



**Northumbria
University**
NEWCASTLE

What has Student Engagement ever done for us? The what, why and how - observations from a UK perspective.

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NStEP : National Student Engagement Programme

Clár Rannpháirtíochta Náisiúnta na Mac Léinn

#TakeOnTomorrow

Nothing new under the sun: the Golden Age



The forwards dynamics of student engagement in national review systems

2000s - Student reviewers active in other European systems – Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Norway

2003
QAA Scotland embraces the role of student reviewer within its national QA system

2008 ENQA review of QAA – partially achieved student engagement – the push forward!

2009 onwards – student reviewers in Welsh QAA system
2009 – 2018 student reviews in England and NI QAA

ENQA reviews of QAA 2013/2018 identified student engagement as a strength



How have we recognised active student engagement?



- Student reviewers - in national/institutional quality processes
- Student representation and active participation in governance
- Active student engagement as partners in learning and quality
- Student voice, NSS, the UK quality Code, TEF submission
- Ongoing work of NUS, sparqs, RAISE, REACT, Student Minds, wonkhe and, of course, NStEP
- The unrealised potential of the Office for Students
- Fees, the rise of consumerism and student rights/entitlements
- Co creation and collaboration in pandemic
- The report of the Student Futures Commission – Feb 2022
- Responding to the cost of living crisis

Some guiding principles

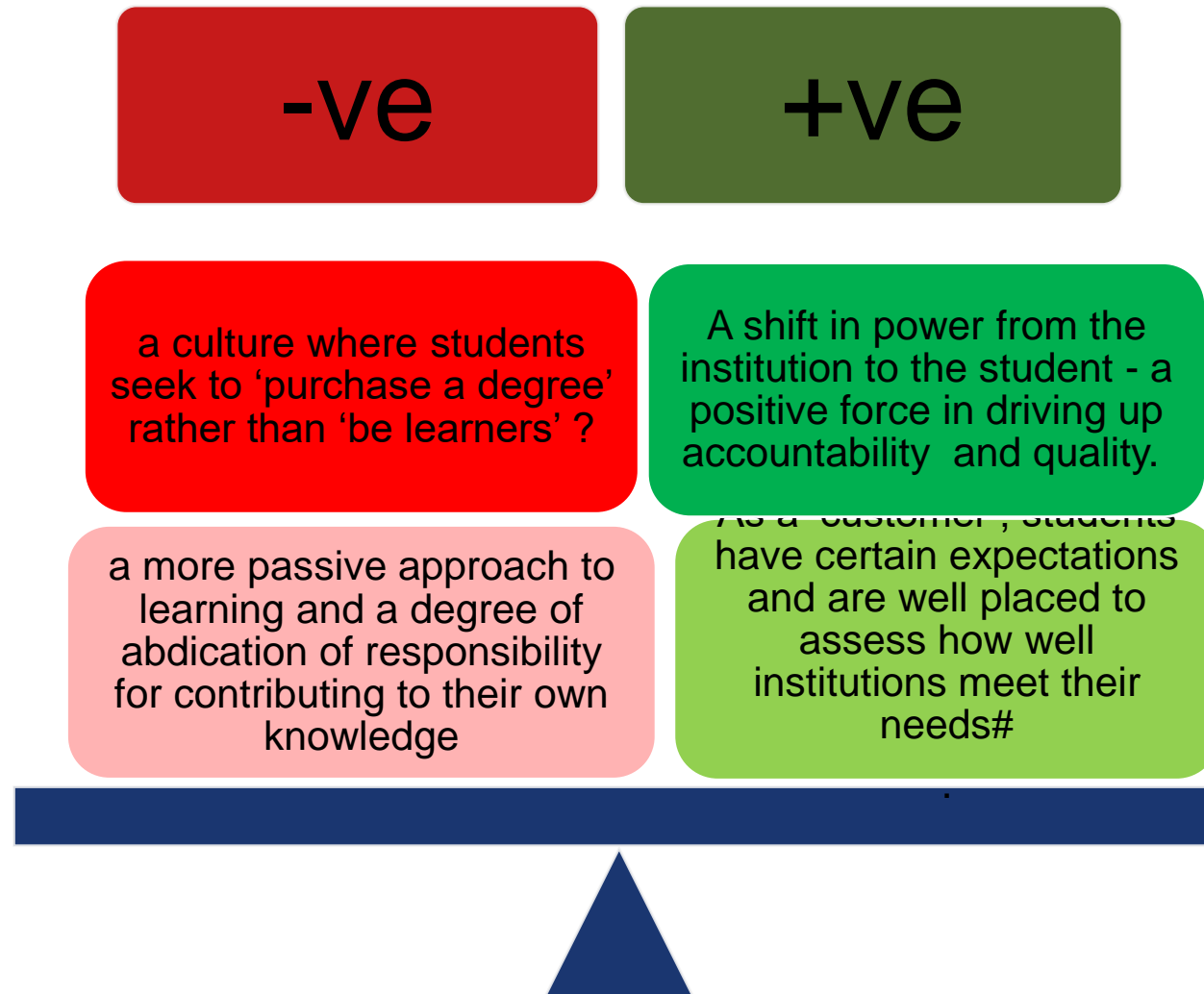
- partnership working
- range of engagement opportunities
- enhancements, innovation and transformation which drive improvements to the student experience
- effective, well resourced and supported representation at all organisational levels
- diversity in the design and delivery of student engagement
- regular, timely feedback

Harnessing the power of student personae

- Learners
- Partners
- co-producers and developers
- change agents
- representatives
- peers
- full members of academic community
- researchers!
- consultants
- customers/consumers



Caveat emptor/the customer is always right



Achieving balance

- Create space for dialogue which covers **all** facets of student ‘identity’
- More than just a consumer : active student engagement, learner identity, academic support and achievement
- ‘value for money’ vs ‘investment’.
- Avoid keen jerk changes in response to ‘consumer’ feedback:
- Foster an environment where a degree is perceived as something that requires investment, effort and engagement.
- Some examples from Northumbria University

Student Careers Advocates



- March 2020 - initial idea of students promoting the work of our Graduate Futures team to peers and providing student voice and feedback to our activities.
- September 2020, re-hired 3 of the original Career Advocates and promoted them to Senior Career Advocates
- October 2020 recruited 3 new Advocates to continue the development of the Career Advocate programme and they 'line managed' by the Senior Advocates.
- Each Advocate was assigned a Careers Adviser as a mentor to guide them in their career development.
- 4 of the students were from a widening participation background – 3 were mature students and 1 was from a low participation neighbourhood.
- Due to Covid, all of the Advocates work was conducted online during the academic year 20/21
- students had the opportunity to work with various stakeholders including members of staff at various levels of seniority across the service, employers, and the SU
- The work they completed over 11 months was diverse and included;
 - *Careers on the Couch* published covering topics such as BAME and Inclusive recruitment.
 - Articulate rise videos to be used as stand alone videos
 - Re-brand of the Part-time Job and Internship social media job infographics
 - Review of Mindset course for NU Futures
 - Data analysis of Webinars on Wednesday attendance
 - Participation in Careers Adviser led sessions : to promote the benefits of a Placement, Competency and Strengths based interviews.
- Examples of digital content produced by the Advocates can be found [here](#)



Student Inclusion Consultants



- Working in partnership with our students to achieve an inclusive experience for all, learning from the 'experts' in the current student experience and addressing barriers to student success where these are identified. We have students from Newcastle, Amsterdam and London.
- lived experience/strong understanding, of the barriers that underrepresented students may face whilst at University.
- Throughout 2022/23, our SICs will work closely with staff across the University to address barriers and enhance the student experience.
- Student Reviews –staff opportunity to work with a SIC to reflect on the inclusivity of practice within their faculty or service. Examples could include an SIC reviewing:
 - teaching materials within a module to ensure accessibility
 - impact of policy on a specific group, e.g., student parents
 - marketing materials to ensure diverse approaches to recruitment for a specific course/activity
 - ...or more currently, to inform what support would be relevant to specific groups around Cost of Living.

Reciprocal Insight Programme IIRIS)

- IRIS matches a SIC with a senior University staff member to share insights and support the staff member in gaining an understanding of the current lived experience of our underrepresented students.
- The focus is on a 1-2-1 professional relationship which supports transformational conversations with an inclusion focus and enables SICs to build networks and develop key employability skills.

Content Development

- Develop or review appropriate content with a student inclusion lens: imagery, written or video content that can be used across various platforms.
- Consultative groups established for our neurodiverse students that services can engage with to obtain an insight into the perception of student induction, marketing materials etc.



Benefits of embedding student engagement

- student-facing policies and practices which improve the overall student experience.
- an environment where students are a fundamental part of determining its effectiveness.
- Institutional focus on improving the learning and teaching offer.
- student views provide valuable information for and feedback to staff
- active student engagement - a key feature of the quality systems operating across *all* UK nations.
- partnership working to enhance policy and practice
- Student involvement in QA/QE supports continuous improvement of HE and the overall student experience
- Students as active ambassadors, engaging with the wider civic/external community
- In critical challenges (pandemic, cost of living crisis) collaborative working to find positive solutions
- Northumbria's winning Times Higher submission for University of the Year

A buzz word, not a fuzz word

- Still a 'gold standard' : and golden ages are not just in the past!
- Be more than just a consumer, be an active partner
- Make effective use of SU and rep system
- Find/be a 'champion' in your SU support structure and in the University/College
- Make the most of your seats on committees
- Ask for (access to) data, information, support and advice
- Get involved in academic governance, strategy development, projects, decision making





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WINNER

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Thank you : Any Questions?

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