

Broadening Student Engagement in the Quality Review Process

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President

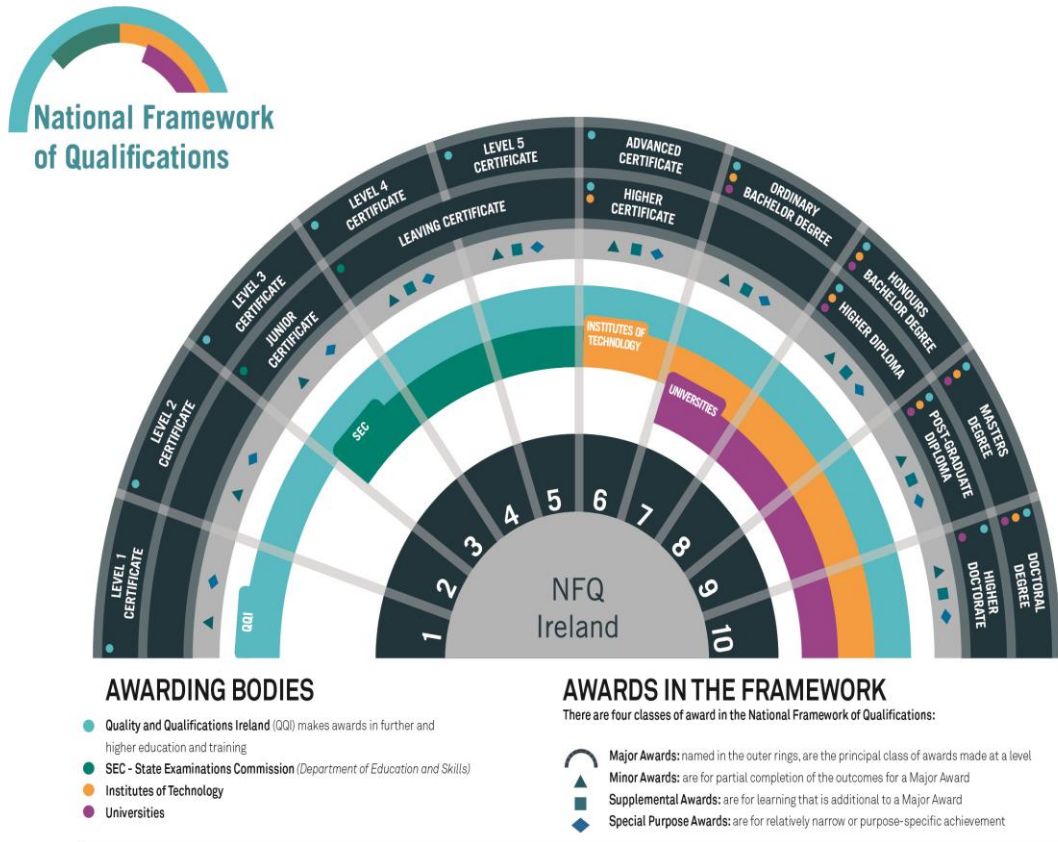
Maynooth Students' Union



Experience

Academic Representative	Maynooth Students' Union Student Senate	Student Quality Assurance (QA) Reviewers Pool	Vice President Education & Deputy President
<p>Academic Representative (2018-2020).</p> <p>Student Programme Coordinator (2020-21).</p> <p>Engaged in Student-Staff Liaison Committees and Department Boards.</p>	<p>Academic Assembly Member (2019-20).</p> <p>Independent Senator (2020-21).</p> <p>Deputy Chairperson of the Student Senate (2021-21).</p> <p>Focus on governance of Maynooth Students' Union.</p>	<p>Member of NStEP/ QQI's Student QA Reviewers Pool (2020-21).</p> <p>Engaged with external QA reviews.</p>	<p>Vice President Education & Deputy President of Maynooth Students' Union (2021-22).</p> <p>Member of the Maynooth University Quality Committee.</p>

Student Quality Assurance Reviewers Pool



- National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP).
- Made up of students from various institutions from across the island of Ireland.
- Focus on valuing students as partners and experts in learning.
- Utilised by QQI.
- External QA reviews.
- Private institutions such as Holmes Institute Dublin.
- New programme proposals.

Fundamental Questions about Quality Practices in HEIs:

1. At what levels are students already involved in the QA process?
2. Where can we broaden student participation, partnership and engagement?
3. What is the role of a student representative?
4. When is student partnership an aspiration as opposed to a reality?
5. What is the difference between Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement?

At what levels are students already involved in the QA process?

Programme Level

- Existing programmes and academic practices are generally governed on a programme level.
- Student participation, engagement and feedback with QA in these programmes is encouraged through:
 1. Academic Representation
 2. Class Representation
 3. Department Boards
 4. Student-Staff Liaison Committees

Institutional Level

- Quality Assurance on an institutional level is encouraged through:
 1. Committees: Quality, Academic Programmes Campus Life, Academic Council, Governing Authority, etc.
 2. As we know, Quality is all-institution encompassing: e.g. CINNTE Institutional Review/recommendations.
 3. Higher level representation: Vice Presidents, President, Postgraduate Representatives of the Students' Union being members of these committees and in these rooms.
- Students on the ground generally don't have opportunities to participate at this "higher level".

Where can we broaden student participation, engagement and partnership?

From our perspective, the fundamental principle which underpins student partnership is:

- Educators are masters of delivering teaching, students are masters of their own learning. Both should be recognised and treated as such.
- I often see our Academic Representatives struggling to have their voices heard at a programme level. This can be damaging for both student engagement and participation.
- If students don't feel respected or valued at a programme level, can we expect them to engage on an institutional level?
- In a perfect system, Sabbatical Officers should be able to focus on institutional level tasks. Unfortunately, the reality is quite different as we often have to step in to help our representatives at a programme level which consumes a sizeable amount of our time.

Where can we broaden student participation, engagement and partnership?

The question still remains: where can we broaden participation, engagement and partnership?

- The first step is for all students / representatives to be valued as partners on a programme level. This includes seeing their suggestions actioned and implemented (if not, why?). This also includes preference given to departmental representatives vs. students' union representatives - is there a balance to be reached?
- Leads to a feeling that their voices and time are important and valuable. They will be more willing to contribute to institutional level QA, if there were mechanisms for them to do so.
- It will also give Sabbatical Officers and other elected representatives (present / future) more time to focus on institutional projects and enhance participation on all levels.

Fundamentally, what is a student representative?



You need to consider, what is a student representative?
What do you see as the role of a student representative?
What value can they add to the QA process?

On all levels, whether you are an Academic Representative or the President of the students' union, you are elected by students, for students.

Representatives are the democratically elected voice of students. This needs to be respected, they must feel valued and listened to. They can be your **most valuable** tool in the QA process.

When is partnership an aspiration as opposed to a reality?

Aspiration

- We understand what student partnership is.
- We talk about student partnership.
- We are “working towards” student partnership.
- Can be perceived as one-sided.
- Students / representatives / staff don't feel valued as partners.
- Can be damaging to both the student and staff experience.

Reality

- Students recognise the role of educators' expertise. Educators recognise the role of students' expertise.
- Two-sided approach. Both sides consistently come to the table with a view to progress.
- The views of both staff and students are mutually valued and respected.
- Students can see their recommendations taken on board to improve their experience on both a programme and institutional level.
- Serves to further the student and staff experience.
- Requires a top-down focus. Needs support from student and staff leaders.

Where do we exist currently as an institution?

What is the difference between Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement?

Quality Assurance

- Working to ensure consistency in quality at our institution.
- Acting on internal and CINNTE recommendations to ensure we are up to acceptable standards.

Quality Enhancement

- Not only ensuring consistency in quality, but enhancing it further.
- Acting on internal and CINNTE recommendations **and** commendations to ensure we are not just up to standards but exceeding them.

Which benefits students and staff the most?

What is the difference between Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement?

- It is important that we can not only assure quality, but enhance it to ensure that we are delivering a world class experience for our students and staff.
- Need to plan ahead each year. Consistently improve for internal and the next CINNTE external review.
- What QA processes will we use and how? Where are students and / or representatives going to be involved?
- Diversity in QA is important. Not only in programme and level of study, but in gender, sexuality, ethnicity, etc.
- Students should be involved in academic quality assurance and enhancement, approval of new programmes, etc. but also other institutional aspects such as facilities, student experience, etc.
- Many avenues to broaden student participation, engagement and partnership.

Overall...

- The first step towards student participation in institutional QA is mutual respect and partnership at a programme level.
- Student partnership is key when we talk about broadening participation.
- With greater partnership at programme level, full-time elected representatives can turn their focus to institutional projects.
- Quality Assurance is good, Quality Enhancement is better. Students would be willing to engage with both if they feel they will be listened to and it will benefit their experiences.
- Partnership needs to be every HEIs reality, not aspiration.
- Academic Representatives have an interest in QA / QE. Students' unions can establish consultations on institutional matters when / if required.
- Student Representatives can be some of your **most valuable** tool, if used correctly.

Thank you for listening.

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