4-7-2016

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

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**Recommended Citation**


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STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN UNIVERSITY
DECISION-MAKING AND GOVERNANCE -
TOWARDS A MORE SYSTEMICALLY INCLUSIVE
STUDENT VOICE - AN OLT STRATEGIC
COMMISSIONED PRIORITY PROJECT

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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.
THE STUDENT ROLE

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]
2015-2016 AIMS TO:

1. Draw on the research and experience in the UK, Europe and New Zealand to begin a conversation in the Australian sector;

2. Reference group consisting of a range of Australian universities and student leaders: city, rural and regional, GO8, ATN, multi-campus and international - underway;

3. Surveys and focus groups involving Australian universities and student leaders;

4. Case studies and piloting of ideas in reference group and other universities;

5. Report and disseminate through regular forums, and a national symposium (5 September 2016); and publication of Good Practice Guide …
FORMAL PROVISION FOR STUDENT PARTICIPATION

Higher Education Standards Framework 2011

6.8 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.


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, 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.

6.3.3 Students have opportunities to participate in academic governance.
THEMES FROM PRACTICE OVERSEAS AND AUSTRALIA THUS FAR:

Institutional commitment to and respect for student voice essential to embed principles and culture of partnership

- Training for student representatives
- Ongoing briefing and support
- Starting culture of student representation from the bottom rather than the top – Course Representatives
- Information provided for both Course Representatives and Academics/Course Co-ordinators
- Information about possibilities for student representative roles from the very beginning – from induction
- Representation from all cohorts: international, indigenous, off-shore, part time/full time, mature …
- Representative roles on national bodies eg QAA in the UK
QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER: HOW DOES YOUR INSTITUTION SEE POST GRADUATE STUDENT PARTICIPATION?

1. The engagement of the voice of post-graduate students as a valuable but ‘invisible’ student group?
2. The role of post graduate student leaders – how do they see themselves?
3. Incentives? Same for PGs as UGs
4. PG students as partners working with the university to enhance quality and standards, design courses and curriculum, improve the student experience?
NATIONALLY …

Should there be a sector-wide collaboration to agree upon:

• Principles guiding a student engagement partnership provided for in policy for example in the UK - Chapter B5 QAA Code?

• A Student Participation Framework, for example in Scotland – Student Participation in Quality Scotland (Sparqs)?

• The Student Engagement Partnership (TSEP) UK: National Union of Students (NUS), Higher Education Funding Council (HFCE), Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), Higher Education Academy (HEA)
CONNECTING WITH OUR PROJECT

We hope you will join us in continuing the Student Voice Conversation via our Facebook page: *Student Voice in university decision-making* and follow our activities via our web page: *studentvoice.uts.edu.au*

Or contact us: sally.varnham@uts.edu.au, Bronwyn.olliffe@uts.edu.au or our Project Manager: ann.cahill@uts.edu.au

Thank you!