



**National Student  
Engagement Programme**

Clár Rannpháirtíochta Náisiúnta  
na Mac Léinn

# National Student Engagement Network

Event Report



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# National Student Network Event

1st December 2022

Many thanks to all the speakers, chairpersons, contributors and attendees for making the National Student Engagement Network such a successful day!

The focus of the event was on embedding student engagement in policy and practice in Ireland, building on success to date and tackling new challenges with real resolve for the benefit of students and staff. It was a lively day of debate and discussion that we hope to build on.

A special word of thanks to the team at Maynooth University and Maynooth Students' Union for their support with organising and hosting the event.



# National Student Network Event

## Agenda



### National Student Engagement Network 1st December 2022 Maynooth University Library

Time	Session
9.30am – 10am	Registration (tea and coffee)
10am – 10.15am	<b>Welcomes and Launch of the NStEP Case Study Hub</b> Chairperson Clodagh McGivern (USI) Niall Daly, MSU President Dr Alison Hood, Maynooth University Dean of Teaching and Learning NStEP partners - Louise Sherry (HEA) and Laura Flynn (QQI)
10.15am – 11.05am	<b>Opening Plenary: Student Engagement in HE Quality</b> Maureen McLaughlin (Northumbria University) Niall Daly (Maynooth Students' Union)  <b>Postgraduate Research Student Engagement: Niamh Kennedy (UL)</b> Chairperson Oisín Hassan (NStEP)
<b>Parallel Sessions</b>	
11.05am – 11.55am	1. Students as partners in assessment – Rob Lowney (DCU TEU)  Chairperson – Anna Travers (NStEP)
11.55am – 12.45pm	2. The path to meaningful student partnership in student support services - Rachel Murphy (TCD Disability Services)  Chairperson – Megan Griffiths (NStEP)
11.55am – 12.45pm	3. Student Partnership for Student Success Strategies– Lisa O'Regan, Eddie Corr, Conor Cronin, Alex Balfe, and Aisling Flynn (Maynooth University)  Chairperson – Judith Veld (NStEP)
11.55am – 12.45pm	4. "You're in the wrong seat": Exploring perceptions of power dynamics among student governors – Kevin McStravock (QAA UK)  Chairperson – Áine Daly (NStEP)
12.45pm – 1.30pm	LUNCH: Pugion Hall, Maynooth University
<b>Plenary Sessions</b>	
1.30pm – 2pm	<b>An overview of UK student engagement in policy and practice: Ruth Burchell and Kevin McStravock (QAA UK)</b>  Chairperson – Rachael Sarsfield Ryan (NStEP)
2pm – 2.50pm	<b>Workshop: Embedding Student Engagement in Policy and Practice</b> Facilitators – Rachael Sarsfield Ryan (NStEP) and Oisín Hassan (NStEP)
2.50pm – 3.20pm	<b>Panel Discussion: Reflections on student partnerships – what works?</b> Maureen McLaughlin (Northumbria University) Catherine McCabe (TCD) and Zoe Cummins (TCDSU) Jennifer Treadwell (NCISU) and Karen Jones (NCI)  Chairperson – Caoimhe O'Carroll (NStEP)
3.20pm – 3.30pm	Closing remarks  Group photograph



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NSIEP@USI.ie



National Student Engagement Programme



National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP)



NSIEPie



www.studentengagement.ie/strategy



QQI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland  
Dearbhú Cállochta agus Cállochtaí Éireann



HEA

AN tÚDARÁS um ARD-OIDEACHAS  
HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY

## Key Takeaways

### Contributor Perspective

Although I came to NStEP Network event at the glorious Maynooth University to give a keynote about the history of student engagement in the UK from national and institutional perspectives and impart the wisdom of my many years of experience in higher education, what I learnt from others and took away from this conference far outweighed what I delivered!

It was a joy to hear how greatly active engagement in the improvement of the student experience is valued by the student representatives who presented , but also by the staff and students who participated in the workshops and plenary sessions.

While the benefit of student engagement may seem obvious to all of us, there was no sense of complacency in this forum and the quest for continuous development and learning from one another is thankfully, inexhaustible.

*Maureen McLaughlin*  
*Academic Registrar, Northumbria University*



## Key Takeaways

### Contributor Perspective

I had a great time attending the NStEP Network event as I had the opportunity to discuss student partnership with like-minded people. I found the discussion that followed my session on cocreation in student support services particularly insightful. We spoke about the value of student partnership in this context, as well as the urgency and importance of quality assurance in student services.

I also attended sessions from other contributors that focused on other areas of higher education. The conversations I found most interesting were those about student governance. Overall, I was very happy to have attended and I learned a lot!



*Rachel Murphy*  
*Graduate Intern, Trinity Disability Service*

## Key Takeaways

### Contributor Perspective

Kevin McStravock provided a keynote on behalf of the Quality Assurance for Higher Education (QAA), the UK's independent expert body for quality in higher education. In the presentation, Kevin outlined how policy developments such as the establishment of the UK Quality Code and the European Standards and Guidelines had embedded student engagement as a central practice in UK higher education. Though policy approaches in higher education have somewhat diversified in recent years between England and devolved nations, student engagement remains a central pillar of the work of most higher education institutions.



*Kevin McStravock  
Lead Policy Officer (Devolved Nations  
and Europe) at the Quality Assurance  
Agency (QAA UK)*

## Key Takeaways

### Contributor Perspective

Kevin also presented the high-level findings of the research project he had completed as part of his Masters in Student Engagement (Higher Education) at the University of Winchester. His research explored the manifestation of power in higher education governance through the lens of student governors in UK and Irish higher education.

The research highlights that governors' ability to influence decision-making in governing body is dependent on their ability to 'play the game' effectively, which is largely determined by their prior experience. In general, students find themselves disadvantaged compared to their fellow governors, particularly lay members whose experience tends to be much more valued in the governance setting. The research also explores how power is manifested differently in online and in-person governing body meetings, though concludes that many examples of power are embedded within the structures of governing body itself.

Kevin's presentation made several recommendations including comprehensive training for student governors, and for all governing body members on the unique expertise of student governors. He also proposed that student engagement in governance be considered as part of an institution-wide strategy to underpin student engagement.

## Key Takeaways

### Attendee Perspective

I took a lot away from this event. It provided opportunities to network with professionals and advocates in student engagement, alongside providing very informative workshops and collaboration opportunities with staff across the UK and Ireland.

I had the opportunity to open the session on powers dynamics for student governors in higher education. I found this workshop impactful and insightful, providing evidence-based pathways of making student participation in University Governance more inclusive and equitable for the students of tomorrow.

*Áine Daly,*  
*NStEP Student Trainer 22/23*





## Key Takeaways

### Attendee Perspective

As a student and past class rep, I found the NStEP Network Event to be an inspiring day! Hearing the presenters and attendees speak about different strategies of promoting student engagement gave me many ideas that I can take back to my own institution. Of particular value to me, was to see the emphasis on building strategies for engaging and empowering inactive students, or students that may sometimes be more on the periphery, such as postgraduate students.

The attendees were from a varied background, both staff and students. The expertise and creativity present in the rooms became very clear during the workshops. Each group came up with great solutions for the questions that were distributed by the presenters.



As a chairperson for the session on student success strategies, I struggled to bring the attention of the groups back to the front to close-off the session! Such eagerness in engaging with the topic and with brainstorming solutions for student engagement was amazing to experience.

*Judith Veld*  
*NStEP Student Trainer 22/23*

# Final Notes

Again, NStEP would like to extend a huge thank you to all the speakers, chairpersons, contributors and attendees for making the National Student Engagement Network such a successful day!

All of the presentations will be available on the NStEP website:

<https://studentengagement.ie/national-student-engagement-network-event-report-december-2022/>

