which might prevent full exploration of their experiences and opinions.

Transcription and thematic analysis

The recorded interviews from Belgium, the United Kingdom and New Zealand were transcribed by a transcription service and the transcripts were subjected to a thematic analysis (Boyatzis 1998) by members of the project team. Each team member initially reviewed the transcripts independently and identified themes present in the transcripts. These themes were then compared and consensus reached regarding a

complete set of relevant themes. The initial analysis of the interview transcripts is reported below.

Documentary evidence

In addition to the opportunity to interview key participants in student engagement, this study provided access to an extended body of documentary evidence regarding the development and practice of student engagement in the countries visited. Insights into student engagement practice provided by these documents are discussed alongside the interview materials to further develop understanding of the key issues in creating effective student engagement.

The UK experience

To contextualise the UK interviews it is useful to discuss some of the background to student engagement there as described in documents identified by some of the interview participants.

Organisations dealing with student representation

In the UK national entities that support student representation include organisations such as student partnerships in quality Scotland (sparqs) (sparqs.ac.uk/); the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) (qaa.ac.uk), Wise Wales (wisewales.org.uk), the Higher Education Academy and the Guild of Higher Education (hea.ac.uk, guildhe.ac.uk/), and The Student Engagement Partnership (TSEP) (tsep.org.uk/). To a large extent student engagement in the UK has been driven by the quality enhancement agenda with the ultimate aim of an improved learning experience.

Scotland and sparqs

It is important to note at the outset that higher education in Scotland remains essentially government funded with no fees for local first time students. This renders the sector immune to some extent from 'marketisation' and the 'student as consumer' characterisation which confronts higher education in England and Wales following the introduction of fees. Experience of student partnership in Scotland however provides valuable knowledge and insights for this research in terms of institution and national sector approaches.

Student partnerships in quality Scotland (sparqs) was set up in 2003 by the tertiary education sector in Scotland to underpin its commitment to student engagement. Sparqs assists and supports students, student associations, institutions and other tertiary education bodies (universities and colleges) to improve the effectiveness of student engagement in quality at the course, institutional and national levels. The focus is on quality enhancement rather than quality assurance.

The Student Engagement Framework for Scotland

(SEFS)(sparqs.ac.uk/upfiles/SEFScotland.pdf) identifies the importance of a formal

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representative process in engaging student leaders within institutional processes to deliver student engagement at the highest strategic level. There is also recognition of the need for representation closer to the learning and teaching interface, the need to engage underrepresented student groups and the focus on supporting student representatives. The merits of both formal and informal processes are recognised (sparqs '*Celebrating student engagement, successes and opportunities in Scotland's university sector*', 2013).

Critical to this model is partnership:

In Scotland's universities student engagement has never been intended to be something that students demand and universities provide. Vice Principals are just as likely as senior student officers to approach the enhancement of learning and teaching by wanting to know how best students can be involved in decisions. (sparqs, 2013)

The role of student associations and student leaders in supporting representative roles in partnership with institutions is recognised. This partnership in turn has capacity to generate a more effective relationship between institution and student associations across a range of activities including providing training for student representatives. Sparqs in turn provides a national training program which focuses on the specific task of enhancing student learning experience, engaging student trainers in this process and providing 'train the trainer' programs for universities. It provides ongoing support, training and resources for institutional trainers, including toolkits for use in developing training.

At the same time sparqs notes a shift in the way in which student associations see themselves. An increasing focus on their role in enhancing student learning experience has facilitated the forging of a relationship which is 'a mature and professional partnership between the university and the students' union'.

The relationship at the highest level between students' associations and universities has been increasingly characterised by a strengthening partnership (sparqs, 2013).

Clear definition of roles and expectations for student representatives together with formal recognition of their engagement, are recognised as important dimensions in developing student representation. The Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR), which was established to create a standard national record of individual student achievements, has scope to capture representative activities for each student.

The need to provide representatives with opportunities for collaboration beyond their representative duties and training is recognised. Representative forums and conferences allow for exchange of experiences, ideas, clarifications, trouble-shooting and extending knowledge bases.

Work at sparqs has also focussed on ensuring that feedback provided by students is used effectively and that outcomes from that feedback are communicated clearly back Student engagement in university decision-making and governance – towards a more systemically inclusive student voice

to students. This closing of the feedback loop had remained a vexed issue across a number of reports but the tide has turned and many institutions are utilising a “you said... we did...” approach to providing feedback to students.

Recent initiatives include supporting the development of student partnership agreements within institutions and reporting of recognition and accreditation of academic representatives. The 2013 sparqs document *Guidance on the development and implementation of a Student Partnership Agreement in universities* (sparqs, November 2013) was published to assist universities in developing partnership agreements with students as a practical way of progressing dialogue with student bodies around the enhancement activities taking place and how students can be involved in that process.

In considering incentives for students to become representatives, the sparqs report *Recognition and accreditation of academic reps- Practices and challenges across Scotland's colleges and universities* (sparqs, November 2015) observes that altruism alone is not enough and that while many students are inspired to work towards improving learning outcomes, there are important factors that make this approach alone inadequate. The report recognises the increasing diversity of student bodies so that students are often juggling employment and family with their studies. It is important that their representation is recognised in a partnership context to reflect the value the university accords it. This information may assist student representatives in many ways including their employability. Other tangible recognition may range from payment and expenses, bonuses and rewards, through to accreditation within institutions and externally.

Scotland has a longstanding practice of engaging students in national committees. The need to provide adequate support for students in these roles has been recognised as critical to facilitating this representation and ensuring that students come to the table as equals in this process.

England

Tuition fees for higher education were introduced in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in 1998, and increased to a cap in 2012. Immediately prior to this (in June 2011), the UK Government released its White Paper *‘Students at the Heart of the System’* which heralded a new focus on determining the needs and expectations of widened and diverse student bodies. The introduction of fees was accompanied by what is referred to as ‘marketisation’ and the ‘commodification’ of education leading inevitably to the ‘student as consumer’ characterisation prevailing in the sector. This is the climate in Australia also.

So while in Scotland the focus has clearly been on partnership, this relationship is relatively new in the UK. In the 2009 Report to the Higher Education Funding Council for England prepared by the Centre for Higher Education Research and Information (sparqs.ac.uk/ch/E4ReporttoHEFCEonstudentengagement), the Open University noted a divergence in approach between student unions and institutions. Whereas student

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unions tended to emphasise the role of students as partners in a learning community, there was a tension for institutions between seeing students in a consumer role and regarding student engagement as central to enhancing the student learning experience. The extent to which this is so seemed to vary between disciplines.

The partnership 'was clearly set out in 2012 in the Expectations and Indicators contained agenda' in the QAA Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B5 Student Engagement:

Expectation: Higher education providers take deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience, the indicators of sound practice are:

Indicator 1

Higher education providers, in partnership with their student body, define and promote the range of opportunities for any student to engage in educational enhancement and quality assurance.

Indicator 2

Higher education providers create and maintain an environment within which students and staff engage in discussions that aim to bring about demonstrable enhancement of the educational experience.

Indicator 3

Arrangements exist for the effective representation of the collective student voice at all organisational levels, and these arrangements provide opportunities for all students to be heard.

Indicator 4

Higher education providers ensure that student representatives and staff have access to training and ongoing support to equip them to fulfil their roles in educational enhancement and quality assurance effectively.

Indicator 5

Students and staff engage in evidence-based discussions based on the mutual sharing of information.

Indicator 6

Staff and students to disseminate and jointly recognise the enhancements made to the student educational experience, and the efforts of students in achieving these successes.

Indicator 7

The effectiveness of student engagement is monitored and reviewed at least annually, using pre-defined key performance indicators, and policies and processes enhanced where required.

(The UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality Chapter B5).

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With this Code and the many initiatives in England pressing the partnership agenda, it is moving towards gaining universal traction.

The process of student representation is recognised as multifaceted, focusing on making students aware of the need for and benefits of representation, what the role involves, recruitment, training, mentoring, execution and feedback. It is recognised as being most effective at institutional and course level but more difficult at the faculty level. Representation is at multiple tiers and use of staff-student liaison committees in disciplines is common.

Effective feedback is also seen as an issue but improving significantly. The challenge for institutions is the need to develop a cohesive approach to student representation across the different institutional levels so that communication gaps do not arise. Closing the feedback loop is seen as a critical aspect of effective student representation.

Many institutions provide some form of formal recognition for student representative activities. Institutions also offer training, handbooks and support and the introduction of student representation coordinators into student unions has improved student awareness and uptake of training.

Ensuring that the voice of all students is represented and in particular representing the interests of part-time, post-graduate and international students was recognised as a challenge.

In 2013 a team led by Bath University produced a Report for a QAA-commissioned study: *'Student Engagement in Learning and Teaching Quality Management: A Study of UK Practices. Research Findings'* (Pimental-Botas & ors, 2013). One of the outputs was a *Good Practice Guide* which mapped practices against the key indicators set out in Chapter B5 (above).

Using these indicators as a measurement, the guide highlighted the importance of the adaptation of student representation to suit individual institutional needs, and the involvement of student input in this process. The Guide notes that effective representation typically provides opportunity for student input at both the course and strategic levels within an institution. Importantly, this process and the ongoing operation of student representation requires collaboration within institutions with their student associations. In a collaborative relationship the student union can be an important source of information about the views of students which in turn can be used to inform policy and strategy.

Regular review of the representation system is also important. This review process can be facilitated by appointment of students as researchers investigating and reporting on specific aspects of representational structures and practices.

A central issue is how best to engage all students. The Guide grapples with the question of whether expecting students to engage through traditional means such as committee structures is effective. Issues of recruitment and attendance are noted Student engagement in university decision-making and governance – towards a more systemically inclusive student voice

alongside the opportunities that the use of new teaching technologies presents with respect to capturing student input. Recognition that student voice may be more accessible through virtual and mobile technologies presents interesting opportunities for better and potentially more comprehensively engaging student voice.

Communication is key. Where there is student engagement in committees it needs to be more than 'tokenistic' and student representatives need to be properly briefed and supported to be able to function effectively in this environment, particular at senior levels where the issues addressed may be complex. It is important to ensure that student representatives on student unions are truly representative and appropriately briefed and supported in carrying out their roles. Emerging from this need is a greater effort on the part of senior management to engage both formally and informally with students and their representatives. There has also been a focus on ensuring that information is accessible as needed.

How to recognise and reward student representatives also features in the guide. An open and frank dialogue about expectations on both sides emerges as critical.

In 2013 The Student Engagement Partnership (TSEP) was created following the introduction of Chapter B5 (above). TSEP operates in partnership with sector organisations including HEFCE, AoC, QAA, GuildHE and NUS and its role is to assist in furthering the expectation that students should be active partners in their education and in their student experience. It supports the sector in enabling students to be actively involved in the development, management and governance of their institution, its academic programs and their own learning experience in line with the seven indicators set out in Chapter B5.

Outputs from TSEP have included *'The Principles of Student Engagement: The student engagement Conversation 2014'* Quoting from QAA reports, that document observes:

[where] student engagement is highly developed, pervading institution culture and clearly recognised by staff and student alike, these institutions tended to be those where related features of good practice were found. (QAA, 2014)

and

It is notable that for an institution to do well in engaging students it needs to work in partnership with the representative student body. (QAA 2012)

The document emphasises the benefits that a partnership approach has for students and institutions alike.

In collaboration with GuildHE, TSEP has also produced *'Making Student Engagement a Reality - Turning theory into practice 2015'* (TSEP, GuildHE, 2015) demonstrating the impact of student engagement on student experience through a series of case studies. Importantly, a culture of partnership was shown to facilitate changes in curricula and

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policy and teaching and learning as well as supporting creation of robust course representative systems. Case studies discuss projects implemented in particular universities that are actively promoting student-institution partnerships, to provide guidance to other institutions in what can be achieved and how it can be done. One such initiative is the Student Fellows Scheme which provides for training and support for groups of students annually to work alongside academics and professional staff on education development projects. TSEP has also collaborated with the Association of Colleges in creating frameworks and toolkits for implementation of student partnerships within colleges.

Another example given is at Ulster University, where the Centre for Higher Education Practice (CHEP) and the Students' Union have championed a partnership approach to enhancing the student experience

(heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/sap_case_study_03_ulster_new_1.pdf).

Curriculum design has been influenced by student workshops and focus groups. Students have joined with academics and other professionals in working parties addressing topics such as Ulster's *Principles of Assessment and Feedback for Learning*, feedback, and the development of online study skills resource for staff and students.

The Higher Education Academy's *Framework for student engagement through partnership* (heacademy.ac.uk/frameworks-toolkits) provides a detailed analysis of the different aspects of student engagement. An accompanying toolkit is provided to assist institutions in implementing the findings and processes identified in the Framework.

Student organisations

Student associations at individual universities are also represented at the national level. The National Union of Students (NUS) comprises groups representing the interests of students in the nations of the United Kingdom- England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (www.nus.org.uk/en/who-we-are/how-we-work/). NUS Scotland is an autonomous body formed in 1971 through merger between NUS and the Scottish Union of Students.

The National Union of Student's (NUS) '*Manifesto for partnership*' (NUS, 2012) considers that at its roots partnership is about investing students with the power to co-create, not just knowledge or learning, but within the higher education institution itself:

... A corollary of a partnership approach is the genuine, meaningful dispersal of power ... Partnership means shared responsibility – for identifying the problem or opportunity for improvement, for devising a solution and – importantly – for co-delivery of that solution (NUS 2012, 8).

Interviews

The findings from analysis of the UK interviews and focus groups are reported here with relevant quotes to illuminate the issues identified. The analysis was broken up into nine thematic areas with sub-themes where appropriate.

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1. Areas of engagement

Student engagement embraces diverse aspects of university life including quality assurance and enhancement, course review, class and course representation and university governance. The task of preparing for and providing student engagement is recognised as a substantial exercise. As a result, some institutions focus their activities in particular areas whereas in other institutions engagement with students across the various levels at which decision making and review takes place is comprehensive.

...you do not have a committee without students and we do not have teaching innovation without students in it ...

... You do not have any seminars about where the direction goes without a student representatives being involved. You do not send information or data out any more...without the Student Union getting it. When you prepare for the next student survey you do it together with the Student Union. [ex-student sabbatical officer]



Governance

Engagement of students in institutional governance has evolved from roles as observers to full participation in some institutions. There is recognition that student interest must be both sought and fulfilled. Some institutions have students on all their major decision-making bodies and the student representatives actively contribute in those bodies. The extent to which this is the case may vary between institutions and may depend on the interests of the vice chancellor and senior management. Some institutions have embedded student engagement while others are reportedly still taking a 'quite old fashioned approach'.

Faculty

In faculties there are examples of Student Staff Liaison Committees which bring together staff and students at a course or module level to talk about courses being delivered, and to identify any issues that need to be addressed. Identified practices include course representatives sitting down with a course leader early in the semester and having a conversation about what the course aims to achieve. Some institutions employ students to review courses. The faculty representative role was seen as an opportunity for students who had enjoyed a class representative role to get more involved. Some institutions provide for student led teaching awards involving students in the reward and recognition of what they perceive to be excellent teaching.



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There are examples of departments or academics wanting to finding ways for students to work together or for students and staff to work together to enhance courses or departments and genuinely seek to find new ways to improve the learning environment. In some institutions this happens in every department and is connected to a broader strategy or vision about student engagement and about an approach to enhancement.

A lot of the roles of academic reps is in supporting the work that departments are doing. Or helping departments identify if you're going to do one thing what should that be to make the biggest difference. I guess that's where it comes back to the whole, the informed student voice so being quite clear about what needs to prioritise if we're going to prioritise anything. Actually I think it drives a bit of innovation, doesn't it, having no money or anything. [ex-student sabbatical officer]

Grievance procedures

Students are involved in decision-making panel on appeals and complaints. This role may be filled by a full-time sabbatical officer. There may also be students involved as student advocates to assist students appearing before these panels.

2. Who is engaged?

It was apparent that there were diverse approaches to who may fulfil the role of a student representatives on formal faculty and university bodies. Commonly it was seen that student representatives were senior undergraduates particularly where they are involved in institutional governance.

Where there is opportunity for students to be involved in student staff liaison committees or as course representatives these students may be more junior and they are likely to develop the expertise to go on to be involved in university governance. For roles such as student reviewers there is a tendency for these students to have been full-time student union sabbatical officers, because of the level of experience and knowledge needed.

Distance students are not necessarily excluded from engagement and there are instances where their engagement is actively sought in, for example, online student staff liaison committees.

Engaging overseas students was recognised as presenting challenges around how students are organised and cultural issues that may need to be considered. Weighting of representative roles towards full-time undergraduates at the expense of part-time, distance, and mature learners is a recognised issue.

Some institutions ensure that both undergraduate and postgraduate students are represented on particular bodies.

There was a strong view that students' organisations cannot assume they are speaking on behalf of students in every case. A lot of the work of a students' organisation has to

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be about pushing power downwards to the places where students are actually engaged themselves.

3. Training

Training plays an important role in ensuring that student representatives can contribute effectively.

Training for representative roles generally

Some institutions have structured training for student representatives. These activities include skills development around writing papers, how you assert yourself effectively, time management, leadership and such like. Information sessions and campaigning sessions may also be provided. Training delivery may be differentiated to suit the needs of different student groups. For example, delivery may include online training and repeating sessions during lunchtimes and evenings to improve student access. The training itself may be differentiated to reflect the needs of different groups. In relation to representation of female students, for example, initiatives such as women in leadership conferences may be used.

... this notion of the informed student voice. So not only do we do formal training such as they do an online training module and then we follow that up. We have something called an academic reps conference – [I am] talking about our academic representatives rather than other representatives at the moment - which we run loads of sessions academic staff, students' union staff. [ex-student sabbatical officer]

We have people from external bodies, ex-students, who am I missing? Those type of people. NUS come down and do lots of sessions talking about the background to issues. So when students get to the table in meetings they already understand the grey areas in between the black and white of an issue.

Yeah, it's lots of skills development. So we do stuff around writing papers, how you assert yourself effectively, time management, leadership, those type of things. Then we have alongside that a lot of information based sessions. We do some campaigning sessions. The information based ones are probably the most [unclear]... [ex-student sabbatical officer]

The method by which this training is delivered varies between institutions. Provision of employed trainers is an important initiative. These trainers may be employed by the student organisation, by the university itself or both student organisation and university may be responsible for delivery of training. Trainers play an important role in helping student representatives to understand the political context in which they need to carry out their representative role as well as understanding meeting protocols, the particular issues they need to discuss and how to present their arguments.

However comprehensive training is not always available and in some institutions only limited, basic training is provided. This sort of training is likely to cover fundamental

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concepts such as the need to consult with the group you are representing, meeting protocols and some basic context around the institution itself and its operating environment. More extensive training and preparation may be provided for student representatives on more senior governance bodies.

The creation of a toolkit to be used in training student representatives was also described.

Induction

An important aspect of the training process is induction for specific roles or generally, creating an understanding of what the student representation process is about in different contexts and how students are expected to engage with the institution. The induction process presents a challenge since student cohorts are continually moving through institutions requiring the induction process to be continually repeated. One group characterised this process as talking to students in induction about the importance of the informed student voice through a short presentation to all new undergraduate and postgraduate students about the ethos of the institution, where it puts the student voice and how student voice is at the heart of the system.

I think in terms of what we would do differently at the national policy [level] - in the first few years we concentrated very much on making sure that the student voice was heard, that it was representative and that it was informed. Those three things. What we forgot and realised I think just in time but maybe a little bit too late for some of the students at the beginning was the realisation that you need to make absolutely evident to students how they matter. [ex-student sabbatical officer]



Meeting preparation

But the key thing for us is that they are very, very well briefed by the Student's Union. That's the absolute key. So they come knowing about the issues that are going to be raised and are therefore able to have a really valuable input. It's not just students being there who are lost by all of the detail. (UK student engagement officer)

So where students are going to meetings we sit down and we go through the papers at a minimum and help them decide what they're going to do. That's like a touch point so they can ask any questions or they can talk about perhaps a particular member of staff who may be is a bit prickly and that means that we can then speak to other staff members who work with them and say ooh, any idea about this. [ex-student sabbatical officer]

Preparation of students to participate effectively as partners in meetings was discussed with emphasis on the need for good briefing beforehand. This preparation may include going through the meeting papers and deciding how to approach Student engagement in university decision-making and governance – towards a more systemically inclusive student voice

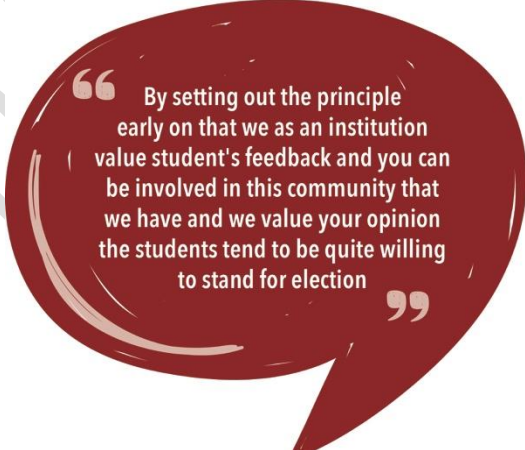
particular issues as well as meeting dynamics. This briefing may be provided by the student organisation and/or the university. Effective development for the university or student organisation personnel who provide this briefing was recognised as important as these personnel may be in their role long term whereas turnover of student representatives is high. The importance of trainers having sound experience rather than simply being fresh graduates was also discussed. Independence is fostered by an education officer being provided by the student organisation was also mentioned as there is the view that university-provided education officers may be biased towards their employer's perspective.

National Conferences

National conferences also provide useful training opportunities across institutions introducing participants to student engagement and the issues on which they are providing representation. The conferences may be aimed at both student and employed participants in the student representation process.

4. Incentives

In many instances student representatives are volunteers. The time commitment for representative roles can be significant yet students frequently need to balance this with their studies and with the necessity to work to support themselves. In this scenario engaging students in representative roles can be challenging. This raises the question as to what incentives are there for students to commit to representative roles.



“ By setting out the principle early on that we as an institution value student's feedback and you can be involved in this community that we have and we value your opinion the students tend to be quite willing to stand for election ”

Payment

Examples of students being paid to take on representative roles were cited. Some students get paid a substantial amount or have their fees waived to be a representative. This can be useful in recruiting students to take on roles that might be perceived as quite boring but of course depends on the institution or student body as having the resources to pay. It may however have the potential to attract student representatives from under-represented groups such as mature aged students where payment might for example cover child care costs.

Other places have chosen - because, let's be honest, some parts of quality assurance are quite boring, and it's quite hard to find people to want to do it, so some providers that have got the capacity have decided to pay people to take part in things. (QAA officer)

There is a question as to how impartial a paid representative might be. In some instances however involving periodic review panels, degree program reviews or

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department reviews the appointment of paid representatives involves an application process administered by the student union.

I also talked to the student reps about sort of professionalising student reps, if you like, giving them more training and [unclear]. So I think there's a debate about giving them expenses. Would you get more, better, different types of student reps if they weren't doing it voluntarily? So for instance, if you want a mature student who's doing it part-time and has childcare issues, would covering their childcare costs help? Or having meetings at different times? There are different things to incentivise different types of people. (HEFCE officer).

A valued activity

Where an institution clearly demonstrates that it values student views and feedback students tend to be more willing to stand for election.

by setting out the principle early on that we as an institution value student's feedback and you can be involved in this community that we have and we value your opinion the students tend to be quite willing to stand for election [ex-student sabbatical officer]

Personal development

Personal development was also cited as a motivator for students who want to understand how the university operates, gain new skills or enhance their curriculum vitae. The latter is particularly true where students are focussed on employability and gaining lots of skills and having lots of experiences. Student representation provides an opportunity to both develop and demonstrate leadership and effective committee participation.

Some see student representation as a source of status. Others are keen to serve their community. Volunteering opportunities may also enhance employment prospects and there was a report of integrating student representation with other recognised voluntary activities that were considered to have increased student participation in representative activities.

Whereas the faculty reps are probably the sort of middle ground. They're people who feel very passionately about being a rep and have enjoyed it and want to get more involved and they tend to be a really great engagement ... [ex-student sabbatical officer]

I guess here there is an element that maybe we don't have at other institutions where students are quite focussed on employability and gaining lots of skills and having lots of experiences. So being able to demonstrate leadership and that they sat on committees in itself is part of the incentive. [ex-student sabbatical officer]

Academic and other recognition

Some universities are reported to provide academic credit for student representative activities. To gain the credit student representatives must attend meetings and put together a portfolio. There is also the Higher Education Achievement Report which provides an opportunity for recognition.

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5. Recruitment Process

Variability was also reported in the way in which students are recruited to representative roles.

Elected representatives

Student representatives are frequently elected to their representative roles. Elected positions include course representatives, students who sit on departmental learning, teaching and quality committees, faculty representatives, full time elected student officers within students' organisations and student representatives on the university senate. While variations between institutions were reported it was noted that typically student organisations are in favour of democratic processes and the appointment of representatives through an election process. Sabbatical officers are elected in public institutions but for other roles and in private institutions students may be co-opted by staff in response to, for example, pressure on them from their department head to appoint a student representative to a particular body.

It will vary wildly between different places, but as a general rule, you'll find that because student unions are big on democracy, it's in their DNA, most of their reps will usually go through some sort of election process. Certainly the sabbatical officers have to be elected in the public sector, but other ones you will find people being co-opted by staff because there's pressure on them from their department head, (QAA officer)

Nominated representatives

The role of student reviewers within the Quality Assurance Agency is an example where the recruitment process involves nomination. The role is filled by current students by a process of nomination. A letter of commendation from their institution is required. The student must have completed a year of their degree. Postgraduate students can be nominated as well as undergraduates. The student representative must be able to fulfil the time commitment alongside their studies. However, many nominees are sabbatical officers as it is recognised that to be a good reviewer requires experience at quite a high level at your own university or college to have a grasp of what both representation and quality assurance means. After graduation the nominee can remain a student reviewer for two years.

Informal representation

An example of informal representation was reported in which regular large group student meetings are held that are attended by about 200 students. Lunch is provided, there are discussions about current issues and the students' feedback is gathered. The students receive a certificate for participating.

6. Styles of engagement

Not all institutions approach student engagement in the same way. Where student engagement is mandated, student representatives are appointed but are not always engaged, their appointment in some instances being tokenistic. However, in other instances student engagement is genuine, across all decision making bodies and students may even take lead roles in particular bodies.



I think initially it's a difficult concept. I think the sector, we, others, NUS even sometimes, I think struggle with the concept of student engagement. Not in what we want it to be but articulating exactly what it is and how you recognise it and how you codify it and what you need to pass on and is that even appropriate because we know there's a lot of good stuff going on out there in institutions but it's a very individual sort of thing. (HEFCE officer)

Where we are now is that there is no committee in the University left that has anything to do with learning and teaching or the broader student experience where there is no student representation, and these are elected student representatives not co-opted... [ex-student sabbatical officer]

The style of engagement is also influenced by the size and nature of the institution. The procedures adopted in large high ranking universities may not necessarily be relevant or appropriate for smaller alternative institutions. Student engagement is more likely to be inclusive where the relationship between institution and student is perceived as a partnership.

7. Roles that support engagement

This research showed that there is provision of a number of roles to assist and support the process of student engagement. Some of these roles are provided for within student organisations whereas others are university roles.

The provision of a dedicated manager or coordinator within the university or student organisation with responsibility for student representation and engagement matters is becoming increasingly more common. The potential for conflict between university appointed coordinators and student organisations was noted. The coordinator will typically assist with preparing students for their roles as student representatives.

The opportunity to have sabbatical officers within a student organisation enhances the commitment to student engagement activities that can be provided through ensuring that representatives can commit the required time to their role.

Champions of the student engagement process within the institution were identified as significant contributors to the success and embedding of student engagement.

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Success is also assisted through clearly defined roles that support each other without creating duplicated effort.

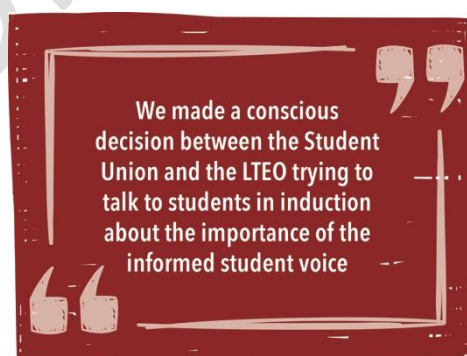
the strategic leadership buy-in into student engagement tends to have an effect. So, if you look at somewhere like Lincoln and their VC is very hot on student engagement, it tends to then be developed more into their structure.(QAA officer)

Lead student representatives have been used effectively in review processes to coordinate student input, to report and to liaise with other stakeholders in the review process.

Staff student liaison committees were also seen as a beneficial initiative. One university said that each department has a staff student liaison committee which is made up of elected student representatives (generally one or two per year per program) and key academic and professional services staff. These committees meet about four times per year to discuss key issues that are coming up, problems that students have, and to ascertain students' views.

8. Processes which benefit an ethos of student partnership

The research showed that there is a number of processes that benefit student engagement. A collaborative working relationship between the institution and the student organisation is beneficial as is transparency, ensuring that student representatives have access to relevant information. Flexibility is also important in order to gather the views of different student cohorts and the feedback process needs to be approached in different ways for different student groups. In addition, processes for checking the effectiveness of approaches to student engagement were seen as valuable.



...seven years ago now we made a conscious decision between the Student Union and the LTEO trying to talk to students in induction about the importance of the informed student voice.

So myself and now the Education Officer, the [sabbatical] officer responsible for academic issues, do a 20 minute, half an hour presentation to all our new undergraduates and our PGT and our PGR students to talk about the ethos of the institution and where it puts the student voice and how it's at the head of the system. So they get that grounding from day one when they arrive on campus ...(UK university student engagement officer)

Benchmarking against similar institutions in terms of how students are supported and the wider experience of the student organisation was also seen as beneficial.

The provision of a dedicated agency that supports student engagement across institutions was emphasised as a useful model. This was identified as a key driver for

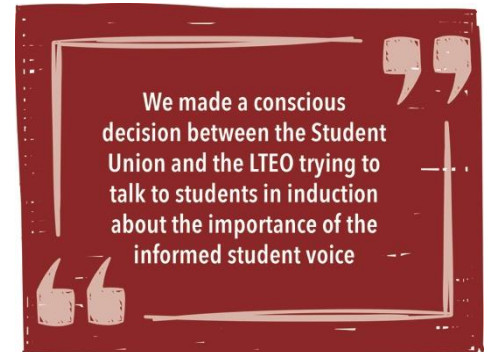
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success in facilitating student partnership across the sector and is discussed in the project report conclusions. The documentary evidence examined above details the outputs of these bodies.

9. Culture

Institutional culture is clearly significant to the success of student engagement. Institutions where student engagement is effective demonstrate commitment to the process and readiness for it.

At the same time the ethos of the student body is important to success. Effective student engagement occurs in environments where students seek an all-round education wanting not just to study but also to gain as much experience and skill as possible. Providing for diverse engagement and ensuring effective representation of all student groups is also important.



So anything that we produce, especially if it's sector, if it's in partnership with the sector, it tends to be quite guidance focused rather than directive. (NUS officer)

... they also introduced a national student listening program which included a kind of National Student Council to advise the higher education minister that wasn't part of us but we had the opportunity to appoint most of its members. (NUS officer)

The culture within student organisations appears to have shifted with student organisations becoming more professional in the way that they do things. This move, combined with a university's commitment, means that institutions and their student bodies often have a shared agenda. This agenda is reflected in an attitude to the student role which sees it as a partnership in education rather than students being viewed as consumers of educational services.

For partnership to exist, trust must be at the centre of the relationship. Creating consistency of commitment and practice across faculties, is also seen as important with the more space given to students on learning and teaching committees the more important and the more valuable their input.

Student engagement in Belgium

Due to the complexities involved in the vast range of countries and higher education sectors within the European Community, it was not possible and indeed would have been fruitless to conduct an investigation into student engagement in university decision making in Europe generally. This project however had the opportunity to discuss student representation in Belgium where generally students are included in all bodies that determine university and country-wide policies concerning higher education, and there is a strong focus on student leadership in institutions and wider national and European bodies (through the Bologna system). Interviews and focus groups were conducted with representatives of KU Leuven and the University of Antwerp. While acknowledging this is a very small sample, its value was that it provided perspectives from two different universities within the European community to compare with the UK research. In conducting analysis of the Belgian research under the same themes, it became apparent that most approaches are shared with the UK. Without examining the divergent historical roots of the university/student relationship and the particular challenges arising from a number of national languages, it seems that the concept and practice of partnership is accorded similar importance although the UK is in earlier stages of development. European students generally have historically been more vocal about their place as partners in higher education.

Interviews

The interviews and focus groups were analysed using the same themes as the UK research.

1. Areas of engagement

Student inclusion in all accreditation and governance issues was again noted. Student engagement is both formal and informal and engagement is genuine. Student engagement is embraced at all levels of decision making starting with the program level. Relevant bodies include faculty council, faculty boards and central governors. One institution reported that every faculty has at least two representatives on the student council and student representatives are found on every board or committee that has to deal with students. Student representatives on most senior bodies take on significant responsibility in spite of a lack of skill and expertise at the outset.



We have student representatives in every board or committee that has to deal with students of course. So they all are student representatives and some of them sit in the board of the student council. (Belgian university student engagement officer)

2. Who is engaged

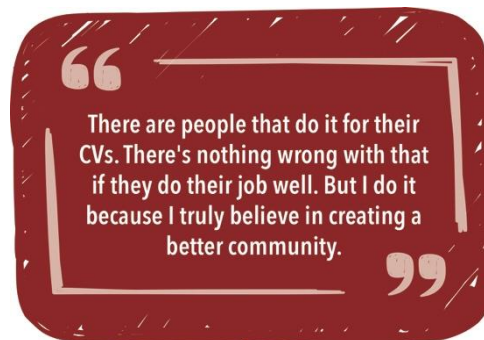
The extent to which students are willing to become involved in student representation was reported to be limited. This in turn increases the workload for those students who do take on representative roles. Students who participate in, for example, the central students' council are students who have been involved in faculty council. Alumni may also take on roles as student representatives. Having joined the student organisation as a student a member may not necessarily leave as soon as they have finished their studies so alumni can stay engaged especially if they have relevant expertise and they are still young. This varies between institutions. Sometimes the age limit is 29 and sometimes 35.

3. Training

Student representatives are trained. The most common centralised European training is provided by European National Quality Assurance (ENQA) on an annual basis. Importantly, teaching staff and the heads of institutions are invited as well as student representatives. In addition, informal training and advice may be provided to student representatives in faculties by the student council to ensure that faculty representatives are well briefed and can contribute effectively. Many initiatives start at the faculty level and it is rare for students to start as representatives at the central or higher level. One university reported that its general assembly would not elect a student who has not had some experience in student representation.

4. Incentives

The question of incentives was accorded equal consideration and was similarly challenging. Payment is provided in at least some instances and there is a view that this assists with recruiting the most appropriate representatives as it compensates for taking the representatives away from study or work. Some students are motivated by being able to include their student representative experience on their curriculum vitae. Others are motivated by a desire to create a better community.



...CV - yeah, it's really great on my - but that is not the reason why I do it. That's also a very personal thing of course because there are people that do it for their CVs. There's nothing wrong with that if they do their job well. But I do it because I truly believe in creating a better community. So... (Belgian university student leader)

[There was indeed] a request by the students a couple of years ago on get extra credits or special credits and the governing commission of the university refused this idea for several reasons. I can say it's more - you are more free. You are more autonomous. You can do it totally in your own discretion. (Belgian university student leader)

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Where there is no payment the role was seen to be quite a burden particularly in the case of those more senior, while roles at more junior levels are not seen as onerous or time consuming. Faculty representation takes about three hours per month.

We still have a lot to do. The only thing is the mandate itself becomes unbelievably heavy for students. Because it's an extracurricular activity. It's not paid in any way. Or we don't get extra things because we do it. (Belgian university student president)

5. Recruitment

Similar to the UK, student representatives are most commonly elected. Central student representatives are elected by faculty student group representatives and faculty student representatives are elected by students. The number of faculty representatives depends on the size of the faculty. One university reported that the faculty student representatives attend a fortnightly general assembly which determines how central representatives will vote and represent their student constituents.

Every year it's a battle. ... So for faculties it's really hard to get students that ... because some are afraid that it will influence their...results. I guess it is a lot of work or they are afraid of the teachers. They are afraid that it will influence their results in the end. If you have a conflict that they will be accounted for. While in my experience it's really not an issue ...Be on a professional level, not on a personal level. So if you have a conflict it's professional. (Belgian student engagement officer)

Not all student representatives are elected. There are some representative roles that are filled by selected experts. Some roles are of limited duration.

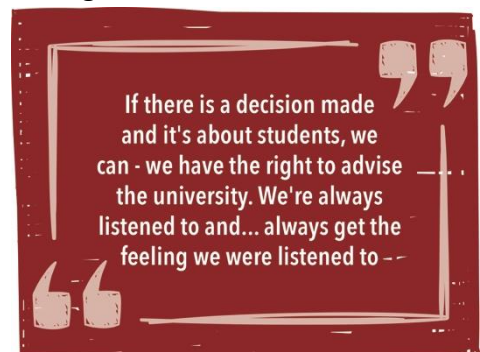
6. Styles of engagement

Student engagement is at multiple levels from faculty to senior governance and in some instances the level of student representation on a particular body is significant. For example, an education council was cited as comprising one third professors, one third teaching assistants and one third students. The compulsory nature of student consultation in one institutional policy was cited as another example.

We advise the university of all matters student related.

So if there is a decision made and it's about students, we can - we have the right to advise the university.

We're always listened to and... always get the feeling we were listened to. Of course, we don't always get what we want. But it is taken into account. (Belgian university student leader)



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7. Roles that support student engagement

The student organisation at one university includes an employed education officer in a half time role. Because the student organisation does not want the education officer to have more power than the board of the student council they are only appointed for two years. This provides continuity within the council and training. The education role is referred to as a student coach in at least one institution. Former student representatives act as advisors to current representatives.

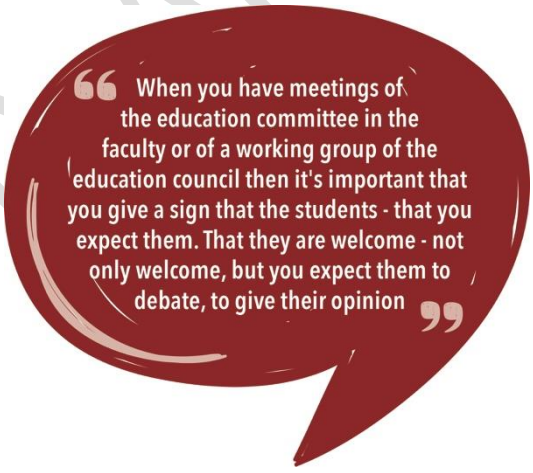
8. Beneficial processes

Senior bodies such as Executive Board and Academic Council that are populated by members of the university community actively engage with student representatives and seek their input on issues under discussion.

9. Culture

It was observed that the opportunity for students to be proactive may differ between years. However, an inclusive culture was observed in at least one institution.

When you have meetings of the education committee in the faculty or of a working group of the education council then it's important that you give a sign that the students - that you expect them. That they are welcome - not only welcome, but you expect them to debate, to give their opinion... (Belgian university student president)



“ When you have meetings of the education committee in the faculty or of a working group of the education council then it's important that you give a sign that the students - that you expect them. That they are welcome - not only welcome, but you expect them to debate, to give their opinion ”

In some instances, students are not considered to particularly understand the issues at hand especially if they are new to the institution. This was contrasted with more central roles where the appointed students are more experienced. The senior management of the university was identified as particularly important to the way in which student representatives are received. Thus the representative role can vary between being structurally embedded in the decision making process to having very limited engagement.

The only thing that becomes really difficult is when your student representation is [not] embedded in the system. It also becomes more and more something which happens on the background which means you can have problems with legitimacy. Which we always try to work on. We try really hard and sometimes you just go to the point that students say, but I don't care just do what you want to do. That's the terrible part of the situation. But it is an extra pitfall for student representation and they can't be real leaders anymore in the more inspiring part of leadership. (Belgian university student president)

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Approaches in New Zealand

New Zealand provides a different context from that in the UK and Belgium and is perhaps more similar to the Australian sector. This is particularly the case in terms of legislative challenges to the strength of students' associations and democracy within institutions. This is shown on two fronts. First, changes to the *Education Act 1989* (NZ) since 2009 have had the potential to impact student engagement in decision-making and governance. Secondly, in common with Australia, voluntary membership of student associations has led to a diminution in their size and representative function and it can no longer be said that they represent all students (section 229A *Education (Freedom of Association) Amendment Act 2011*. For commentary, see stuff.co.nz/dominion-post/news/4366661/Voluntary-student-membership-a-mistake). Further, the *Education Amendment Act (No 4) 2011* impacted how student amenities fees could be used (sections 227A(1) and 235D(1)) by delineating the types of service to which they could be applied and the right of the student body to be consulted in deciding which services would be funded.

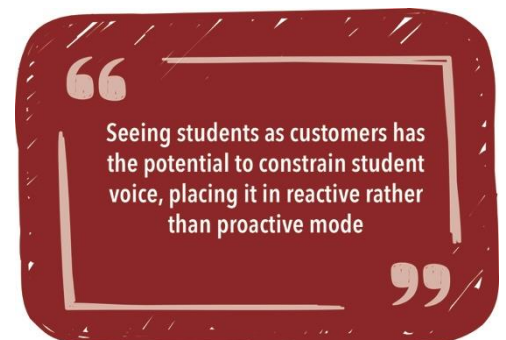
Recent legislation further reduced the size of university governing bodies and removed the requirement for elected student and academic representation (*Education Amendment Act 2015*). Universities grappled with how this would be dealt with and continued with student and staff membership following wide consultation within their constituencies. Heart could also be taken from the introduction of a private member's Bill known as the *Education (Restoration of Democracy to University Councils) Amendment Bill 2015* in October 2015 but this failed to progress past the first reading in the National majority legislature.

Despite legislative intervention, the higher education sector and tertiary institutions in New Zealand continue to demonstrate a real commitment to the genuine engagement of student voice in governance and decision making. Student associations within universities generally continue to receive institutional support, and the operation of the national body, the New Zealand Union of Students' Associations (NZUSA) is funded collectively by New Zealand universities. Much of the research work of this body is also funded by Ako Aotearoa: the National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence (the equivalent of the demised Office of Learning and Teaching in Australia).

New Zealand Union of Students' Associations (NZUSA)

The commitment to student partnership is influenced, to no small extent by NZUSA. This is an association of university student associations and while having a clear political aspect it also has a strong education focus particularly in relation to the role of student voice. In 2012, NZUSA and Ako Aotearoa (the National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence) commissioned research into student representative systems in New Zealand, and how they contribute to quality enhancement in tertiary

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institutions. The research investigated two universities, four institutes of technology and polytechnics (ITPs), one wānanga (Maori tertiary institution) and two private training establishments (PTEs). The resulting 2013 report, *Student Voice in Tertiary Education Settings: Quality Systems in Practice* identified a well-developed system of representation present in institutions that formed part of the study. All the institutions had arrangements for representation which allowed them to feed into university governance. Representation was provided at different levels within the institutions starting 'at grass roots' with well-developed class representative systems which then fed into program, faculty and university governance structures. Student leadership through student associations plays a big role in this in terms of facilitating information from class representatives upwards and working in partnership with the institution in training and support of representatives. The report identified important characteristics of effective student engagement systems not least of which is institutional culture and how students are perceived within the institution. While the presence of consumerist characterisations of students could impact their representative role, generally the representative systems seemed to be working for those organisations and the student representatives.

Seeing students as customers has the potential to constrain student voice, placing it in reactive rather than proactive mode. Organisations may then only react to complaints, rather than seeking the input of students into larger issues related to actively improving teaching and learning. Where there were examples of true partnership in action, students made a significant contribution to quality enhancement at the class, faculty and committee level. This worked when students were perceived and treated as equal partners, the students themselves were well prepared, and worked in a consultative way with other students to ensure that the views they were putting forward were representative, and when organisations acted on student input and communicated this back to students. (Ako Aotearoa/NZUSA, 2013)

The report observed that organisations that engage effectively with their students have a culture that values student voice which they demonstrate by a range of representative systems that enable, as far as possible, input from all students. They work to ensure that all student representatives are trained and supported so that they can actively participate in decision-making. Furthermore, students are willing to engage actively in student representative systems where there is a recognition of and reward for their contribution. It is recognised that a lack of resources to enable student representatives to fulfil their roles presents significant barriers to their doing so effectively. Developing clear terms of reference and constitutions of committees were also seen as important.

The report emphasised the importance of communication so that students understood their role as class representatives or on a board or committee and were fully briefed and prepared. Significant also was the importance of communication in terms of making the student representatives aware of what had been done as a result of their

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input. This conclusion highlights once again the central importance of institutions demonstrating a commitment to and respect for student voice:

The culture of valuing student voice is the feature of representative systems that underpins the other features, and is critical to ensuring that student voice is validated and valued. Where a positive attitude exists towards student voice, organisations build the systems, practices and processes that will ultimately ensure that students' representative voice is listened to and used in the quality-enhancement process and that students know that to be the case. (Ako Aotearoa/NZUSA, 2013 at p 78)

Interviews

1. Areas of engagement

Formal representation includes roles within faculties on different committees. There is no consistent model but typically there are class representatives, faculty representatives, teaching and learning committee members, academic committee members and academic board members. Established faculty societies have a seat on the relevant faculty board. There may also be opportunities for society presidents to meet informally with the relevant dean.

The class representative system may be run through a contract between the university and the student association. Each class elects a representative. Large subjects run across multiple classes may have multiple representatives. The class representation system was reported as having developed more systemic student engagement.

The role of academic committee and academic council may differ between institutions although there was some evidence that the extent to which student voice is actually heard at this level may be questionable.

on all of our faculty boards we have student representatives which are XXX [university student association] nominees. So we work through a selection process to find those people. So before someone becomes a Faculty Delegate, they'll meet with either a Student Representation Coordinator or our Academic Vice-President to talk through what that role is. (NZ university student president)

2. Who is engaged

While there are diverse student engagement opportunities, a minority of students engage with election processes and these are typically students who want to be representatives. There are attempts to gain input from different groups within the student body and votes are allocated to important groups. There is a question around the extent to which student organisations effectively represent student cohorts. There was also evidence that for particular roles there are attempts to recruit student representatives with relevant skills and experience.


3. Training

In at least one institution the student organisation provides an education coordinator. This role allows training of student representatives to be independent of the institution and to develop expertise in debating issues, critiquing proposals and working with different stakeholders as well as understanding meeting protocols.

Training starts early with induction to the student representative system commencing in first year through orientation and through a slide shown in each class at the beginning of the year. This process assists in making students aware that their representatives can advocate for them and should work to seek their views.

Time is invested in building skills and briefings before meetings.

I would say we're quite pleased with how the system works, in terms of it's ingrained, in terms of systemic student representatives at virtually all levels of the academic approval committee processes and things like that. So in terms of the functionality of that as well, we invest a lot of time in terms of making sure that those student representatives have the skills and pre-briefings and things like that to be able to engage in the process. (NZ university student president)



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”

4. Incentives

Representative roles are unpaid and may take many hours per week at the more senior levels. As a result, many students do not see representation as relevant, they just want to get their degree and move on. The motivation for some students, however, is the belief that engagement enhances their student experience and that of others. Leadership and volunteering programs that lead to recognition of contribution as a student representative may also be of assistance. For some students the motivation to contribute is that it will look good on their curriculum vitae, however there was a suggestion that where this is identified the relevant students are discouraged.

5. Recruitment

For the most part, student representatives are elected or volunteer particularly at the class representative level. Students may come through the student organisation to all representative roles. There are some roles where students are appointed rather than elected particularly in more senior roles where skills to represent the student body effectively are seen as important. Appointment rather than election does raise issues but the process was justified by a reported struggle to get good representatives. Faculty delegates on the academic committee and board may be appointed through a selection process involving a formal interview.

we like elections to happen to find them and often you might get a case that no-one wants to necessarily volunteer, so eventually the lecturer will ask for any volunteers type thing and if there's a few people that will put their hands up then you might have an election. Otherwise it's, okay, you've volunteered so you'll be the Class Representative, type thing. (NZ university student president)

6. Styles of engagement

Different approaches to student engagement were reported. Some faculties are active in engaging with students while some academics see it as a compliance issue. Attempts to improve engagement with students included a project to highlight the value of class representatives.

Student attitudes to engagement also vary. Some students see it as valuable. Student enthusiasm may depend on the actual student representative and class. Variable attitudes towards the extent to which student voice is sought, listened to and affects outcome were reported.

7. Roles that support student engagement

The most significant role appears to be the education officer that is provided by the student organisation.

we have a fulltime - well, it used to be called an Education Organiser and is now a Student Representation Coordinator, that's what it's called. The whole reason - a little bit of history, it was basically based off a union model of class representatives, delegates, representatives over all these levels in terms of a student union model and that translated into, how does that fit with this particular thing? So we have - just to outline how the whole system works - Class Representatives. So we're contracted to facilitate and run the Class Representative system. (NZ university student president)

8. Beneficial processes

The engagement of students at multiple levels across the institution again appears to provide a useful mode for building expertise and allowing greater range of student voices to be heard than might otherwise be possible.

9. Culture

Culture again appears to play a significant role in the extent to which student voice is effective in higher education in New Zealand. Where there is a student-centric approach there appears to be a genuine interest in attempting to ensure that processes are in place that provide for effective engagement with students even if there are recognised limitations in current student engagement.

A model of student engagement

The findings reported above were used to formulate a model depicting how institutions can create genuine relevant and effective student engagement in decision making and governance. Like themes were coalesced and relabelled as appropriate to succinctly reflect the key concepts embraced by each theme.

1. **Communication** – of representative opportunities, and of outcomes from student input.
2. Effective, valued and supported **student leadership in partnership with universities**.
3. A **developmental approach to student representation** from course subject level through to high level institutional bodies.
4. Resources for **training and support** of student representatives.
5. Policies and practices for the engagement of students in a continual process of enhancement of courses and their university experience.
6. **Capturing every students' voice** - engaging underrepresented student groups to ensure engagement of the whole student cohort.
7. Appropriate financial and nonfinancial **support and incentives** for student representation.

Strong **sector supported national agencies** were also identified as key to developing systems on a sector-wide basis.

Significance for Australian higher education

Universities in Australia operate in uncertain times. The many tensions make it imperative that they keep the interests of their students, course quality and the student experience uppermost. The sector is subject to increasingly corporate economic treatment by governments and the spectre of deregulation is ever-present. Commercialisation and competition has led inevitably to 'student as consumer' attitudes which does neither universities nor their students any favours. It encourages passivity in students and does little to promote the true purpose of higher education which is to develop future leaders, innovators and critical thinkers. Consumer law

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could be said to have its place in the protection of students from misleading or deceptive conduct or to provide redress when an education is not 'fit for the purpose'. Success in this course of action however has been elusive in courts and tribunals, pointing to its unsuitability. Importantly, to classify students as consumers argues against the nature of a university as a community of scholars with all members working together towards the common goal of enhancing education and the educational experience for all.

To adopt the words of European students:

Students are not consumers of higher education, but significant components within it. Consumers are not involved in the management of process, but students are co-responsible for higher education management, as higher education is developed for students. Students are the main beneficiaries of increasing the quality of [higher education]. Students should have more impact in decision-making and governance of higher education, which must be a community of students and professors who are equally responsible for its quality.

[Budapest Declaration: Governance and Student Participation.
21st European Student Convention – February 2011]

Research shows that in comparative sectors subject to similar market forces and legislative intervention, the systemic participation of students in decision-making and governance in universities is developing strongly. A point may be taken here from business and marketing literature which focuses on the importance of listening to customers for business success (see for example "*Listening to customers yields success*" at www.forbes.com/sites/alanhall/2013/05/17/listening-to-customers-yields-success/) with the logical extrapolation that engaging with students will be important to the success of universities. However, the relationship between students and universities cannot be reduced to just a business transaction. Sectors abroad are focussing on how best to engage students as partners so as to make them an integral part of their course development and enhancement - how best to recognise that central to university decision making should be the voices of those to whom institutions owe their existence as viable corporate entities.

There is evidence that Australian universities are moving to embrace the concept of student partnership. These moves are reflected in recent higher education policy. Following sector consultation to formulate the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards)* 2011 and its 2015 replacement (from January 2017), the Higher Education Standards Panel included a requirement for student representation. In the first iteration, at Chapter 1.6.8 it provided:

As appropriate to its scale and scope, the higher education provider has student representation within its deliberative and decision-making processes and encourages students to participate in these processes.

The new 2015 Standards state at CI 6.1.4.:

The governing body takes steps to develop and maintain an institutional environment in which freedom of intellectual inquiry is upheld and protected, Student engagement in university decision-making and governance – towards a more systemically inclusive student voice

students and staff are treated equitably, the wellbeing of students and staff is fostered, informed decision making by students is supported and students have opportunities to participate in the deliberative and decision making processes of the higher education provider.

and CI 6.3.3. further provides:

Students have opportunities to participate in academic governance.

While these provisions recognise students as stakeholders in higher education they lack any clear requirement that students must be represented in institutional decision making processes at all relevant levels.

The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) confirmed the importance of student representation in university decision making to improving tertiary education for themselves and for future students. It goes further than the Standards to suggest some of the means by which universities may engage students:

- by encouraging students to participate in meaningful feedback processes, including student surveys;
- by informing students of any actions it takes to improve the quality of education as a result of student input; and
- by having student representation in its decision-making processes about quality improvement and assurance, for example, through student representation on relevant committees or through consultation processes.

(Do students have a voice in the assessment of quality in higher education?
www.teqsa.gov.au/for-students#C).

These words may be compared with those in Chapter B5 of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (2012) which contains an expectation that higher education institutions will take deliberate steps to student engagement. The rationale for the Chapter is in the beginning statement which says there is a wide acceptance that ‘the views of students, both individually and collectively should inform quality systems for the purpose of improving the educational experience for both current and future cohorts’ (p 4) and the suggestion of a range of areas of a university’s functions in which the views of students are important. The Expectation in the Chapter B5 requires that ‘higher education providers take deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their education experience’ (p 6). It is followed by seven Indicators by which providers may demonstrate that they are doing this (these are set out above). It defines partnership in this context to mean ‘joint workings between students and staff’ based on the concept that each member brings ‘legitimate, but different, perceptions and experiences’ and it reflects a ‘mature relationship based on mutual respect between students and staff’ (p 6).

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Practically, student engagement in governance may have clear benefits for both students and institutions in the competitive corporate climate. A body of literature which preceded Chapter B5 supports this view (for example, Trowler, 2010; Little & Ors, 2009; Lizzio and Wilson, 2009). This material reports that affording students the opportunity to have meaningful input into the quality of teaching and learning increases the likelihood of improving the effectiveness of the organisation. Further, it states that the student motivation for ensuring that they are receiving value for money lends itself to student involvement in decision making processes as a valued activity (Trowler, 2010). It follows that institutions that actively engage with their students in decision making processes are likely to be viewed favourably by students when choosing where to study. Moreover, there is evidence that effective student engagement in decision making assists in improving quality which again is likely to translate into higher enrolments (Coates, 2005).

Following inclusion of Chapter B5 into the Quality Code, the UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) commissioned Gwen van der Velden and others at the University of Bath to undertake research into student engagement practices in UK higher education institutions (University of Bath/QAA, 2012). This research strongly supports the value of student engagement in university governance and suggests that 'a more competitive environment stimulates a strong focus on student opinion'.

The findings from the research reported here shows practices that may be adopted in the Australian higher education sector to provide greater and improved opportunities for student engagement in governance and decision making. While there may be differences in the sectors studied relating to how higher education institutions are structured and funded and how they perceive student organisations, this research identifies converging themes. What stands out is the suggestion that market pressures can drive a need to embrace effective student engagement at multiple operational levels. Examples particularly from the United Kingdom illustrate the interplay and evolution of these aspects of higher education delivery.

With the introduction of Chapter B5 and the establishment of The Student Engagement Partnership (TSEP) in the UK, the early adoption of student engagement practices by some institutions provided useful models for those now following suit. Valuable aspects of the models available include provision of training to prepare students for these roles, introduction to the concept of student engagement at orientation sessions, opportunity to develop skills through progression from class roles through to roles on governance bodies and differentiated pathways for selecting representatives. Incentives and recognition may also be provided as an important encouragement to students taking on governance roles. There is also recognition that the approach to student engagement needs to fit with differences between type and style of institution.

In New Zealand higher fees have not yet been adopted. While there is now legislation which could have the effect of discouraging student engagement and weakening student associations, the concept of student partnership is progressing nevertheless. The engagement of students in university decision making and governance is becoming Student engagement in university decision-making and governance – towards a more systemically inclusive student voice

embedded in most universities and increasingly in polytechnics and colleges. This is assisted by the work of the National Union of Students' Associations (NZUSA) which enjoys sector support and performs a training and research role. Students may be engaged as representatives at course level through to senior university management bodies and there are examples of effective preparation of student representatives through training programs and briefing sessions. There are also examples of careful selection of student representatives for participation in senior institutional bodies. An important aspect of the New Zealand context is the relatively small tertiary education sector competing for a smaller student constituency. In this climate there is a clear need for institutions to be positioned as responsive to student needs and this factor has had the potential to advance the position taken on student engagement in the absence of a mandate to do so.

While the evidence from abroad provides knowledge, experience and insights for Australia, it does not ignore the challenges. Currently, student representation in institutional governance is provided for in the legislation of most states and territories but there is pressure on institutions to reduce the size of their governance bodies and student representation could well be a casualty as was the case in New Zealand. Legislation to this effect was enacted in Victoria but was unpopular with both institutions and students and it was subsequently repealed. The weakening of student associations and of the effectiveness of student leaders has been caused in large part by voluntary student unionism, and this needs addressing. For student partnership to progress there is a need for the sector to focus on the role student leaders may play in the representative context, the value of this engagement, and building the university/student relationship as one of trust and mutual respect.

Australia sits poised for the introduction of fee deregulation in the sector. There are indications that deregulation if and when introduced will lead to dramatic increases in fees as institutions feel compelled to charge in line with competitors to maintain their standing. To charge less may cause them to be seen as inferior, budget alternatives. Whatever the market forces, it is clear that enhancement of course quality and the student experience must always be at the centre. Experience from abroad demonstrates that this is best achieved in partnership with students. Hopefully this experience will accompany the growing recognition in the Australian sector of the part student voice may play in achieving better outcomes for both students and universities.

Dissemination

During her stay in the UK Professor Varnham gave a presentation on this project at a Roundtable organised by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education for England and Wales, at Reading. This was attended by approximately 30 people.

The findings reported here have also been presented in their entirety or in part in:

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Varnham S (2015) *Students as partners: the student voice in university decision making and governance – discussion of an Office for Learning and Teaching project*, Higher Education Compliance and Quality Forum, Melbourne, Australia, November 2015

Varnham S (2015) *Seen and Heard: engagement of the student voice in university decision making*, 24th National Conference of the Australia & New Zealand Education Law Association (ANZELA), Brisbane, Australia, September 2015

Varnham S, Olliffe B, Cahill A and Waite K (2015) *Student engagement in university decision-making and governance - towards a more systemically inclusive student voice* Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA), Melbourne, Australia, July 2015

Varnham S, Olliffe B, Cahill A and Waite K (2015) *Student engagement in university decision-making and governance - towards a more systemically inclusive student voice* Australasian Law Teachers Association (ALTA), Melbourne, Australia, July 2015

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STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN UNIVERSITY DECISION MAKING AND GOVERNANCE: TOWARDS A MORE SYSTEMICALLY INCLUSIVE STUDENT VOICE

AN OLT STRATEGIC PRIORITY COMMISSIONED PROJECT LED BY
PROFESSOR SALLY VARNHAM, FACULTY OF LAW, UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY



REPORT ON SURVEY FINDINGS **(APPENDIX E)**

Overview

Key to beginning the Australian stage of research for the OLT project: *Student engagement in university decision making and governance -towards a more systemically inclusive student voice*, were surveys of Australian tertiary institutions and student leaders. The aim was to begin an understanding of what is happening in Australia with respect to student engagement in university decision making and governance.

The institutional survey was based on a survey conducted by the University of Bath into student engagement. The response to the survey was strong (53%). The responses were received from institutions that generally indicated they were receptive to an active role for students in decision making and governance. This raises the possibility that just over half of our tertiary institutions are thinking along these lines although other reasons may of course have prevented other institutions from responding.

The overwhelming outcome from the institutional survey was that there are pockets of good practice throughout the Australian tertiary education sector. It could be concluded however that a systemic approach is lacking.

A separate survey of student leaders was carried out. The survey instrument was a modification of the institutional survey that a student focus group helped to tailor to better suit a student leader audience. There was a response rate of around 50% of our sample with responses received from diverse institutions across the country. The findings of the surveys reported here are potentially representative of what is happening with student engagement in decision-making in Australian universities from a student perspective. However, it is important to recognise that with a larger sample the picture might look somewhat different.

Students report they are engaged in a range of decision-making opportunities across their institutions most notably in senior decision making bodies such as council and academic board or senate where they participate fully. From final comments provided by students there is some concern that this full participation is tokenistic. Closer to teaching activities, at course and faculty level, there is less engagement with students in decision- making and where it occurs there are typically no voting rights. Overall institutional and staff attitudes to student representation are seen as compliant with students being seen as customers or stakeholders. Little in the way of formal incentives and recognition is provided for student representatives.

Student representatives are typically no more than moderately difficult to recruit and come from the ranks of full-time, undergraduate, local students. They recognise their role as representing the interests of their fellow students. There is some training and support for student representatives and this may be provided through the student association or by the university.

Communication was key. Institutions may share information with students both about the institution and how students can become involved in representative roles through various sources. A potential challenge lies in ensuring that valued information is easily available

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through sources students are most likely to use. Responses gave rise to an interesting question which was the extent to which students view how institutions are doing with engaging them in decision-making as a communication issue rather than a question of what has actually been set in place.

This report details the project's survey findings regarding how student engagement in university decision making and governance operates in Australia. Ultimately our goal is to inspire systemic discussion and practice leading to effective student engagement in decision- making.

SUBMITTED DRAFT

The institutional survey

A survey instrument was developed based on a survey conducted at University of Bath. A copy of the survey instrument, covering letter and informed consent is appended to this report. All 47 institutions listed in the A and B lists on the Australian Government's [Office for Learning and Teaching](#) website were invited to participate. A copy of the survey together with the supporting documents was mailed to the Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic or equivalent at each institution. Some institutions asked for a soft copy of the survey that could be filled in on line to be provided and this request was met.

Survey responses were entered into a spread sheet to permit simple statistical analyses to be undertaken where appropriate. Many of the survey questions and their responses are qualitative in nature. Those that are capable of quantitative treatment are not suited to detailed statistical analysis. While the survey response sample represents a good cross-section of Australian tertiary institutions caution should be exercised in assuming that the results can be extrapolated to all Australian tertiary institutions. It may only be speculated whether those institutions that failed to respond to the survey are not currently receptive to prioritising deepening student engagement in decision-making and governance. Other reasons may have prevented response - time constraints perhaps but also that the survey failed to reach the right person. For the most part those that did respond exhibited a strong interest in student engagement in decision-making and governance.

Ethics approval

The research is the subject of ethics approval provided by the University of Technology Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee under approval number HREC 2012-459A.

Survey Data

The response rate to the survey was 53% (25 of 47 institutions that were sent the survey).

Type of institution

Participating institutions were asked to indicate which classification(s) applied to their institution:

Group of Eight

Australian Technology Network

Innovative Research Universities

Regional Universities Network

Open Universities Australia

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Respondents were from different types of institution with the Group of 8, Australian technology network, Regional universities network, innovative research universities, and open universities all represented in the responses received. A significant number of respondents identified as unaligned or as being a non- university higher education provider. The breakdown of respondents by institution type is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Type of institution

Type of institution	Number of respondents
Group of 8	5
Australian technology network	4
Regional universities network	3
Innovative research universities	2
Unaligned	6
Open universities Australia	1
Other higher educational institutions	4

Where are students engaged and how

Respondents were asked to identify the opportunities provided by their institution for students to engage in decision-making and/or governance. Respondents were provided with Table 2 and asked to check all relevant boxes.

All respondents engage students on their academic board and at faculty level while most (84%) engage students on the institutional council, and have a student association. 92% reported engaging students at course level and 80% engage students in grievance processes. At course level the engagement is overwhelmingly through student feedback surveys with two instances of staff student liaison committees (SSLC) reported (these became two of our case studies). SSLCs are most prevalent at faculty level (64%). Committees in general are a prevalent form of engagement with surveys and ad hoc projects also being used to engage students. Fifteen of the responding institutions reported other forms of student engagement including: student senators, student representative councils, consultation forums, co-creation projects and specialist senior executive appointments focussing on student engagement. The recorded responses are presented in Figure 1.

Ease of Recruitment

The survey asked respondents to identify whether recruitment of students at their institution into representative roles was easy, moderately challenging, difficult or they did not know. 32% of respondents reported recruiting students to representative roles as easy while 48% of respondents reported moderate difficulty in recruiting student representatives. The remaining respondents reported difficulty in recruiting student representatives. Responses are presented in Table 2, including response by type of institution.

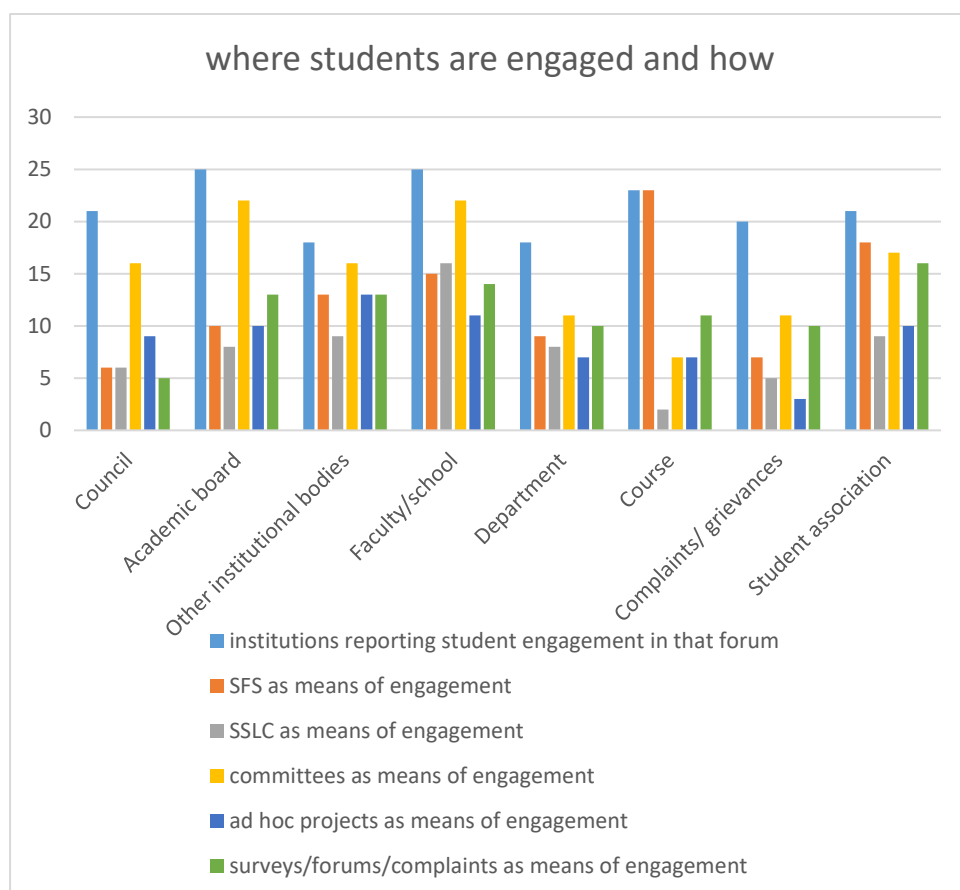


Fig. 1

Table 2: Ease of Recruitment

Ease of recruitment	Number of institutions reporting result	Number by type of institution
Easy ¹	8	Group of eight 3 Australian technology network 1 Regional universities network 1

¹ One institution reported recruitment for board and council as easy but other roles as moderately difficult Student engagement in university decision-making and governance – towards a more systemically inclusive student voice

		Innovative research universities 1 Unaligned 1 Open universities Australia 0 Other higher educational institutions 1
Moderately challenging	12	Group of eight 2 Australian technology network 4 Regional universities network 0 Innovative research universities 1 Unaligned 5 Open universities Australia 0 Other higher educational institutions 0
Difficult	7	Group of eight 0 Australian technology network 0 Regional universities network 2 Innovative research universities 0 Unaligned 1 Open universities Australia 1 Other higher educational institutions 3

Who engages

Participants were asked to identify which groups of students are most and least likely to engage in decision-making and/or governance procedures in their institution from the list provided in Figure 2. Students most likely to engage are undergraduate, full time, local students. Post graduate, part time, international and students from minority groups are significantly less likely to engage (Figure 3).

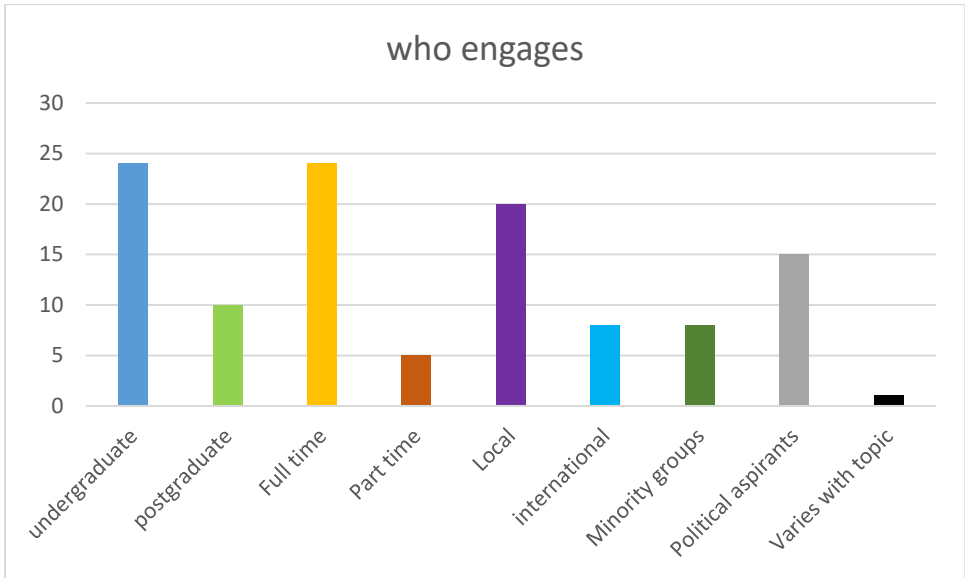


Fig. 2

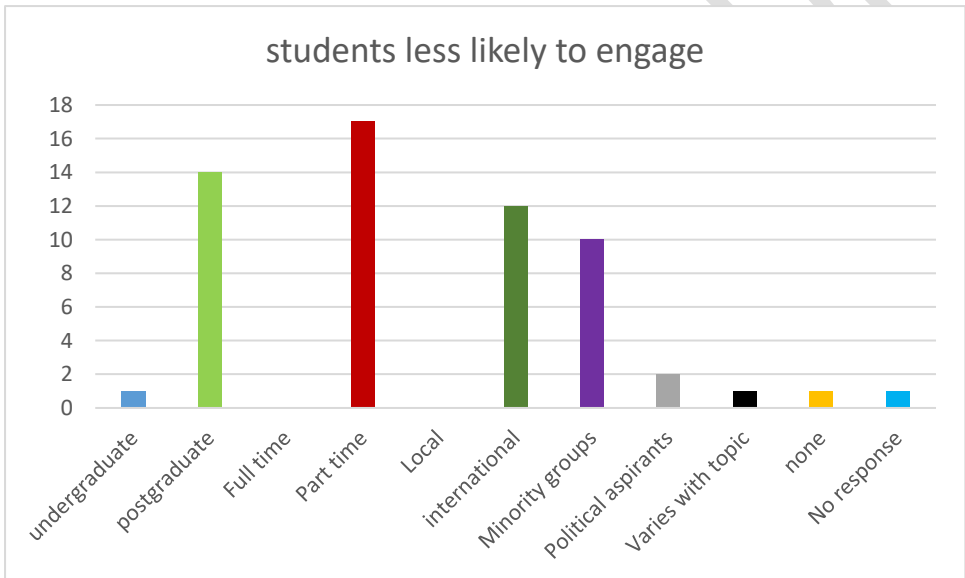


Fig. 3

Thirteen institutions reported that they are taking action to improve engagement of groups with limited engagement. The initiatives being employed include those set out in Table 3.

Table 3: initiatives to enhance engagement of under-represented groups

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<i>Communication strategies</i>	<i>Support</i>	<i>Creating structures and roles to promote engagement</i>	<i>Processes</i>
<p>better advertising of opportunities</p> <p>social network</p> <p>regular information sessions (using social media and other channels)</p> <p>what wall</p> <p>surveys and forums</p> <p>campaigns, initiatives, awareness events</p>	<p>targeted leadership programs</p> <p>mentoring</p> <p>collaboration with student association</p>	<p>formal committee involving DVC, PVC, management, Student Union and SRC to formalise a strategy</p> <p>Faculty Consultative Council to give students direct access to executive deans and senior colleagues.</p> <p>student ambassadors</p> <p>appointment of PVC student engagement</p> <p>Governance Support Unit and Student Engagement and Development Team joint project to encourage participation</p> <p>Creation of permanent Student Engagement and Development Team</p> <p>Formation of VCs student representative council</p> <p>establishing student collectives</p>	<p>improved elections and calling for representatives</p> <p>review of student consultation involving student groups</p> <p>proactive relationship building via consultation and regular meetings with international student groups and representatives</p>

How does recruitment occur?

Participants were asked to identify how students become representatives in their institution from the options provided in Table 6. Student association elections commonly provide council and academic board representatives as well as student association representatives. Institution run elections may also be used to provide academic board representatives as well as faculty representatives. At the faculty level, representatives may also be volunteers, nominees or appointed by staff. Volunteers and staff appointments are also common at the

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department or discipline level. Representatives dealing with complaints are most frequently staff appointments. Recorded data is presented in Figure 4.

Training

The survey asked whether there is any formalised process for training student representatives on governance and decision making bodies at responding institutions. Nearly all respondents reported some form of training for student representatives. Mostly this occurs through formal institutional programs, through staff who have this as a formal responsibility or through formal student association programs. Although not included in the listed options, there were a couple of reports of using external providers to provide specific training (e.g. company directors). If there was a formalised process, respondents were asked to identify how it is funded. Sixteen institutions reported there being funding allocated to training student representatives. Mostly the funding is provided by the institution although there appear to be institutions allocating student amenities funds to this purpose. The type of training being provide is summarised in Figure 5 while funding source is summarised in Figure 6.

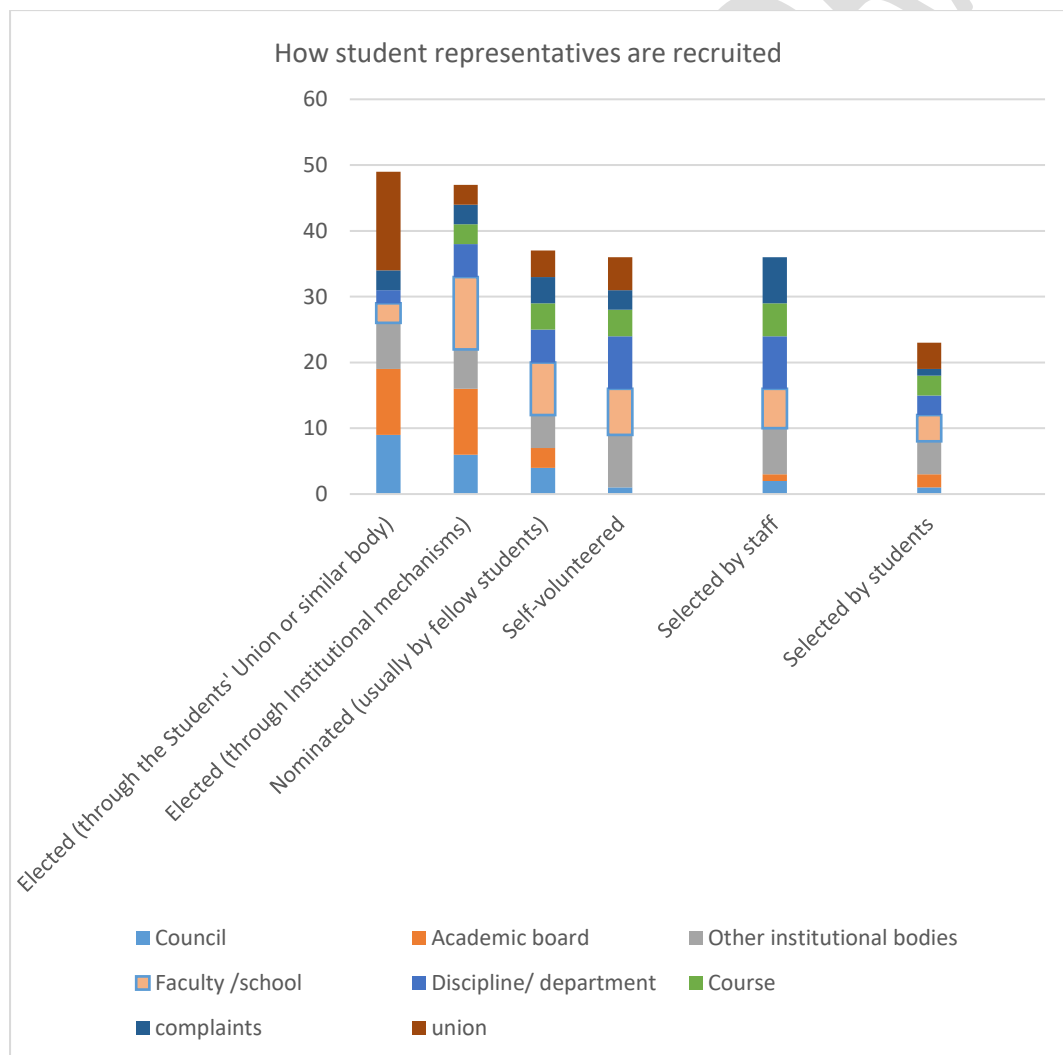


Fig. 4

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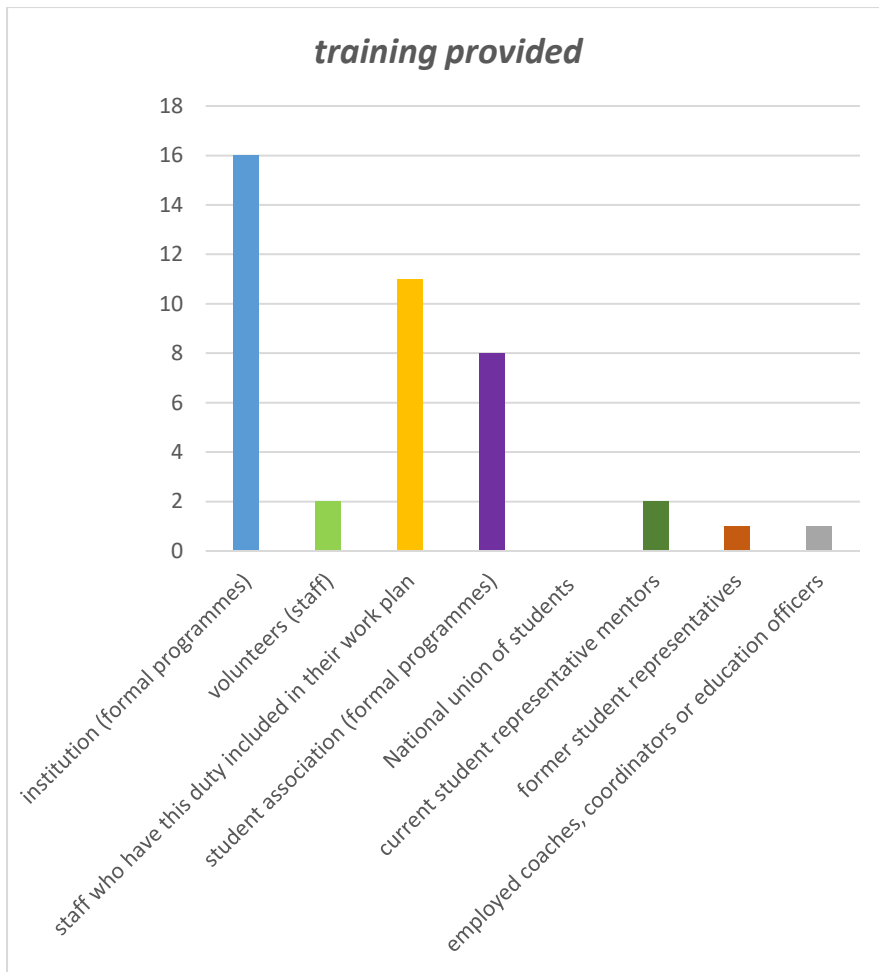


Fig. 5

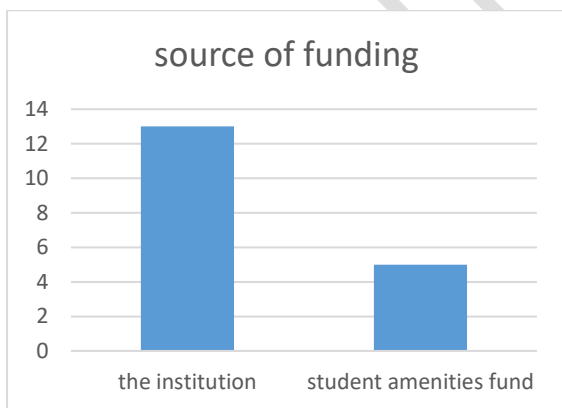


Fig. 6

Informing academic and administrative staff of the role students play
 Respondents were asked to describe any mechanisms their institution uses to enable academic and administrative staff to understand the role students play in university decision-making and/or governance. Fourteen institutions reported providing mechanisms designed for this purpose. The mechanisms used include induction, training and on the job performance management, communication and staff awareness strategies, committee

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terms of reference, strategic plans, a student engagement and development team and staff-student forums.

Support for student representatives

The survey asked whether there is any formal or informal avenue available to student representatives for support and advice. Most respondents reported providing support for student representatives. This was typically provided by staff with this responsibility. 44% of respondents had formal institutional programs in place, 36% of respondents provide student association programs and the same percentage utilise current student representative mentors. The results are summarised in Figure 7.

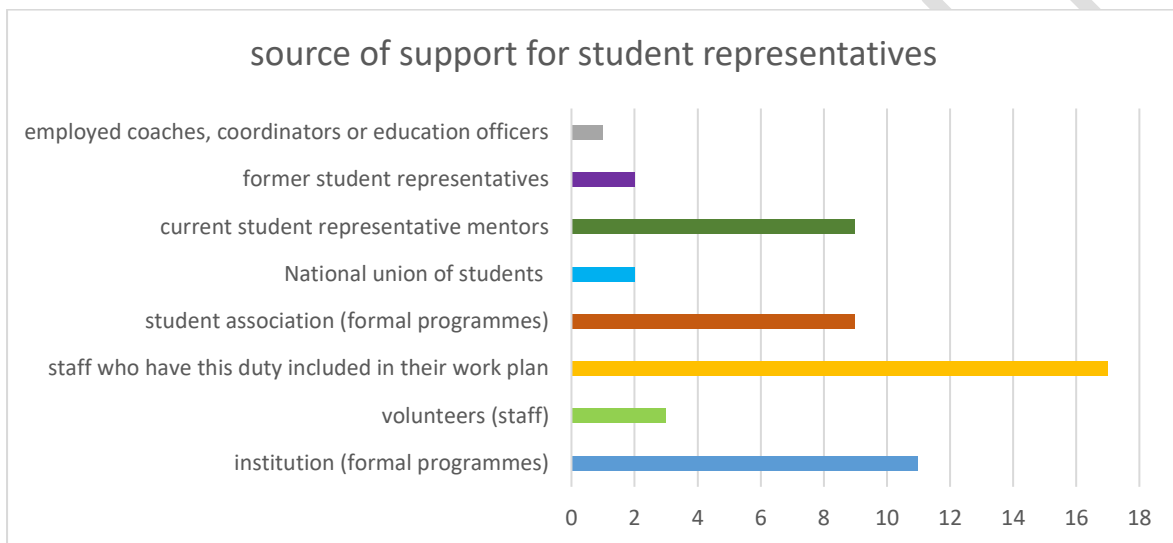


Fig. 7

Informing students about representative roles

Respondents were asked to identify opportunities used in their institution to inform students about the role they can play in decision-making and/or governance. Possible responses were to be selected from those presented in Table 4. All respondents reported having a mechanism for informing students about representative roles. Orientation and information on the institutional website were the most common means with social media and student forums also popular. Other reported mechanisms were letters from the DVC, a pop up shop, student ambassadors, information on the student association website and emails to all of students.

Table 4: sources of information for students about decision-making and/or governance roles

Sources of information	Number of institutions reporting
Orientation	17
student forums run by students	12
student forums run by institution	10
information on institutional website	18
social media	13
other (please specify)	Letter from DVC, pop up shop, student ambassadors, information on the student association website / emails to all of students

Information shared with particular groups of students

Participants were asked to identify the type of information and data their institution makes available to students and at what level from the options provided in Figure 8. Respondents reported a diversity of information being shared with various groups of students. Considerably more information is shared with student representatives and committee members than is shared with the student union and all students. Information most likely to be shared with student representatives and committee members is program evaluations. Subject evaluations are the information most likely to be shared with all students. The most widely shared information is reports of actions taken to enhance student educational experience. External reporting is least likely to be shared.

Respondents were asked to identify if there was any other information shared. Other information reported as shared includes strategic plans and policies, annual report on student services and amenities website, student guild audited financial statements, consolidated course performance reporting, feedback on teaching and learning matters and results/summaries of university surveys.

Information shared by student organisations

Institutions were asked to report on information shared by their student organisation (association, union or guild). Three institutions reported they do not have a student

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organisation. Information reported as shared by respondents having a student organisation included:

quarterly reports on SAF expenditure, guild budget, guild presentations to committees, minutes of academic representatives' meetings, survey outcomes, annual report, campaign information, student leadership council program of activities and outcomes and information and data regarding academic advocacy, financial support and welfare services.

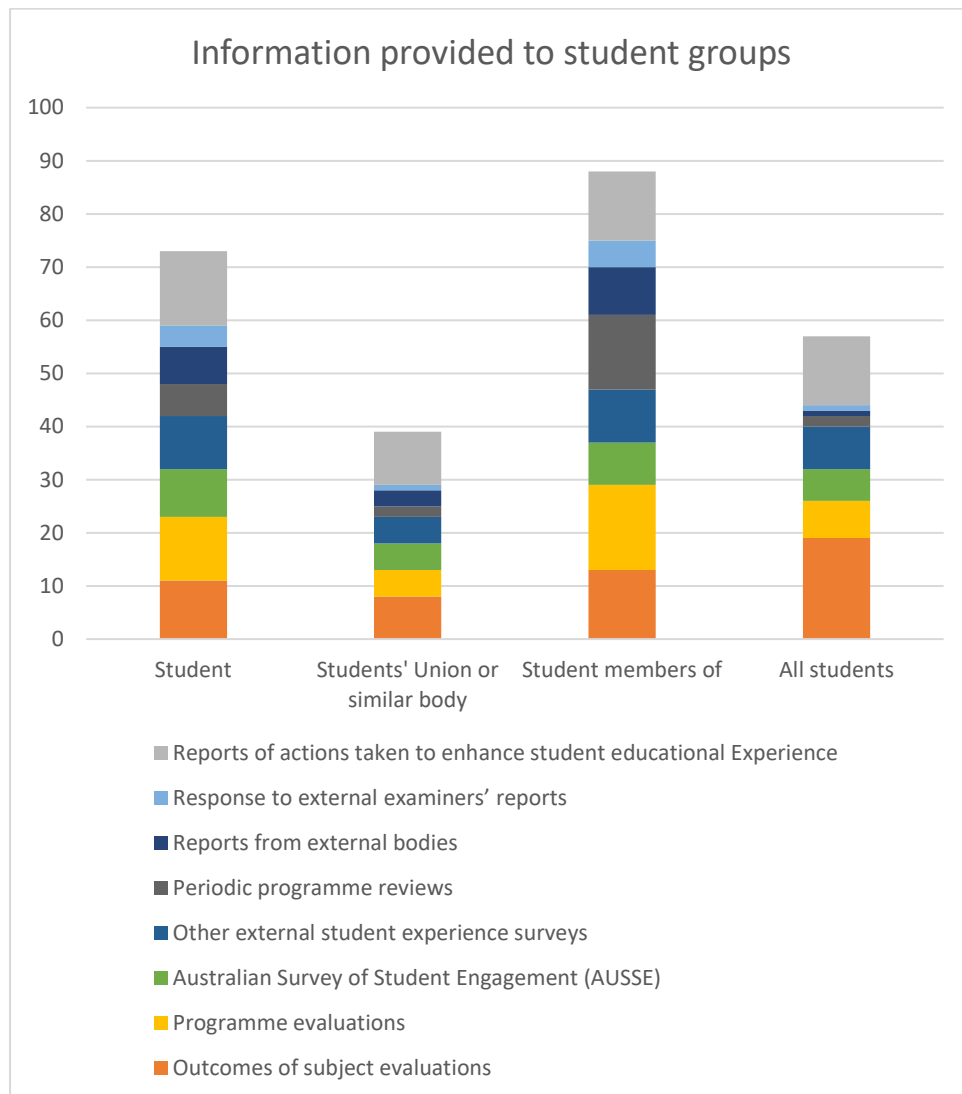


Fig. 8

Mechanisms to inform students of enhancements to student experience

Institutions reported using a variety of means to inform students of enhancements to student experience. The institutions themselves do so through publications, websites, notice boards, social media, meetings and emails. Publications, websites and social media were reported as being the means used most often. Student associations were reported as most frequently using publications and social media. The level of joint dissemination

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between institutions and student associations does not appear to be high. Similarly, the level of communication from faculties, departments, courses and student representatives was noticeably low. Publications and websites, and - in the case of faculties - notice boards and email were the preferred means. Results are summarised in Figure 9.

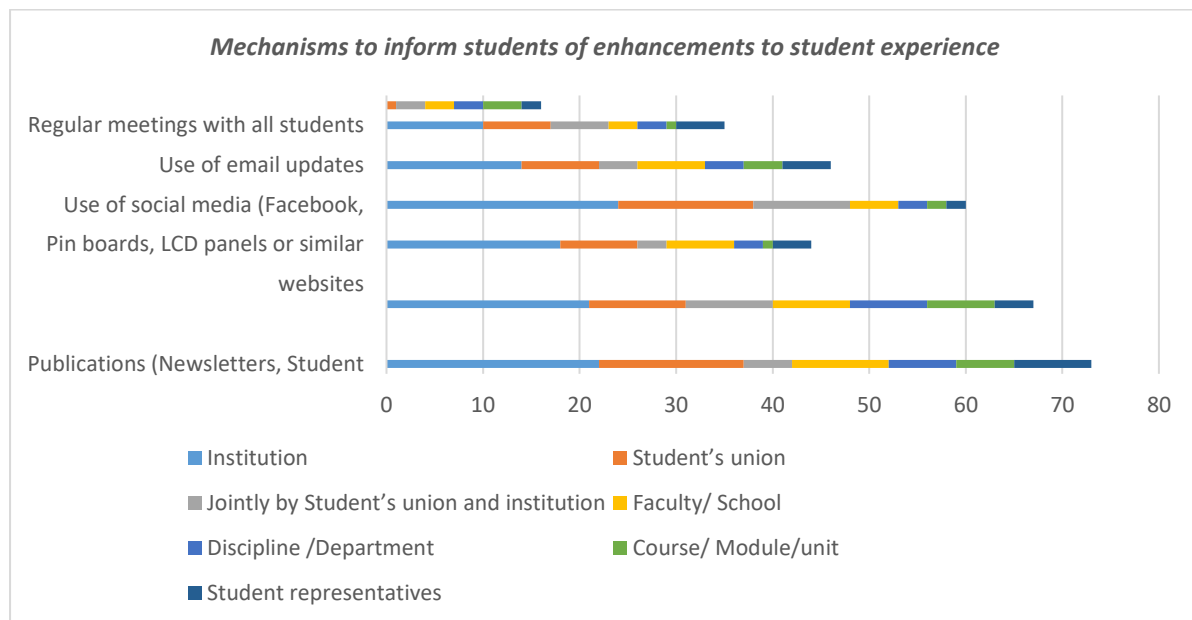


Fig. 9

Acknowledging student contributions

Institutions were asked to report on whether student contribution to governance and decision making is explicitly acknowledged in publications and news items. Ten institutions said that student contributions were not acknowledged and one was unsure. Those that reported that student contributions were acknowledged reported that this was through news stories and other forms of communication, by student leadership or management, reports on governance issues, through stories relating to outcomes, noting of authorship or contribution, you said...we did..., Inclusion on AHEGS statement, in the minutes of the meetings, in the student newspaper, letters of thanks, and membership lists.

Performance indicators

Institutions were asked to report on whether they have performance indicators for the effectiveness of student engagement. Thirteen institutions reported that they do not have relevant performance indicators and one respondent was unsure whether their institution had relevant indicators or not. For those institutions that reported having relevant indicators the majority referenced the institution's strategic plan as the source. The areas that were reported as being evaluated were variable. The following comments were made: *All areas of the university report against the strategic plan. Student engagement is a key result area;*

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We have no formal KPIs but student engagement is part of the university's key strategic priorities and progress/activities are reported to council via a number of mechanisms including the VCs performance agreement;

some, these are reported in OPTs and in our annual reports;

KPIs include club and social activity;

Results from CEQs. Overall satisfaction with SELT survey. Employment rates. Percentage of students who undertake further study;

my role as associate director student communications and engagement is guided by a strategy and an operational plan;

Indicators for student engagement and experience from the current strategic plan include: Student satisfaction (%), HE student retention rate (%), VET student completion rate (%), Timely HDR completion (%), Review of the University Experience Survey outcomes, Student Evaluation of Unit and Student Evaluation of Teaching indicators, Monitoring the e-communications traffic and setting targets for improved levels of student communication; extent of student engagement in the work of consultation and decision making bodies across the university reference the university strategic plan;

Bi annual governance surveys of Academic Board and Council include questions about engagement with students. These are scored and reported to both bodies via Council's Governance Committee.

*Institutions reporting performance indicators were asked to comment on changes brought about through using these performance indicators. Specific changes to operations both large and small were reported. The following comments were provided:
more funding was shifted to sports facilities;*

closer working relationship with the student guild;

the review of academic governance had student reps and this has given us new direction in framing our charter;

the student union lobbied successfully for a change in sports management on one campus and for ATSI flags in all locations;

*Increased numbers of students using online chat to engage and resolve issues.
Improvements in the University Experience Survey results. Improvement in the commencing HE student retention rate;*

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improvements based on SELT feedback. The Results of SELTS are regularly reviewed and presented at relevant committees where students are represented. Improvements are recommended and reported on;

changes made in response to student voice include making unit feedback results available to all staff and students, changing the way exam results are delivered to students (via personalised email rather than requiring students to login), installing more free water stations;

The University has implemented numerous programs of engagement and promotion at the nomination and election stage for student participants and representations, which in turn has resulted in much increased student participation in elections in 2014. The 2014 program of student elections had three times as many nominees and voters as the previous round of elections. Council's Student/Council Liaison Group (SCLG) has increased the frequency and rigor of its meetings, and these are supplemented by regular Student Forums hosted by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education & Students) with the participation of the Chair of SCLG. Two-way flow of information from SCLG and Council has improved as the result of these actions. The Chancellor has also focused on student participation, by having regular pre-meeting briefings with student representatives. Council has also held Town Hall meetings in order to respond directly to student and XXX community concerns. Council members have also become more engaged in university functions, expanding opportunities for interaction and communication with students. As a result of these actions, this area of the survey has increased in the 'Always' response since 2012 (from 17% to 27%), and decreased a corresponding amount in the 'Usually' (from 54% to 40%) and 'Sometimes' responses (from 29% to 20%;

increased push for active involvement of the student voice issue specific forums, increase in student standing committees. Co-creation of new facilities and services;

we are developing our use of social media for engaging students. At this point it is being driven by the college not by student interest;

the appointment in 2014 of a new PVC.

Incentives

Institutions were asked whether they provide any specific incentives to encourage student engagement in governance and/ or decision making. Thirteen institutions reported providing informal recognition, seven provide specific awards and eight provide payment. Other reported incentives were training and development opportunities in relation to leadership and governance, AHEGS and gifts and gratuities. Five of the institutions provide no incentives. None of the institutions provide academic recognition. The results are summarised in Table 5.

Table 5: incentives for engagement

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Incentive	Number of institutions reporting
specific awards	7
Payment	8
academic credit	0
informal recognition	13
other (training and development opportunities in relation to leadership and governance. AHEGS, Gifts and gratuities)	3
None	5

How students participate

Institutions were asked to identify how they would categorise student participation on committees at the levels identified in Figure 10. Most institutions reported students being fully involved in discussions and having voting rights at senior governance levels on bodies such as council and academic board, in the student association and to a lesser extent in complaint and grievance processes and at the faculty level. At the faculty, department and course levels the responses were a combination of students being fully involved in discussions and having voting rights and students voicing their concerns but not voting. Institutions were asked to comment on changes that have come about from student participation. Many of the reported changes were at senior governance levels.

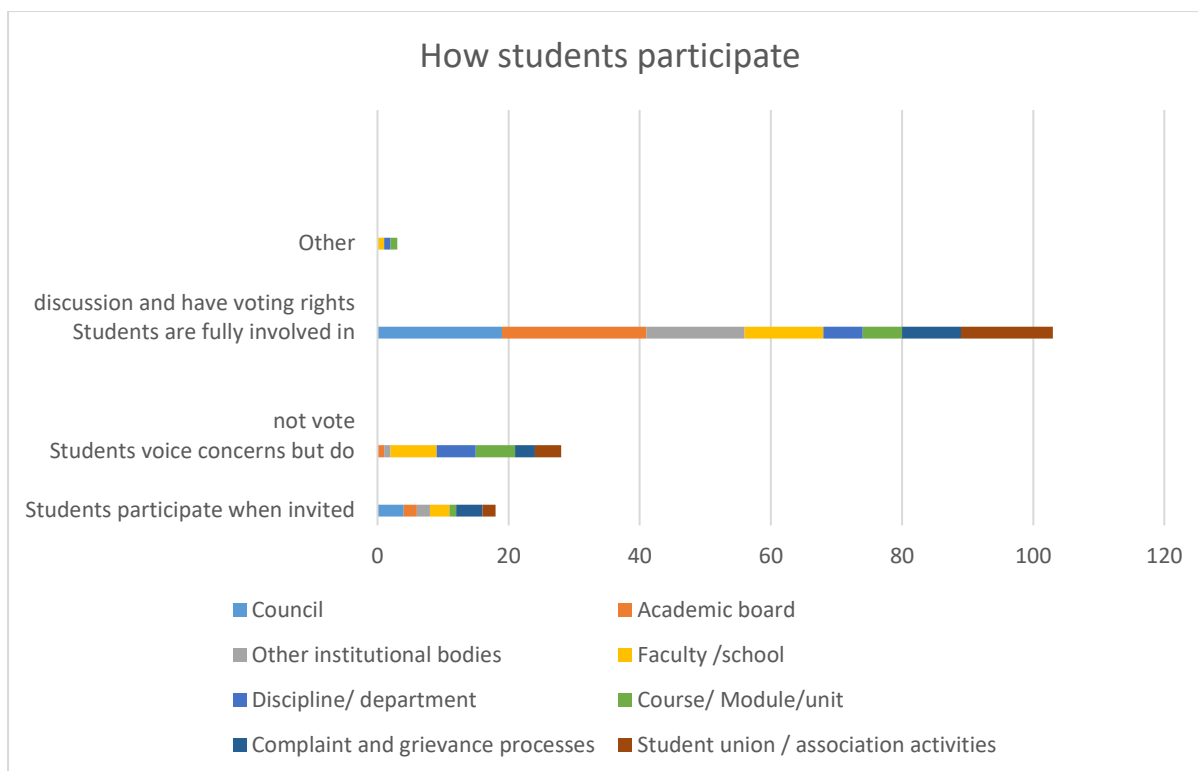


Fig. 10

Institutions were asked to comment on changes that have come about from student participation. The following changes were reported:

Student participation has brought about change at Council, Academic board, other institutional bodies, Faculty, department, and Course levels and in complaint and grievance processes and student association activities including rewriting of the student discipline statute and development of student association strategy;

council, academic board, other institutional bodies- a better understanding on the part of management about the impact of decisions on students;

changes at course, complaint and grievance and union levels;

council, academic board, complaints and grievances, student union- academic misconduct. Students give a degree of realism and a connection to the student body. At academic board often policies can be given a good airing by having students on the board and it also means it gets back to the student body;

academic board, faculty- policy change in relation to academic integrity, academic assessment policy;

other institutional bodies, faculty, union-The University just underwent a major branding exercise and it was led by an external marketing agency but involved hundreds of students through focus groups and surveys. The final brand messaging was completely based on the Student engagement in university decision-making and governance – towards a more systemically inclusive student voice

feedback of student about their experiences, desires and fears ... and had very little staff involvement or input. The university recently launched a PRIDE (LGBTI strategy) with leading support from the Student Union – events were organised and the profile and media was co-ordinated by a staff but developed and driven by students and the student union;

Academic board, faculty, course, union- students were involved in the development of the Faculty Student Consultative Council initiative The complaint and grievance process has been streamlined and involves direct feedback from students;

Council, Academic board, other institutional bodies, Faculty/school, Discipline/ department, Course/ Module/unit, Complaint and grievance processes, Student union / association activities. Improvements from SELT Feedback. The formation of the Mental Health Advisory Group and strategy;

academic board. TSE, complaint/grievance processes, student union activities, Hub Central, student experience project (virtual Hub) both processes were project based and TSE was critical (along with its reference groups) to percolate up the student voice;

changes effect at academic board and other institutional body level- institution revised its governance structure in 2014 and students were involved in all levels of the discussion and decision process. The result was greater and more coordinated representation;

student participation has brought about change in council, academic board, complaint and grievance processes, student union/association activities- students have been involved in the formulation of the current and future strategic plans and in a range of policy and curriculum reforms including changes to the university's assessment processes, special consideration and appeals processes;

student participation has brought about change at council, academic board, faculty, course, complaint and grievance process and student union levels including student led teaching awards and recent changes to student representation

at council and academic board- I have been on there 2 of 5 years and the feedback from students while important provides more of a trigger for pursuit of matters rather than a catalyst for change;

council, academic board, other institutional bodies-probably on issues like academic policy review, conduct and discipline procedures etc, student discipline procedure, review of orientation, sport and recreation activities, expansion of "Jobs on Campus" SSAF funding allocations;

joint negotiation of a student charter by the institution and the guild, student guild partner in welcome week activities;

council, other institutional bodies- student participation at board level saw the introduction of women's rooms and queer spaces. Review of blended learning strategy. Submissions for funding of initiatives e.g. international student accommodation;

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course through surveys rather than committees- subjects are constantly evolving. Other changes at the college are driven by compliance, benchmarking, continuous improvement or informal student engagement with faculty;

course, student association- feedback from students regarding courses and units has resulted in subsequent changes, student association feedback has resulted in changes at orientation;

council, academic board, other institutional bodies, student association, student representatives reworked the constitution of the student association which was approved by the executive committee. The changes increased student representation in certain areas, council takes seriously the comments from student representatives;

our experience with student representation is still limited. Generally, students provide a testing ground: is a proposed development reasonable to them as students? And we are yet to see a more substantive student-initiated contribution emerge;

academic board, other institutional bodies, faculty, student union- a student member of university learning and teaching committee suggested a change to the student evaluation of teaching processes which was adopted. The student association conducted an audit of the student experience which was present to academic senate. Most of the recommendations made were acted upon;

student feedback or participation in committees has brought about change at Council, Academic board, Other institutional bodies, Faculty/school, Discipline/ department, Course/ Module/unit, Complaint and grievance processes, Student union / association. Students are active participants and lend their voice and perspective to Committees at every level from Council to faculty subject level. However, as equal members of a Committee or representative bodies their voice is no more important than other representatives, and decisions of the Committee are not allocated individually, but take account of all perspectives when a decision is made. Student perspectives have been invaluable in contribution to strategic activities from the Campus Masterplan to learning futures, however their contribution is made in the context of a collective decision making process;

council, academic, faculty, complaints/grievances/union - Student Experience – engagement and success – is a key strategic priority of the university and is part of senior leadership key performance indicators. Increased opportunities for the student voice being heard and having an impact at a local College, university wide, Senior Executive and Council level.

Other bodies, union - The Student Association put forward a proposal to the University to introduce food trucks due to widespread dissatisfaction with the food. This was taken up by the University and was a huge success and contributed to more atmosphere and community on campus for both staff and students. The other significant contribution that students have on a regular basis is to the SSAF Budget Advisory Committee, where they make up 50% of the committee and contribute to making crucial decisions around almost \$4M every year.

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How the institution perceives students

Students' roles are perceived differently in different situations within institutions. Institutions were asked to rank the extent to which each of the classifications provided in Table 6 represent the student roles in their institution. Not all of them provided a ranking. Some chose a single option. Some chose more than one but did not rank them. In these instances, all relevant selections have been given a ranking of 1. The most common response to how institutions perceive students was as a stakeholder (47%) with only 19% identifying the student role as equal partner. 22% identified students as customers or consumers.

Table 6: Institutional perceptions of students

Role	Ranking 1	Ranking 2	Ranking 3	Ranking 4
Equal partner	7	2	3	4
Customer/consumer	8	6	1	2
Expert	3	1	3	2
Stakeholder	17	2	3	
Other	Partner but not equal 1	Learning community 1		Initiator of ideas 1

How student leaders perceive themselves

Participants were asked whether from their experience, they believe student leaders perceive their role as leading a team of student representatives. Fifteen institutions reported that in at least some roles student leaders perceive themselves as leading a team of student representatives. Amongst the dissenting responses the views expressed included individual students representing their own interests, absence of a student organisation, focus on specific interests rather than representing a student cohort and the prime concern being to form a cohesive team within a committee rather than pursuing student interests. The dissenting responses were as follows.

Our students do not come to college to engage with other students to form views about the college. No "leader" speaks for them. They directly engage with faculty and staff to express their views.

There is no student union or SRC so students don't see themselves as leaders of teams of reps.

Usually there are just two representatives on a committee. Where a student association or a SSLC exists in a college there is a stronger sense of student leadership of a team.

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Students often represent their own views, very few appear to seek feedback from or provide feedback to the student body they represent though this does occur on occasion.

No, they see their role as crucial to governance.

They tend to represent particular areas rather than see themselves as leading a student body.

Feedback indicates most student representatives feel a lack of connection with other student representatives. Their role as a student leader can be highly variable depending on their home faculty and other factors.

They often get derailed into politics or confrontation unless genuine trust can be built. I had to "turn" quite a few union presidents (SRC are more pragmatic).

Student leaders tend to view their role more as a co-ordinating role and providing feedback rather than a truly representative role or as role models for other students. Most interactions are low-profile and outside of the Union or SRC not well co-ordinated and publicised.

Student leaders in the main seem to be motivated by their personal ambitions and career prospects.

It is hard for them to do this, most staff who sit on boards and committees are similar, it takes time to learn to carry an overview capacity. You have to feel like the responsibility is shared amongst a group and that you can function as one. This is difficult if you feel you represent a constituency.

Student charter

Participants were asked whether their institution has a student charter or similar staff-student agreement in place. Eleven of the responding institutions reported having a student charter and a further two reported that they were in the process of developing one. Three institutions volunteered that they had a student code of conduct in response to this question.

Institutional attitude towards student engagement

Institutions were asked to characterise their attitude towards student engagement. The most prevalent attitude was "championing/pioneering" at about 56%. About 36% of institutions identified themselves as "compliant". The remaining 8% characterised themselves as avoiding student engagement. The responses are summarised in Table 7.

Table 7: Institutional attitude

Institutional attitude	Number of institutions reporting
Compliant	9
Championing/ pioneering	14.5*
Avoiding	2

* a few institutions categorised themselves as in between compliant and championing or working towards championing so were scored as 0.5 in each relevant category

Increasing engagement

Institutions were asked to identify what would motivate them to increase student engagement. 52% reported being self-motivated while 36% reported that provision of incentives would motivate them. Results are summarised in Figure 11.

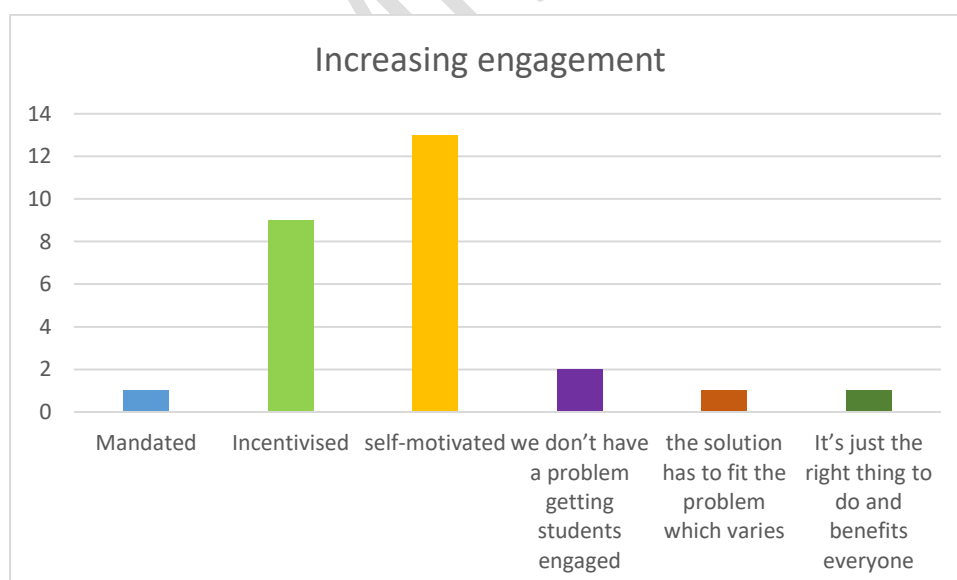


Fig. 11

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Additional insights

Institutions were invited to share any other insights they thought relevant. Respondents addressed a range of issues from the deficits and frustrations they experience in relation to student engagement through to significant changes and initiatives that their institutions had adopted. This latter feedback supported an overall view that while there is no systemic approach to student engagement in decision making there are pockets of good practice that can be drawn on by other institutions to enhance their student engagement practices.

Students at our university are true partners with university staff.

Our institution is predominantly a VET provider and about 10% of its activity is in the HE sector so relatively few students are at the institute for more than a year. It is also very multi-campus, even in the HE sector there is a high proportion of international students in some courses. In other HE courses there can be a high proportion of part time students. All these factors result in a low engagement

The research that I have read (UK based) doesn't suggest that "student representatives" represent any view other than their own (or their clique) and students don't feel "heard" because some other student is on a committee. Requiring student reps on committees is more for reporting/show than for effectively hearing the voice of students. This is why we see social media- direct contact with students as more likely to achieve the goal of hearing student voice than committee representation.

The university has over the past few years generated a more focused application of the student voice to engagement in governance and decision making. Regular student leader meetings with the Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, Provost and other senior leaders; whole of university forums to bring students and staff together to discuss the concerns and issues of the university experience; meetings with university Council members and inclusion of students in the Academic Board and Council are scheduled throughout the year. Student leaders are currently included in the strategy planning for the upcoming university Strategy Plan.

XXX is a leader in student contribution to governance, and will continue to value student input at every level of decision making.

Co-creation says it all.

There is an acknowledgement that [we] can do more in this area – hence the development of the strategy currently underway (I am part of this team). The level of engagement and effectiveness of student leaders over the years in my experience depends on the maturity and motivations of the student. For example, many students have been quite combative with University Management and not effective – these types of students tend to be political aspirants who view their role as one of

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independence and a “check-balance” to University management / authority. Others have worked more closely with the Union, staff and management to achieve positive changes, activities or outcomes and viewed their role as less political. Many students who take on roles at the age of 18 and 19 lack the life experience when compared with postgraduate who are sometimes in their 30s and with families. Younger students find the bureaucracy surrounding the University very difficult to navigate at times.

The university considers that it is valuable to engage students in governance and decision making. The student voice needs to be heard and this means students are encouraged to participate in committee work.

In 2015 [we] moved to a new model of student engagement in university decision making, the previous student association was disestablished and a new body established- the student representative council. This body has elected student reps from all cohorts but is managed by the governance section of the university. This will lead to greater levels of engagement of the SRC in decision-making as the governance team is the link between the students and all committees within the university including council, academic board and the VCs advisory committee. Therefore, if academic board is considering matters with a direct impact on students the governance team brings those matters to the SRC and facilitates student input before a decision is made. The student reps also now have access to comprehensive training and induction in relation to university governance and operations something which did not occur when student representation sat with the student association which was a separate entity to the university.

The quality and experience of student leaders varies from year to year. It is important for the university to have a clear philosophy of student engagement that has longer term outcomes. Questions of volunteerism versus paid are vexed. Students need economic support if hours are expected but payment brings less freedom to act as students rather than employees. The university has been well served by a partnership model with strong collegiality which respects the nature of students and staff in the university. Students contribute best when expectations are clear and consistent.

I am a University employee working in the Office of Student Engagement; however, I manage the Student Association. My role is to oversee student representation mechanisms across the University. I have been in the role for three years and only now are we embarking on a wholesale review of the representation mechanisms across the Uni and a review of best practice here in Australia and the world. I personally would like to reinvigorate representation mechanisms across the University and I do have the support of the DVC (A) on that. Our representation structures are a bit all over the place – with no consistency from faculty to school. I would like to have a consistent structure and develop a really good support and development program for all reps across the University.

Key issues identified by the survey

The level of response and diversity of responding institutions was encouraging. As previously mentioned, caution must be taken in extrapolating these results to all Australian tertiary education institutions since there is a risk that participating institutions are those with a greater interest in student engagement in governance and decision making. This is supported by the majority of respondents characterising their attitude towards engagement as championing. That is not to say that all non-responders are not interested. There are other reasons institutions may not have responded such as the time preparing a response would have taken and competing priorities.

Students are participating in a diversity of governance opportunities in the institutions that responded to the survey. However, representation is not evenly shared by all groups of students and groups such as part time, post graduate, international and minority student groups are reportedly under represented. Some institutions are taking steps to improve this situation. At the same time there are few formal incentives for student engagement with most institutions identifying the incentives they provide for engagement as informal.

Training and support for student representatives is being provided by some but not all institutions and some of those providing this do so through formal programs. However, it appears that for the most part these programs are provided as additional duties for existing staff rather than through staff who have this duty as their role.

Institutions for the most part reported perceiving their students as stakeholders rather than partners and this in turn is likely to be significant for enhancing student engagement. The Student Engagement Framework for Scotland (SEFS) (<http://www.sparqs.ac.uk/upfiles/SEFScotland.pdf> viewed 12 September 2015) identifies the importance of a formal representative process for engaging student leaders at the highest level within institutional processes to deliver high reaching and strategic student engagement. The merits of both formal and informal processes are recognised (sparqs, 'Celebrating student engagement, successes and opportunities in Scotland's university sector', 2013) Critical to this model is partnership:

In Scotland's universities student engagement has never been intended to be something that students demand and universities provide. Vice Principals are just as likely as senior student officers to approach the enhancement of learning and teaching by wanting to know how best students can be involved in decisions (sparqs, 2013)

Clearly there is an issue in our tertiary education sector with respect to how the relationship between student and institution is perceived. In England, a consumerist approach to student engagement gained prevalence in response to the introduction of higher fees. However, with the passage of time and the example provided by sparqs, there is increasing recognition that a partnership approach is beneficial to students and institution alike.

It is notable that for an institution to do well in engaging students it needs to work in partnership with the representative student body (QAA, 2012)

Overall the survey findings demonstrate that there are some very sound practices in place in Australian tertiary education institutions but these practices are not systemic.

Student engagement in university decision-making and governance – towards a more systemically inclusive student voice

Student leaders' survey

Conducting the survey

The student leaders' survey was set up on Survey Monkey. The questions asked were a version of the institutional survey (which was based on the survey conducted by the University of Bath for the UK QAA, Pimental-Botas & ors, '*Student engagement in Learning and Teaching Quality Management: A Study of UK Practices Research Findings*' 2013) modified to better suit the information student leaders would be likely to have readily available to them and issues of relevance to them. A focus group was run at UTS with student leaders to look at the survey questions and adjust them as necessary before sending the survey out.

We emailed the survey link to all student associations that had an identifiable email address. In some case student union sites were unreachable so no email contact could be found. In some instances, the site was available but there was no email address that we could send the link to. This meant that of the 48 institutions we identified we were able to send information about the survey and the link to the survey to 30 institutions. Our response rate was about 50%.

Where did the responses come from?

We didn't ask the students where they were from or what type of university they were from. Based on some of the other answers however we could deduce that there was representation from most states and different types of university:

4 Group of 8

2 ATN

2 regional

1 innovative research university

4 unaligned

1 unknown.

All respondents, but one, were elected student leaders in institutions and around half were involved in student associations, university councils and academic boards. Only one was involved at faculty level.

How do student leaders see their role?

All respondents saw their role as providing leadership and representing the interests of the student body as a whole. Less than half saw themselves as activists and one third identified the role as developing their careers.

How do student leaders see their institutions?

We asked student leaders to characterise their institution's attitude to student engagement in decision-making and governance (Figure 12).

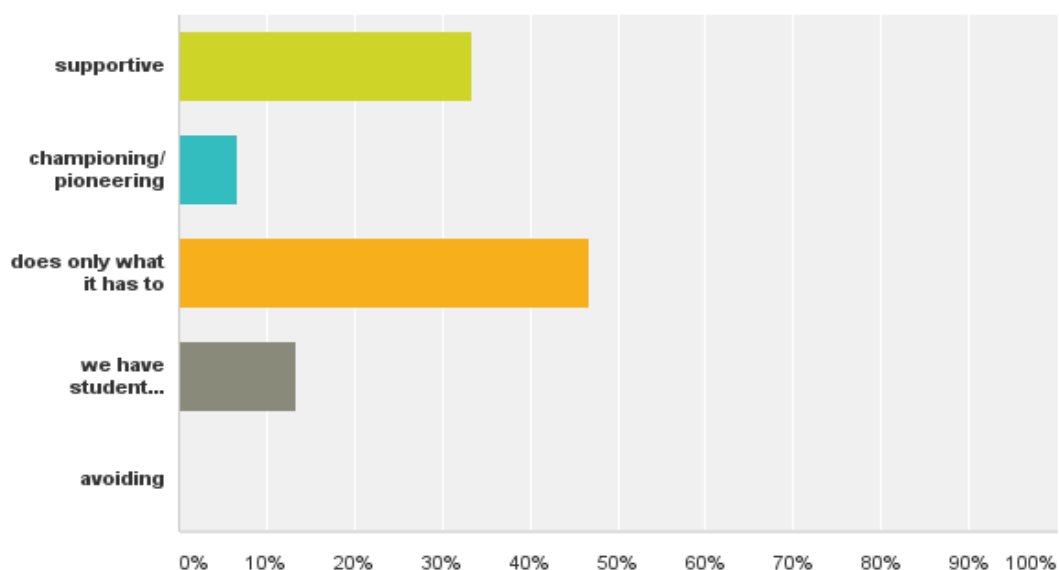


Fig. 12 Institutional attitude towards student engagement in decision-making

Over a third saw their institution as supporting student representation and around half consider their institution does not value student representatives. The question of how staff see students received diverse responses (Figure 13). None of the respondents characterised staff as seeing students as partners and around 25% consider students are seen as customers. Significantly the largest response was in the “other” category. There was some evidence of staff engaging effectively with students in decision-making roles but this was largely a mixed bag with the positive relationships not being reported as existing at all levels and some taking a negative view of staff-student relationships. There is some indication that student representatives are viewed more seriously than other students.

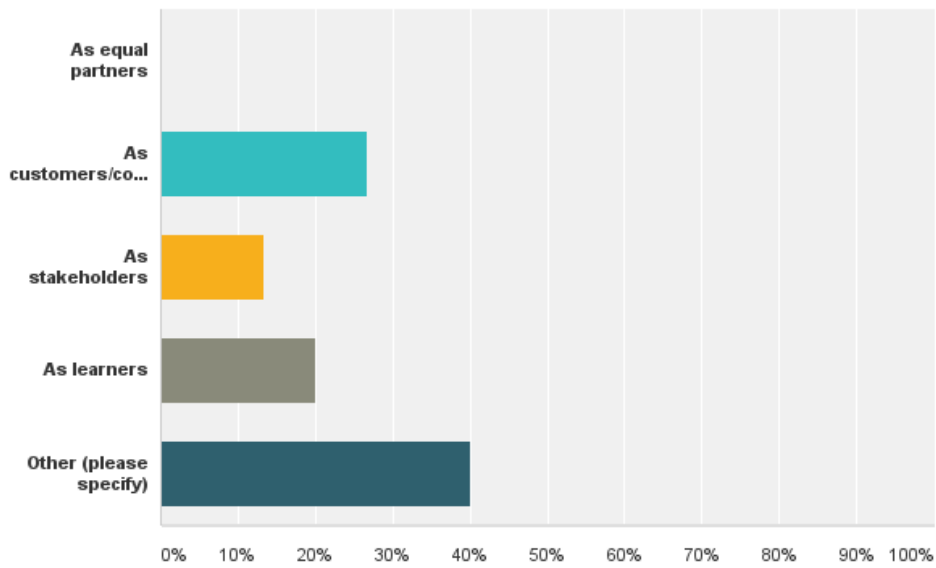
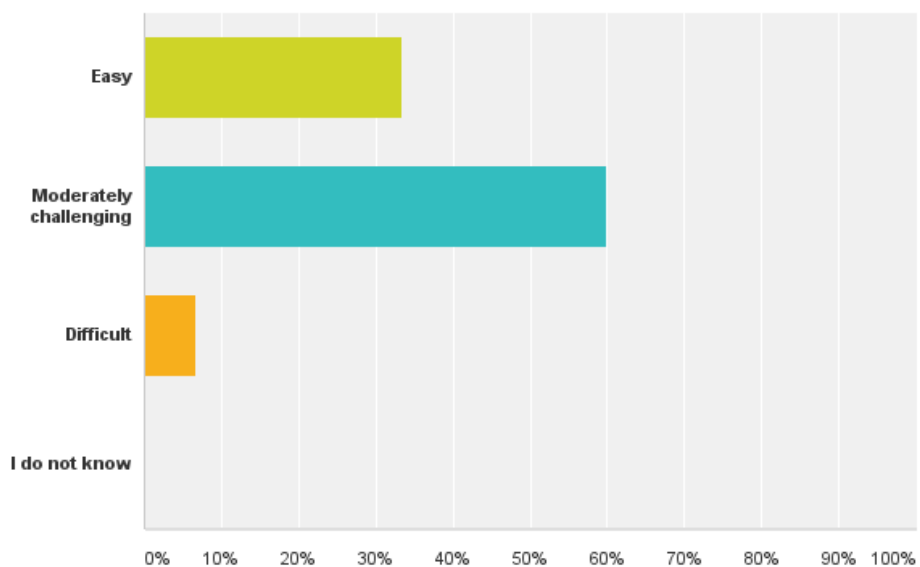


Fig. 13 Staff attitude towards student engagement in decision-making

Recruitment

Recruitment of student representatives was reported as mostly moderately challenging (60%) with one third of respondents reporting it as easy. Only one respondent considered it difficult (Figure 14).

Fig. 14 Ease of recruitment



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Representatives are most likely undergraduates and students who know a student leader or who have been student leaders. Postgraduate, part time and international students were the categories considered least likely to engage as student representatives. Interestingly, females were also underrepresented (Figure 15).

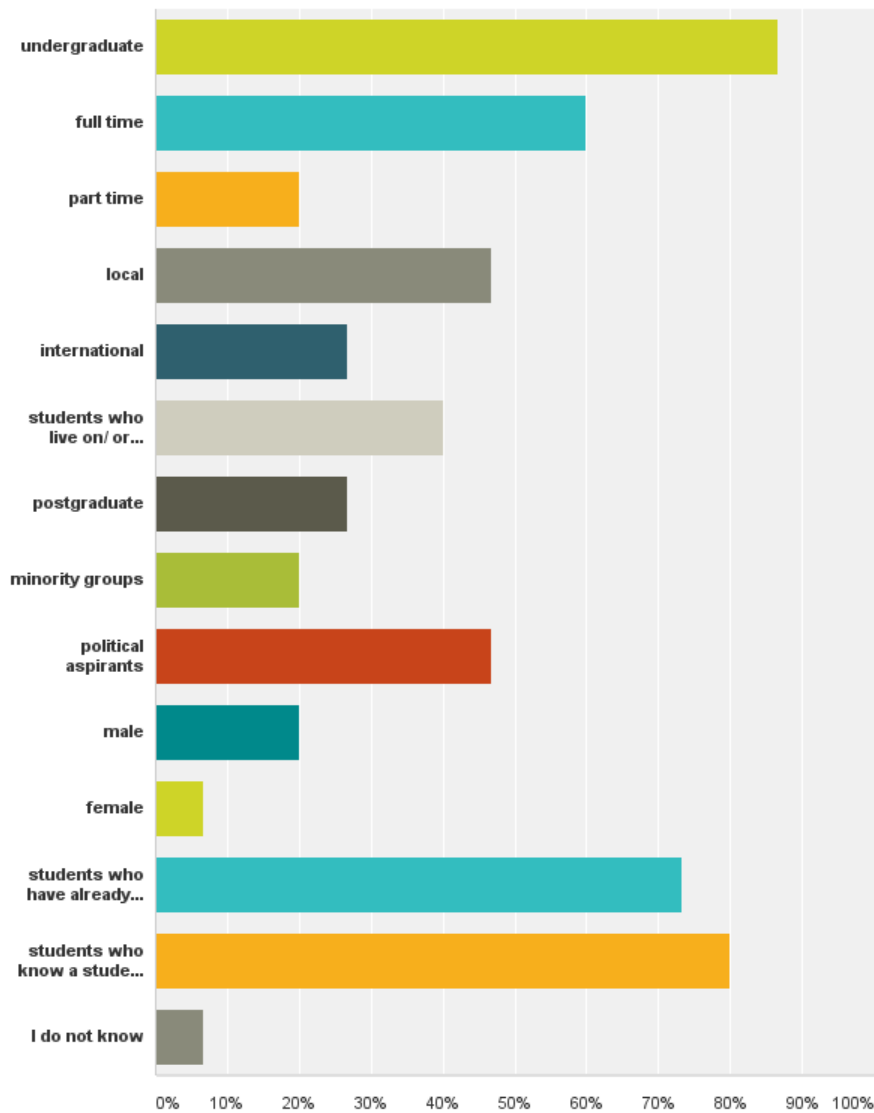


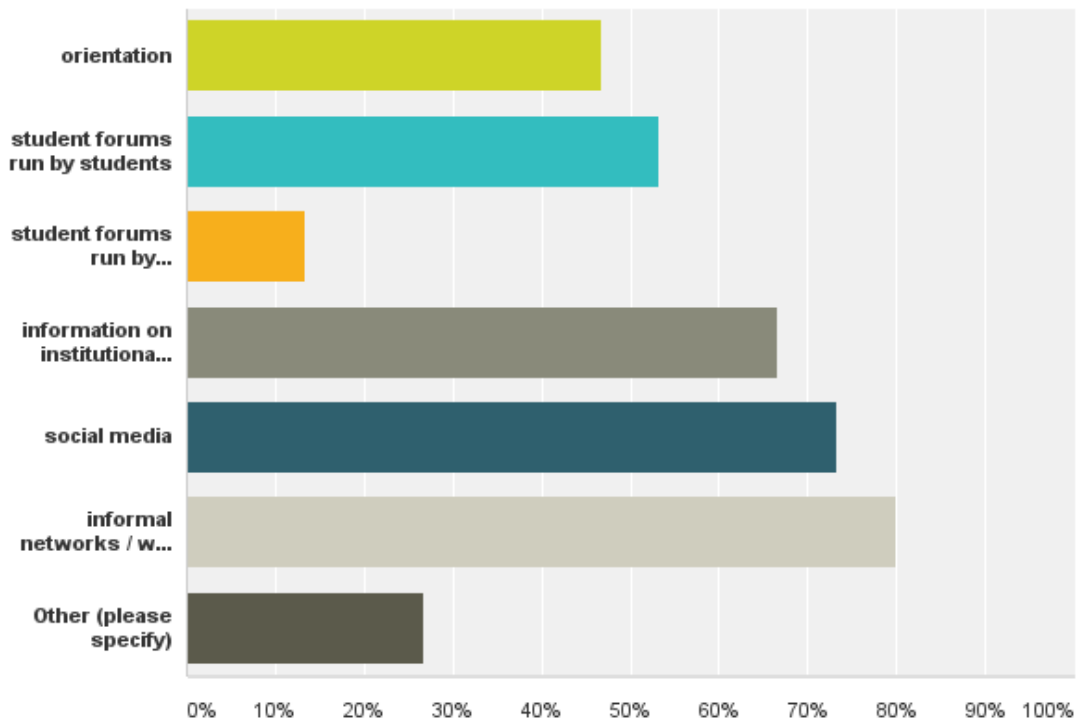
Fig. 15 Which student groups are most likely to become student representatives?

Training and support for student representatives is provided through the student association and current student representatives. Support is provided by staff who have this duty as part of their work load in some instances.

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Informing students about opportunities to become student representatives
 Informal sources, social media and institutional websites are the most common sources of information for students about representative roles and opportunities. Informal sources and social media are the most effective (Figure 16).

Fig. 16 Where can students find out about representative opportunities?



Incentives

Informal recognition was the most common incentive for student representation reported. One third reported no incentives being provided and 20% reported payment or formal certificates being provided (Figure 17). In terms of incentives that respondents value academic credit was the most highly ranked followed by certificates for specific training, inclusion on graduate statements and then payment (Figure 18).

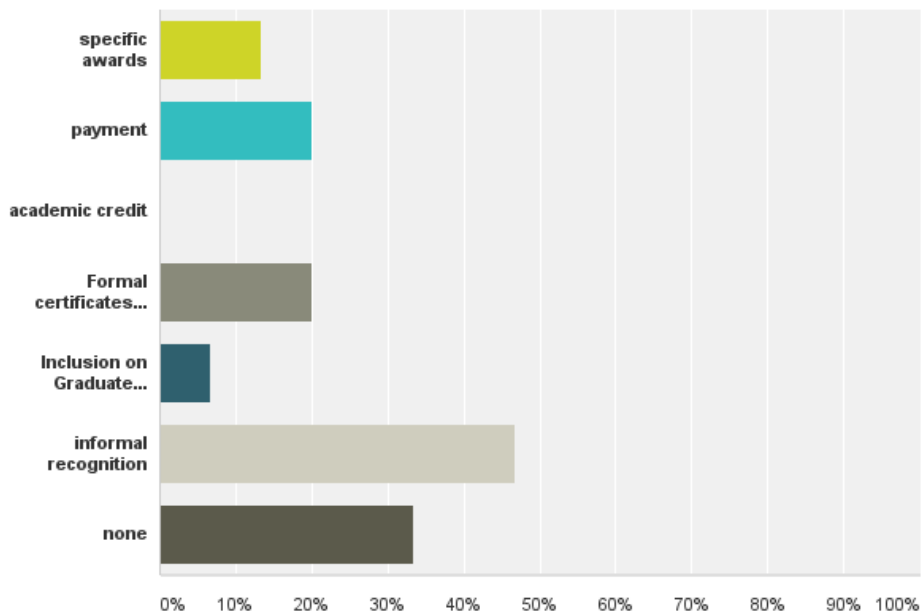


Fig. 17 Incentives provided for student engagement

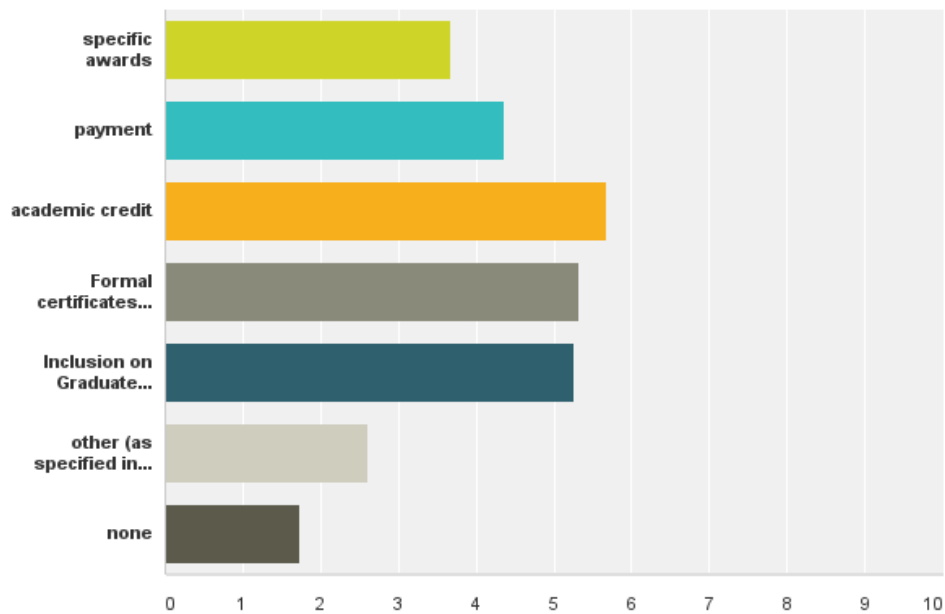


Fig. 18 Incentives students value

Students were asked whether their institutions formally acknowledge student contribution to governance and decision-making in publications and news items. For the most part students responded that they were not acknowledged or they did not know if they were acknowledged (Figure 19).

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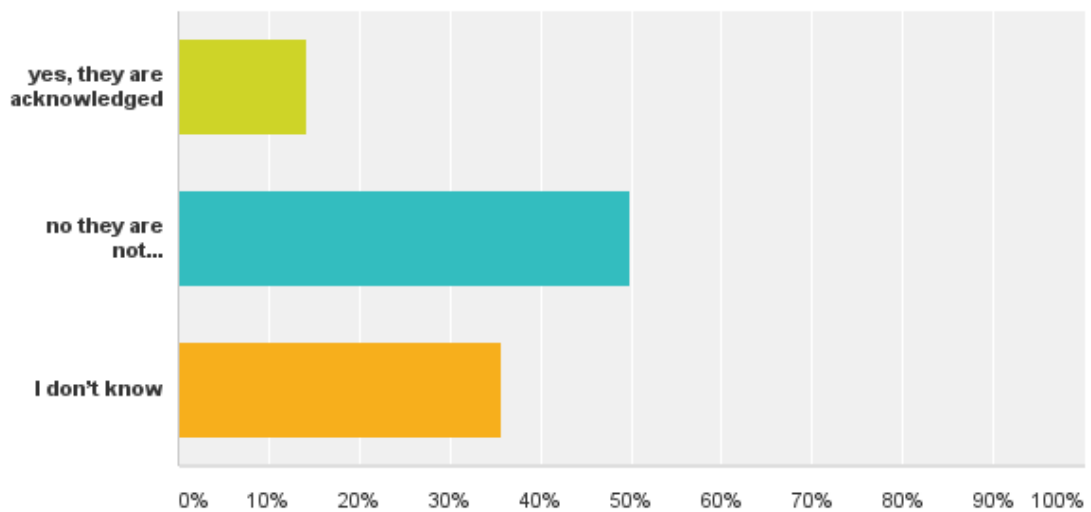


Fig. 19 Acknowledging student input

Levels of student involvement

In terms of levels of involvement, students being fully involved and having voting rights was reported at over 80% in student associations, 60% in academic board, around 45% in council and significantly less at faculty level and below. Student involvement at the course and faculty level is less. Students perceive their achievements through engagement as affecting policy, council, academic board and in terms of raising issues.

Impact of student involvement

Respondents consider that student involvement has impacted decision making in their institutions, most notably within their student associations but also in raising awareness of particular issues and students' responses to them. Students also see themselves as having impact in relation to policy, within university council and academic board (Figure 20).

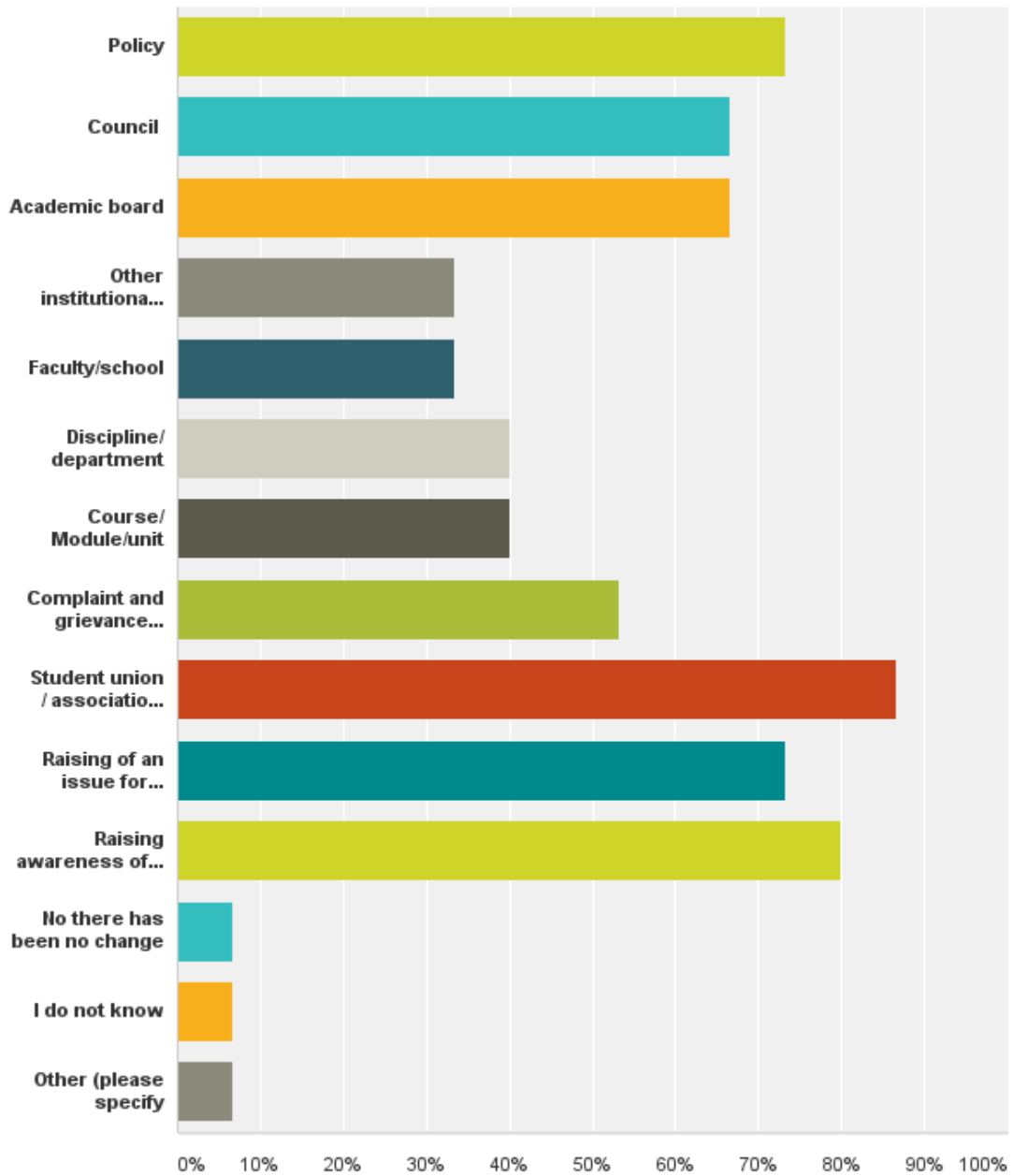


Fig. 20 Impact of student involvement

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Communication

Table 8: Information shared with students

	Students' association	Students on committees	All students
University Rankings	46.15%	61.54%	69.23%
Results of student feedback surveys	33.33%	66.67%	25.00%
Outcomes of subject evaluations	40.00%	80.00%	20.00%
Programme/course evaluations	0.00%	60.00%	40.00%
Australian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE)	33.33%	100.00%	33.33%
Other external student experience surveys	60.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Periodic programme reviews	16.67%	100.00%	0.00%
Reports from external bodies	28.57%	85.71%	0.00%
Response to external examiners' reports	20.00%	80.00%	0.00%
Reports of actions taken to enhance student educational Experience	80.00%	80.00%	40.00%
Student progression and retention data	36.36%	81.82%	0.00%
Employability survey data	28.57%	85.71%	28.57%
Annual institutional financial data	30.00%	80.00%	30.00%
Annual institutional performance data	30.00%	60.00%	20.00%

Students were asked which of this information they considered the most helpful. The most useful category was results of student feedback surveys (93%), followed by reports of actions taken to enhance student educational experience (72%), employability survey data (64%), programme/course evaluations and student progression and retention data (both 57%). University rankings, external examiners' reports and institutional financial data were the least helpful (Table 8).

We also asked what information is shared with their institutions by their student associations. The most common information collected is survey responses. There was some discussion of the need for more formalised collection and sharing of information.

Students were asked to indicate the mechanisms used to inform students of enhancements to the student experience and the level at which these mechanisms operate. Email and websites were the most common means used by institutions, while student unions Student engagement in university decision-making and governance – towards a more systemically inclusive student voice

commonly use publications and social media as tools. At the faculty level notice boards and emails are most commonly used. At the department and course level respondents were less clear about what mechanisms are used but email again seemed to have some preference as a mechanism. In the case of student representatives, regular meetings with students were the preferred mechanism (Table 9).

Table 9: How is information about enhancements shared?

	Institution	Student's union	Jointly by Student's union and institution	Faculty	Department	Course	Student representatives
Publications	67%	73%	27%	33%	6.7%	6.7%	27%
News items on student facing websites	86%	71%	28%	14%	7.1%	7.1%	36%
Pin boards, LCD panels or similar	71%	43%	28%	50%	7.1%	14%	21%
Use of social media	67%	67%	33%	27%	20%	6.7%	40%
Use of email updates	92%	69%	31%	61%	31%	38%	23%
Regular meetings with all students	17%	50%	33%	17%	0%	0%	67%
I don't know	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	50%	0%

Further thoughts

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide any further thoughts they had. Two thirds of respondents took up that opportunity. Their comments are provided below. where institutions were specifically identified in the response this detail has been removed. While the comments for the most part do not provide comfortable reading it should be noted that they may not necessarily be attributable to institutions that consider themselves to be actively promoting student engagement. Whether there is a correlation or not, it is clear that a challenge for all institutions lies in ensuring that the engagement they are working to provide is effective and effectively communicated to students.

Engagement on mutually beneficials is not a controversial issue. The issue arises when the student issues raised are in conflict with the intent of the University. The search for an alternative solution is not utilised and instead the student voice is ignored.

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While students are awarded a spot of University Council and Academic Senate (as well as a number of other committees), often the University administration values the thoughts and opinions of students much less than they do their own. On University Council, the students 'have a vote' but nothing ever gets voted on. The number of students and staff are severely outweighed by the number of external members. Academic Senate is a place for University administration to pursue an agenda and very little input from the students is taken on board. I will concede xxxxx is better than most Universities overall in the question of student governance, but it is often tokenistic and done so they can say "hey - we consulted students look how student centred we are," without attempting to respect the feedback and opinions being presented.

The university needs to explain to students HOW to engage. Lots of bureaucratic processes put students off as they don't want to look stupid. Having a section at meetings where students can simply verbalise things at the end, and this explicitly being explained, would be fantastic.

XXXXX avoids student engagement and involvement unless pressured by the student union. They have created a different body for student leaders with which they can 'consult' so as not to have to consult with the union.

Need to understand or standardise what we mean by 'governance' and 'decision making'. Currently all student representative spots are consultative at best, however the President of the Student Union has some genuine Governance/Decision making input (However this is not formalised and based on positive relationships and networking).

Students should be a part of every decision making level in every decision making body as the primary stakeholders. The facilitators (the University) should provide adequate training as well as mentorships to ensure students understand the environment they are participating in and are given the tools to contribute effectively. The relevant peak student organisation should ideally be the body that elects/nominates the students to these various bodies.

The University often claims to value student representation and reflects this by including students in most of its high level committees and boards. However, the views of students who sit on these committees are not always taken seriously and sometimes the student participation is entirely token.

Student representatives/leaders are expected to be both generalists and specialists The expectations of many student representatives are increasing as organisations become more aware of their responsibilities as directors, yet the perception is that students are irresponsible with money.... On a similar note, while I feel student representation and leadership is celebrated and valued by some, overall I would say it is drastically undervalued in the University context. This is commonly justified by arguing student reps/ leaders benefit in the long term with career experience, however the reality is that we are exploiting student reps/ leaders in the short term so that students can have a strong voice and to further the

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University's objectives. ... Lastly, it is worth noting that the increasing competition in the higher ed space is resulting in each institution striving for innovation and excellence and increasing pressure to produce results in the short term. This reduces the time for effective and meaningful student consultation and results in tokenistic efforts and puts student representatives in a difficult position as rightly so students ask why they weren't consulted on such significant changes. In this regard it is also worth noting that consultation over summer/winter holiday periods when students are not there is entirely inappropriate and should be discouraged strongly.

SUBMITTED DRAFT

Appendix 1 Institutional survey

Student engagement in university decision-making and governance- towards a more inclusive student voice: Institutional survey

- an OLT Strategic Priority Commissioned Project led by Professor Sally Varnham, Faculty of Law, UTS.



Thank you for participating in our review of student engagement in university decision-making and governance. Before starting this survey could you please complete the informed consent and indicate your willingness to be interviewed if you would like to participate further by being interviewed.

Informed consent:

- I agree to participate in this research on the understanding that my name and the name of my institution will be anonymised
- I am willing to be contacted for a further face-to-face or telephone interview. My name and telephone number are:

Type of university

Q1. Please indicate which classification(s) apply to your institution:

- Group of Eight
- Australian Technology Network
- Innovative Research Universities
- Regional Universities Network

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Open Universities Australia

Where students are engaged

Q2. Please tick the opportunities provided by your institution for students to engage in decision-making and/or governance at each of the levels indicated below:

	Council	Academic board	Other institutional bodies	Faculty /school	Discipline/ department	Course Module/unit	Complaint and grievance processes	Student union / association activities
Student feedback questionnaires								
Staff-student liaison committees								
Student representation on other Committees								
Student representation on ad hoc projects								
Surveys/ forums/ complaints								

Q3. Please describe any other opportunities your institution provides for student engagement in decision-making and/or governance and the level at which they operate.

Who is engaged

Q4. How easy is it to recruit student representatives at your institution?

- Easy
- Moderately challenging
- Difficult
- I do not know

Q5. Which groups of students are most likely to engage in decision-making and/or governance procedures in your institution? (please tick all that apply)

- undergraduate
- full time
- part time
- local

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- international
- postgraduate
- minority groups
- political aspirants

Q6. Which groups of students are least likely to engage in decision-making and/or governance procedures in your institution? (please tick all that apply)

- undergraduate
- full time
- part time
- local
- international
- postgraduate
- minority groups
- political aspirants

Q7. Is your institution taking action to improve student engagement of the group(s) you identified as least likely to be engaged?

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

Q8. If so, what actions is your institution taking?

Recruitment of student representatives

Q9. How do students become representatives in your institution? (Please tick all that apply)

	Council	Academic board	Other institutional bodies	Faculty /school	Discipline/ department	Course/ Module/unit	Complaint and grievance processes	Student union / association activities
Elected (through the Students' Union or similar body)								
Elected (through Institutional mechanisms)								
Nominated (usually by fellow students)								
Self-volunteered								
Selected by staff								
Selected by students								

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Training

Q10. Is there any formalised process for training student representatives on governance and decision making bodies at your institution?

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

Q11. If there is a formalised process is this provided by:

- institution (formal programmes)
- volunteers (staff)
- staff who have this duty included in their work plan
- student association (formal programmes)
- National union of students
- current student representative mentors
- former student representatives
- employed coaches, coordinators or education officers

Q12. If there is a formalised process is there funding provided to support this process?

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

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Q13. If there is funding, is this funding provided by:

- the institution
- student amenities fund
- other (please specify)

Q14. Please describe any mechanisms your institution uses to enable academic and administrative staff to understand the role students play in university decision-making and/or governance.

Q15. Is there any avenue, formal or informal, available to student representatives at your university for support and advice?

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

Q16. If there is an avenue, formal or informal, available to student representatives at your university for support and advice is this provided by:

- institution (formal programmes)

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- volunteers (staff)
- staff who have this duty included in their work plan
- student association (formal programmes)
- National union of students
- current student representative mentors
- former student representatives
- employed coaches, coordinators or education officers

Q17. What opportunities are used in your institution to inform students about the role they can play in decision-making and/or governance? (Please tick all that apply)

- orientation
- student forums run by students
- student forums run by institution
- information on institutional website
- social media
- other (please specify)

Q18. What type of information and data does your institution make available to students and at what level?

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	Student representatives		Students' Union or similar body		Student members of Committees		All students	
	Yes	No	yes	no	Yes	no	yes	no
Outcomes of subject evaluations								
Programme evaluations								
Australian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE)								
Other external student experience surveys								
Periodic programme reviews								
Reports from external bodies								
Response to external examiners' reports								
Reports of actions taken to enhance student educational Experience								
Student progression and retention data								
Graduate destination data								
Annual institutional financial data								
Annual institutional performance data								

19. Please list any other type of information and data your institution makes routinely available to students and at what level.

Q20. What type of information collected by the Students' Union or similar body is shared with the institution? (Please tick all that apply)

Survey outcomes

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Minutes of academic representatives' meetings (or summary thereof)

Other

Q21. If you selected OTHER, please describe it.

Q22. Please indicate the mechanisms used to inform students of enhancements to the student experience and the level at which these mechanisms operate. (Please tick all that apply)

	Institution	Student's union	Jointly by Student's union and institution	Faculty/School	Discipline /Department	Course/Module/unit	Student representatives
Publications (Newsletters, Student Magazine, Student Handbook, etc.							
News items on student facing websites							
Pin boards, LCD panels or similar							

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Use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)							
Use of email updates							
Regular meetings with all students							
I don't know							

Q23. In publications and news items (see above), are the contributions of students to governance and decision making explicitly acknowledged?

yes

no

Q24. How are these contributions acknowledged?

Q25. Does your institution have performance indicators for the effectiveness of student engagement? E.g. see institution strategic plan, annual report

Yes

No

I do not know

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Q26. Please describe them.

Q27. Please give an example of change which resulted from using these indicators?

Incentives

Q28. Does your institution provide any specific incentives to encourage student engagement in governance and/ or decision making? (please tick all that apply)

- specific awards
- payment
- academic credit
- informal recognition
- other (please specify)
- none

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Culture

Q29. How would you categorise student participation on committees at the following levels?

	Council	Academic board	Other institutional bodies	Faculty /school	Discipline/ department	Course/ Module/unit	Complaint and grievance processes	Student union / association activities
Students participate only when invited to do so								
Students voice their concerns but do not vote								
Students are fully involved in discussion and have voting rights								
Other								

Q30. If you selected OTHER, please describe what this participation is.

Q31. Has student feedback or participation in committees brought about change at any of the levels below? (Please tick all that apply)

Council

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- Academic board
- Other institutional bodies
- Faculty/school
- Discipline/ department
- Course/ Module/unit
- Complaint and grievance processes
- Student union / association activities

Q32. Please record two of the most important examples of student involvement that have helped to bring about change.

Q33. Students' roles are perceived differently in different situations within institutions. Please rank the extent to which each of the following classifications represent the student roles in your institution.

- As an equal partner
- As an expert
- As customer/consumer
- As a stakeholder
- Other

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Q34. If you selected OTHER, please describe this relationship.

Q35. From your experience, do you believe student leaders perceive their role as leading a team of student representatives?

yes

no

Please provide an explanation for why you answered yes or no.

Q36. Does your institution have a student charter or similar staff-student agreement in place? (if so please indicate where this document can be accessed)

yes Accessible at:.....

in progress

no

Q37. Please characterise your institution's attitude to student engagement

- Compliant
- Championing/ pioneering
- Avoiding

Q38. Please characterise the circumstances that would bring about increased student engagement in governance and decision making in your institution:

- Mandated
- Incentivised
- self-motivated
- other (please specify)

Q39. Please add here any further perceptions/thoughts/ideas you have relating to student engagement in governance and decision making stemming from your university experience that you would like to contribute.



SUBMIT

Appendix 2- cover letter

Dr Sally Varnham

Professor of Law

University of Technology, Sydney

PO Box 123 Broadway NSW 2007

Tel: (02) 95143455

Mob: 0415 392 834

Dear

Student engagement in university decision-making and governance - towards a more systemically inclusive student voice- an OLT Strategic Priority Commissioned Project

I am leading a project about enhancing the student experience by the development of a more systemic inclusion of student voice in decision making and governance in Australian universities. The project is funded by a Strategic Priority Commissioned Grant from the Australian Government Office of Learning and Teaching, and by the University of Technology Sydney.

The project aims to provide mechanisms for better defining student expectations in the evolving new higher education environment. International evidence supports the view that effective engagement with student representation in governance and decision making enhances institutional performance and value to students.

This part of the project builds on an analysis of practice in other countries by surveying all Australian universities to establish what practices are already being adopted here. In tandem with this institutional survey a student association survey and desk research will be conducted. Based on our findings we will be creating good practice guides to assist universities in developing and enhancing their student engagement practices and inviting universities to participate in pilot projects testing particular practices. Small amounts of funding are available to assist with these projects.

We would appreciate your assistance with completing this survey of student engagement practices in governance and decision making in your institution and returning it to us in the envelope provided. We would be grateful if the completed survey could be returned to us by **31 July 2015**.

Kind regards

Sally Varnham

Student engagement in university decision-making and governance – towards a more systemically inclusive student voice

Appendix 3- informed consent

CONSENT FORM

I _____ (*participant's name*) agree to participate in the research project:

Student engagement in university decision-making and governance - towards a more systemically inclusive student voice

being conducted by Professor Sally Varnham, Faculty of Law, University of Technology, Sydney, situated at CM5B2.14, Tel: +61 2 95143455; mob +61 415392834

I understand that the purpose of this study is:

To work towards enhancing the student experience by the development of a more systemic inclusion of student voice in decision making and governance in Australian universities. It investigates the case for deeper engagement of the views of diverse student bodies and considers how this may be achieved at many levels and in many facets. Ultimately it aims to provide mechanisms for better defining student expectations in the evolving new higher education environment. It is imperative now that universities work proactively to identify and address the wants and needs of students in order to provide the appropriate and relevant student experience, and recognise the value of their input in their investment. In addition, a wider perspective suggests that an inclusive culture embracing student participation in decision making is essential to the development of citizens and leaders in a democratic society. It is timely now in a changing regulatory environment to identify, refine and trial systemic processes by which this may be achieved.

Essentially this project will apply international experience, information gathered regarding Australian practice and experience gained through pilot projects to provide universities with the tools and knowledge to implement processes to facilitate and embed effective student participation. Ultimately it works towards building inclusive and responsive universities which value the student voice, and enhance the student experience by understanding and meeting student expectations.

I understand that I have been asked to participate in this research because of my knowledge, expertise and experience of university processes and university governance, gained as a stakeholder in the higher education sector.

I understand also that my participation in this research will involve responding to an institutional survey to information regarding how your institution engages the student voice in university processes involving quality and standards, and on university governance bodies. This research is considered low risk or risk of negligible magnitude, save to a minor degree because of the inclusion of students. Participants and their institutions will be de-identified.

I am aware that I can contact Sally Varnham if I have any concerns about the research. I also understand that I am free to withdraw my participation from this research project at any time I wish, without consequences, and without giving a reason.

Student engagement in university decision-making and governance – towards a more systemically inclusive student voice

I agree that Sally Varnham has answered all my questions fully and clearly.

I agree that the research data gathered from this project may be published in a form that does not identify me in any way.

_____ / /

Signature (participant)

_____ / /

Signature (researcher or delegate)

NOTE:

This study has been approved by the University of Technology, Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any aspect of your participation in this research which you cannot resolve with the researcher, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officer (ph: +61 2 9514 9772 Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au), and quote the UTS HREC reference number UTS HREC REF NO. 2012-459A.

Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.

INFORMATION SHEET

Project title: Student engagement in university decision-making and governance - towards a more systemically inclusive student voice

UTS HREC Approval Number: UTS HREC 2012-459A

-WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?

My name is Professor Sally Varnham and I am an academic at UTS.

WHAT IS THIS RESEARCH ABOUT?

This project is about enhancing the student experience by the development of a more systemic inclusion of student voice in decision making and governance in Australian universities. It investigates the case for deeper engagement of the views of diverse student bodies and considers how this may be achieved at many levels and in many facets. Ultimately it aims to provide mechanisms for better defining student expectations in the evolving new higher education environment. It is imperative now that universities work proactively to identify and address the wants and needs of students in order to provide the appropriate and relevant student experience, and recognise the value of their input in their investment. In addition, a wider perspective suggests that an inclusive culture embracing student participation in decision making is essential to the development of citizens and leaders in a democratic society. It is timely now in a changing regulatory environment to identify, refine and trial systemic processes by which this may be achieved.

Essentially this project will apply international experience to provide universities with the tools and knowledge to implement processes to facilitate and embed effective student participation. Ultimately it works towards building inclusive and responsive universities which value the student voice, and enhance the student experience by understanding and meeting student expectations.

IF I SAY YES, WHAT WILL IT INVOLVE?

We have provided a survey that we would ask you to complete and return to us.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS/INCONVENIENCE?

The survey may take some time to complete but the information you gather may be of value to you and it will form part of an overview of relevant practice in Australia that will be made Student engagement in university decision-making and governance – towards a more systemically inclusive student voice

available to your institution. There are very few if any risks because the research has been carefully designed and the questions are of a general nature. All data from the surveys will be de-identified in terms of yourself and your institution.

WHY HAVE I BEEN ASKED?

You are able to give me the information I need to find out about the role of students on university governance bodies and, if desirable, mechanisms to best encourage participation and engagement.

DO I HAVE TO SAY YES?

You don't have to say yes.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I SAY NO?

Nothing. I will thank you for your time so far and won't contact you about this research again.

IF I SAY YES, CAN I CHANGE MY MIND LATER?

You can change your mind at any time and you don't have to say why. I will thank you for your time so far and won't contact you about this research again.

WHAT IF I HAVE CONCERNS OR A COMPLAINT?

If you have concerns about the research that you think I can help you with, please feel free to contact me on Tel (02) 9514 3455, or mob 0415 392 834, or at sally.varnham@uts.edu.au

If you would like to talk to someone who is not connected with the research, you may contact the Research Ethics Officer on 02 9514 9772, and quote this number UTS HREC REF NO. 2012-459A

Appendix 4

Student Leader Survey

Q1: Informed consent: I agree to participate in this research on the understanding that my name and the name of my institution will be anonymised

I am willing to be contacted for a further face-to-face or telephone interview.

contact details

Q2: What student organisation(s) does your institution have and what is (are) its (their) role(s)? (e.g. overseeing student clubs and activities, representatives to institutional governance bodies).

Q3: What is your Student Representative role?

Q4: What do you think the purpose of being a student representative is? Please select all that apply

Q5: Please characterise your institution's attitude to student engagement in decision-making and governance (choose one).

Q6: How do you think staff in your institution view students? Please tick the answer you think best applies.
If none of these apply, tick "other" and tell us what it is.

Q7: Where does your institution engage students in decision-making and/or governance? (please tick all that apply)

Q8: How do students become representatives in your institution? (Please tick all that apply)

Q9: How easy is it to recruit student representatives at your institution?

Q10: Which groups of students are most likely to become student representatives in your institution? (please tick all that apply)

Q11: Which groups of students are least likely to become student representatives in your institution? (please tick all that apply)

Q12: Is there any process for training student representatives on governance and decision making bodies at your institution?

Q13: Other than training, is there any support and advice available to student representatives at your institution?

Q14: What opportunities are used in your institution to inform students about the role they can play in decision making and/or governance? (Please tick all that apply)

Q15: What are the most effective ways to inform students about the role they can play in decision-making and/or governance? (Please tick all that apply)

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Q16: What type of information and data does your institution make available to students and at what level?

Q17: Which of this information do you find the most useful? (Please tick all that apply)

Q18: What type of information collected by your Students' Union or similar body is shared with the institution? (Please tick all that apply)

Q19: Please indicate the mechanisms used to inform students of enhancements to the student experience and the level at which these mechanisms operate. (Please tick all that apply)

Q20: In publications and news items (see above), are the contributions of students to governance and decision making explicitly acknowledged?

Q21: Does your institution provide any specific incentives to encourage student engagement in governance and/ or decision making? (please tick all that apply)

Q22: Which of the following do you value most – Please rank 1-6 (1 – being most valued)

Q23: How would you categorise student participation on committees at the following levels?

Q24: Has student feedback or participation in committees brought about change at any of these levels? (tick all that apply)

Q25: Please add here any further perceptions/thoughts/ideas you have relating to student engagement in governance and decision making that you would like to contribute.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN UNIVERSITY DECISION MAKING AND
GOVERNANCE:
TOWARDS A MORE SYSTEMICALLY INCLUSIVE STUDENT VOICE

AN OLT STRATEGIC PRIORITY COMMISSIONED PROJECT LED BY
PROFESSOR SALLY VARNHAM, FACULTY OF LAW, UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY



**POCKETS OF GOOD PRACTICE - EXAMPLES OF
STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN DECISION MAKING FROM
THE AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITY SECTOR
(APPENDIX F)**

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SUBMITTED DRAFT

Acknowledgement

We would like to thank the institutions staff and students who so generously shared their time, expertise and experiences to enable us to assemble examples of how universities can engage their students effectively in decision making processes.

SUBMITTED DRAFT

Introduction

Responses to our survey of student engagement practices in Australian universities, and stories volunteered to the project team at conferences, made it apparent that there were initiatives and existing practices at Australian universities that are already providing opportunity for students to have a significant representative role in decision making processes. Consequently, with the approval of the relevant institutions, we conducted interviews and focus groups with key personnel and students to gain an understanding of what these practices look like and how they are experienced by staff and students. Our aim was to create a body of exemplars that institutions keen to further develop their student engagement practices might draw on for ideas and implementation. Many of these practices are quite new. Consequently, we do not consider it appropriate to cast them as best practice as yet. Nonetheless, they show what universities who have taken on championing student voice have been able to achieve so far. Challenges have been identified. These issues reflect the need for continuing development of the relevant processes and are useful also to institutions considering working on their own practices.

Interviews and focus group sessions were audio-recorded and the recordings transcribed to provide a record of the practices explored at each institution. These transcripts were used to create the synopsis of each case study that is presented in this guide.

A willingness in some institutions to develop greater expertise led to an opportunity to conduct a pilot project relating to the use of staff student consultation committees. This practice is adopted overseas as well as in some Australian institutions and is seen to be highly valuable as a path to building a culture of student engagement and allowing both students and staff to gain expertise in student representation.

University A:

Student Staff Consultative Committee (SSCC)

This university provides SSCCs operating at the program level. The SSCCs enable students to have real input into their study program in meetings held to discuss program-related issues such as:

- course and program structure
- teaching methods
- timetabling
- workload
- access to resources and facilities
- class sizes.


One of the University's responsibilities set out in its Student Charter is to *Support student organisations and include student voices in decision making.* The SSCCs, established here many years ago, are one way of accessing student voice. The university has separate processes to deal with issues such as student appeals, or grievances against staff or students.

Student representatives can self-nominate

Students can nominate themselves as SSCC representatives and if more than one nomination is received the relevant School will hold an election. All students in the program are eligible to vote. Often the student representatives have been encouraged to nominate themselves by friends who are already student representatives or have been tapped on the shoulder by a teacher in the program. Student representatives are a diverse mix of domestic and international, undergraduate and postgraduate, full time and part-time students.

Initially I guess my hand was kind of forced to become involved in SSCC. But since then I guess I've got a lot of personal growth out of it and have found that the more I get involved the more I gain and the more I can contribute to the university as a whole. It's not - I've found it's not necessarily going to change what happens while I'm here. It's about the future students. (student representative)

There are Guidelines for the operation of SSCCs that are provided to student representatives. The Guidelines include the required meeting quorum of two members of academic staff and a minimum of half of the student members. Meetings are generally held twice per semester, with the option of calling additional meetings under specific circumstances. There is also a SSCC Student engagement in university decision-making and governance – towards a more systemically inclusive student voice



“ I've got a lot of personal growth out of it and have found that the more I get involved the more I gain and the more I can contribute to the university as a whole. ”

Representative Manual, setting out information and tips such as ‘Get connected to other students’ to support and guide SSCC student representatives.

The student representatives are the ‘voice’ of the students in the program and they consult their peers to learn about program-specific issues which are of concern to students. A wide range of communication options, including social media, are employed by student representatives to reach their student constituency. Student representatives provide feedback to their peers on the outcome of the discussions at the meetings. The SSCC may make recommendations with an accompanying action component setting out the action and the person responsible. The Guidelines set out a list of suitable persons responsible for carrying out recommendations, including the associate PVC teaching and learning, or nominee.

Visibility of student representatives to the student body

Each program/course has its own method of publicising the opportunities to become a student representative and how to contact a student representative when a course issue is causing a problem. Some courses use the University online learning management system while others introduce the student representatives during classes. Student representatives aim to be as visible as possible by attending class and making themselves known to the student body. Social activities arranged for a particular course are another opportunity for student representatives to make themselves known and available to other students. In some courses social media are also used. Even with what appears to be extensive promotion of the role of the student representative, students in some courses remain unaware of the role of student representatives and so as yet no perfect method of communication has been identified.

Training provided by the University is offered to student representatives

The training is a free, three-hour interactive session designed to provide the knowledge and skills required for the role and to develop further employability skills.

University A has a strong Student Union and in 2016 the Student Union introduced a new staff member to resource SSCC student representatives with advice on areas of policy that they might need assistance in understanding. The Union has also held a SSCC Student Leadership Summit which included a Keynote address by the Vice Chancellor and President, Leadership and Critical Feedback Workshops as well as peer discussion to share experiences.

Training is not provided to staff but instead staff members are given a briefing pack.

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Incentives for recognition of representative roles

Student representatives can have their role as a student representative formally recognised with a certificate from the University. To be eligible to receive the certificate, a student representative must attend the training session and complete a minimum of seven to eight hours of activities relating to the work of the SSCC.

Another incentive promoted is the direct opportunity to contribute to the improvement of the student representative's own program of study. Some matters raised at SSCC meetings were addressed immediately and student representatives reported that this was a very effective incentive as it made them feel that their commitment to the SSCC was making a difference. Student representatives found that it was much more effective raising a matter at a SSCC rather than through any of the Subject Feedback Surveys they completed. Some students recognised that sometimes the improvements being made would benefit future students rather than the current cohort, especially when representing a course of one year or less.

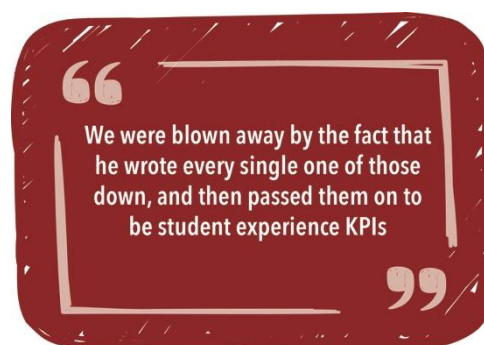
Individual student representatives often had personal incentives for becoming a student representative. This included gaining more confidence; learning about Australian culture and seeing how universities work (from an International student); making a contribution and connecting with other students.

The opportunity for leadership and skills development in the role with resulting benefits to employability is promoted widely to students. The role is seen by both the university and students as a good way to gain experience and confidence to take on student representative roles on other committees and boards of the university.

Wider student representation – changing culture

Students reported a changing culture at this university. A recently arrived VC with a clear view of the importance of the student voice has had a big impact. The new VC is bringing the student experience to the centre. Students reported feeling as if they were now involved in the actual decision-making.

We sat down and we gave a list of priorities on behalf of the student organisation but also on behalf of all students of things that we've heard over time and as first hand of things we'd like changed. We were blown away by the fact that he wrote every single one of those down, hand by hand and then passed them on to be student experience KPIs. It was absolutely phenomenal. (student representative)



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University B:

Student Campus Council (SCC)

University B has a Student Representation and Participation Policy with a stated purpose of

‘student representation at the university to provide students with an opportunity to voice their views, suggestions and concerns through a proper and efficient process. The voice of the student body is important in the governance of the University; ...student representatives suggest, develop and implement solutions that are campus specific and university wide.’

This Policy sets out clearly the guiding principles to be followed and in accordance with those principles University B has established support structures for student representatives. The details for the implementation of this Policy are found in The Student Representation Procedures.

University B has multiple campuses and each campus has a Student Campus Council (SCC). In addition to each SCC, there is a Student Representative Council which includes three members of each SCC and deals with university - wide issues. In place of either a Student Association or a Student Union, University B has a Student Representation and Participation (SRP) model.

The SCC terms of reference of SCCs are set out in the Student Representation Procedures and include:

- promoting the interest of campus students;
- providing a communication channel between students and the university;
- publishing a newspaper/newsletter to communicate to students;
- liaising and working closely with all university staff including the Campus Provost.

Diversity of student representatives

To ensure diversity in representation, membership of each SCC is specified and consists of six General Representatives, one Postgraduate student representative, one International student representative, one residential student representative and two clubs and societies representatives. It is open to an SCC to appoint non-voting office-bearers to assist in particular areas where assistance may be required such as women’s issues or Indigenous issues.

Each SCC member is elected for one year with the term commencing on 1 January and finishing on 31 December. Elections are held towards the end of the year. If there are any casual vacancies at the beginning of the year, then by-elections are held to fill them.

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Meetings are scheduled at least once per month and unless there is a specific need to hold the meeting elsewhere, it must be held on the home campus of the SCC. The quorum is 50% + 1 of the total number of voting members of the Council with no special requirement as to the composition of the members present.

Students become representatives in a multitude of ways, most often because they know someone who was or had been a representative and they were encouraged to apply. Others had held positions at previous institutions or wanted a view to be represented that they identified was missing in the then current representation.

Visibility of student representatives to the student body

Student representatives see that an important part of their role is to spread the word of their existence to the whole student body. The myriad emails causing information overload for students make it very hard to maintain good communication with the student body. At this University, the members of the SCC use every opportunity to remind students of the existence of the SCCs and what each has achieved. The SCC offices are marked on university maps so students can find their representatives. The SCCs have regular branded events where they hand out pizza, chat to students and make sure that the students know who is handing out the pizza. Certain SCC offices have been identified as being in prime locations for accessing students as they are in areas where students pass by. An open door policy encourages students to drop by and chat on impromptu visits.



So we run small events from time to time - try and have them as regularly as possible just doing things like handing out pizza and trying to engage people in conversations on campus. We've got big table cloths which have the SCC logo on them and stuff, so it's quite clear - we try and make it very clear who we are. We do have offices which are marked on maps and stuff. (SCC member)

Training and support – general induction and handover

Students receive training in the form of a general induction provided by the University. Each student representative is given a comprehensive Leaders Resource Guide. The training is offered once a year over several days at the end of the year and then one day at the beginning of the next year. This training covers multiple student representative positions. There is specific training for those students taking on roles as secretaries and chairs. The training is not compulsory. Handover from the outgoing members of the SCC to the new members is encouraged and the outgoing cohort is invited to the induction of the new group of representatives.

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we do have the end of the year about three days, the training, or a couple of days, and then there is one whole day once before we start next year in February. (student engagement officer)

A University position, Manager, Student Representation and Participation is in place to support the operation of the SCCs (and the Student Representative Council). This position provides advice, support and guidance on all strategic and procedural aspects to the student representatives.

An additional university position is that of Student Voice Officer. This position was created to support and resource student leaders and to facilitate the student voice in university decision-making.

Incentives – tangible and intangible

In recognition of the commitment made by students to take on representative roles, University B pays sitting fees to student representatives. A further loading is paid for student members of the SRC. The sitting fee is intended to compensate the students for the time they commit to their role and the impact this has on their capacity to undertake paid employment. Some student representatives nominate for the position without being aware of the amount of the sitting fee and others are unaware of its existence.

In advertising student elections University B describes the opportunity for students to play a key role in the life of the campus and to contribute to decision-making at the university. In addition, the professional skills development which comes from being a student representative and which are the same attributes actively sought by employers is promoted to students to encourage nominations for the roles.

University C:

A regional university embracing a number of student engagement initiatives

University C has multiple regional campuses and a significant population of Distance Education (DE) students. There is wide variation between campuses and student cohorts both of which pose challenges for student engagement. There are three initiatives of interest underway at University C:

- Student Representative Councils (SRC)
- Student Leadership Conference
- Competencies for Student Members of senior governance bodies

SRCs on each campus

The university's student charter provides that students can expect opportunities to contribute to the organisational and cultural life of the University and to be represented and actively involved in relevant University committees, as well as opportunities to provide feedback for the improvement of the University.

Each campus has a Student Representative Council (SRC) and there is a SRC Senate with representatives from all campuses. The SRCs are intended to be responsible for ensuring a student voice and for funding student clubs and social events on campus, and to provide opportunities for leadership, university engagement, community engagement and the opportunity to practice skills directly relevant to the workplace.

However, there is a view that members of SRCs and Student Senate are mainly occupied with organising social and sporting activities. Students with issues with courses etc. take them to a student representative on a school or faculty board rather than the SRC. There appear to be no clear pathways between whole student bodies and SRCs.

At University C there is no course representative system currently operating. When it did run in the past, it seemed to work quite well with bigger courses. There was an induction booklet for course representatives but possibly no other training for these positions. Student representatives on school and faculty boards are very isolated and academic attitudes towards student representatives are not very encouraging.



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A focus group of SRC representatives, professional staff who are responsible for administration of the SRC structure and other student representatives on committees and boards; governance officers and the Chair of the university senate (Academic Board) provided insight into some of the challenges confronting SRCs.

Communication is a big issue. The students felt the university was missing valuable opportunities by working solely through committees. They said that students become much more involved in discussion forums when they are implemented using social networking tools.

the two things that we've used that have helped a bit is looking at the technologies or mechanisms we use rather than just relying on committees all the time, and to make things topical or issues based, rather than just generic governance processes. When you're here today to approve all the grades, you're here today to do this. That stuff people don't really get engaged with. Whereas, you say, you're here today to talk about this new plan the university has to do this. That focusses people's attention. You're here about an issue, here's an issue. (student engagement officer)

The SRC Senate is highly structured and students worry about getting protocols right. This is a barrier to students fully engaging. Formal structure is recognised as important for learning how to engage with committees, however, so a combination of formal committee structures and social media tools is seen as useful for generating input for consideration by committees.

There can be difficulties in supporting student representatives who are so spread out. Identified issues included non-alignment of election timing and a lack of readily available resources for students who want to know about leadership options. This has highlighted the need for an effective communication strategy which in turn gave rise to the Student Leadership Conference.

Student Leadership Conference

A Student Voice think-tank was convened including presidents of the SRCs, the Presiding Officer of Academic Senate, Student Liaison Officers, the University Secretary, and the Dean of Students. This meeting reinforced the importance of student involvement in university governance to the success of the university, the university community, and to the professional development of the individual students involved. The message of 'everybody wins', needed to be communicated more effectively to students to increase student engagement.



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The concept of a Student Leadership Conference as a vehicle for students from different campuses to meet to build a 'whole of university student leadership culture' emerged. The conference also provided an opportunity to build skills to allow representatives to work more effectively in their positions and the opportunity for the students to meet with and question some of the senior staff leaders of the university.

I think raising the profile of student leadership is definitely happening.

(student engagement officer)

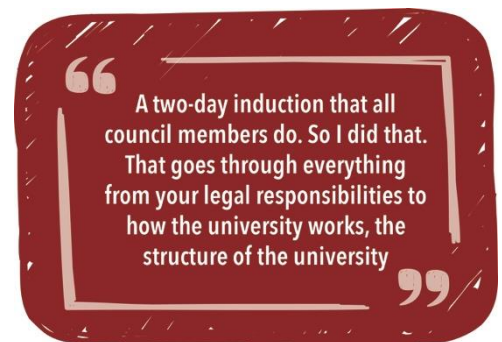
The conference was a day and a half of networking, developing leadership skills and brainstorming about the future of University C student leadership. The conference was funded by SSAF (Student Services and Amenities Fee) and travel, accommodation and meals were all covered for the students who attended. Students travelled from their different campuses to attend. The Student Leadership Conference has resulted in many more people standing for elections and it is planned to continue and build on it as a yearly event.

We've had far more students put their hands up for those positions than in days gone by. (student representative)

Board Competencies for Student Members of Academic Boards and Committees

At University C, induction into University Council for student representatives is 'extensive and very good'. There is a two-day induction for all Council members including the student representatives. To enhance financial literacy, the university sends student representatives to the Australian Institute of Company directors' financial directors' course.

So that's I think a two-day induction that all council members do. So I did that. That goes through everything from your legal responsibilities to how the university works, the structure of the university. So that kind of covered a lot of stuff which was full on in the two days. But it was really, really good to start with. (student representative)



Students generally do not seek to become involved in senior governance bodies because the positions are not advertised widely, students are unlikely to see the benefit, and they are typically time and financially poor. Representation is not generally seen by them to be part of their learning experience but they might do so if it was a smaller commitment and if positions were funded.

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University D:

Student-centred key strategic partnership providing programs and activities which complement the learning and development outcomes of the university

University D has a dedicated non-profit entity that provides a range of non-academic services and facilities and social, cultural, recreational and sporting programs. Its activities cover a wide ranging spectrum, from the operation and management of commercial venues in the university, to discipline clubs in faculties and schools and diverse sports clubs. Its stated goals and objectives cover providing a range of services, products and venues that anticipate and respond to university needs, the delivery of welfare services, and activities which enhance and support social and cultural development in the university community. These activities include providing leadership opportunities for students through programs run, governance and advisory positions. This entity seeks to engage all members of the university community – students, staff and alumni – in its activities and holds effective collaboration to be of primary importance.

In addition to funds from commercial activities, the entity receives funding from the university through SSAF monies.

Majority of student directors on the Board

The entity has a Board that has a majority of student directors (7 out of 13 Board members) which include the President and Vice-President. All student directors are elected for a two-year term by the whole student body, while the other Directors are appointed by the University Council. There are a number of permanent staff led by a Chief Executive Officer. The Board has a several committees whose memberships include student directors, for example, the Marketing Committee, the Programs Committee and the Sports Management Committee.

This entity distinguishes itself from the Students' Association as a non-political university organisation, rather than a student organisation and, while it has a majority of student directors, it exists for the benefit of all members of the university community. The Students' Association, on the other hand, exists to represent students in educational and political matters.

There is no differentiation between student directors and other directors of the entity, and all have a number of specific duties under various statutes. All directors are obliged to attend monthly Board meetings. Importantly all

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meetings must have a quorum of at least 7 members, meaning that there must be at least one student director present. Student directors have equal voting rights with other directors. Student directors feel both that their voice is effective and that their role provides benefits for their personal development.

While there are seven student directors on the Board, the leaders of sports, social and cultural clubs, as well as student accommodation and school and faculty clubs are engaged in activities conducted by and through the organisation. Each club and society has a student leader executive. Some of the sports clubs are affiliated to community based clubs and students are on their boards also.

Knowledge of the organisation as a whole, and views on the impact of student voice generally through the organisation varies with role, for example, sports clubs tend to focus on their club activities rather than the activities of the entire entity. There is also variation in perceived support from faculties for the course/discipline societies and their benefit in liaising with relevant staff members.

External Training provided

All new student directors attend a one day “Governance for Directors’ Course run by the Australian Institute of Company Directors. There is also a full-day induction workshop where student directors are taken through every aspect of the company – its mission, values and objectives. This workshop is attended by the CFO and company lawyers: *‘You are a director not a student director’*.



Leadership, governance and financial training and support is also provided for sports and other affiliated clubs and societies.

Visibility of Student Directors to the whole student body

The student directors use the organisation website to facilitate student engagement and interaction. They are currently undertaking a review and benchmarking with other similar university organisations. The website now contains a ‘Student Leadership’ page aimed at promoting student leadership, encouraging nominations and showcasing the governance model. The Student President and a director also compile a Meet the Candidates Handbook to publicise the nominees to the student body. There are also plans to facilitate an Inter Varsity Student Director Forum to lead to productive discussions among counterparts from other universities.

Elections are held in August and Student Directors play a strong role in publicising the opportunity for nominations, currently through an Election

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Nominations Video to promote nominations as well as holding information sessions for prospective candidates.

Student Directors' terms are rolling – electing three in an even year, and four in odd years. There is reported to be an increasing knowledge of the roles in the wide student community. In 2015 there were 20 nominations for four positions. There is now an affirmative action policy included in the Constitution to counter the previous struggle with female participation.

'We firmly believe that meaningful engagement and meaningful student voice for our company is why we are doing so well within the university... We are a leader in our sector'. (manager)

There is a strong focus by the CEO on effective student perspective and student capability and competency, and a third of her time is spent on student director engagement on a regular basis. On the strategic planning day, they have a section for student outcomes and student deliverables and assets and resources are allocated to the goals.

"And we do all the 'fun' stuff for orientation" (manager)

Incentives – expenses, honoraria and experience

The President is reimbursed for expenses incurred, and both the President and Vice-President receive an honorarium.

There are also other less tangible incentives, the importance of which differ between students. Some value their role as something to include on their CV. There is also kudos in being young and responsible for a substantial organisation. This is particularly attractive to business students who can *'apply all the theory we hear in class'*. The opportunity to become involved in huge projects is a key driver. Being a director enhances key graduate attributes and skills that industry finds valuable - *"leadership, the ability to effectively communicate with peers, to work within a team, the ability to engender support and enthusiasm from multiple stakeholders towards a common goal."* (manager)

University E:

Student Guild Structure and Education Council

University E was chosen as a case study because of their model of student leadership through their Student Guild structure and the part played by student voice through their Education Council. The Student Guild has an undergraduate student president who is elected for one year. The Guild President works alongside an elected postgraduate student president. The Guild President represents students across the university and is assisted on post graduate issues by the elected Post Graduate Student President – they may sit on different committees and co-sit on other university committees to provide both focuses.

Guild elections are held annually to elect the President and other office bearers, and Guild Councillors – all for a one-year term. The same elections elect one student member of the University Senate.

Below the Guild is the Education Council which is made up of representatives from all Faculty Societies. This body ensures that students from each Faculty have a voice on education issues. Below Faculty Societies there may be discipline clubs whose membership is made up of students from particular disciplines within faculties. Some faculties do have a course representative structure but this is not common throughout the university.

Discipline clubs work directly with their school or with unit co-ordinators and their students. They feed issues up to Faculty Societies, which in turn feed up to the Education Council. The Education Council meets monthly to discuss campus wide issues which may be taken up by the Education Council President and the Guild President. The Education Council is a place where representatives from faculties collaborate and skill share to enhance the education of all students. Education Council oversees lobbying of faculties, the University and government.

Campaigns are run by the Education Action Network (EAN) which is a group for all students of the University committed to understanding issues relating to higher education and improving education provided at the University. The EAN runs campaigns on matters such as fee deregulation, and long term projects like rights at work, they do student-friendly guides to university policies and respond to university-wide issues.

There are two other sub-councils of the Guild – The Public Affairs Council and the Societies Council – all have their own presidents. Below this there are around 13 other representative based portfolios. This structure provides not only student input on education issues but also comprehensive student input into 'university life areas such as orientation, residency, staff awards etc. The

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Guild operates a large number of sports, social and cultural clubs and societies and commercial operations on campus.

Guild officers, such as the President, have ex-officio positions on university governance bodies, such as Academic Council and the Academic Board has six student members. The Guild President and Postgraduate President also have ex officio positions on Senate, and there is a third elected student member.

Formal training and informal succession practices

Each incoming Guild President is required to attend governance, risk and financial management training conducted by the Australian Institute of Company Directors and funded by Senate. Training is also offered to specific Guild officers in relation to their specific roles.

There is an informal 'succession' of student Guild leaders whereby the incoming President is likely to have performed a series of other leadership roles being mentored by the preceding experienced student leaders. The Guild also has a very formal, structured handover process – as well as the incoming President 'shadowing' the outgoing one, the Council receives training and there are handover packs distributed to affiliated bodies.

"Most of the learning happens by us starting off in a smaller role then getting sort of mentored and taught by the more experienced members of the society and then if you decide to – you know, want to keep getting involved, then as you go into different roles you keep being mentored by those higher. You get better skills, you get handover and so eventually ..." "It's just the normal – like accession from like a fresher rep where you're really new and you don't know what's going on, to putting forward a more meaningful contribution in a more senior role, if that makes sense?" (student president)

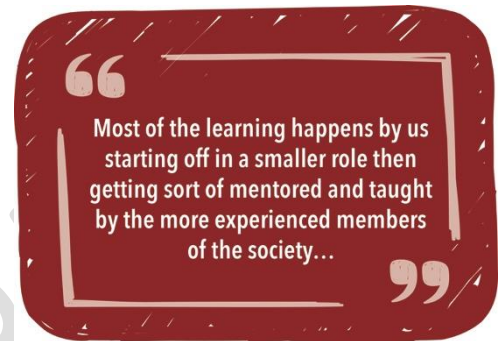
Faculty Society Representatives receive training, funding and support from the Guild, and many faculty societies run their own training days for the committees internally.

Perceptions of university commitment to student voice

Students were generally positive about the university's commitment to student voice but at the faculty and discipline levels there were variations:

"It also depends very much who's on the particular committee that you're taking it to. Within our faculty, we have different committees that are very responsive and appreciate student feedback and do make changes

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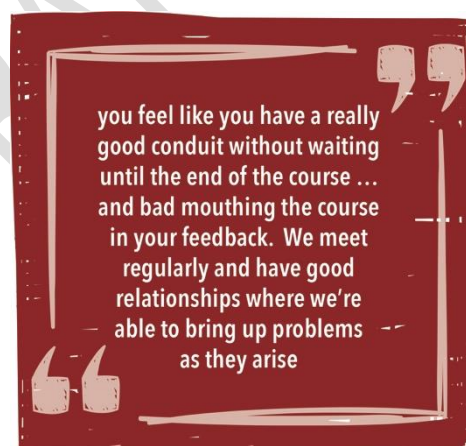


based on our suggestions whereas we have others that aren't as responsive. So it's – that has a big influence – the person". (faculty student representative)

There is a culture of student voice but there is a hierarchy of who and what the university will listen to. Deans are reportedly happier to talk to Faculty Society representatives than discipline clubs; and the University Executive are happy to meet with the Guild President but it's *'a lot harder for a faculty society representative to get a meeting with a member of the university executive'*. At the Faculty level, representatives on the education committee and Faculty Board will be asked for views if there are changes being considered. An example was given by a Science club representative of the faculty listening to students' suggestions on a course review.

Visibility of student representatives – faculty societies and Guild involvement in systemic issues

Reportedly most students would not have much idea of the Guild and its educational functions unless they engage at faculty society level. Faculty societies promote themselves on orientation day. They also rely on academics promoting the student representative function to their students – this varies widely. Promotion is driven largely by Deans, academics and student support officers.



"So we meet every month and we bring up education issues, just organisational stuff because we collaborate on a lot of different things. So you feel like you have a really good conduit without waiting until the end of the course ... and bad mouthing the course in your feedback. We meet regularly and have good relationships where we're able to bring up problems as they arise and generally they get solved really quickly, because we've developed a really good relationship over the years with the faculty". (student faculty representative)

The Education Council and the Guild become involved in systemic issues. When there is a significant change being contemplated, the Guild President and Postgraduate President are invited to sit on a student concerns working group and work directly with faculty societies to get their input. Student surveys may also be used to get input from all students. These inputs are communicated to the working group. The working group in turn advises Academic Council. Academic Council keeps the Education Council updated on progress.

There is a strong culture of listening to students on important changes/issues affecting the whole university. There had been a feeling that the university doesn't listen to postgraduate students but there is evidence of that changing.

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University F:

Academic Student Representatives (ASR)

The case study considers an initiative aimed at encouraging student involvement and engagement to facilitate the ongoing improvement of teaching and learning outcomes.

For the students, it is aimed at giving them 'deeper insight' into the operations of the university and to help develop their skills of communication, leadership and teamwork, and '*development as professionals*'.

The Academic Student Representative (ASR) Program itself currently operates in four schools in one Division (Faculty) and was predominantly piloted in 2014. It was instituted by the Dean and is led by an 'Experience Plus Support Officer'.

The structure and recruitment of ASRs

Each program has an ASR and this includes undergraduate, Honours year, and postgraduate coursework. Each school is responsible for the recruitment of students – co-ordinating School Board selection process (see below), arranging orientation sessions and ensuring attendance at these sessions by appropriate school staff members; ensuring Program Directors convene meetings with ASRs (4 x year) and that they report to students and responsible staff on what transpires and recognizing the contribution of ASRs at end of term.

There are published Recruitment Guidelines for ASRs which provide that there should be one for every year level of a program. The Program Director is responsible for developing the process for appointment of ASRs within their program and election is preferred within Week 3. Before the election, the nominees are to be given the opportunity of addressing the class or they may produce an online statement. Every year, representatives for the School Boards are elected from the ASRs.

Each Program Director organises quarterly meetings each year with a report from the ASRs as standing items on the agenda. The meetings are attended by a School Academic Team professional staff member. The notes from each meeting are distributed via email to all students, the Head of School, the Associate Head of School, the Teaching and Learning Team Leader and program academic staff.

Training – orientation and guidance using previous ASRs

Orientation is required for the ASRS and there is a Student Representative Handbook. This provides for matters such as: an overview of the role of ASR, advice on dealing with issues, strategies for collecting peers' ideas, suggestions and techniques to communicate this in meetings. It also provides school

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specific information, e.g. the operation of committees and boards and the selection process for the School Board Representative.

It is important that ASRs have the opportunity to talk to the year below *'things I wish somebody had told me'* and talk at open days and orientations – and that the role is taken seriously with Program Directors providing guidance.

Incentives – seeing impact of views

Consideration has been given to how to encourage students to get involved – coffee vouchers, tee shirts and certificates have been suggested. Feedback from students was that Coles vouchers are preferred to book vouchers.

The main incentives for students were recognition that their views were listened to and in some cases acted upon and they could see that. Also important was developing socialisation and communications skills, getting to know program directors, other ASRs and students generally.

Staff Perspective

Interviews were conducted with the Dean of the Division who is the main instigator and driver of Program and the Experience Plus Support/Administrative Officer. The Dean started the program because of a feeling that the Students Association was ineffective and it was thought that an ASR scheme could be 'melded' with the university wide student representative system. It was designed with a simple format and a small cohesive team. Program co-ordinators came on board and the program developed from there. The concern was a lack of proper channels for feedback and it was decided to institute the system in part for this purpose, based on one which was already operating in one school in the Division.

The focus groups held for Program Directors discussed teething issues, including some Program Directors feeling threatened and others not allowing ASRs opportunity to talk to the classes. Currently there is a feeling that there are greater resources needed for it to operate effectively. Now that the student union has found its feet and student representation is happening better there is the thought that the whole campus based system could be combined with the ASR program and they could be responsible for training and support. The relationship between the ASR program and the Student union is *'tricky'* - *'we're trying to step away from saying, you've got your ideas let's collaborate'* - *'so we're still trying to negotiate and get over that, the past history of our two organisations'*. *'So things that I'm thinking about is if we keep our program year level reps and they feed back into the campus reps that they have at each campus, and then they take all that feedback and go to their school boards and all the other things they go to.'* (student engagement administrator)

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“ ...the students are dealing directly with the university - the Vice Chancellor - all the way through to facilities management - and the Student Engagement Unit, so that there's a big consultative process involved with other students as well ”

ASRs are not advocates but *'vessels to push the message across'*.

The Program Directors said that those who did get involved felt they really benefitted from it in many ways: course improvement, ideas, dealing with issues before they escalated etc. They also talked about how their students (architecture) had become involved in things like the design of the new student lounge – *'... the students are dealing directly with the university – the Vice Chancellor – all the way through to facilities management – and the Student Engagement Unit, so that there's a big consultative process involved with other students as well'* (student engagement administrator). They said that while it was sometimes difficult to recruit students, it was gaining momentum as other students can see peers putting hands up. There was a view that: *'We have to really sort of head hunt', 'I think one of the challenges with student reps is the sort of changing culture of universities – of students at university ... no longer a strong culture of being on campus and hanging round and working on campus... So truly representing your peer group I think is difficult'* (academic course coordinator). There was a variation in disciplines and year groups – some have eagerly contested elections and the effectiveness of programs varies widely. It was stressed that the Program Directors need to generate enthusiasm and be willing to meet with students on a regular basis - to see their role as being as a conduit with ASRs and to encourage contact through email or visits. The ASR program has helped to *'iron out a few large issues'*




'I think in terms of developing a good culture with the group – the student group – it's been really good' 'I think culture has a huge effect on the quality of the teaching program, on satisfaction of staff and students' (academic course coordinator).

It does depend strongly on the buy-in of the Program Directors and there is a wide variation in terms of their advising classes of the system, calling for nominees, letting nominees talk to classes and conducting elections, giving elected ASRs chances to address the whole class. However, it is a new phenomenon and they are *'finding their way slowly'*.

The main benefit is on culture and thus satisfaction of all which increases quality of teaching program.

A focus group with students helped to gain their perceptions

Some feel the role to be largely 'tokenistic': *'The way I believe the role was – is – is that we would be able to bring any student issues to the senior academics or to the people that run the school essentially. The reality is I feel it was a tokenistic role is that we came in, we sat on three meetings in one year and they told us what was going on. We told them what needed to change'.*
(student ASR)



The reality is I feel it was a tokenistic role is that we came in, we sat on three meetings in one year and they told us what was going on. We told them what needed to change

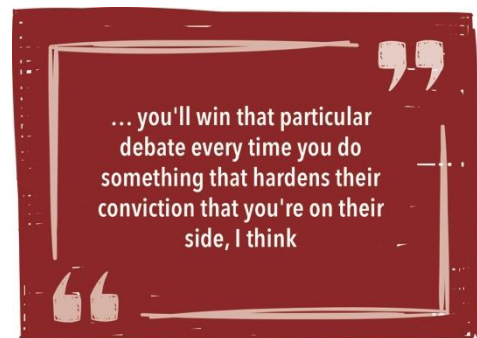
There was no documentation and they didn't know what the outcomes were and this lack of communication was seen as a flaw in the system.

The students echoed the view that it was hugely dependent on the buy-in of the Program Directors, for example there was one who took notes and emailed points to students and had been willing to change things. Others had started a Facebook group as a forum.

Generally, the role was seen as liaising with students to see if positive ideas can be put forward but often students only communicate with ASR if they have a complaint.

University G: Co-creation of a major student facility

A student facility was created through a project of co-creation with students actively engaged in the process of determining what would be in the centre and how it would work. But the university did not get it right all in one go and the mistakes they made at first instance were important to how they revised their approach and the success they ultimately achieved.



Historically service delivery at the university was fragmented across the schools. To improve this situation service teams were formed and when a new building became available university management took the opportunity to create a service centre populating the lower level with service delivery. The process was essentially around redesigning the service delivery and then installing it in a space. A customer relationship management system was also put in place so that the students could access quite a few services online which freed up academic time and enhanced service consistency and quality. At the same time spaces were created where students could study and engage in other activities. The resulting student space was quite corporate and turned out to not really be what students wanted. It wasn't used by students in the manner anticipated.

Subsequently, the university received a grant to produce student-related space. This time the university decided to engage in a formal process of co-creation. A transforming student experience committee was formed which along with the property and services building committee that managed the physical development of the building reported to an executive group. Reference groups were formed to feed into that transforming student experience committee. One of the reference groups was the student union which was perceived as entrenched and antagonistic towards university management, viewing university management as trying to take advantage of the students.

Management started to meet with the president of the union and the president of the student representative council on a fortnightly basis. From the beginning both groups were told that the consultation and the cooperation process would include other reference groups to ensure that the broadest representation would be achieved. This was not necessarily well received but management was unmoved and continued to stress that their voices were important but other voices were too. The reference groups provided a filtering process to provide information to the transforming student experience committee which could then determine what this meant in terms of the reality of the project.

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Gathering input from all students

A big plexiglass wall was set up. Questions would be put up on the wall and students passing by could grab a pen and write up their answers. At regular intervals the wall would be photographed to record student responses. The wall would then be cleaned and a new question posted.

Social media was used as a communication tool with two student ambassadors appointed to moderate blogs and talk to the students.

Repeated workshop forums were run with students paid to participate since they were run during the summer break. These forums were attended by students who were interested in participating and they ran over two days. Lunch was provided and the students were asked to think about how they study and what was missing from facilities available on campus. They were asked why they were not studying on campus, and what would make them stay on campus.

The brief was cast as aspirational rather than being based in concrete details of what the space would physically look like. The process was about really teasing out what is important about being a student at the university. Concepts included sense of community, sense of belonging, wanting to be with other people, the need for good coffee. But also important was the need to have a non-corporate, safe environment that could be open at all hours.

Architects were included in the process so that they could listen to what the students had to say. They were keen to design an award winning building but that was not necessarily relevant to what students wanted.

A lot of time was spent drawing the aspirational brief. Within a few months the student union had added the project link to their website which was a watershed moment. Management was no longer the enemy, management and the student union were working together on something. Important to this development was the appointment of a union president who embraced participating in the co-creation process and was willing to work collaboratively with university management.

From the aspirational brief the co-creation process needed to move on to the functional brief which had to deal with the hard fact that the project would not be able to deliver everybody everything they wanted. This phase required the team working with the architects and the students to evaluate costs and priorities. Throughout this process social media, student ambassadors, blogs and The What Wall continued. Over the life of the project student involvement and interest grew.

Commitment to listening to students was readily apparent in this phase of the project:

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we were together looking at some of the architect's stuff about having a big tree in the middle of the thing. We looked at the price and I looked at the students and I said, well what do you think? They went; no, let's not go with that. So end of story. The fact that I could say to the architect, no we're not going to do that, it's really funky, but do you know what - no... they've seen me make those changes that responded to what they said... you'll win that particular debate every time you do something that hardens their conviction that you're on their side, I think.(manager)

One of the things students clearly wanted was a kitchen which was opposed by property services. Management made a deal with the students that they could have a kitchen as long as they managed it well. There has never been a problem with the management of the kitchen and students take pride in making sure that new cohorts understand that they need to look after the kitchen in order for students to continue to have access to it.

The end result – instant population


The facility opened in September 2011 and was instantly populated by students, not just the ones that had, in one way or the other, co-created the space. The project was something that people didn't believe could work and then it did.

The facility has students everywhere and the place buzzes with learning - people at computers, people with books, people reading, people talking about projects, people in project rooms. The next phase will involve creating additional project rooms because student feedback says that there are not enough. These are learning spaces which are unstructured, self-guided and for students. Staff cannot run tutorials in these project rooms. Students cannot hold demonstrations in the facility but are free to do so on the steps outside. Apart from cafes there are no retail activities in the facility.

There is comfortable modular seating. The ground level is fairly noisy and active. The next level is quieter with project rooms and maths and writing support provided. Physics and chemistry tutorial support is to be added because use of the tutorial services has escalated since it has become so available.

There is a facility manager. The facility was designed around the students so the services were reconfigured so they would work in this space. Staff from different areas of service administration rotate through the facility depending on the season. At enrolment there is a lot of staff available to prepare student cards and to advise students. Mid-year there is a big push for study abroad, so the global learning team is there. There is an information desk and a one stop

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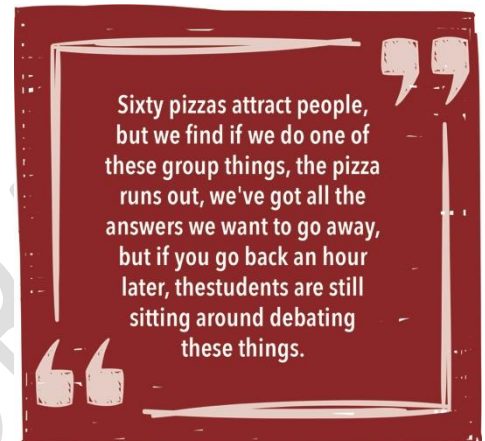
“ It is in the middle of the campus and it is a demonstration of the commitment of the university to do things for and with students ”

one step philosophy which is that the student will either have the answer straightaway or they'll be sent to the one place where the solution is.

in the end [it] was a 40 million project, so we put much more money than just the 15 million we got from government. But it's a touchstone. It is in the middle of the campus and it is a demonstration of the commitment of the university to do things for and with students. (senior manager)

The future – continuing co-creation

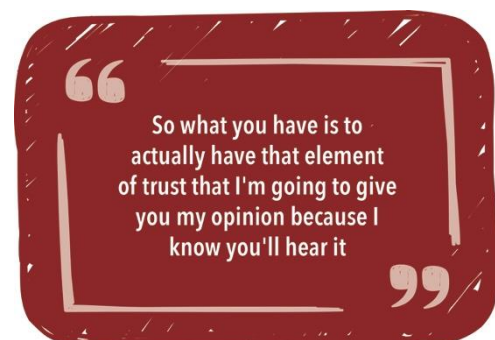
Moves are afoot to further increase space and facilities leveraging the social capital and trust built with the students over the project. The student union would like to have a home in or near the facility since the union building is somewhat out of the way. This would create opportunity to co-create future use of the union building. What is envisaged is a cultural and sports precinct that will provide students with a reason to go there. In exchange those services that the union provides, for example counselling, will be available around the facility. The precinct will have an improved gym and a basketball court, because international students want to be able to 'shoot some hoops'. Student commitment to this process is apparent in their willingness to allocate SAF funding to it.



A virtual co-creation concept was pursued across 2012 with the same committee, the same logic, the same system. This project identified a significant number of issues that impacted student experience. These issues were addressed one by one and have provided for improved student experience through e-commerce, a timetabling App, compatibility with different devices, improving Blackboard functionality. This Virtual project was about delivering what would make the university virtual environment, a more student friendly one in which they wanted to spend more time.

The process has led to a cultural change

The success of the project created institutional awareness of the value of investing in the student experience. Many students now spend three to five hours more a day on campus because the facility is there. The facility is located where the natural flow of traffic means that over 50 per cent of students would walk through it at least once a day. People still walk through there but then they can get good coffee.



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we'll involve hundreds or thousands of students in our consultation as opposed to one or two or three elected people...

The project has given rise to a new language on campus. Students now refer to consultations as doing a [name of facility]; shorthand for the co-creation process. The students are really keen to go back to that same experience.

you've got to be authentic. So that's been my red thread through everything... when in doubt, ask a student. If it's about learning and teaching, ask a student ... I am not the target market. I'm not currently enrolled in this university. In fact,

I don't have a degree from this university so I am the least qualified person to talk about the student experience. But I know I'm the most qualified person to get that information from them.... So what you have is to actually have that element of trust that I'm going to give you my opinion because I know you'll hear it. (senior manager)

Facility and services managers had this to say about how they engage students in ongoing co-creation activities:

we'll involve hundreds or thousands of students in our consultation as opposed to one or two or three elected people... So when we survey, we survey hundreds. When we want to bring people together to ask them a question, we go and buy 60 or 80 pizzas and we make an announcement.... We go up to the mezzanine and anyone who wants a free lunch can come up on the condition they participate in whatever we're doing, which they do... we pre-plan it, but we don't pre-advertise it. So if you advertise you're going to be doing this in six weeks' time, you tend to get people with an agenda get together and come along and dominate those things. But we'll tend to give 10 minutes' notice. We'll just make it - and so we get the people who are in the [facility] now, and the people who are in the [facility] now are representative of the group who use it. We'll get 300 or 400 who come to that We call it flash focus groups.... Or pizza for comment, we call it both.... Sixty pizzas attract people, but we find if we do one of these group things, the pizza runs out, we've got all the answers we want to go away, but if you go back an hour later, the students are still sitting around debating these things. (university property manager)

Positive impact for the university

The managers also commented on how this co-created facility has impacted the university:

One of the big things I guess is the international student barometer that measures international students' feedback on all these things. For us, this university was normally bottom in the Group of Eight. Since the [facility]'s

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been here the surveys that have been done, we're number one or two in the Group of Eight, but normally number one. The last couple of years we've been number six or seven in the world out of 180 universities that are surveyed ...Well they're directly relating that to the [facility]. (university manager)

SUBMITTED DRAFT

University H: Embedded leadership practices at an old university

Special value placed in developing Leadership Skills

University H is one of the oldest universities in Australia and has a long tradition of active student representation. It has an engaged student association at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. It places a special value on leadership and there is a view that it is 'front and centre of everything University H does'. As part of the valuing of leadership skills University H offers its students encouragement and support to develop their leadership skills. There are several ways that it does this.

Leadership Course/Subject for academic credit

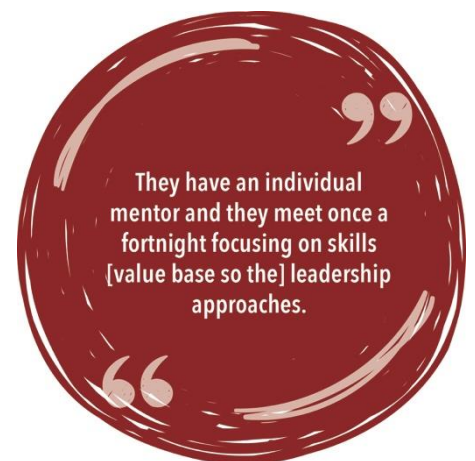
University H offers a course, *Leadership and Influence*, for academic credit. It is one of the courses known as a Vice-Chancellor's course and is interdisciplinary with a peer-learning ethos. It is available to students from second year onwards who have an elective available. The course guide notes that:

Students will develop a strong sense of their individual efficacy in pursuing self, social or organisation change and development. One of the assessment tasks is a group project to develop an idea to "pitch" at the end of the course to the Vice-Chancellor on how to enhance the [University H] student experience.

Vice-Chancellor's Student Leadership Program

The Vice-Chancellor's Student Leadership Program has an undergraduate version and a postgraduate version. Students who are in or intending to apply for university student leadership positions are strongly encouraged by the university to apply. The Program is completed within one semester and places are limited to 18 students. Topics which have been covered in these Programs include *Models of Leadership, Influencing and Motivating Others* and *Influencing and Managing Yourself*. Students are required to attend a series of workshops and to develop and work on a Leadership project in which they play a leadership role. As part of the Program students are assigned a senior member of staff as their mentor. On completion of the Program students are presented with a Certificate by the Vice-Chancellor. Students can complete both the Leadership Course for academic credit and the Vice-Chancellor's Leadership Program.

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They have an individual mentor and they meet once a fortnight focusing on skills [value base so the] leadership approaches. This year out of the SSAF funding the postgraduate students said this is such a good idea they wanted to put some money aside for students to implement some of those ideas. (senior manager)

Student Leadership Forum

The Student Leadership Forum is held towards the end of the year and is a gathering of those students who have been elected for student leadership positions in the following year. The speakers at the 2015 Forum spoke on a range of topics with the primary focus on the subject of student leadership and responsibility. The incoming VC shared his view that student leaders set the example and tone of a university and were responsible, together with the VC, for the culture of the university. Student leaders were seen to have power and be able to have an impact and to create change. Strategies addressing how to manage challenges while in a leadership position, were provided to students. Students were encouraged to look after themselves and support each other throughout their terms. Leadership skills were promoted as important and valuable lifelong skills. The Forum is one part of the training student leaders receive.

University I:

Staff Student Consultation Committee Pilot

Project

Staff student consultation committees (SSCCs) have not been widely used at University I. A pilot project was initiated in the law faculty working with students and staff engaged in the undergraduate LLB program to determine whether this type of engagement with students would be beneficial to staff, students and the program.

Seeking approval and participation – online notice for recruitment of students

The possibility of running the pilot project was canvassed with the faculty executive who approved it. The Associate Dean Education agreed to chair the SSCC. At the faculty meeting, staff were briefed on the process of using SSCCs using a short PowerPoint presentation based on a bank of slides available through student partnerships in quality Scotland (sparqs). Individual academic staff teaching within the LLB program, and others with various administrative roles pertinent to programs of study and students, were approached to join the committee.

The opportunity for students to participate in the committee was advertised through online student notices with the permission of the faculty executive. Students interested in participating were invited to attend a training session that would explain in detail how the committee would function and what the responsibilities of student representatives would be.

Initial training session for students

The training session was run twice to maximise opportunity for students to attend. Students could opt out of the committee if they decided they did not want to participate after attending the training. The training was run by two trainers each delivering content supported by a PowerPoint presentation once again based on the bank of slides available through sparqs. The session included a short video presentation illustrating the role and benefits of student representation and a series of scenarios for students to discuss. These scenarios were chosen to help students recognise the types of issues they could be asked to deal with as course representatives, those that were outside their role, where they could direct students for assistance for those matters that were outside their role and evaluating how urgent particular issues might be. Students were also provided with a student representative manual based on a manual produced by Victoria University Wellington Student Association.

Introducing the diverse range of student representatives to their cohorts and their gathering feedback

All students participating in the training agreed to participate in the pilot project. The student representatives were from all years within the program and represented diverse courses of study including various combined degrees. Prior to the SSCC meeting the student representatives were introduced to the student cohort through student messages with contact email addresses provided. The students collected feedback from students regarding issues they wanted to raise in relation to the LLB program. The committee met twice during the teaching period for an hour and a half each time. Student representatives who could not attend a meeting were encouraged to share their feedback with other representatives to raise at the meeting. Some chose to forward their issues by email to the minutes' secretary together with their apologies.

The first meeting was structured around various aspects of the student experience

These were:

- Endorsement of good practice
- Quality of the LLB
- Learning and teaching methods
- Assessment methods
- Feedback on assessed work
- Provision of study skills support
- Resources
- Other student learning experience issues.

Once staff and students had introduced themselves, these various issues were discussed. Staff explained the significance of each of these issues from a university perspective and student representatives had the opportunity to comment on their experiences and relevant issues that had been raised by other students. The discussions were minuted and the minutes circulated to all participants. Student representatives were required to report back to students on the various issues raised at the meeting. Staff identified that a number of initiatives had been put in place and that students had identified some misconceptions staff had had around how best to communicate with students.

The second meeting – opportunity to raise issues for discussion

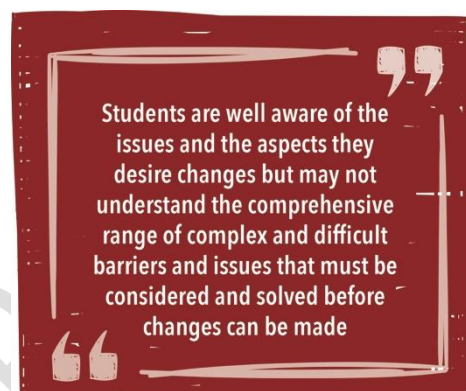
The process was repeated at the second meeting but with a truncated agenda so that students who had not attended the first meeting had the opportunity to raise issues in relation to any of the topics and the student representatives who

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had attended before focussed on the topics where they wanted to raise new or additional feedback. Staff representatives were able to report back on how they had addressed student concerns.

Following up - staff and students' perceptions

A detailed follow up of the project was undertaken with both staff and student participants. The pilot project was well received by the students involved. They liked the opportunity to work with staff, to raise student concerns and to have them addressed in an open, collaborative discussion. Students benefitted from gaining a better understanding of university processes, recognising that some decision making processes are centralised and therefore not controlled by faculty whereas some issues can be addressed within faculty. Understanding the reasoning behind policies and processes was beneficial. Students appreciated the changes that were implemented as a result of their comments and advice that matters that could not be actioned immediately would be pursued. Students also appreciated this opportunity to enhance communication and transparency while engaging with students from other years of their course.



Students are well aware of the issues and the aspects they desire changes but may not understand the comprehensive range of complex and difficult barriers and issues that must be considered and solved before changes can be made (student representative)

Students felt that at the outset they were not entirely clear on what the SSCC would do and how it would work and they also felt it needed greater promotion with the student body so more students were aware of what it was, what it did and how they could raise questions and concerns. Clear differentiation between this forum and faculty board was also seen as important. Facilitating feedback to students on the outcomes of SSCC meetings needs to be further developed. It is anticipated that if this forum was adopted by the faculty these issues would be addressed.

Students were in favour of the SSCC continuing. There was interest in a greater number of meetings and in extending the process to other courses within the faculty and to provide opportunity to address the needs of students in different combined degrees.

There was a range of responses from the academics involved in the SSCC. There was a concern that adding another Committee to the number of meetings that

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academics attended was not a good use of time and that the aims of the SSCC could be incorporated in other Committees that were already established. Another concern expressed was that the evidence base was anecdotal making it difficult to assess the extent and significance of some of the suggestions. Others found it a very positive experience prompting good self-reflection on current practices and reported being impressed by the professional approach of the student representatives. It was beneficial for the Faculty to be meeting these students in a collaborative environment and to be hearing from a 'new group' of students representing their peers rather than be dependent on those students who were active in other student bodies. Better briefing and training of academics prior to the first SSCC meeting may have increased positive responses from some academic members. The Faculty is exploring the SSCC concept with a view to introducing it more widely.


SUBMITTED DRAFT

University J: Embedded student representation processes in a private university

A private Australian university has developed a strong culture of student representation and partnership in university leadership and decision-making. Student representation is embedded structurally, and is embodied as a cultural ethos. Use of the word “embodied” reflects the importance of physical presence of student representatives at many levels across the university.

A developmental approach to student representation

Student representation is supported at all levels of the university, including first year. All classes nominate or elect a class representative. Lecturers then forward the representatives’ details to the Student Association which provides class representative training. While the experience of class representation may vary across the university, the intention is that the representative system provides multiple channels for feedback throughout the semester. The representative is invested with a level of authority to speak to the lecturer on behalf of the class. If an issue were to arise which the representative felt that they could not raise directly with the lecturer, then they, as a class representative, may contact a senior manager, or raise the issue with the student association who may then play an advocacy role.



“ Really it's a good early warning signal if there's something going wrong in the subject ”

if we have good class reps and the students are participating well then really it's a good early warning signal if there's something going wrong in the subject. Or I guess quite happily in a lot of circumstances good affirmation of things that are working well as well. (senior university manager)

Progressing from class representation, students have the opportunity to be elected as Faculty Representatives. Students are elected to the University Council and to the Students’ Association. Two Student Association office bearers represent the interests of students on the Academic Senate and various committees, including curriculum review committees.

Governance procedures demonstrate respect for the student voice

As a sign of the importance of the student voice within the deliberative bodies of the university, the governance procedures include specific student quorum

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requirements. If the specified number of students is not present at the Senate meeting, the meeting is not considered “quorate”. Discussion may continue, but the decisions will not be ratified until the next meeting. It is highly unusual for this situation to occur, as student representatives are highly engaged and proactive. This is a further example of the value of the physical presence of students in university decision-making.

Students as initiators of university-wide administrative change

Student representatives have been the initiators of university-wide administrative changes. For example, a student association representative proposed that there should be changes to the student evaluation system. At that time, students were able to respond to the survey until the last lecture of the semester. The representative made the case that students should have a longer response window – extending until students have completed their final exam. This extension would provide them with the opportunity to comment on the appropriateness of the exam, and the alignment between the learning and teaching during semester and the exam.

The representative worked with the Chair of the Academic Senate to present a proposal, addressing the anticipated objections from academic staff. The Chair allocated the representative a time-slot in the meeting to present the proposal. As expected, there was initial resistance to the proposal. Academics were concerned that students who felt they had performed poorly in an exam would provide more negative evaluations. The proposal did not pass at the first meeting, however, the student representative was asked to address the issues, and in partnership with the Chair, prepared a second proposal which was passed at the next meeting. Student evaluations are now open until after the exam period.

Partnership between the university and students on personal development curriculum

Students undertake a set of core curriculum subjects, including leadership and team dynamics, ethics, and critical thinking subjects. Student representatives participate in the Core Curriculum Working Party which has developed a mandatory but not-for-credit extra-curricular subject which involves individually negotiated personal development. This includes work-related, community and career related activities, including volunteering.

The diversity challenge

Despite the strong commitment to representation from both students and staff, the university still experiences issues with the diversity of the student representatives. While all faculties have student representatives, the university Student engagement in university decision-making and governance – towards a more systemically inclusive student voice

wide representatives are typically drawn from a narrower disciplinary group, Law and Business, who tend to arrive at University looking for representative positions as they consider representative and leadership experience will be a valued and relevant skill in their careers.

Digital presence: Visibility and transparency of the student representative bodies

The student association has an appealing and informative website which includes not only services available through the website, but easy to access information on the constitution, budgets and minutes of meetings. The website includes professional photos of the current representatives, with their contact details. Clear descriptions of the roles of the representatives are easily accessible, to both prospective nominees and the student body as a whole.

Alignment of a cultural ethos with business sustainability towards quality

Both domestic and international students pay full fees at the university. From the perspective of both students and the institution, the quality of the university experience is extremely important for both student educational outcomes and the sustainability and growth of the university. This alignment is expressed in the university's strategic plan: "Align decision-making between University strategy and student association objectives". While there are clearly business objectives, and some form of transactional relationship from students, (and sometimes their parents) – the practice of student partnership appears to be embodied throughout the university as an authentic cultural ethos, providing benefits to both students and the reputation of the university. Objective measures of these benefits are evident in the university's high performance on quality of the student experience on the QILT website.

University K:

A young university establishes student representative systems

A young regional university is a “greenfield” site for developing an embedded culture of student partnership in decision-making and governance. The university has grown from a few hundred students at its inception 20 years ago to nearly 12,000 in 2016, with a current growth rate of around 11%. Developing student representative bodies raises the challenge of developing a broad culture of representation across the student body, and the value of engaging students and staff in ongoing review of the new structures and processes.

Growth requires more formalised student representative structures

The university can no longer be considered a small university. Previously, the campus was compact, and staff and students had significant personal interaction in a relatively informal manner. The footprint of the campus has increased, as have student and staff numbers, and the university has expanded into a number of regional centres. Senior managers have recognised that the structures and procedures for student engagement need to become more formalised *“to ensure that students are integrally part of the university as it grows, and that their voice will be part of the emerging university in five or ten years’ time.”* A senior manager considers this point in time a great opportunity for the development of a culture of representation.

Establishing effective structures requires broad cultural change

At this university, the main student representative body, the Student Guild, had been in abeyance for some time. The recently re-established Guild worked to determine the breadth of its remit. In conversations with the Guild representatives, the new PVC (Students) became aware that the work of the Guild was focused predominantly on social and advocacy activities.

As there was little focus on the student learning experience, and this focus would have required more student capacity, university management established an additional Student Representative Council (SRC) to liaise with the university on issues related to student learning and engagement. Students were able to nominate for these positions but development of a culture of representation is proving challenging. Due to a limited history of representation, and a lack of awareness amongst the student body, few students nominated. Deans of schools were asked to nominate students in the Student engagement in university decision-making and governance – towards a more systemically inclusive student voice

disciplines where none had self-nominated, and the full complement of SRC representatives was appointed.

A holistic communication approach

As part of the initiative, students and staff have engaged in focus groups to help review and develop a culture of representation, and have engaged in activities related to this OLT project, and others on student partnership. In reviews, communication issues have been at the forefront with students commenting that information on nomination and elections was not obvious, and was not in line with their expectations. From a student perspective, important messages, such as exam timetable reminders were sent by SMS. They preferred that election reminders were also sent through SMS. Further issues were raised about the “depth” of news items on elections and nominations on the website, students seeing these items as important. As this was a new initiative, students would not search for something they did not know about. They suggested a holistic approach to communications on their issues, a “closing the loop” so that the communications team who promoted a student event, or forum, would also communicate the outcomes of the event or forum back to students. This feedback has informed further development of the student engagement strategy.

A delicate balance between guidance and autonomy

In the establishment phase, management drafted a Terms of Reference and chaired the first meeting of the SRC so that it could determine its own goals, and learn how it might obtain resources to support its activities. While management had instigated the establishment of an elected representative body it was clear that students should assume control so that the SRC evolves with student interests at the forefront. This requires a delicate balance between fostering autonomy, and determining when to offer guidance, as evident in the following example. With little formal documentation on the roles of the SRC, the representatives did not have a clear understanding of process. Students were unaware of the appropriate staff member to contact with an issue or complaint. Management saw the need to develop a Student Charter and the SRC promoted this to the student body. The SRC considers the promotion of the Charter one of its early successes.

Knowledge transfer – the challenges of continuity and connection

The culture of student representation at the university is in its early stages - in its current form, a little over a year. As student representatives may hold a position for only one year, the transfer of representative organisational knowledge is a significant issue. The university has determined that the representatives for the SRC will hold office from July until June, to ensure that Student engagement in university decision-making and governance – towards a more systemically inclusive student voice


incoming members have an opportunity to learn from outgoing members, during the main teaching period, rather than changing over during the long summer break. Within one faculty, a representative had taken a pro-active role in mentoring new faculty representatives.

Managers and staff have the benefit of continuity, and may have opportunities to learn through sharing experiences with other managers of other universities through various forums. However, this opportunity is less available to students. It is easy for students to become focused on local issues related to facilities and food, but with limited external connections to other student bodies, the development of a culture of interest in broader issues tends to be ad hoc. This challenge is acknowledged by management, who support students with training from external bodies, such as the State Ombudsman, and travel to student conferences. However, the development of an independent and proactive student representative body which instigates action to shape the university experience requires significant institutional support, and is acknowledged by management as a further challenge.

Appendix G - posters

Student voice – what post graduate students think matters

Sally Varnham, Bronwyn Olliffe, Katrina Waite & Ann Cahill University of Technology Sydney



Introduction

The student voice project is examining good practice in student engagement in decision making and governance in universities internationally and in Australia. In Australia there are pockets of good practice but there is still a way to go in developing a systemic approach.

The Problem

We have identified that in Australia post graduate students are an under represented group in university decision making and governance.


Methodology

We have :

- interviewed key players from universities and organizations involved in student engagement in the UK, Europe and New Zealand and carried out a thematic analysis on the transcripts
- Carried out an Australian institutional survey based on our findings in our international research and a similar survey conducted in the UK.
- Conducted case studies in Australia based on our survey findings

Results

Key finding 1:
There are five key dimensions that contribute to effective student engagement in decision making



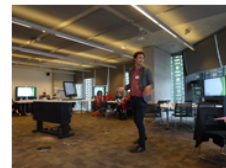
Key finding 2:
Not all categories of students are well engaged in decision making and post graduates are an under-represented group

Student category	% that are well engaged in decision making
Undergraduate	6
Postgraduate	23
Full-time	27
Part-time	14
Local	2
International	14
International postgraduate	23

Key finding 3:
Provision of suitable training and support and incentives to participate require development in Australian universities. Few instances of formal incentive schemes were reported.

Name of support	% institutions reporting for Europe	% institutions reporting for Australia
Formal incentive programs	0	14
Staff incentives	0	14
Staff salary	14	0
Formal student incentive programs	0	0
Academic incentive programs	0	0
Research incentives	0	0
Research grants	0	0
Student support	0	0

Key finding 4:
A bottom up approach to developing student engagement seems to work best providing opportunities starting early in a student's academic career and at course level. This can assist greatly to develop an ethos or culture of student engagement in the university which extends to an expectation of student voice at all levels including postgraduate



Summary

There is a strong culture of student engagement in decision making in universities in other countries.

That culture is emerging in Australia but more work is needed to make it systemic.

Under represented student groups, such as post graduate students, need to be better engaged.

Training and support and incentives are important dimensions to improving engagement.




A culture of partnership is borne out of institutional commitment to and respect for student voice.

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studentvoice.uts.edu.au

Pimentel Bótas, P. C. van der Velden, G. M. Naidoo, R. Lowe J. A. and Pool A. D. *Student Engagement in Learning and Teaching Quality Management: A Study of UK Practices Research Findings Commissioned by the Quality Assurance Agency University of Bath*

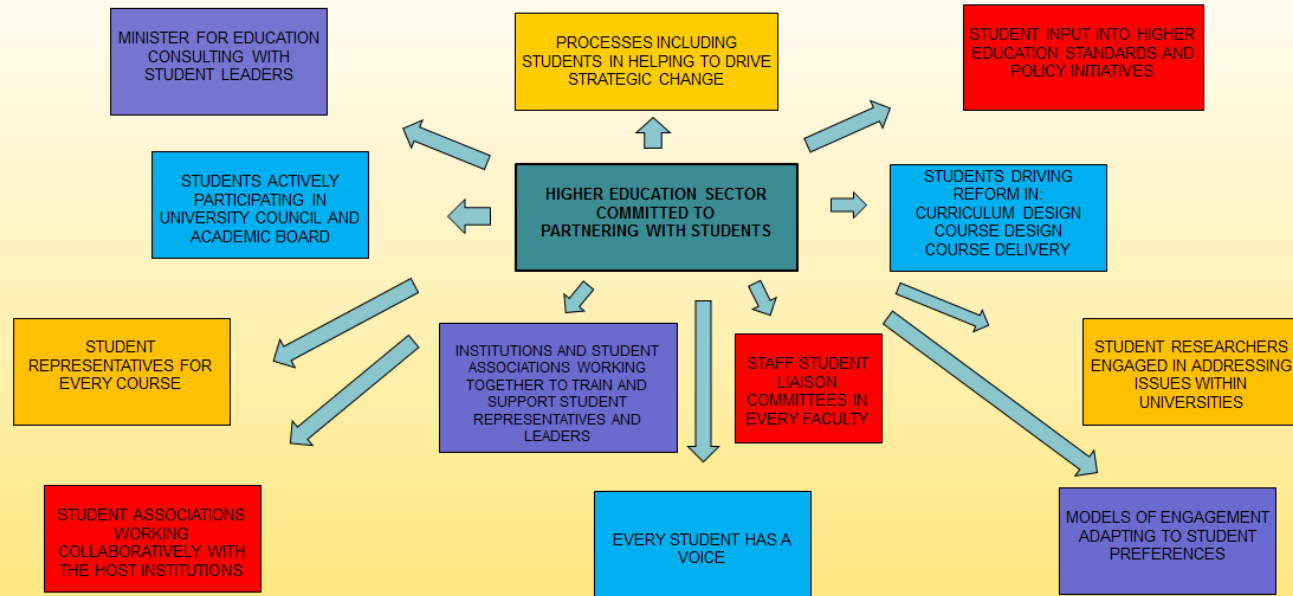
Support for this publication/activity has been provided by the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching. The views expressed in this publication/activity do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching.

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STUDENT PARTNERSHIP: UNIVERSITY DECISION MAKING IN AUSTRALIA IN 2030 - THE WAY IT COULD LOOK



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Appendix H- project Facebook and web pages

The screenshot shows a Facebook page for 'Student Voice in university decision-making'. The page header includes navigation tabs: Page, Messages, Notifications, Insights, and Publishing Tools. The main content area features a post from September 11 at 8:30pm by Gwen van der Velden from the University of Warwick. The post text reads: 'Gwen van der Velden from the University of Warwick demonstrating why consultation with students is not enough if institutions are serious about partnering with students in decision making processes'. Below the text is a video thumbnail showing a presentation slide titled 'WARWICK' with a diagram and a speaker. The post has 140 people reached and options to Like, Comment, and Share. A sidebar on the left contains the page name, a 'Create Page @Username' button, and a menu with options like Home, Posts, Videos, Photos, Events, Notes, About, Likes, and Manage Tabs.

The screenshot shows a university website page for 'Student Voice in University Decision Making'. The page has a navigation menu with tabs: Overview, Initiatives, Working with UTS, Venues and facilities, and Conferences and seminars. The main content area features a large red banner with the text 'STUDENT VOICE IN UNIVERSITY DECISION MAKING' and a graphic of colorful speech bubbles. Below the banner is a sidebar with a list of links: Overview, The project team, Reference group, OLT project cluster, The Conversation, Reports, Events, Resources, Workshop 2015, and Symposium 2016. The main text area contains an 'Overview' section with the following text: 'This project is an OLT Strategic Priority Commissioned Project led by Professor Sally Vanham, Faculty of Law, University of Technology Sydney that aims to develop more systemic approaches to the inclusion of student voice in decision-making and governance in Australian universities. It relates not only to activities at the highest levels of governance, but also student representative activities at faculty, school and course level. In the first phase of the project, Professor Vanham worked with members of her extensive international network to identify good practices in the formal provision for student participation in university governance and decision-making in UK, New Zealand and Europe. A series of interviews with key personnel from universities, student associations and various agencies led to the development of a map of key concepts that emerge as important to effective engagement of students in decision-making and governance. Phase 2 of the project involved a survey of Australian tertiary education institutions to determine the range of approaches and the mechanisms for active student engagement being adopted in Australia. The survey was informed by a national survey undertaken by the University of Bath for the UK Quality Assurance Agency and the information collected in phase 1. This survey is supplemented by interviews with staff from some participating institutions, a survey of student leaders from Australian institutions and student focus groups. A further aspect to this phase of the project is desk research which examines published evidence around the context and practice of student engagement in decision making and governance in Australian institutions. The third and final phase of the project relates to development and sharing of good practice in student engagement. The results of the institutional survey showed that there were already some excellent practices occurring here in Australia. Consequently the project team has been working towards capturing those stories in a series of case studies to be included in project reports. There will also be opportunities to develop good practice in university...

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Appendix I - Dissemination

The following dissemination activities and opportunities occurred during the project.

Conference presentations

Varnham S, Waite, K, Olliffe, B, Cahill A, 'Student voice in Australian university decision-making: From misrecognition to a systemic model.' Society for Research in Higher Education Annual Research Conference Dec 2016, Newport, Wales, United Kingdom. (forthcoming)

Varnham S, Olliffe B, Cahill A, Tangonan M & Bridges T, Student engagement in university decision-making and governance: what, why and how? 2016 UTS Learning and Teaching Forum (forthcoming)

Varnham S, Cahill A, Chapman L, Heckenberg S & Ngan B, 'Creating a National Framework for Student Partnership in University Decision-making and Governance: the OLT National Senior Teaching Fellowship' TEQSA/HECQN conference 9-11 November 2016

Waite K, Varnham S, Olliffe B & Cahill A, 'Student Engagement in University Decision making and Governance: Australian perspectives'. Student Voice and Quality at Universities Conference, Oct 12, 2016. AKO Aotearoa, Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities, and NZUSA

Varnham S & Olliffe B, '*Student Engagement in university decision-making and governance – what, why and how?*' Law Faculty Learning and Teaching Seminar, UNSW, 6 October 2016 (followed by entry in Law Faculty blog)

Waite, K, Varnham, S, Olliffe, B, & Cahill, A. 'Student engagement in university decision-making and governance: Towards a more systemically inclusive student voice' Workshop with staff, students and student leaders. University of the Sunshine Coast, 6 October 2016

Varnham S, '*Student Engagement in university decision-making and governance –what, why and how?*' ANZELA Conference, Auckland New Zealand, 28-30 September 2016

Varnham, S, Olliffe, B, Waite, K, & Cahill, A. National Symposium 'Student engagement in university decision-making and governance: Towards a more systemically inclusive student voice'. 6 September 2016. University of Technology Sydney.

Mercer-Mapstone, L., Matthews K, Rueckert, C., Varnham, S., Thomas, L. 'Students as Partners' in Higher Education: An insurmountable challenge or an opportunity for transformation?' HERDSA, Fremantle Australia, July 2016

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Varnham S, '*Student Engagement in University Decision-making and Governance: towards a more systemically inclusive student voice*– an OLT Strategic Commissioned Project' Office of Learning and Teaching Conference, Melbourne, July 2016

Varnham S, '*Student Engagement in University Decision-making and Governance: towards a more systemically inclusive student voice*– an OLT Strategic Commissioned Project' [National postgraduate student experience symposium 2016, 7-8 April, Gold Coast](#)

Varnham S, '*Student Engagement in University Decision-making and Governance: towards a more systemically inclusive student voice*' Universities Australia Conference, HECQN Satellite Session, Canberra, 12 March 2016

Varnham S, Waite, K, Olliffe, B & Cahill, A, 'Building the argument for more systemic student voice in university governance and decision-making in Australia: Learnings from the UK', *Converging Concepts in global Higher Education Research: Local, national and international perspectives*, Society for Research into Higher Education Annual Research Conference December 2015, Newport, Wales, United Kingdom

Varnham S (2015) '[Students as partners: the student voice in university decision making and governance – discussion of an Office for Learning and Teaching project](#)', Higher Education Compliance and Quality Forum, Melbourne, Australia, November 2015

Varnham, S, Olliffe, B, Waite, K, & Cahill, A. National Workshop 'Student engagement in university decision-making and governance: Towards a more systemically inclusive student voice'. 27 October 2015. University of Technology Sydney.

Varnham S (2015) '*Seen and Heard: engagement of the student voice in university decision making*', 24th National Conference of the Australia & New Zealand Education Law Association, Brisbane, Australia, September 2015

Varnham S (2015) '*Student engagement in university decision-making and governance - towards a more systemically inclusive student voice*' Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia, Melbourne, Australia, July 2015

Varnham S, Olliffe B, Cahill A and Waite K (2015) '*Student engagement in university decision-making and governance - towards a more systemically inclusive student voice*' Australasian Law Teachers Association 2015, Melbourne, Australia, July 2015

Posters

Varnham S, Olliffe B, Waite K & Cahill A, '*Student Voice – what postgraduate students think matters*' [National postgraduate student experience symposium 2016, 7-8 April, Gold Coast](#)

Varnham S, Olliffe B, Waite K & Cahill A, '*Student Partnership: University Decision-making in Australia 2030 – the way it could look*' Office of Learning and Teaching Conference, Melbourne, July

Media

'*Mission to Reverse Student Apathy*' The Australian, Higher Education Supplement, 11 November 2015

'*Efforts to Engage Students Pays Off*' The Australian, Higher Education Supplement, 5 October 2016

'*Interview with Sally Varnham, University of Technology Sydney*' 27 October 2016
<http://www.sparqs.ac.uk/announcement-detail.php?page=562>

Book Chapters

Varnham S, 'University Governance: Responsibility and Accountability' in Varnham, S., Kamvounias P & Squelch J (eds), *Higher Education and the Law*, The Federation Press, 2015 pp. 16-29

Tyrrell J & Varnham S, 'The Student Voice in University Decision-making' in Varnham S, Kamvounias, P & Squelch, J (eds), *Higher Education and the Law*, The Federation Press, Sydney, 2015 pp. 30-40

Consultation submission

Project team submission to the recast OLT consultation process led by Professor Ross Milbourne for the Department of Education and Training reported as 'A new national institute for learning and teaching' Aug 2015.

Appendix J – A systemic model of student partnership in university decision-making and governance in Australia

