

Review of Student-Staff Agreements in Higher Education: Creating a Framework

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Abstract : Research has long described the enhancement of student engagement as a fundamental aim of delivering a consistent, lifelong benefit to student success across the multitude of dimensions a quality HE (higher education) experience offers. Engagement may take many forms, with Universities and Institutes across the world attempting to define the parameters which constitutes a successful student engagement framework and implementation strategy. These efforts broadly include empowering students, encouraging involvement, and the transfer of decision-making power through a variety of methods with the goal of obtaining a meaningful partnership between students and staff. As the Republic of Ireland continues to observe an increasing population transferring directly from secondary education to HE institutions, it falls on these institutions to research and develop effective strategies which insures the growing student population have every opportunity to engage with their education, research community, and staff. This research systematically reviews SPAs (student partnership agreements) which are currently in the process of being defined, and/or have been adopted at HE institutions, worldwide. Despite the demonstrated importance of a student-staff partnership to the overall student engagement experience, there is no obvious framework or model by which to begin this process. This work will therefore provide a novel analysis of student-staff agreements which will focus on examining the factors of success common to each and builds towards a workable and applicable framework using critical review, analysis of the key words, phraseology, student involvement, and the broadly applicable HE traits and values. Following the analysis, this work proposes SPA 'toolkit' with input from key stakeholders such as students, staff, faculty, and alumni. The resulting implications for future research and the lessons learned from the development and implementation of the SPA will aid the systematic implementation of student-staff agreements in Ireland and beyond.

Keywords : student engagement, student partnership agreements, student-staff partnerships, higher education, systematic review, democratising students, empowering students, student unions

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