

The role of Student Reviewer at UCC

Within the Irish university sector, the participation of students as full Panel Members on Quality Peer Review Panels is unique to UCC. The role of Student Reviewer was first introduced within the internal quality review process of UCC in 2014 and to this day, provides a vital contribution to realising UCC's mission of delivering *“an outstanding student-centred teaching and learning experience with a renewed, responsive and research-led curriculum at its core”* (UCC Strategic Plan 2017 – 2022, Goal 1).

The student voice and perspective are crucial to the ongoing quality enhancement of UCC professional practices in education, research and support activities and services.

To this end, the engagement of students as active partners in the equality enhancement process is explicitly stated as one of the key objectives of the University's Quality Enhancement Policy (2018). This role of students as equal partners in the structures and activities of the University is also endorsed at national level by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and Quality and Qualification Ireland (QQI) among other key State bodies and agencies. A landmark policy document in this sense was the Enhancing Student Engagement in Decision-Making Report¹ (HEA, 2016). This report clearly states:

'Student engagement in institutional decision-making, far from being an optional 'extra-curricular' activity in higher education is in fact an integral, existential, part of higher education. It is central to the mission of higher education in democratic societies and a core element in the education and socialization of students into active citizenship'.

As a response to this report, the National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP) was immediately established by the synergic efforts of HEA, QQI and the Union of Students in Ireland (USI). The latter recently published the 'Steps to Partnership Framework'² (2020), aimed at supporting the implementation of staff-student partnership practices in the Irish higher education sector and launched and delivered its first Professional Development course for HEI staff 'Steps to Partnership' in 2021.

¹ <http://www.thea.ie/contentfiles/HEA-IRC-Student-Engagement-Report-Apr2016-min.pdf>

² <https://studentengagement.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/NStEP-Steps-to-Partnership-WEB-VERSION.pdf>