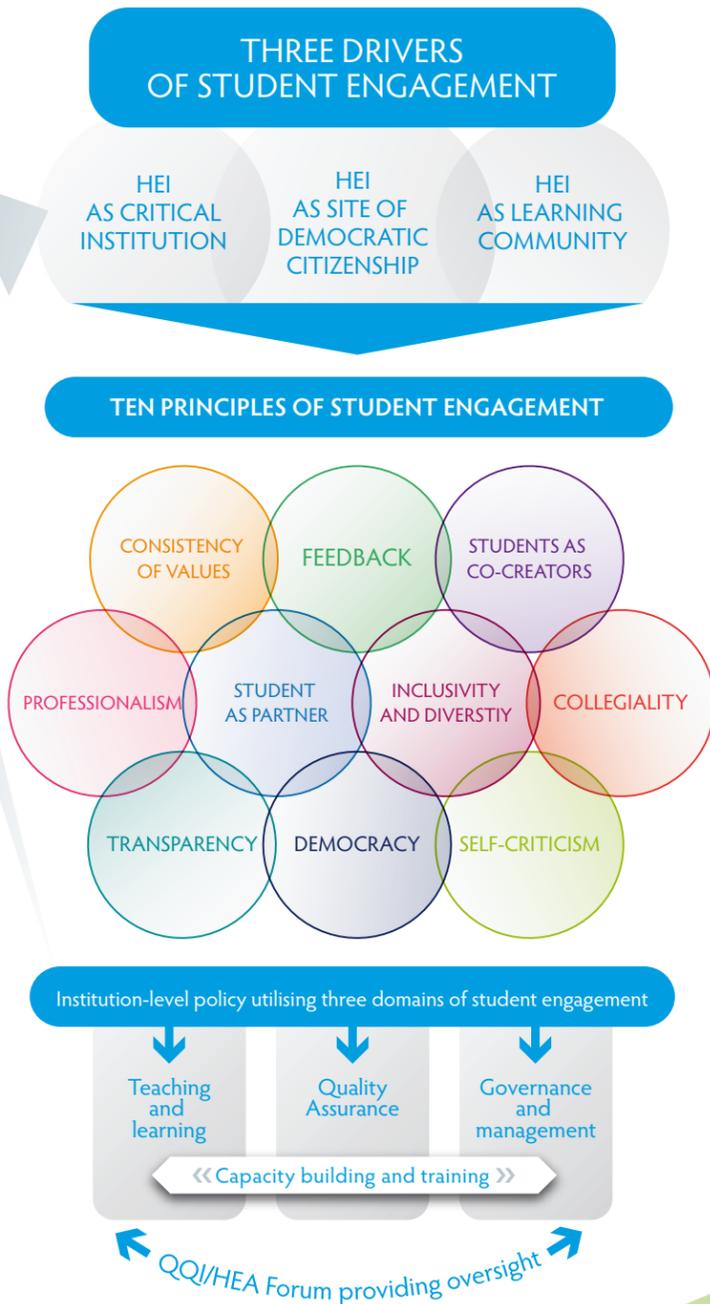


The principles are embedded through the actions of individual institutions, student unions, students and staff members, with the support of the relevant agencies. Three domains of quality assurance, teaching and learning, governance and management, and the cross-cutting theme of capacity building and training are the vehicles through which these principles are actioned. Institutions design a co-authored policy on student engagement to embed the principles using these three domains.

Visualisation of student engagement



EMBEDDING THE PRINCIPLES OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT



SUPPORTING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Students are valued members of the higher education community, and it is important that this value is actioned by welcoming student participation in all aspects of higher education institution (HEI) life.

The student, institution, and wider community benefit when students are actively engaged in institutional decision-making in terms of the three domains of governance and management, teaching and learning, and quality assurance. Student engagement can be defined as

The investment of time, effort and other relevant resources by both students and their institutions intended to optimise the student experience and enhance the learning outcomes and development of students, and the performance and reputation of the institution. (Trowler and Trowler, 2011).

Institutions can be influenced by three drivers in creating a culture of student engagement:

THE HEI AS A SITE OF DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP

Higher education plays an important role in building and maintaining democratic culture and democratic institutions. It is the responsibility of the institution to foster a sense of civic responsibility in the student body.

THE HEI AS A LEARNING COMMUNITY

Students who are viewed, and view themselves, as members of an academic community gain, not only rights, but also responsibilities to that institution. When loyalty is fostered, students can voluntarily seek to improve structures within the institution for all students, present and future.

THE HEI AS A CRITICAL INSTITUTION

Academic freedom is an essential principle of higher education institutions. Academics and universities have traditionally prided themselves on their ability, and duty, to speak truth to power. As key institutions in civil society, they are central to a culture of challenge, critique and free speech.



1. Democracy

The institution will adhere to democratic principles, and will encourage these principles in staff, students, and in wider society.

2. Student as partner

The implications of perceiving students as partners, rather than as consumers are substantial and deep. The student as partner is an active member of an institution with which s/he shares a strong sense of allegiance and commitment.

3. Inclusivity and diversity

Institutions will actively seek to gain insights and contributions from all sectors of the academic community in their governance and decision-making processes. This will go beyond the formal legislative requirements, to provide myriad formal and informal engagement opportunities. As institutions become more socially and culturally diverse, student unions will work to ensure that the diverse nature of the student body is represented on the executive team.

4. Transparency

Institutions will be transparent in the life-cycle of their decision-making processes, while student unions will be transparent in their internal lines of governance, and in the relationship between elected officers and permanent staff. They will ensure that suitable measures are in place to facilitate knowledge transfer from year to year.

5. Students as co-creators

Students will be expected to take responsibility for their own learning. Irish HEIs will embrace innovative teaching and learning techniques which value active involvement from the students.

6. Collegiality and parity of esteem

Irish HEIs and student unions will promote collegiality between staff and students across the institution. Central to collegiality is the development of an open and trustful relationship between individual staff and students within the institution.

7. Professionalism and support

Students and their representatives will contribute fully and act in a professional manner when they are involved in the structures and processes of the HEI. This professionalism is the joint responsibility of the institution and student union. The institution will recognise that staff and student members on committees may have different life experiences and areas of expertise but all are equally valued in the ongoing evolution of the institution. It will be the responsibility of the institution to provide the necessary supports to the student representatives as to enable them to fulfil their role.

8. Feedback and feedback loop

Institutions will welcome and encourage open and prompt feedback from students. Suitable measures will be put in place across the institution to ensure that students are facilitated in providing feedback in a safe and valued manner. Feedback practices will be transparent and the feedback loop will be closed in a timely fashion.

9. Self-criticism and enhancement

Student unions and institutions will continue to be self-critical of their student engagement practices. They will use evidence-based techniques to assess and critique the effectiveness of their strategies for building a culture of engagement.

10. Consistency

Institutions and student unions will ensure that values and practices with regard to student engagement are applied consistently through particular institutions and across institutions, and may put procedures in place to allow departments to share good practice measures.

