Perceptions of the Challenges and Effectiveness of Students on Internal Quality Assurance Review Panels: A Study Across Higher Education Institutions.

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Abstract.

This study evaluates the challenges and the effectiveness of students engaging in quality assurance (QA) review processes in higher education institutions. The research team set out to uncover and explore the benefits of working in partnership with students in QA processes and highlight the potential barriers to a more inclusive engagement, in order to work towards widening the diversity of student voices in these initiatives and academic development opportunities more broadly. We used a snowball sampling methodology and received responses from 35 higher education institutions. The main findings of this study have demonstrated the value of working with students as partners in QA processes, due to their fresh perspectives and expertise in student experience that can challenge the status quo. However, this study has also importantly highlighted the potential pitfalls of the recruitment processes, in particular the need for further action to be taken to diversify the pool of students from which the Student Reviewers are recruited, and the need to develop effective training to support students to be successful in their roles.

Keywords: QA; Quality; Student engagement; Student panel members; Student reviewers.

1.　Introduction.

This research explores the developments of student engagement in quality assurance (QA) reviews, to highlight and evidence the challenges can be found and where best practice can offer solutions. This paper situates the term '*student engagement*' in this context as being the extra-curricular participation of students engaging in QA roles for programme (re)approval. It will highlight the uptake of these student engagement initiatives at the time of this research study and critically assess the effectiveness of engaging students as full panel members (QAA, 2012). This paper provides a preliminary audit of higher education to explore the number of institutions fostering student engagement in QA, assess the approaches those institutions take– with particular consideration to representation and opportunities for engagement - and highlight the manner in which students are engaged in the QA panels. These foci will follow Derfel Owen's (2013) research, which asked nine providers several questions relating to students as panel members: i) Are students up to the job of being academic subject reviewers? ii) How do you recruit and select the most appropriate students to be reviewers? iii) What training and support are required to make sure students are effective reviewers? iv) Are students effective in the role and do they add value? We have adopted Owen's questions and included further questions relating to accessibility to opportunities (Mercer-Mapstone, Islam &Reid, 2019; O'Shea, 2018). There is variance in practice in academic quality assurance internationally. On the whole, governing bodies are open to exchanging their ideas, solutions, and structures for QA (McClaran, 2018).

The assurance of the quality of the academic standards, delivery of courses, and student support is an integral part of the educational system to protect the standards of education. In recent decades, particularly in Europe, higher education institutions have begun to engage students more meaningfully in these processes, as part of a growing global movement to engage students as partners in educational development (Lowe & El Hakim, 2020). This standard is followed globally in other regional quality bodies such as the APQN (Asia Pacific Quality Network) and CHEA (Council for HE Accreditation – USA). In the European context, the European Association for QA champion QA via peer review, rather than through external regulators and inspection. In the Republic of Ireland, the National Student Engagement Programme sets out aims to develop student engagement through course level representation, governance and management, and in QA and enhancement (NStEP, 2020).

The practice of peer review panels encourages a sector-wide direction towards enhancement, collaboration, and transparency. These panels consist of higher education institution managers/administrators, academic staff, policy leads and, importantly, often students (ENQA, 2005). The European Commission emphasises that '*every institution should develop and implement a strategy for the support and on-going improvement of the quality of teaching and learning, devoting the necessary level of human and financial resources to the task, and integrating this priority in its overall mission…*' (European Commission, 2013, p. 64). In the United Kingdom (UK), where the majority of the responding institutions in this study are located, the QA Agency for Higher Education (QAA) has established Student Reviewers on their higher education institution review panels since 2007 (Blackstock, 2020). Following this, higher education institutions also began to emulate this practice for internal reviews of academic courses. This took the shape of student engagement roles such as Student Panel Members and Student Reviewers (UCL, 2020; Edinburgh Napier University, 2020; University of Lincoln, 2020). This paper shall refer to the role as Student Reviewers but incorporates Student Panel Members. It is on these formal student roles on QA approvement and scrutiny panels that this study will focus, with regards to their uptake, effectiveness, and challenges at higher education institutions.

European higher education has seen a steady increase in student engagement in educational developments in the last twenty years (Lowe & El Hakim, 2020; Bryson & Callaghan, 2018), particularly at course level and University governance (Bols, 2020; Fletcher, 2017).,. Questions concerning the students' place in higher education as a partner (NUS, 2012), producer (Neary, 2020) or member of a community (Beniston and Harris, 2017), are of paramount importance. Supporting students to take part in university governance and quality review is an advanced area of student engagement practice, which requires attention to ensure the effectiveness. The expectation for UK higher education institutions to follow these practices was set out by the QA Agency in the UK Quality Code 2012 (QAA, 2012).

An ambition was emphasised that students should be '*full and equal members*' of all quality processes, such as the quality review panels on which this paper will focus (Owen, 2013, p.166). In 2018, the revised Quality Code emphasised, '*Higher education providers take deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience*' (QAA, 2018).

Buckley (2014) states that student engagement occurs in either pedagogy or policy development, however, these are not mutually exclusive and student engagement in QA panels are both in one. From a preliminary review of the search terms '*Student Panel Members*' and '*Student Reviewers*' on university websites, the role broadly entails students being required to attend an event alongside other representatives such as academics, prospective employers, quality officers and managers. Often these panels take place for either the validation/approval of new courses of study, or the revalidation/re-approval of current courses, and exist to scrutinise the documentation and proposals from academic staff. Student Reviewers are expected to assess the student experience through meetings with students, student survey data. They are provided some level of training to raise awareness of university processes. It is clear that payment or accreditation is provided by some, although in both QAA guidelines (2012 and 2018),, no specific payment, training or facilitation guidance is provided beyond ambitions for representation.

Weller and Mahbubul (2018) identify barriers for higher education institutions (HEIs) when adopting student engagement roles in QA, such as a lack of clarity about the rationale and purpose of student involvement in quality processes, power relationships between students and staff, and institutional structures. Owen (2013) highlights barriers that could prevent students from engaging in these processes such as inaccessible jargon and language, the quantity and depth of reading required (e.g. annual course evaluations 10 pages, revalidation documents 100 pages), and overall daunting documentation (Owen, 2013). However, Owen showed students to be capable and willing, although training was not widespread. The study also found that students were considered by staff to be full and equal members of the panels (Owen, 2013). When engaging students in QA processes, Weller and Mahbubul (2018) emphasised the following steps to be taken to ensure this form of student engagement remains appropriate:

1. Provide clear definitions of student engagement in quality (rationale, purpose, roles etc.);
2. Reflect on student engagement's role within the organisation;
3. Discuss the question of power, authenticity and differential experiences;
4. Explore holistically student engagement at the HEI on all levels;
5. Review roles to ensure they are accessible especially when there is a significant time commitment.

(Weller & Mahbubul, 2018).

This research paper discusses the uptake, coordination, effectiveness, and challenges associated with engaging students as full and equal panel members of QA panels in higher education. This research paper draws from predominantly the UK to assess the number of institutions fostering student engagement in quality, explore the approach those institutions take and understand how these students are supported. QA

2.   Methods.

We used JISC Online Surveys to collect mainly qualitative data from a number of higher education institutions. The research used a snowball sampling methodology to gather data, using relevant email distribution lists and social media networks. This approach was undertaken to reach the greatest number of people who fit a specific set of character traits i.e., to reach specific QA colleagues within higher education who coordinate such schemes.. The survey questions were scrutinised through the University of Winchester's Research Ethics Committee and approved (University of Winchester, 2019). The team constructed the survey in response to Derfel Owen's research in 2013 to create a new question set that endeavoured to explore students as quality reviewers in contemporary higher education. The institution's name was recorded, however, this has been anonymised and will be solely used to define the university by nation, where appropriate in the analysis. The survey received 35 responses from different institutions apart from one institution from the UK that responded twice. Of the 35 responses, two were from the United States of America (USA), one from Canada, one from the Republic of Ireland, with the remaining 31 from UK. Of the UK respondents, three were from Wales, two from Scotland and 26 were from England. Question 2, '*Does your Higher Education Institution engage students as panel members/reviewers on internal panels/committees for QA purposes?*', received the answer '*no*' from three institutions. These were the two USA institutions and the Canadian university; all other institutions who participated answered '*yes*' to question 2 and will be assessed in the findings. Whilst the eligible responses from participants in this study were from the UK and one Republic of Ireland, the data has implications beyond its borders, as it highlights the value of this partnership work in QA and provides a depth of insight into how to ensure Student Reviewers are diverse and supported to be successful in their roles.

The survey asked two multiple choice questions (Q2 a d Q5), with Q2 ending the survey for institutions answering '*no*' to engaging students in panels. All other questions were open text to

encourage participants to provide institutional narratives for analysis. Framed by a construction-ist epistemological perspective, one that seeks to understand the sociocultural and structural contexts that give rise to t responses, an inductive thematic analysis was conducted on the qualitative data. The analysis was explored at a latent level, as the research team sought to understand the underlying assumptions and ideas behind the participant responses (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The inductive thematic analysis meant that we viewed the data set as a whole to draw out emergent repetitive themes for the individual questions. The themes were established for the analysis through a sense of patterned responses to the question (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Table 1. Survey questions.

Q1	Higher Education Institution name
Q2	Does your Higher Education Institution engage students as panel members/reviewers on internal panels/committees for QA purposes?
Q3	How do you recruit and select students to be reviewers/panel members?
Q4	What training and support do you provide to make sure students are effective in their role as reviewers/panel members?
Q5	Approximately how many hours does a student commit per review? (Excluding training, but including reading and panel participation)
Q6	What are the benefits of engaging students in QA processes as reviewers/panel members?
Q7	What are the challenges of engaging students in QA processes as reviewers/panel members?
Q8	What steps are taken to ensure the opportunity of being a student reviewer/panel member is accessible to diverse student groups?
Q9	How are the student reviewers/panel members recognised for their contribution and time committed to these processes?

3.   Results.

This discussion will explore each question in turn and examine the responses thematically in line with the methodology outlined above.[1]

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[1] N.B. participants of UK higher education institutions also refer to a course of study as a '*programme*' and this is reflected in some responses.

2. Does your Higher Education Institution engage students as panel members/reviewers on internal panels/committees for QA purposes?

The study had intended to provide an international survey of the practice of students engaging in QA processes. However, three of four institutions outside of the UK answered 'no' to question 2 and were routed to the end of the survey. For the remaining 31 institutions, we recognise that the institutions that do not have students engaged in their QA processes might have been less likely to fill it in.. Our methodology might have also contributed to this somewhat, as the snowballing sample method would have meant that colleagues who were familiar with this practice were more likely to send it on to other colleagues at institutions who coordinate similar initiatives. Whilst the study might not have achieved the broader scale of the international line of enquiry a, it has offered an interesting perspective on the challenges and benefits to those institutions within the UK and in the Republic of Ireland that do engage students in QAollowing Owen's 2013 study, this paper does succeed in recruiting a greater number of provider responses through its sampling technique for further analysis below.

3. How do you recruit and select students to be reviewers/panel members?

Owen's 2013 study highlighted that six of nine providers in his? sample engaged elected Students' Union Officers (such as Presidents, Vice-Presidents) in the role of Student Reviewers. The remaining participants recruited Student Academic Representatives (171). In this study, further context is given for both the recruitment method as well as the students who are engaged as a result. Student Reviewers occupy positions of elevated levels of responsibility, as they are scrutineers of new or current academic provision in higher education. We were interested to enquire who these students were by asking how they were recruited. Many sector bodies and scholars are beginning to question the representativeness of student engagement roles (Bols, 2020; Mercer-Mapstone & Bovill, 2019; UKSCQA & QAA, 2018) and in particular whether the students are necessarily representing a voice of the collective student body. One way to consider this is through reflecting on how these student engagement opportunities recruit for their roles, which can enable certain student groups to engage, but also prevent others from participating. Overleaf is a table of the results to the question on recruitment for the role of Student Reviewers.

Table 2. Recruitment method for Student Reviewers and frequency of citation in the survey.

Recruitment method	Frequency No of HEI respondents
Recruitment directly from Student Academic Representatives	18
Working directly with SU's either in partnership or asking them to recruit on their behalf	10
Application process and/or interview	6
'Jobs board' and 'leaflets at student events'	3
Media outlets (social media, internal portal, Virtual Learning Environment)	2

More than half (18/31) of the providers cited that the Student Reviewers were directly recruited from Student Academic Representatives, which suggests that the positions were not offered to the wider student body. Student Academic Representatives are course level student representatives who are elected at the start of each academic year by their cohort. Some of these elections are conducted online, but many are still in person, under pressure, and often attract confident students and underrepresent non-traditional students (Lowe & Bols, 2020, 276). Student Academic Representatives are considered to be the core of student engagement / student voice workings at many providers (Lowe & El Hakim, 2020). However, often the opportunity to be selected for this role occupies a short window of opportunity for students – usually elections are held at the start of their first year - and once appointed, those students thereafter benefit from a wealth of further opportunities, including the role of Student Reviewers. It can be argued that the rationale for this method of recruitment is that student representatives will have greater experience of university committee meetings prior to sitting on a panel, but it does suggest that Student Reviewers are exclusive posts only available to a portion of the student population. Concerningly, two providers spoke about direct '*selection*' from the pool of Student Academic Representatives, suggesting the voices are only heard by those students who are deemed most suitable and possibly, as a result of the selection, most agreeing with the provider. Another reported that the General Manager of the Students' Union would be asked to approach the elected student representatives placing that same individual in a considerable position of power. Interestingly, not one of the eighteen institutions expressed their rationale for why they selected

from the pool of Student Academic Representatives, leading the research team to assume this may be a choice made for the above points regarding familiarity with process or, potentially, for convenience. To take this to a further conclusion, it can be understood that certain voices are being missed in these processes and some students, who perhaps may voice unwelcome (but still valuable) perspectives, are being blocked from participating (whether intentionally or not).

4. What training and support do you provide to make sure students are effective in their role as reviewers/panel members?

For many student engagement opportunities training is often cited as crucial element, as students often have to navigate university committees and processes that might be unfamiliar territories with certain expectations for preparation and conduct (Bols, 2017; Sims, King, Lowe & El Hakim, 2016).

Twenty-five (71%) of the respondents reported that formal training was provided, which compares to Owen's 2013 study, where none of the university participants reported formal training and only two Students' Unions did (17%). There was no common content amongst the practices reported, however workshops or training sessions were often reported (7) to involve Quality Officers/Managers relating to QA processes. In these sessions it was outlined that support is offered for the students analysing the documentation to ensure students '*don't feel overwhelmed with the paperwork that can be provided to panels'*. One participant highlighted the importance of dividing the documentation outlining '*which bits to focus on and which they can probably ignore*' as well as highlighting the '*importance and value of their input […] to encourage them to share their views openly*'. One institution reported the innovative use of previous Student Reviewers attending training to share their experience. Other practices included one-to-one briefings (4).. One respondent noted that this is because meeting the students face-to-face would ensure that they know '*what is expected of them'*. Another reported facilitating a mock event in which an institution offers a live practice experience, which is designed '*not to tell the students what to say but to give them an understanding of the event and what they may be asked'*. One respondent also trained students alongside staff as they feel '*It is important for students to feel like equal panel members'* and another provided follow up training in relation to particular '*skills they might need to help them succeed*'.

Many student engagement opportunities in UK higher education are coordinated in partnership with their Students' Union (LeBihan, Lowe & Marie, 2018) and six of the respondents outlined that the training for Student Reviewers was conducted with a Students' Union. Only five institutions cited how long the students were trained for, with two detailing a day, one stating training is a half day event, one noting two hours and one stating that training varies in length without specifying what the length varied between. Only one institution responded that the training was offered online. Seven of the respondents cited that there was no specialist training provided at all, beyond general Student Academic Representative training where the students were recruited from. One participant reported that '*admittedly, there is a gap in training effectively for this purpose [as Student Academic Representative] training tends to focus on providing proactive feedback, rather than how panels and reviews work*'. The same participant reported that there was only a 15-minute briefing before the panel took place.

5. Approximately how many hours does a student commit per review?

There is a relatively even split between the first three timeframes offered, but there is a substantial difference between a student committing 0-5 hours per review and a student committing 11-15 hours per review (see Table 2). It is important to note, however, that this is an approximate assessment, so, with the participants most likely being familiarity with the review documentation, they could have underestimated the time students spend preparing for the panel. This time could also vary between students in the same institution due to many contributing factors such as, previous panel experience, familiarity with higher education jargon and documentation, and confidence. This is also dependent on the areas that students might have been directed to concentrate their focus on. As has been discussed above, some participants noted that they tell students specific areas for them to make comment, whereas others students might be required to read the entirety of the documentation. We specifically asked for this question to be answered excluding time committed to training, because this would help to build a better understanding of the Student Reviewer experience concerning hours committed to the individual event. We had not expected seven institutions stating that 16 hours or more has been committed by the student per review. To speculate, this could suggest that the review panels are over more than one day which might be because the review structure is not conducted for individual courses, but by groupings of subjects e.g. by department.

Table 3. Reported approx. hours student commit per review in higher education institution (HEI). Excluding training but including reading and panel participation.

Survey response categories	No of HEI respondents	Percentage of HEIs
0-5 hours	10	31%
6-10 hours	8	25%
11-15 hours	7	22%
16-20 hours	2	6%
21-25 hours	2	6%
25+ hours	3	10%

6. What are the benefits of engaging students in QA processes as reviewers/panel members?

The most common theme from the responses to this question was the foregrounding of the students' perspective, which corroborates with Owen's (2013) findings where '*across the board it was felt that student members of internal review teams play a full, professional and effective role*' (p. 174). There were multiple references in the responses d to the perspective of the student being that of an expert in the student experience, which makes the role an integral asset to any prospective course development. Recognising that students bring an equal share of expertise ensures the respect for this role and the Student Reviewer. Reflecting this notion, one respondent wrote, '[*t*]*hey are able to give a unique opinion from a student perspective; they pick up on queries and highlight concerns for the student experience, which is an additional pair of eyes that is not focused on learning outcomes or assessment strategy.*' This suggests that they are able to see other equally important aspects of the course design that might otherwise go unnoticed. This provides students with an opportunity to challenge the status quo, as they are not focusing on following conformity to previous experiences of documentation or policy, but on the potential lived experience of the course design. The potential inexperience students might have for institutional processes and systems, gives the reviewing process a fresh insight to '*challenge ways of thinking' and, as one respondent notes, to 'test our assumptions […] to make the best use of the expertise, insights and enthusiasm of our own students'.*

Furthermore, respondents also appreciated this opportunity for students as providing a platform to garner a depth of insight that module evaluation forms cannot provide, as they are able to

follow up on comments and explore ideas from the Student Reviewer. Building on this, the respondents also commented that students are able to identify potential barriers and work with staff to help to remove them for students. This perspective is an influential aspect to the students' role on the review board and can initiate some tough lines of inquiry that often lead to amendments to prospective courses. It is the depth of response and the unique perspective that the students offer that has been identified as one of the key benefits by the respondents. The respondents also highlighted the role the Student Reviewer plays in encouraging any other student who might attend the meeting to speak more freely. One participant noted, *'[t]he students [reviewers] can put departmental students at ease and question them far better than staff.'* This suggests the students act as a connection to the department representatives on a course – one that '*makes the students feel more at ease*', as another respondent noted - which will elicit more meaningful, honest responses from them. The Student Reviewer in this respect is playing the role of something of an arbitrator. Two comments from the respondents, in line with the above, were that the students in this role act as an '*ambassador/ role model to all involved for how good working with students can be*'. These comments suggest that in having a student on the panel, it will evidence the positives of working with students and encourage future working relationships between staff and students in their own disciplines and projects.

The second theme that emerged under this question related to professional development for the students. Respondents recognised the potential gains in '*employability experience and skills'*, '*experiences to take forward into the workplace'*, '*experience of operating in a professional environment*'. These comments recognise that the employability benefits for students being reviewers is a symbiotic relationship, where both parties get something the experience. Furthermore, the students were also perceived by respondents to be benefiting through getting to engage with the processes of the university. As one institution states, '*It increases their knowledge of university processes and how their programme is monitored, this helps them appreciate and engage in governance processes'* and is suggested to be an opportunity to show the transparency of university processes to highlight to students '*the University's commitment to enhancement and improvement of the student experience'* and highlight '*the rigour of our courses*'. The least frequent theme that emerged, but interesting to note nonetheless, was the understanding that a student in the role of reviewer can use this opportunity as a steppingstone to future student involvement, with specific references to the potential for a role as a Students' Union sabbatical officer.

7. What are the challenges of engaging students in QA processes as reviewers/panel members?

When engaging Student Reviewers on a national stage in the UK in 2006, many university leaders claimed that students should not be in such positions of power (Blackstock, 2020) or be equipped to do such demanding work (Owen, 2013). Such issues as low attendance, difficulty navigating jargon, time commitment and reading are often cited as challenges to engaging students in quality processes. We were keen to investigate the common challenges in engaging students as reviewers. We found, the challenges were wide and diverse with a lot of crossover between themes highlighted earlier in this paper. Only one provider reported that they had no issues '*as students are keen to engage in the process'*, with all others reporting several challenges highlighted below.

Although the challenges reported by the providers were diverse, the greatest reported challenge related to students' verbal contributions as Student Reviewers, with nine institutions raising this issue in several ways. One reported that student contributions varied at panel events, two stated that they needed to ensure students would be confident at the events and that the provider placed emphasis that students '*thoughts are just as valid as any other panel member'*. Another reported that '*sometimes students can feel duty-bound (or coerced) to say what they think people want to hear [or] sometimes their lack of experience might mean they miss the opportunity to say what might be influential'*. Two further providers referenced student 'fear', 'imposter syndrome' and 'intimidation' at events in unfamiliar spaces, with senior members of staff present. One noted students' lack of experience as a strength, where students' '*naivety can be a valuable source of helpful criticism'*, but only if the fellow panel members allow students to speak on areas with which they are not necessarily familiar. Another report of good practice from the respondents to overcome challenges related to verbal contributions highlighted the importance of a panel Chair encouraging students to participate and making them feel welcome.

In previous sections the term '*representativeness*' has been discussed mainly with concern for ensuring diverse students' voices are heard, however, individual students can also pose challenges to representativeness. Four providers outlined individual students not representing the wider students' views, with some Student Reviewers having a '*tendency to hear from a particular section of student community, not necessarily representing the 'diversity of the whole student*

population'. Another reported that sometimes, '*they can come with their own agendas which can be a challenge*' This outlines the importance of representativeness being at the forefront of discussions, for not only the provider (for accessibility and inclusion purposes) but also for students in positions of power to remember, as outlined by another provider, '*it is sometimes the case that a student's personal agenda / issues may override the overall process*'. However, it is important to reflect that the same can be said of the staff members on the quality panels, who are equally capable of being in the quality review position with their own agenda.

Resource was also reported as a challenge by two providers noting that '*resourcing a permanent community*' of Student Reviewers is '*difficult*', due to the continuous lifecycle of student transitions and '*bureaucracy*' regarding payment posed a challenge. Other themes related to motivating students to become a reviewer, with seven institutions reporting challenges relating to '*getting students interested'*. Building on this, recruitment as a challenge was also reported from two further institutions, with one particularly citing that, as a distance institution, engaging predominantly part-time students was difficult. Three institutions stated that they struggled to keep students engaged following training and '*follow through with their engagement'*. Another challenge reported by one provider was students' not seeing it as relevant to them as it would not impact their own student journey, rather the students of the future.

Other challenges included 'imposter syndrome', extensive documentation, unfamiliar processes and language, and these have been covered in other sections. Five providers reported time as a challenge relating to the time availability of the students or the time taken to train students to be able to perform the role. The time challenges faced by students including the amount of reading, level of understanding, event clashes with timetabled class sessions, or the events taking place in vacation. One provider also noted the challenge of time relating to matching students with appropriate events and another referencing the anxiousness of staff who did not wish to overburden the students taking part due to the considerable time commitment. One provider responded that '*students' availability rarely seems to coincide with the programme of periodic reviews, and there is a tendency for them to drop out at the last minute when they realise the[y] have an assessment deadline looming'*.

8. What steps are taken to ensure the opportunity of being a student reviewer/panel member is accessible to diverse student groups?

. We were keen to ask this question directly, following calls in wider student engagement literature for student engagement opportunities to be accessible and to represent underrepresented students' voices (Mercer-Mapstone, Islam & Reid, 2019; Bindra et al., , 2018). Mercer-Mapstone and Bovill notably state that just because an opportunity is '*open to all*' does not mean that the opportunity is accessible to all (Mercer-Mapstone & Bovill, 2020) and O'Shea pleads with student engagement practitioners to take additional steps to ensure student engagement opportunities are accessible to students from underrepresented groups (Mercer-Mapstone & Bovill, 2020; O'Shea, 2018).

Time and recognition were reported by two institutions where one noted that it makes efforts to ensure that '*enough time is given for responses so that students could engage'*, and they had also changed locations and paid for travel so that students may attend. The other ensured that there was flexibility in the opportunity, so it was open to students with varied time commitments. Payment was also reported again to ensure that students could participate. Similarly, to the question concerning recruitment, five providers referenced working with Students' Unions to ensure the calls to engage went to a diverse set of students, stating that the Students' Unions had taken steps to engage and be accessible to diverse students, shifting the onus onto the Students' Union.

Diversity was cited in six responses, where one considered the diversity of students when appointing and another monitored uptake of students regarding their demographic, continuing to respond that '*there is always more we can do'* and that more evaluation was required. Another institution cited deliberate steps to target non-elected students, underrepresented groups and another reported how their institution encouraged reflection and engagement of different student voices from varied backgrounds. One respondent stated that they were working closely with a colleague with expertise in their institution to ensure that they were looking out '*for inherent bias in our marketing information*'. A variety of communication channels was also encouraged by three respondents as one way to encourage applications from a wider range of students.

Seven providers referenced similar answers to the question on recruitment and selection, citing the use of provider-wide job boards and other internal student pages so they could be accessed

by any student. One stated that their '*student body is very diverse anyway (above national average in all categories) so no steps are currently being taken to engage one group over another*'. Another five mirrored Bovill's observation by stating that their applications were '*open to everyone*', using '*standard and generic methods*' [which] '*does not enable any type of discrimination*'. Although these statements are not deliberately or consciously making the opportunities exclusive, these institutions could do more to take deliberate steps to ensure this high-responsibility opportunity is more accessible.

9. How are the student reviewers/panel members recognised for their contribution and time committed to these processes?

Although many agree that recognition is required for students taking on a role such as a Student Reviewer, what value to place on students' time is debated and therefore varies across the sector. Recognition through financial payment, employability related student award (e.g., Personal Development Online Badge) and simply volunteering as part of the student voice cause, are all reported in the diverse set of student opportunities. Institutions often employ a range of recognition methods for the Students Reviewers; however some institutions employ only one or two of the methods outlined in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Reported approaches for recognition of students' contribution and time committed as a Student Reviewer.

Recognition of role as Student Reviewer	Further detail	No of HEI respondents
Paid role	Range cited: £150, £200, £350, £60 vouchers. One institution noted they paid the role the same as an external professor and another cited that they paid hourly based on the event and the training. Paying for expenses and food refreshments were also referenced.	15
HEAR accredited	Higher Education Achievement Report	7
Letter of thanks	Email, document, verbal	6

Reference	Reference offered for future job applications	3
'They are not'	Statement from one HEI. Another wrote *'there is no formal process [for recognition]'*	2
On campus credit	e.g., lunch vouchers	1
Unsure	*'I have no information on this'*	1
In process	*'we are currently working on this'*	1

4.   Recommendations.

This paper has highlighted several areas that require further work from institutions. The recommendations from this paper are listed briefly below but will be expanded on in the following discussion.

- i)   Training for Student Reviewers should be provided,
- ii)   Selection of the panel Chair to be given consideration for their influence on the Student Reviewer's experience,
- iii)   Deliberate steps should be taken to increase accessibility of Student Reviewer roles,
- iv)   Recognition should be considered for students in the roles – paid or otherwise.

Training was inconsistent across the participating institutions. It has been highlighted that training provides the answer to many of the challenges faced and therefore we highlight that support must be given to the students to aid with navigation of processes and proceedings. This must be developed whilst respecting that often it is precisely the student's naivety for these processes that can lead to them contributing unexpected and highly valuable considerations. Therefore, this paper recommends that training is constructed to scaffold learning in preparation for the reading and event, to increase confidence, aid with navigation of documentation, and to support student reviewers, rather than to guide student perception of course design. Furthermore, the panel, and in particular the Chair, plays a key role in ensuring students are willing to contribute. Institutions may wish to consider this role more fully in light of the student experience alongside the considerations to the individual's expertise. Recruitment, concerning both methods of and selectivity for, varies across the sector. There is room for this to

be inconsistent in approach, depending on the institutional context, however, what must be taken into further consideration is the accessibility of these opportunities and enhancements to encourage a wide diversity of student voices, beyond the Student Academic Representatives. This may also go some way towards aiding student recruitment, as the institutions selecting directly from the Student Academic Representatives might be selecting the students who are busier and cannot, therefore, give time to this role. Further work is needed here to ensure the role is not just '*open to all*' but accessible to all. In line with this, recognition for the students' time and effort is of importance, where a student might be taking time out of paid employment outside of their studies to contribute to the panel for the other experiential benefits.

5.   Conclusion.

This research paper sought to provide a greater understanding of the role of Student Reviewers in QA processes. The findings have shown the practice is varied across institutions and has highlighted some areas for further development. Compared to Owen (2013), the larger sample size shows the uptake of this form of student engagement, as well as a new adoption of formal student training. Whilst there has shown to be areas that require further consideration, such as accessibility and recruitment, there have also been some key positives, as also highlighted in the findings. Students engaging in QA processes has shown to be a positive experience for the staff, the students, and the overall course development, further endorsing Owen' (2013) which advocates student engagement in QA. It is worthwhile highlighting the numerous positives that have emerged from the data concerning working with students as partners in quality processes. The participants in the survey emphasised the importance of the role in gaining insider knowledge in the student experience, as they are experts in this area and make vital contributions to course design that '*test assumptions*'. Student Reviewers have been noted as also providing a depth of feedback on the course, which forms part of a developmental dialogue that can be further explored in the panel event. This means that the feedback is more meaningful, as it can be considered alongside the student and work with them to find solutions through appreciative and constructive conversation. Participants also highlight that students in these roles act as ambassadors for partnership working, often exemplifying how positive and rewarding working with students as partners in course design and scrutiny can be, which can act as a catalyst for staff attending the event to consider this in their own projects. This study has highlighted the changing sector views regarding student participation

in quality processes and hopes to encourage further developments to support better the students in these roles.

6.   References.

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