

# Responding to Student Voice: Student-led and sector-wide enhancement activity in Scotland

**WILLIAM HASTY**

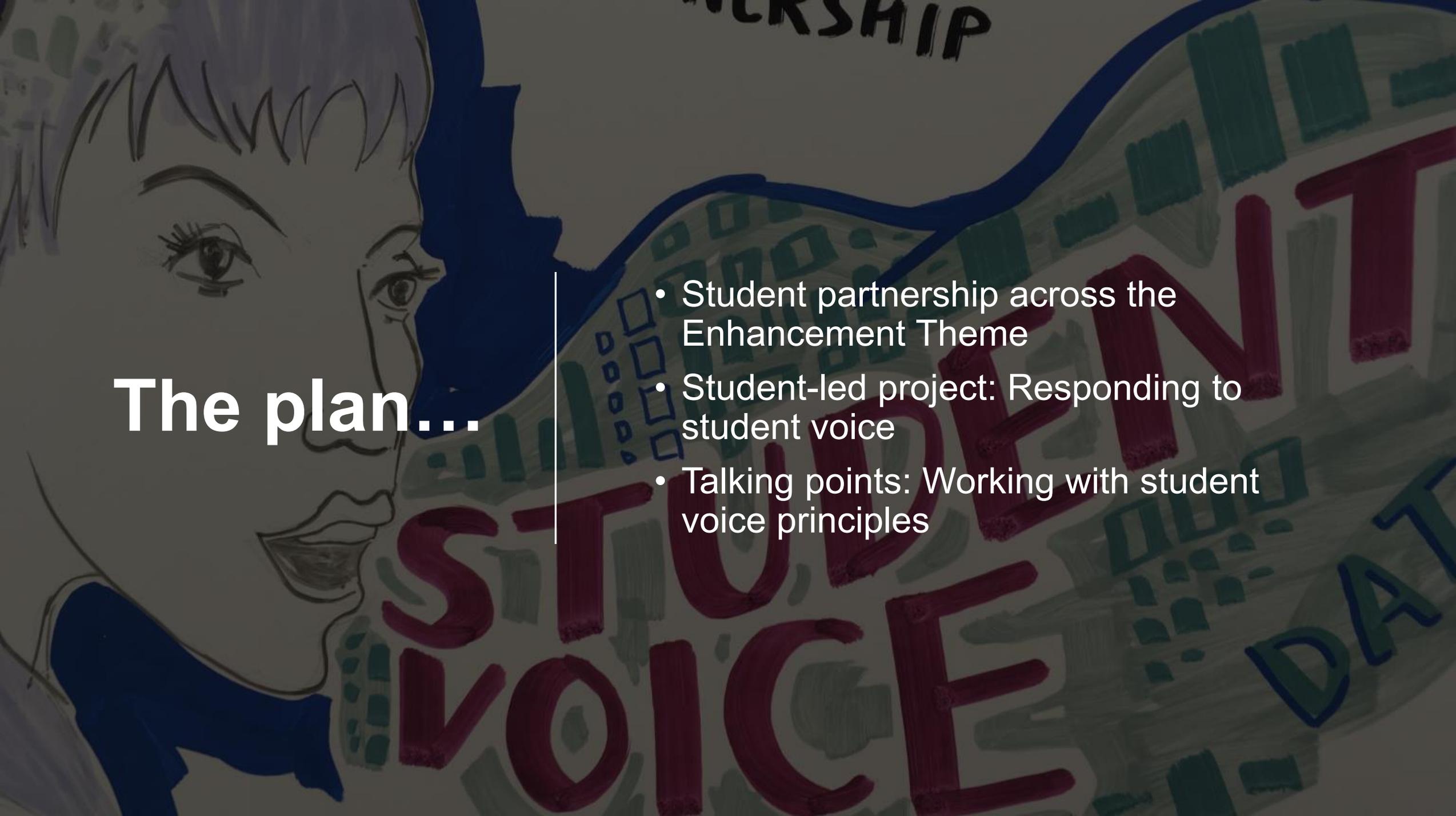
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[@Hasty\\_Tweets](#)  
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# The plan...

- Student partnership across the Enhancement Theme
- Student-led project: Responding to student voice
- Talking points: Working with student voice principles

# Scotland's Higher Education Institutions

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15 Universities



2 small specialist institutions



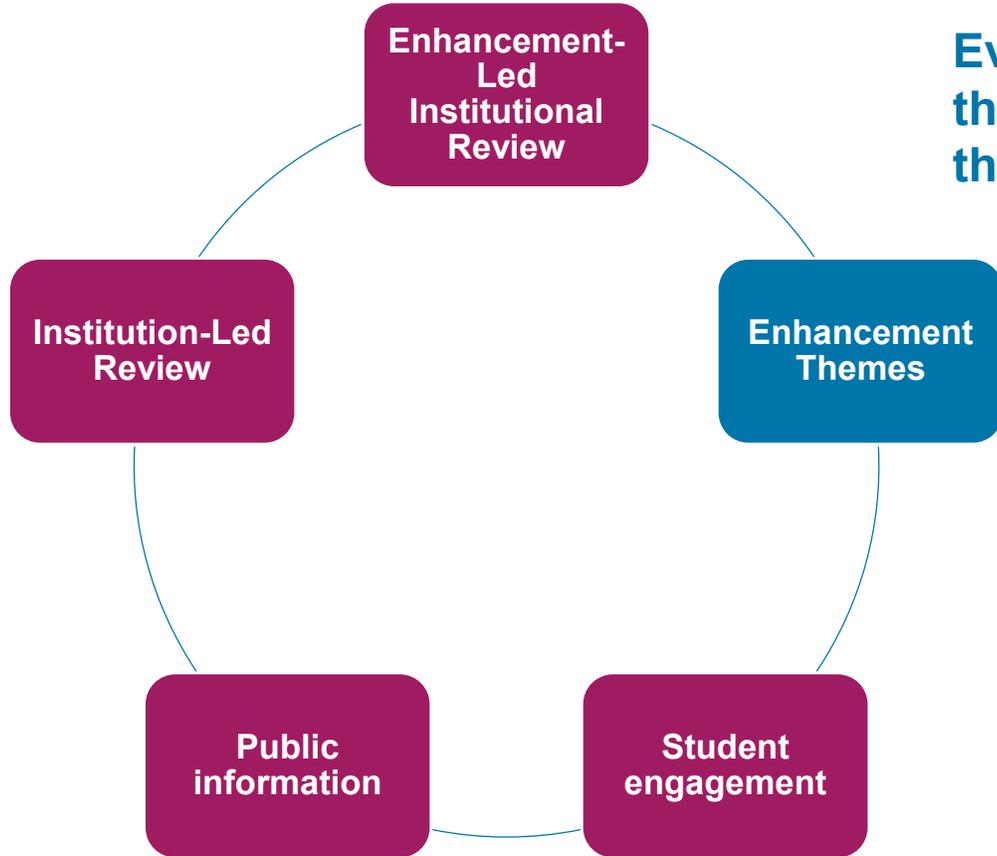
1 tertiary institution



The Open University in Scotland



# Scotland's Quality Enhancement Framework



Evaluating the quality of learning & teaching through an enhancement-led approach since 2003 through partnership



# The Enhancement Themes

## 15 Years of Enhancement Themes



- Assessment and Integrative assessment (2003-04)
- Responding to student needs (2003-04)
- Employability (2004-06)
- Flexible delivery (2004-06)
- First year: engagement & empowerment (2005-08)
- Research-teaching linkages: enhancing graduate attributes (2006-08)



- Graduates for the 21st century (2008-11)
- Developing and supporting the curriculum (2011-14)
- Student Transitions (2014-17)



- **Evidence for Enhancement: Improving the Student Experience (2017-20)**



## What makes a good Theme?

- Relevance to students and staff at all levels
- Inspires people to make a real difference
- Timely response to major issues in HE
- Resonates across the UK and beyond



## How does it work?

- Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee – VPs (Learning and Teaching)
- Theme Leaders' Group – staff and students
- Institutional teams



**Supporting Programme Leaders**  
Edinburgh Napier University



**Learning analytics**  
University of Strathclyde



**Creative disciplines**  
Glasgow School of Art



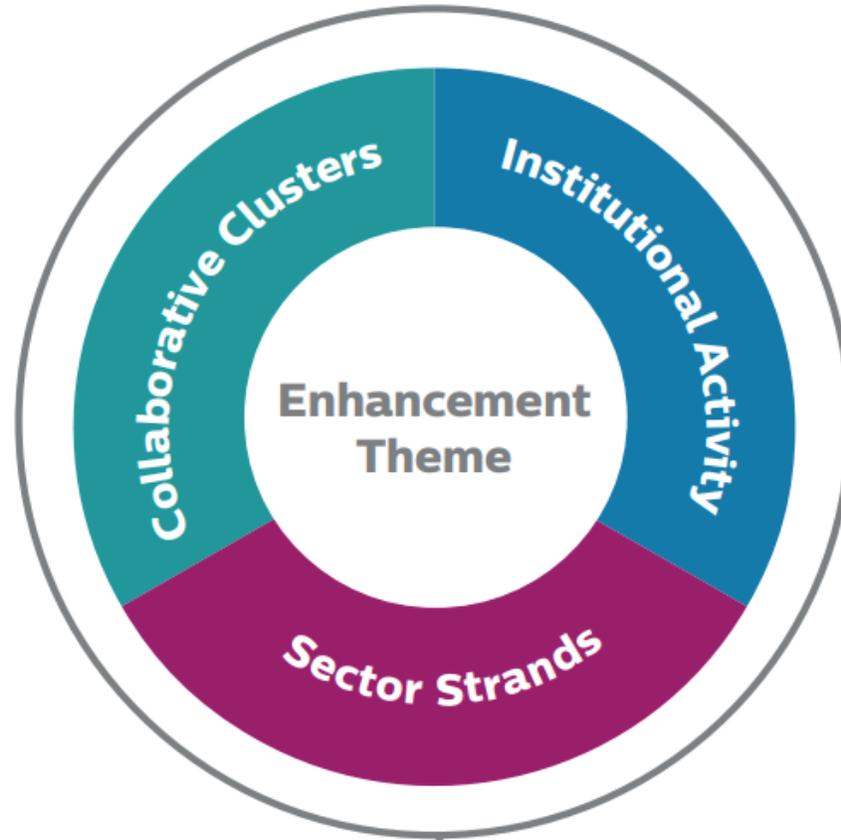
**Distance learning**  
Queen Margaret University



**Measuring beyond metrics**  
Abertay University



**Graduate employment**  
University of Dundee



**19 Institutions pursuing projects across the following areas:**

- The nature of evidence
- Approaches to evaluation
- Staff upskilling and empowerment
- Learning analytics and dashboard development
- Quality assurance processes
- Student characteristics
- Student success, retention and employability
- Student engagement and belonging
- Learning space and curriculum development
- Digital technology, learning, teaching and assessment

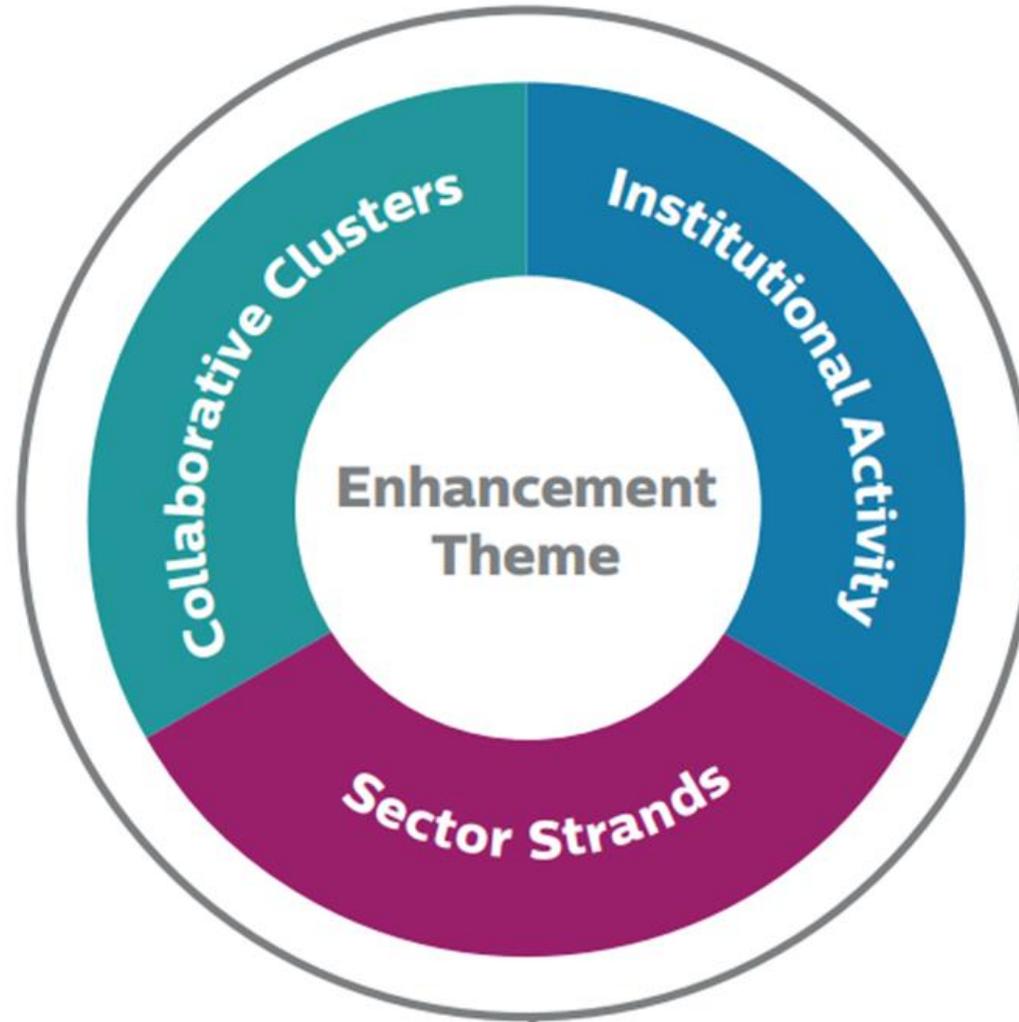
**Optimising the use of existing evidence**

**Student engagement**

**Student demographics, retention, and attainment**

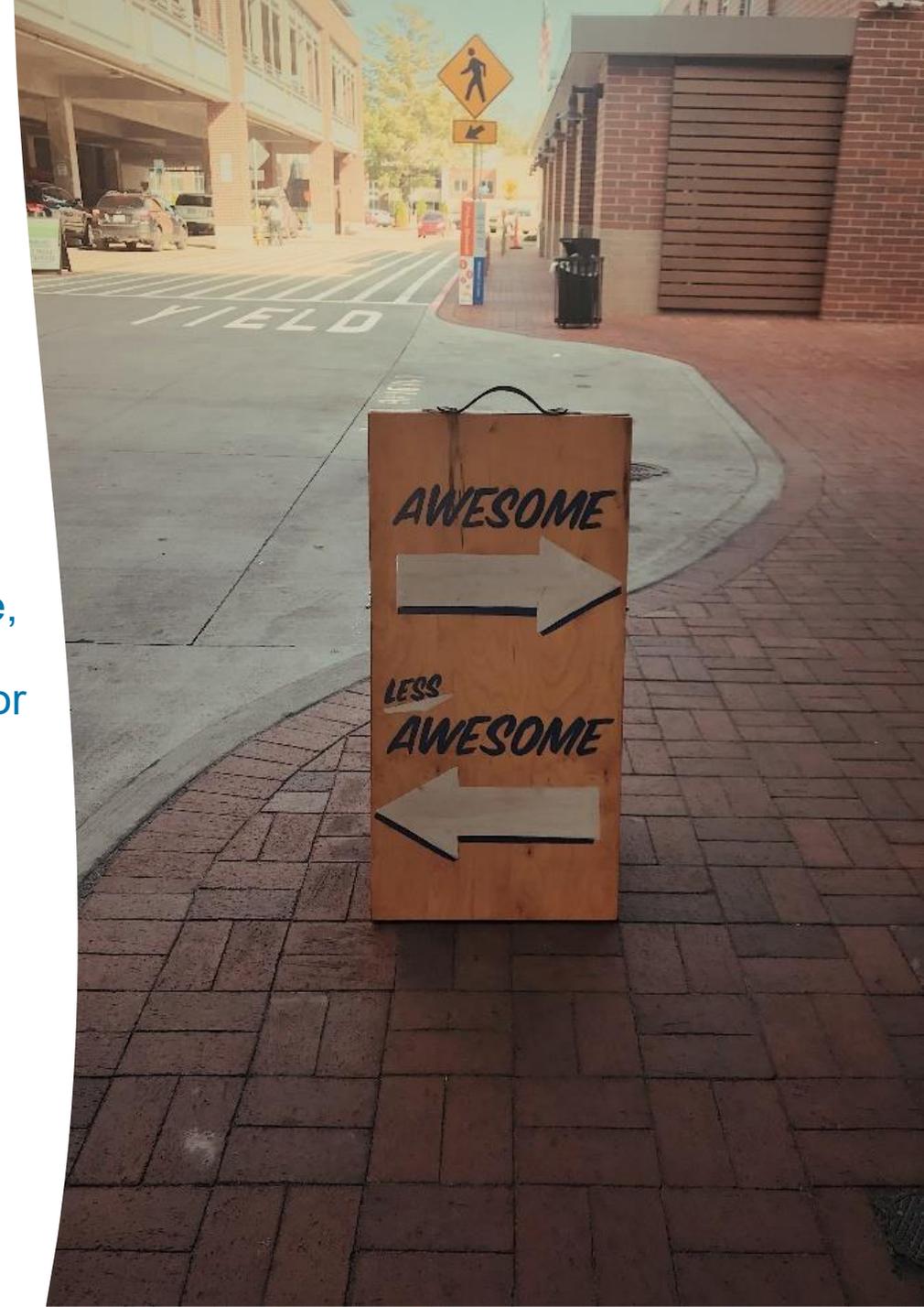
# Student engagement across the Theme

- **Student-led projects**
- **TLG and SHEEC membership**
- **Key element in Collaborative Clusters** (e.g. student interns working on Learning Analytics across the sector)
- **Members of all institutional teams**
- **Leading institutional projects** (e.g. SRUC Students' Association 'speak week' initiative)



# Student-led projects

- Partnership approach
- Student-led – what does that mean?
- Aim to support the development of new and/or enhanced policy, practice, resources, and networks around issues students identify as pressing or important.
- Students and staff from across the sector work together, coordinated by QAA Scotland, with significant input from sparqs.



ENHANCEMENT  
THEME  
STUDENT-LED  
PROJECT

# Responding to Student Voice



Student opinion is an **increasingly important arbiter of teaching quality** in higher education environments, **gradually being institutionalised** as a valid comparative performance measure on such things as the quality of teachers and teaching, programmes and assessment, and levels of institutional support.

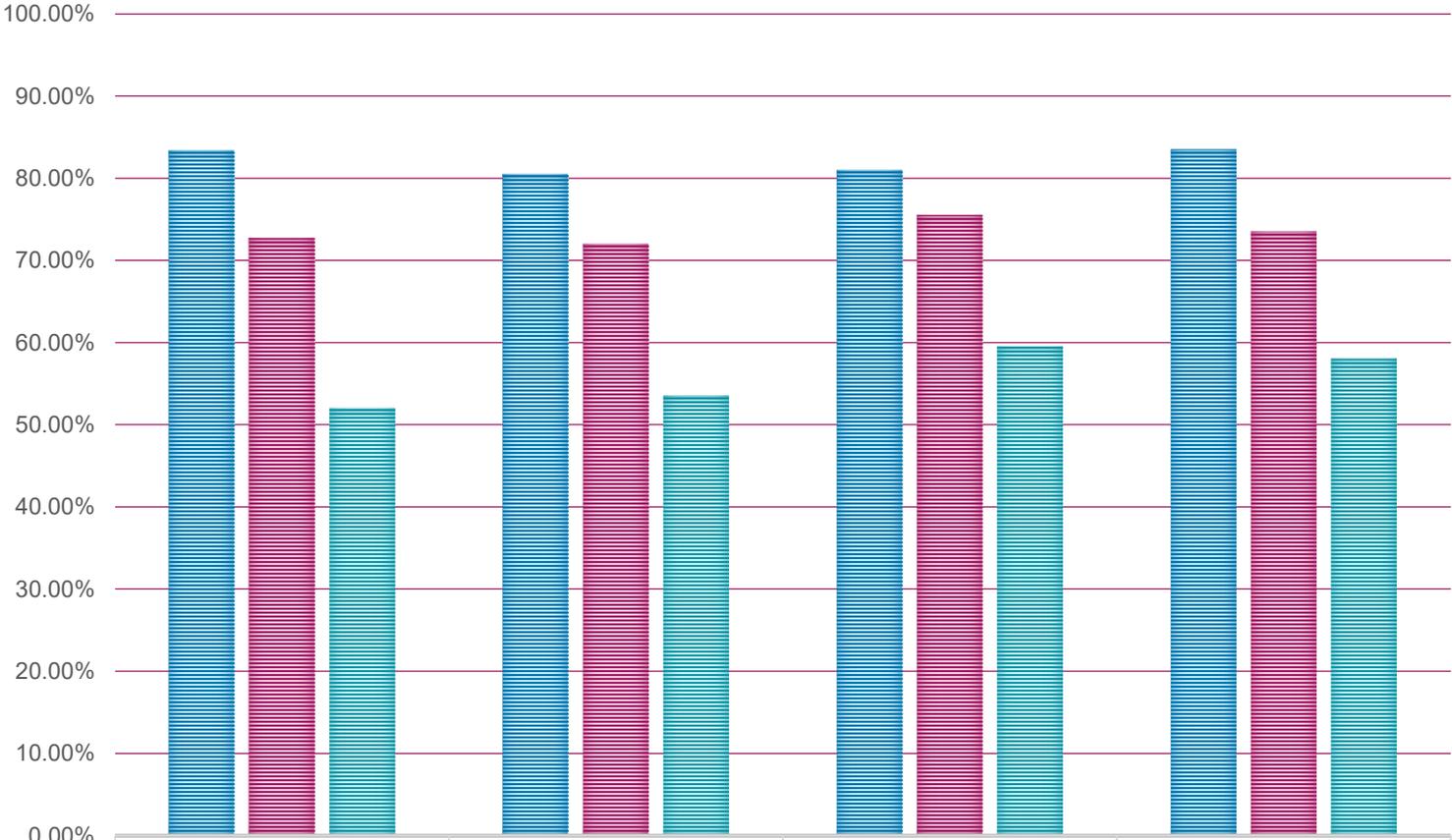
Darwin (2016: vii)



...the existing literature may suggest that higher education staff value student evaluations, there is little evidence ... to show that these evaluations actually lead to real change in practice.

Blair and Valdez Noel (2014: 892)

# UK NATION AVERAGES FOR 'STUDENT VOICE' QUESTIONS (NSS 2017)



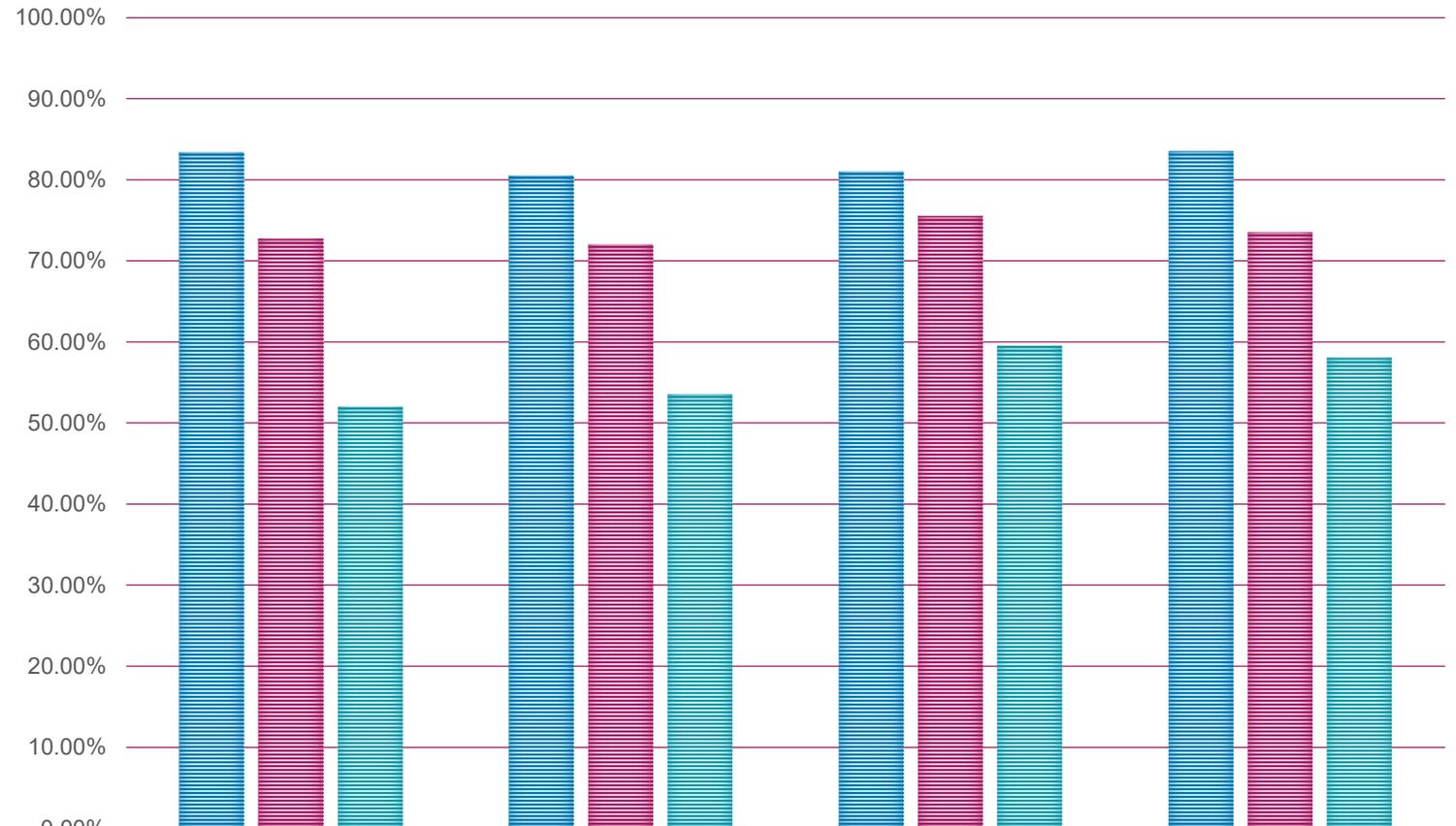
	Scotland	England	Wales	N. Ireland
■ Q.23 I have had the right opportunities to provide feedback on my course.	83.40%	80.50%	81%	83.50%
■ Q.24. Staff value students' views and opinions about the course	72.70%	72%	75.50%	73.50%
■ Q.25. It is clear how students' feedback on the course has been acted on	52%	53.50%	59.50%	58%



a renewed challenge to the sector.

(Morris, 2017: no pagination)

## UK NATION AVERAGES FOR 'STUDENT VOICE' QUESTIONS (NSS 2017)



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...in order to improve higher education practice, there needs to be purposeful deliberation on how the voice of the students can be operationalised

Blair and Valdez Noel (2014: 891)



Previous studies have shown that **if universities do not systematically close the loop on student feedback then there are manifold risks** including declining response rates, poor student engagement in feedback process, and **lack of trust between universities, students, and academics** on improvements as a result of their voice.

Shah *et al* (2017: 119)

# RESPONDING TO STUDENT VOICE: PRINCIPLES OF PRACTICE

In responding to student feedback, **institutions** and **students' associations** should...



WORK IN  
PARTNERSHIP



UTILISE  
REPRESENTATIVE  
SYSTEMS



ENCOURAGE  
DIALOGUE



BE TIMELY



ENSURE  
TRANSPARENCY



EMBED ETHICS



SUPPORT  
ENHANCEMENT-LED  
APPROACHES



CELEBRATE  
ACHIEVEMENT



## **WORK IN PARTNERSHIP**

Empower staff and students to participate fully and meaningfully in student feedback cycles.



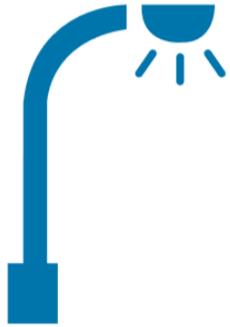
## **UTILISE REPRESENTATIVE SYSTEMS**

Continue to engage with and evolve student representative structures as a framework for meaningful discussions on student feedback



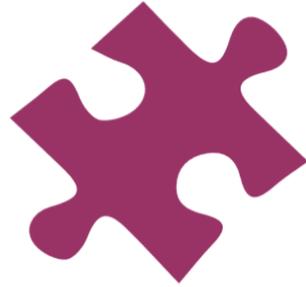
## **ENCOURAGE DIALOGUE**

Encourage respectful and open-ended dialogue between staff and students to ensure feedback cycles are dynamic and inclusive.



## **ENSURE TRANSPARENCY**

Provide accessible and clear explanations of feedback processes and information about who is responsible for these processes.



## **EMBED ETHICS**

Adhere to all relevant ethics standards and procedures when processing student feedback and communicating outcomes realised through this activity.



## **BE TIMELY**

Process feedback efficiently and share outcomes emerging from this activity at a time which will benefit students.



## SUPPORT ENHANCEMENT-LED APPROACHES

Approaches to responding to student feedback should be regularly evaluated and reviewed with a view to supporting continuous improvement.



## CELEBRATE ACHIEVEMENT

Ensure achievements emerging from actions taken as a result of student feedback are shared and celebrated.

### Responding to Student Voice: Principles of Practice

Responding to student voice involves paying attention to how student feedback is processed and how the impact of this activity is communicated back to students. These principles of practice were designed by staff and students working in partnership to help you improve the policies, processes, and practices that shape how you respond to student feedback.



#### WORK IN PARTNERSHIP

Empower staff and students to participate fully and meaningfully in student feedback cycles.



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#### ENSURE TRANSPARENCY

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## RESPONDING TO STUDENT VOICE



### ENCOURAGE DIALOGUE

Encourage respectful and open-ended dialogue between staff and students to ensure feedback cycles are dynamic and inclusive.



#### Something to think about...

Q: Which of your current policies and practices encourage open-ended dialogue?

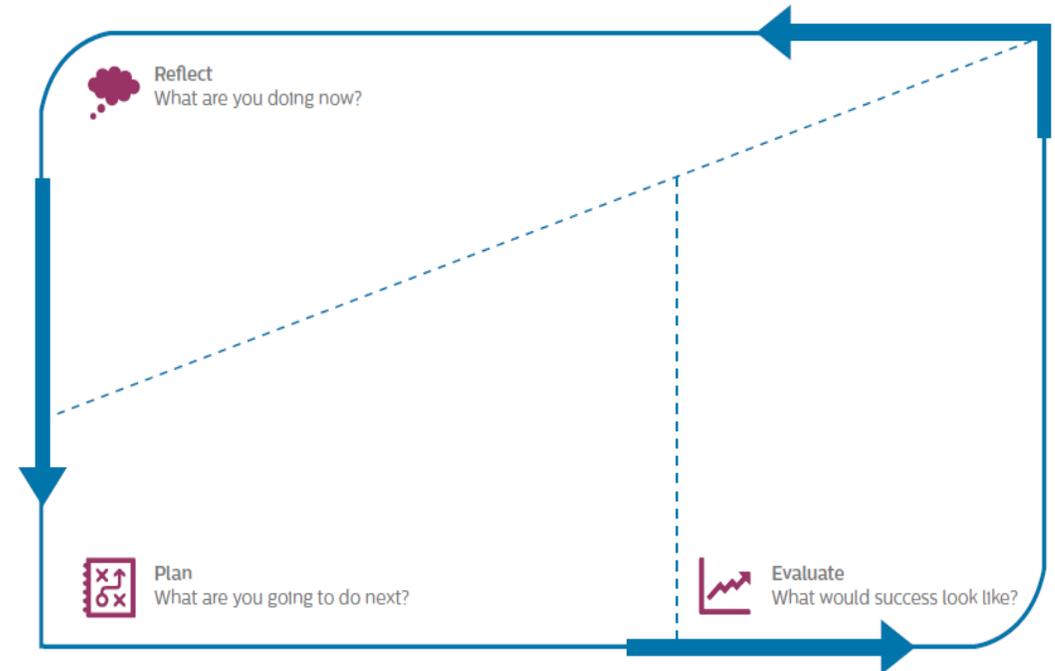
Q: Do you think that students feel their feedback is part of an ongoing conversation?

Q: When communicating the impact of changes made as a result of feedback, do you encourage further engagement from students?

## PRINCIPLE: ENCOURAGE DIALOGUE



**ACTION:** Use the boxes below to **reflect** on your current policy and practice, **plan** how you will make improvements, and explore how you will **evaluate** progress towards meeting this principle.



# RESPONDING TO STUDENT VOICE: PRINCIPLES OF PRACTICE



**ACTION:** Using the table below and the notes you have made on the back of each principle card, you could produce a summary of proposed actions, interventions and enhancements.

Principle	Summary of actions/next steps			Review point(s)	Owner(s)
	Objective	Activities/Outputs	Success/Impact Indicators		
Work in partnership					
Utilise representative systems					
Encourage dialogue					
Be timely					
Ensure transparency					
Embed ethics					
Support enhancement-led approaches					
Celebrate achievement					

# WHEN CAN I USE THE CARDS?



The principle cards can be used by individuals or groups in formal and informal contexts. Ultimately, the cards should be used in an active way rather than simply consulted as a check-list. You should write on them, annotate them, use them as a stimulus for discussion, and as mechanism for planning changes.

Here are some suggested uses, offered by students involved in the project which delivered these cards:



To audit Institutional or Students' Association policies



To gauge consistency and difference across Institution or Students' Association



As a framework for establishing student views



In staff development sessions



During programme or module review exercises



To identify, evaluate, and share effective practice



In workshops with students and/or staff



In staff and student representative inductions

Using the notes on the back of each principle card, the A3 planning grid sheet included in the pack can be used to plot activities and interventions across the principles.

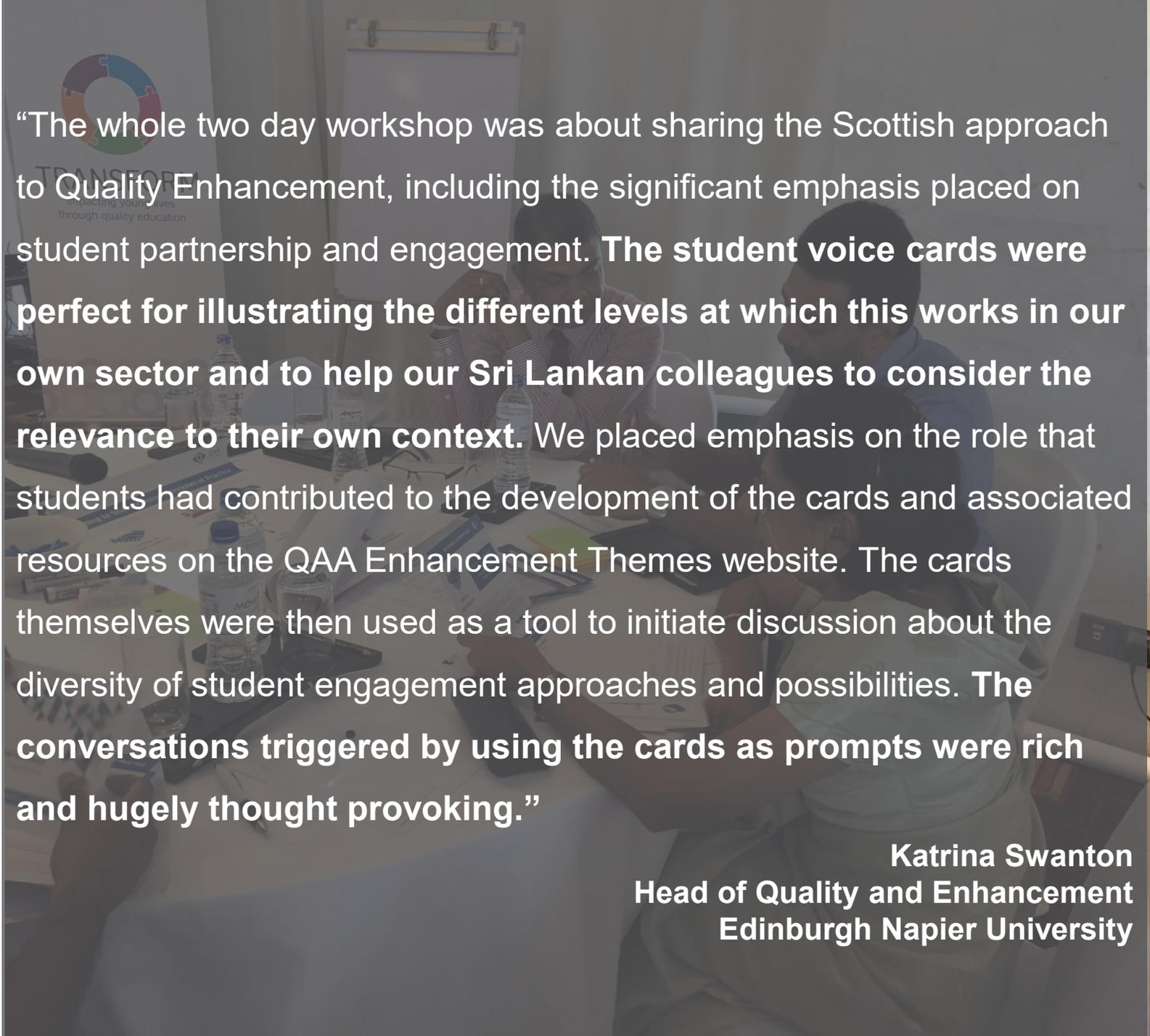
# Reflections on process and impact

- Engaging end to end
- Pathways to action
- Direction not prescription
  
- Wider view and deeper dive
- Somewhere to start difficult conversations
- A solid and challenging frame of reference
- A replicable or scalable model?



# Reflections on process and impact

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“The whole two day workshop was about sharing the Scottish approach to Quality Enhancement, including the significant emphasis placed on student partnership and engagement. **The student voice cards were perfect for illustrating the different levels at which this works in our own sector and to help our Sri Lankan colleagues to consider the relevance to their own context.** We placed emphasis on the role that students had contributed to the development of the cards and associated resources on the QAA Enhancement Themes website. The cards themselves were then used as a tool to initiate discussion about the diversity of student engagement approaches and possibilities. **The conversations triggered by using the cards as prompts were rich and hugely thought provoking.**”

**Katrina Swanton**  
Head of Quality and Enhancement  
Edinburgh Napier University

**Thank you**

Please do get in touch to discuss  
further

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