Student Engagement in Quality Assurance in the context of State Universities in Sri Lanka

FINAL REPORT

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1. Project Background

1.1 Executive Summary
The aim of this project is to support the introduction of student engagement in quality assurance activities and learner outcomes in State Universities in Sri Lanka.

The University of the West of Scotland (UWS) formed a partnership with British Council in Sri Lanka at the start of 2020 to undertake an initial piece of research and training. The project focused on a scoping exercise to understand the current quality assurance landscape, in order to make recommendations for the implementation of a formal approach to student engagement. The team also planned to deliver initial training and share practice to support building of both capacity and capability in state universities.

1.2 Aims & objectives of project
• To support the University Grants Commission (UGC) in expanding their knowledge and skills in the field of student engagement in quality assurance systems – from the possible perspectives of policy and implementation as a way of enhancing quality provision of tertiary education
• To provide professional expertise in developing a framework on Student Engagement in Quality Assurance
• To build the capacity of key professionals working within the tertiary sector, with responsibility for implementation and monitoring of quality assurance
• To raise wide awareness of issues relating to student engagement in quality assurance
• To be mindful of the opposition to Higher Education (Quality Assurance & Accreditation) Bill by some university employees

1.3 Quality Assurance in the Sri Lankan HEI context
The National Policy Framework of Higher Education & Technical & Vocational Education, Sri Lanka, 2009 defined quality in Higher Education as “a multi-dimensional concept which embraces all its functions and activities”.

Quality Assurance in all 15 state universities is overseen by the Quality Assurance Council (QAC), an independent body established in 2005 and overseen by the UGC. The role of Director of the QAC is tenured and is currently held by Professor Nilanthi Di Silva, whose substantive post was the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Kelaniya. Further information on the QAC can be found on their website, including all guidance documentation and the QAA framework. The Standing Committee of the QAC reports on a regular basis to the UGC and comprises representatives from all State Universities.

The QAC has worked to establish frameworks and baselines in quality across the sector. Common credit and qualifications frameworks have been agreed and broadly adopted in the last ten years, with the goal to allow greater understanding of the value of an award, and greater mobility between institutions for students.

Internal Quality Assurance Units (IQAU) were established in all universities in 2005. These were renamed as Centres for Quality Assurance (CQA) in 2019. The members are appointed through the recommendation of the respective Vice Chancellors of the University. The CQA is responsible for the oversight of the QA processes in the university schools and department, and for ensuring compliance to process.

The Quality Assurance (QA) process currently includes a range of review activities with reports made available through the QAC website. Reviews are undertaken of institutions, subjects and programmes and there is also a system for the review of Library services in HEIs whilst...
peer review occurs at all levels. However, while it is understood that QA should operate independently of other arms of the administration, it is not clear to what extent the Internal Quality Units do have autonomy.

The programme review processes focus largely around a handbook of 156 standards, against which institutions provide evidence from within their practice.

Whilst it is clear that Quality Assurance practices are moving forward, an understanding of how the student voice can be incorporated at each stage of improvement (constructively and without judgement) is integral to this study.

Key Points to Note:

- The UGC recognises that some programmes need to evolve in order to be relevant for the workplace and compete with international institutions; one goal of the strategic plan includes ‘focus in ensuring the academic curricula of states HEIs are highly relevant, industry focused and achieve excellent global and local standards’.  

- In recent months, the Sri Lankan Government has tried to pass the Higher Education (Quality Assurance & Accreditation) Bill, but there have been calls for this Bill to be shelved. The Federation of University Teachers’ Associations (FUTA) have expressed the views that it ‘undermines the public university system, politicises its quality assurance and fails to resolve issues within the sector’.  

- HEIs in Sri Lanka have accepted that a rigorous approach to quality in their establishments will be a key to growth and improvement on a national and international stage; however, it is not clear to what extent this has been understood and implemented at regional or individual level.

References:

1.4 Student Engagement in Quality Assurance

While Quality Assurance processes have existed in Sri Lankan universities for over a decade, the concept of Student Engagement in these processes is still a relatively new idea and so the aim of this short project was to understand to what extent it is embedded in institutional and sector approaches. The team explored the extent to which students were involved in sector wide quality assurance activities as required by the University Grants Commission.

Institutional Review

- The Manual for Institutional Review of Sri Lankan Universities and Higher Education Institutions (UGC 2015) confirms that the overall purpose of institutional review is to “achieve accountability for quality and standards, and by using a peer review process to promote sharing of good practices and to facilitate continuous improvement”. The review process has a strong focus on student-centred learning – “teaching learning process... where students learn by actively engaging in and interacting with the study material with the role of the teacher being more as a guide and facilitator”. There is clear reference to Institutional Reviews taking cognizance of student data such as student feedback and student satisfaction surveys. The review panel is asked to seek evidence that the University/Institution “regards the availability of effective channels for student feedback as a key element in monitoring of quality and standards” and documentation must make reference to consultative committees, feedback questionnaires, and student representation. The review visits incorporate meeting with both staff and students but use these sessions to “to get a clear picture of the institution’s processes in operation”. The manual states “student engagement and interaction with teachers and peers is used as a powerful driver for quality teaching. Formal representation of students in decision-making bodies and their participation in discussions on educational changes are facilitated by the institution and attention paid to their viewpoints. To enable this, students actively contribute when consulted on teaching matters and when serving as representatives on relevant committees”. Consideration is also given to the “quality of students” in terms of entry qualifications and requirements.

Subject/Programme Review

- The Manual for Undergraduate Study Programme Review of Sri Lankan Universities and Higher Education Institutions (UGC 2015) provides clarity on the role of programme and subject review: “Programme Review evaluates the effectiveness of Faculty’s or Institute’s processes for managing and assuring quality of study programmes, student learning experience and standards of awards within a programme of study. It is about management and assurance of quality at programme level. On the other hand, Subject Review evaluates the quality of the undergraduate student learning experience at a subject/departmental level. It is about management and assurance of quality at subject/departmental level, rather than programme of study as a whole.” The manual outlines clear criteria that the panel will focus on during programme review and this includes curriculum design, content and review, teaching learning and assessment methods, quality of students and their progression, extent and use of student feedback, skills development, academic guidance and counselling and peer observation. The programme review reports of an institution and the institutional response to them will contribute to the review of the institution as a whole.

The initial research undertaken by the team into current quality assurance activities suggests that there are clear opportunities for integrating the student voice into existing practices. The current methodology for engaging with students focuses on collection of student data views and then ensuring there are processes for institutions to respond to this data and feedback. There is a clear opportunity to develop this approach to a more involved, proactive partnership approach. The team also identified examples of practice from the UK and, indeed, from within Sri Lankan HEIs, that could be shared across the sector to enhance...
student engagement. However, the team acknowledged that there would also need to be a change in culture across the sector. There would also need to be an acceptance from both staff and students that student engagement would bring benefits to all, and that it was a meaningful and developmental approach requiring commitment from all levels to be effective.
2. Methodology

The team undertook background desk research to understand the climate and conditions within which the UGC, QAAC and Universities operate. This has involved analysis of official strategies and policies, reports written within and external to Sri Lanka, academic papers, and news stories. A sample of the sources consulted can be found in Appendix II. A short overview of the HEI context can be found in Appendix I.

In discussion with the British Council and The Director of the QAC, it was determined it would not be possible to visit all State Universities due the travel required to reach each University. Instead, a sample of universities would be visited in order to hold focus groups with academic colleagues and students, and the remainder of the universities would be invited to Colombo to meet the team and join group discussions.

It was determined that focus groups would be utilised to gather information to inform the UWS research team of current practices, understanding and inform the second visit in order to be able to identify capacity building and knowledge building, and future information and training sessions.

In conjunction with the British Council a series of focus group questions were identified, consent forms developed and ethical approval sought from the School of Health & Life Sciences Ethics Committee.

These focus groups explored:

- Value perception of an established, national framework of Quality Assurance and for ensuring student engagement of such activities
- Perceived expected inclusions in such a framework or process
- Examples of success with student engagement in the sector
- Perceived best practice and existing internal organisational goals
- Challenges in student engagement
- Challenges that may arise with academic staff in introducing student engagement
- Colleague expertise in supporting students
- Expected obstacles preventing enhanced student engagement

The Team requested a minimum of 10 participants to attend the focus groups in order to generate high quality discussion. All encounters were recorded with the participants’ permission, in order to analyse at a later date while allowing the facilitators of the activities to fully focus on the conversations taking place. Each university was visited by two UWS staff and one British Council employee.

On the final day of the visit, a large workshop was held in Colombo and facilitated by three UWS and two British Council staff. Directors of each Centre for Quality Assurance (or their nominated representatives) were invited to attend, to discuss similar themes.

2.1 In Country Work – Visit One

The first visit took place in February 2020 and lasted one week, incorporating meetings with Universities, British Council, the Director of QAC and the UGC Chairman.

The team from UWS undertook visits to six of the fifteen state universities to understand views and perspectives from a cross section of the state HE sector in Sri Lanka. The institutions selected incorporated a range of different Universities/ subjects areas. The Universities visited were:
University of Moratuwa,
University of Colombo,
University of Kelaniya,
University of Sri Jayawardenapura,
University of Ruhuna,
University of Visual & Performing Arts.

During the visits to the institutions, focus groups were conducted with Institutional Quality Assurance Directors, CQAs & faculty coordinators, academics and students.

The topics covered within the focus groups and the final workshop encompassed the following questions:

• What does the term student engagement mean to you?
• What does the term quality assurance mean to you?
• Tell me about how students are consulted for feedback in a university.
• Who do students go to provide feedback on their course or facilities?
• How do you communicate with students?
• What is the relationship between the students in departments/faculties and the academic and administrative teams?
• Are there any students or groups of students who could have had a different experience? Why?
• How is Quality Assurance Council perceived by Universities/Academic Staff/Students?
• What benefits do you hope to secure through implementing a formal system of student engagement in quality activities?
• What will be the main challenges in adopting a formal system of student engagement?
• How do you currently engage the academic community in the development of UGC policy and practice?
• How engaged are the academic community in Quality Assurance activities?
• How do you currently capture the student voice when considering changes to policy and practice?
• Is there a formal system of student representation/representatives – at what level is this – module/programme/school/institution?

A full list of topics/questions asked can be found in Appendix III.

2.2 Post visit analysis

The first visit to Sri Lanka, and the opportunity to meet with the Chairman of the UGC, the Director of the QAC and colleagues at the British Council, was incredibly helpful in providing a more in-depth overview of the current political climate and the background to the project. The visit to the six institutions and the workshop with the CQA Directors were crucial in providing the team with an understanding of higher education in Sri Lanka. These meetings gave the teams a much clearer appreciation of the challenges and opportunities surrounding student engagement in Quality Assurance. This understanding could not have been gained from desk research alone. The final meeting with the British Council and the Director of the QAC provided the team with an opportunity to share initial thoughts and to outline the team’s thinking for the second visit in March 2020. The team were keen to ensure that the activities in visit two were led by both students and staff and sought support from the British Council to
facilitate workshops and secure attendance from all fifteen institutions.

Upon returning to Scotland, the team reviewed the feedback from the focus groups and summarised the common issues and points raised in each of the sessions.

The data from the first visit was utilised to inform the agenda for the second visit.

### 2.3 In Country Work – Visit Two

The second visit took place in March 2020 with two members of the original panel returning with a plan to deliver two workshops, one with students and one with QAC Directors and academic staff; the proposed agendas can be found in Appendix V. The desired outcome of this second visit was to triangulate information gathered from the first visit with a wider group of University staff and students to be able to draft a definition for student engagement in Sri Lankan Higher Education and to identify a roadmap for implementation. This would involve discussion and debate around current approaches in terms of challenges and opportunities, sharing examples of effective practice and discussing core theories and concepts on student engagement, partnership and involvement. The workshops would focus on:

- What the student engagement could and should entail in respect of -
  - Who should ask student for their views?
  - When should their views be sought?
  - What activities/decisions should their views be sought on?
  - Why should their views be included?
  - How student views be sought?
  - To determine training needs for staff and students
  - To determine whether students (and potentially staff) could be proactive in identifying areas of good practice.

The final part of the project aimed to provide a toolkit of supporting information and documentation to enable further work on student engagement to be expanded and developed, in line with the concept paper on student engagement that is being developed by UGC Standing Committee for Quality Assurance.
3. Key findings of Visit One

All meetings were conducted as planned, with the exception being the UGC Chairman who was involved in speaking to students who were demonstrating outside the building (and hence the time was cut short). Over a period of three days, representatives from all universities were consulted on the topics/questions posed above in Methodology, to elicit responses and data regarding their experiences and perceptions of student engagement in their respective quality assurance processes. Six universities were visited, and focus groups conducted with a range of individuals, including those with responsibility for QA, management, academic staff and students.

Some examples were given of good practice and of a strong desire to see students be given an effective voice in the quality assurance process. However, the understanding of (and subsequent approach to) student engagement in QA was mixed.

Below are collated responses to the main themes:

3.1 What does the term Student Engagement (in Quality Assurance) mean to you?

Most academics and QA professionals defined student engagement as the process of students being actively engaged in their own learning (and, in general, more active than they were currently felt to be). This could take the form of active involvement in the quality assurance process (for example through giving feedback on their experience) but was more widely defined as students taking an active role in their own learning. Participants defined Student Engagement as:

- Students being involved in community engagement and outreach, CSR and sharing research
- Students taking responsibility for their own learning
- Students being ‘good students’ (for example high attendance and timely completion of assessments)
- Students being involved in the learning process; for example peer to peer teaching (e.g. giving presentations)
- Students understanding what they are learning and why
- Cooperation of students in implementing strategies
- Student-centred learning

Other feedback given in the focus groups included:

- Students should be engaged in the QA process and know about the systems; they should participate in decisions about upgrading syllabi.
- Some universities and academics expressed a wish for more engagement with students
- Students should be involved in the whole QA process, including the process of making decisions and sharing views – they should have the authority to help make decisions. However, there should be boundaries or limitations to the student power.
- As students, being engaged in the decision-making process should also mean that they are engaged enough to understand that they can’t always get what they want, and that cooperation and compromise are often key
- Students volunteering feedback or giving opinions does not necessarily mean they are engaged with the QA process
- It is the duty of the faculty or teaching team to listen to student suggestions when making decisions
• It was felt by almost every focus group participant that students are often passive consumers of their education (sitting and waiting to be taught) and that although the teaching style is changing, this is to an extent inherent in the learning culture of state sector education in Sri Lanka. There is a need for students to be more active participants in their educational experience – this is also the case with QA.

• Several universities referred to students as ‘critical partners’ and ‘key stakeholders’ in the QA process and were keen to understand their priorities. One CQA Director mentioned interest in a project around students as co-creators of curriculum. It was noted that this does also come with cultural challenges.

Students gave very mixed views on the term student engagement; some had no understanding at all and were unable to offer an explanation. At a basic level, students demonstrated a limited understanding that ‘engagement’ means the opportunity to engage with lecturing staff and that ‘they listen to our views’.

Others referred to it being how they engaged with their studies and social corporate responsibilities.

In general, participants were a little unclear or uncomfortable with the definition of Student Engagement and did not automatically associate it with the ability of a student to have a ‘voice’ or opinion regarding their studies or learning environment. That said; most universities and academics believed that the students played an important part in designing and defining the university experience.

• **What does Quality Assurance mean in your institution, and how does the structure work?**

All universities offered a similar structure: a Centre for Quality Assurance (CQA) overseen by a Director, who is typically in a fixed term post. Each faculty has a QA ‘cell’ with its own coordinators and committee. These cells report into the faculty board and Dean, who has oversight of the reports and actions of the cell. The University CQA ensures that the cells are compliant with their duties and carry out QA activities – however does not specifically receive reports about the QA itself. The CQA committee meets on a regular basis to discuss activities across the university.

In some universities, Quality Assurance was mentioned as a standing item on agendas for bodies such as Senate.

QA was generally seen as an activity linked exclusively to the academic elements of a student’s programme.

The message and function of QA within the university often became diluted with colleagues moving further away from the QAC; we often heard that the function of QA colleagues was to maintain records and gather evidence against the 156 standards of the Manual.

• **Student Feedback**

The panel explored a number of areas in relation to student feedback:

• Tell me about how students are consulted for feedback in a university.
• Who do students go to provide feedback on their course or facilities?
• How do you communicate with students?
• What is the relationship between the students in departments/faculties and the academic and administrative teams?
• How do you currently capture the student voice when considering changes to policy and practice?
• Is there a formal system of student representation/representatives – at what level is this – module/programme/school/institution?
The responses gathered indicated that there are a number of well-established activities undertaken across the sector and the teams were also able to identify institution or subject specific activities that could be shared a position examples of practice for sector learning.

- **There are common mechanisms used in all universities:**
  - Student representatives on faculty committees. Typically, these are members of the Student Union committee, or elected by the Student Union (SU). In some universities, the Dean must approve the nominations. (It was mentioned in a number of universities that engaging with SU can sometimes be problematic due to the SU political orientation)
  - Anonymous feedback forms, completed once or twice per semester. In some cases these were completed online (through the VLE or other web link – Google Forms was mentioned), in many cases paper forms were completed and returned. Return rates were sometimes as high as 80% and surveys following graduation often received the best response rate. Some departments allowed time in the timetable for completion. Module evaluation questionnaires in some institutions focused on teaching, practical work and field visits; module leads summarise the feedback and the faculty quality lead derives themes from the feedback for reporting. Participants mentioned the manual processes needed for analysis of paper forms rather than an automated online process (this was one bottleneck in responding to feedback), however some noted that paper forms did often yield a better response rate. One university noted that the Library also used forms to obtain feedback on their service. An example of a student feedback form can be found in Appendix IV.
  - Academic staff acting as personal tutors (10-20 students per tutors), consulting students on an individual basis and available for support both academically and personally. In some universities, it was mentioned that tutors would refer students to other pastoral teams if they found it was useful (e.g. counselling services). Staff did not mention training and support in their capacity of tutor (some institutions agreed this did not happen) but some colleagues knew of individuals trained to support others in the past (for example one university had around seven colleagues trained by British Psychology in the past)
  - Complaints system (going to department, or facilities complaints going straight to faculty)

- **Other identified mechanisms in place for obtaining feedback from students included:**
  - Student consultative committee at department level – 5/10 sit on the committee, with meetings held twice a semester
  - Student subject coordinators – act as liaison between academics and students; hold meetings where student concerns can be raised
  - Batch representatives (1-2 students per cohort of the programme) elected on behalf of their year group to act as liaison
  - One university mentioned consulting students when looking to review content for degree programmes
  - ‘Open door’ approaches allowing students to speak to academics directly, including direct approaches to Head of Department
  - Representation in QA meetings (one university) – this was a recent initiative following IR
  - Student representation on additional committees (including student-staff liaison, department committees)
  - Students nominated by staff to attend departmental meetings (sometimes the strongest students, sometimes a selection of strong/middle/weak)
  - Mentor/mentee system (academics/students)
  - Senior staff (e.g. Head of Department) attending student meetings or lectures/inductions to ask for feedback
• Separate feedback process for student welfare concerns
• Faculty appoint a student counsellor or advisor for the student body to approach
• Students at one institution noted the use of an anonymous suggestion box which had been used to secure some changes and enhancements

3.2 Engagement with Staff
During the discussions with the staff, a number of common themes arose:

• **Student expectations**
  Staff felt that, in the main, there was a desire to fix issues raised by students and noted that issues raised by students tended to vary across the faculties. However, it was noted by some that ‘students don’t always know what they need’ and that expectations of students ‘could often be unrealistic’ (for example limitations of space or finances).

• **Training and motivations of student representatives**
  No universities mentioned offering training to student representatives, whether to help them engage with academic colleagues to articulate student concerns or gather meaningful feedback from their peers. We asked how faculty boards (for example) could be sure the student members on faculty or department boards were expressing the views of the majority and were told that, as the student body had elected the student representatives, the student body should trust their representatives to accurately convey their messages at meetings. While some students stated that SU meetings occurred 2–3 times per year, there was no mention of gathering feedback to pass to management. There was concern that the SU representatives on faculty panels were often politically motivated and thus not necessarily accurately representing the wider student voice.

• **Consultation on new programme development**
  Students were not routinely consulted when considering wider changes to programmes or new programme development, although their feedback was (in some institutions) taken into consideration when reviewing course content. The length of the process for new programme or significant changes to be implemented was noted in several institutions – the complexity of the process (involving all levels of the university, the QAC and the UGC) meant students were not often actively involved in review. Minor change requests were easier to implement and lecturers would have the flexibility to incorporate any desired changes once per semester (this excludes medicine, who must be aligned nationally).

• **Feedback content**
  Feedback tended to focus almost exclusively on quality and content of curriculum and lecturers with students across multiple institutions identifying three key questions around punctuality of lecturers, quality of teaching materials and a generic measure of overall quality.

  The efficacy of obtaining meaningful, accurate feedback from students and responding to this feedback is unclear, and focus group participants gave mixed responses on student feedback. One university representative commented that ‘tick the box’ mechanisms may be in place, but currently nothing facilitates effective student engagement in quality assurance. One university representative suggested that they ‘basically don’t have’ student engagement in quality assurance processes.

• **Examples of good practice**
  A number of examples of positive practice were identified during the two visits, which included structured engagement opportunities and closing of the feedback loop, anonymous opportunities to enhance professional services such as libraries, and student
led feedback sessions. Examples of good practice on collecting feedback include:

- Students were routinely asked for module and programme feedback at the end of the academic session
- Several universities mentioned consulting students when considering content of new programmes
- Personal tutors for students provided an access point for students to give feedback or query department or faculty decisions
- Feedback given by batch representatives was seen to have had a direct impact on student experience in the following intake (e.g. requests for longer internship placements)
- Students from one institution highlighted a particularly effective feedback loop with information carried from student groups to faculty meetings and ‘hostel groups’ and clear evidence of action and feedback.

### 3.3 Student Communication

The following questions relate to the forms of communication undertaken with the students regarding feedback and completing the feedback loop:

- **How do you communicate with students (regarding their feedback)?**

  Most university colleagues agreed that there is often a bottleneck when it comes to reviewing, reacting to and reporting on feedback given by students (e.g. in a ‘you said, we did’ approach). This is particularly the case where feedback is paper based. Some universities advised there is ‘no formal mechanism to report back to students on feedback provided’. However, some mechanisms given included:

  - Information provided in the student handbook or orientation programmes for the following batch
  - Student feedback points summarised and discussed with lecturers – any changes made and incorporated into the presentations for the new batch
  - Student-focused announcements on intranet
  - Through student representatives
  - Asking accreditation bodies to meet with students
  - Students sitting on CQA/IQAU cell meetings (although it was noted that IQAU bylaws do not mention student representatives and so their feedback might not be included in meeting minutes)
  - There is ‘a connectivity between the university and student body’ (note: this same student body claimed they did not have a voice and were not listened to)

- **What is the relationship between the students in your department/faculty and the academic and administrative teams? Are there any students or groups of students who have had a different experience?**

  A number of universities suggested that students sometimes struggled to engage with the organisation in a constructive way or around QA. One barrier to student engagement was language – feedback often taken in English and many students arrived at university with a low level of the language (also causing issues where it is the language of instruction). Some universities did mention that they would be happy to take comments in the suggestion box in Tamil or Sinhala as well as English and responded to them all equally.

  Colleagues also noted that students don’t always understand why giving feedback is
important; in addition, they may fear identification, a theme repeatedly highlighted by students themselves across all participating institutions. It was felt by some colleagues that students needed to take greater ownership of their own learning; and that without this it would be hard for them to become more engaged in the QA process. Students were more accustomed to a passive learning process than acting as co-partners in their studies. In addition, staff acknowledged that students view the role of the teacher to be ‘sacred’ and, as such, difficult to criticize.

Some colleagues mentioned student action, strikes, low attendance or disruptions as inhibitors to student engagement in the QA process. Students themselves often highlighted non-academic strikes as a major cause of disruption and discontent during their learning experience.

• **What benefits do you hope to secure through implementing a formal system of student engagement in quality activities? What will be the main challenges in adopting a formal system of student engagement?**

Student feedback forms part of subject and institution reviews but there is a lack of understanding about how effectively these have been implemented. There has also been some fluidity in the review cycles and in some instances a considerable period of time elapsed between reviews. Funding challenges have affected the ability to implement and maintain a consistent review cycle.

Some challenges:

• Students lacking confidence to give honest feedback due to fear of lack of anonymity
• Student representatives are not given training to be able to participate effectively in meetings. Some focus groups mentioned that students were picked and told that attendance was mandatory, but then queried why students did not speak during the meetings
• Limited evidence showing meaningful responses to feedback given (for example, academic colleagues making changes to course content), although there were small examples in select departments in some institutions

This led to a further discussion in some instances on a National Student Survey or similar opportunities in Sri Lanka. In general, academics were in favour of an NSS-style programme as they agreed that it could produce useful learning points. It could also act to encourage wider programme/sector-specific conversations on best practice with departments in similar fields across the country. However, some colleagues were concerned about the creation of any form of league table or overt competition between institutions, and the impact this could have on certain colleagues, departments or institutions.
3.4 Staff communication and engagement with QA

- **How engaged are the academic community in Quality Assurance activities?**

  Cross-faculty engagement with quality assurance processes varied according to the institution. It was agreed that QA has had a slow start, with varied reception across faculties. Newer faculties tended to position quality assurance more at the centre of their activities, having built it in from the start of operations. Conversely, older faculties or institutions observed that QA can often be hard to integrate: ‘the university is old, but QA is new’. It was noted that it could be very slow to integrate changes into established systems. Colleagues at one institution observed that progress had been made but that QA approaches (particularly receiving and responding to feedback) did not come naturally to more senior colleagues; they suggested that they would expect it to be second nature to academic colleagues ‘in the next generation, or maybe 10 years’.

  Many QA colleagues participating in the focus groups agreed that there had been a small shift in recent years; that there were always early adopters, followers and resisters in any organisation. There was a feeling that engagement in quality activities should be mentioned in promotion criteria (not currently the case) and that strong, involved leadership (at Dean/Executive level) was necessary for successful QA processes and truly engaged students. One institution mentioned a recent communication from the QAC/UGC highlighting the need for the post of Director in each CQA to be supported and respected in an appropriate manner.

- **What opportunities do you have for staff development at your institution?**

  Some staff development opportunities were mentioned by some colleagues (e.g. formal qualifications or access to external training, for example from the British Council in student-centred learning approaches). No-one mentioned any formal training/support to support their role in academia and how to ‘develop’ as a teacher and review/implement feedback or share good practices. Colleagues mentioned the presence of peer review programmes and staff development centres. However, the level of support varied between institutions. Colleagues noted that applications for staff training opportunities could often be highly competitive (particularly where funding was available). No academics mentioned formal training specifically in place for QA or student engagement activities.

- **Do you feel that the academic voice is heard at your institution and that your views are regularly sought?**

  Colleagues at universities gave a mixed response to this question. They noted that the majority of academics have very little oversight of QA or involvement in review processes. The CQA does not have sight of QA feedback at faculty level and so experience can vary greatly according to the experience and approach of the Dean. In general, staff perceive QA to mean almost exclusively the activities surrounding the external review process. They often considered this useful for feedback, and helpful to reinforce good behaviours.

  The short, fixed term duration of the CQA Director was noted – with its length meaning they may not see a review during their tenure.

  In general, QA staff believed they had adequate input to committees and review structures in their respective faculty or institution. However, they often felt that their experience and views were not taken into consideration when decisions were made at UGC level.

- **In response to the academic voice, staff were keen to comment on the current Quality Assurance process –**

  Their comments included:
• A wish for simplification of 156 standards, and more opportunity for qualitative rather than just quantitative review
• Increased alignment between professional accreditation and QA review activities (suggested joint events in a similar approach to UK)
• Yearly internal reviews
• A student engagement process ensuring consistency of approach between reviews
• Additional training on QA for support staff/flexibility to recruit QA support staff with appropriate skills. This included additional support at faculty level.

• **What do institutions want to hear feedback on from students? Is it what is important to faculty or what is important to students?**

This was hoped to be covered in the second visit in depth from both a student and staff perspective to correlate and agree what students should feedback on.

The data gathered from the first visit was limited to engagement with six institutions and key stakeholders and not necessarily scientifically robust, for example:

• The UGC Chairman thought it should encompass all aspects, including facilities such as toilets and water supply.
• The QAC Director believed it should concentrate on aspects of Learning & Teaching
• The QAC Directors and CQA members were often unclear on the breadth of feedback expected but saw acting on feedback as the responsibility of the Deans and School/Faculty teams
• Students understood feedback mainly as a way of commenting on their lecturer’s performance or giving thoughts on course content
• Academic staff did not offer a consistent response on the value and scope of feedback and in general did not view feedback outside of course content as anything they could impact in a meaningful way (the plan was to explore this further through a Mentimeter survey on the second trip).
4. Outcome of Visit Two

Two workshops were planned as follow-up to the initial February visit, due to take place in mid-March 2020. One workshop was planned with students and the second with CQA Directors and academic staff. A variety of factors meant that these workshops have not yet taken place in the format intended. Although we did note some challenges within Universities in nominating student participants, the largest factor was the timing of the visit. The workshops were planned for the middle of March, which ultimately proved to be just three days before the forced closure of education establishments in Sri Lanka in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A third online activity was due to take place with the CQA directors, however again was postponed in light of international events and lockdown in both Sri Lanka and the UK. However we do plan to continue with the research, training and feedback in the future.

In light of the cancellation of these workshops, in March the team were offered the opportunity to attend a National State University Workshop on subject benchmarking for Humanities and Social Sciences, in order to survey a range of staff from QA Directors to lecturers (Ruhuna, Moratuwa and Eastern Universities were not represented). A Mentimeter presentation was shared and responses requested. The data is however biased as the audience was wholly Humanities and Social Sciences and therefore not scientifically valid.

Two very brief workshops at Colombo University were also attended, one with the Law Faculty and one with the Faculty of Arts (Humanities and Social Sciences).

In light of the cancellation of the student workshops, a briefing and videos were prepared for QA Directors to deliver student Mentimeter sessions. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has prevented this being delivered to date (as all educational establishments in Sri Lanka were closed from Friday 13th March 2020).

In addition, a Mentimeter session was devised for academic staff and the Director of QAC was going to deliver this at a national workshop. This again was subsequently cancelled in light of the COVID-19 situation.

These Mentimeter activities still remain and can be delivered when the current global confinement of human personnel is relaxed. The team is planning to support these activities and to work with colleagues at the British Council, QAC and institutions as needed to finalise this work.

4.1 ‘Student Engagement’ – What does it mean?

A key part of the focus groups and project has been to review the understanding of student engagement by all the stakeholders interviewed.

The definition below is that used in the UGC Standing Committee on Quality Assurance draft document – Guidance on formulating University Policy on Student Engagement in Quality Assurance.

“Student engagement is the involvement and empowerment of students in the process of shaping the student learning strategies, to inform a University’s quality system with the purpose of improving the student educational experience for both current and future cohorts.”

As mentioned in section 3.1, understanding of the terminology was mixed. Stakeholders mentioned themes including student centred learning, community engagement and outreach, CSR projects, dissemination of research into the community; students taking responsibility for their own learning and extracurricular activities; students being ‘good students’ (attendance, work completion etc.), students getting involved in the learning process (e.g. peer to peer teaching, presentations etc.).
The Quality Assurance Council believes that student engagement is getting students more involved and committed to giving their views on what should make a quality programme. They would like to understand the students’ perspectives on institutional infrastructure, new developments and other issues that affect their experience at university. The QAC had a broader view of the concept of student engagement (and one closer to its typical use in many other countries) than was seen within Sri Lankan institutions.

Given the confusion, a consistent definition is required; the second visit aimed to identify and propose a definition for student engagement.

4.2 Student Engagement and Quality Assurance

Quality assurance (QA) of teaching and learning has become one of the main strategic topics in higher education across the world in the past few decades (Harvey & Williams 2010). According to Welzant, H et al (2015), the definition of quality and quality assurance from the perspective of higher education continues to present major challenges. They conclude that there is no agreement in how the themes of how quality is theorised and evaluated in higher education. However, they note that definitions generally incorporate four broad theories of quality – “purposeful, transformative, exceptional, and accountable”. They also propose that there are two essential elements within current definitions of quality assurance, the first being on “processes, policies, or actions”, and the second features of quality that relate to accountability and/or continuous improvement.

Internal quality assurance frameworks in some HEI’s across the world unmistakably articulate student feedback as a device to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. These frameworks often form part of HEI’s strategic plans and key performance indicators, with targets attributable at School and/or Faculty level. The quality assurance of the teaching and learning often measures a variety of student experiences as part of their studies through mechanisms including (but not limited to) end of term/semester ‘module’ questionnaires, staff-student liaison groups and national and international surveys (e.g. NSS in the UK and International Student Barometer). The latter surveys do not impact on the quality assurance process per se, but account of the full student experience from entry, accommodation, facilities, library and well-being support to identify a few.

Sri Lanka, like many other countries, has implemented an Institutional accreditation quality assurance process governed by the QAC which is cyclical and audits should occur every 5 years. As part of QA accreditation, many institutions across the globe are required to provide documentation and evidence of student feedback processes and the results of recent surveys. Attention is also paid to institutional trend performance data and benchmarking within the sector and selected groupings of universities. The QA process in Sri Lanka currently incorporates 156 points that must be complied with in order to meet and pass the QA process, rather than explicit improvements in student learning. This is unlike the West, where the QA process has changed to incorporate a focus on enhancement-led audits that monitor improvements and follow up outcomes from the previous audit. Such audits normally encompass a range of staff, (academic and professional), students and employers. Currently this is not the case in Sri Lanka; the engagement of students within the QA process is a first step along the journey. There is a need to review who and how students and other external stakeholders meaningfully input into the Sri Lankan QA process. In some professional body accreditation activities external stakeholders are already involved with the programme reviews.

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Across the globe the present setting for HEI’s is that they can no longer be seen as ‘Ivory Towers’, but must develop new initiatives in line with the changing landscape, political drivers and reforms (Powell & Owen-Smith, 1998). Within the West, HEI’s are utilising QA measures amongst others to determine financial viability of programmes and where resources should be directed. Barry & Clark (2001) and Sizer & Cannon (1999) maintain that HEI’s need to be more accountable and be objectively assessed; such actions are often driven by Government and other stakeholders to guarantee that universities contribute to social and economic development in a global context. In a report titled The Financing and Management of Higher Education, they urged “a more radical change, or restructuring...which means altering who the faculty are, how they behave, the way they are organized, and the way they work and are compensated” (Johnson et al. 1998). Sri Lanka needs to address this area within its QA processes and engagement. An example of where universities and the students are not aligned with the economy is the development of ‘Port City’; a Chinese investment to create a reclaimed extension to Colombo city offering world class healthcare, education, financial district, hospitality and a marina. Yet from the limited interaction we have had with the academic staff it appears none of the State Universities are developing or changing programmes to cater for such an investment and produce graduates that will be ‘work-ready’ for these opportunities. The GoSL continues to invest each year in providing free education for 30,000 new students, yet the students will not necessarily have the appropriate knowledge and skills to impact society on completion of their programme. This is one of the areas some students were concerned about – they felt that they would not have appropriate skills to obtain employment (this was a more predominate comment from science and engineering students).

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5. Student Engagement – Literature Review

Student engagement has become a prevailing perception in the organisation and management of higher education (Leach, 2012). It incorporates contribution in teaching and learning, issues of identity and how students are involved in institutional structures and processes and has widespread appeal across the globe. Student engagement is a multi-dimensional multidimensional concept that includes wide-ranging features of the student experience. A simple definition is

“...engagement is a broad construct intended to encompass salient academic as well as certain non-academic aspects of the student experience” (Coates, 2007 p122).

Numerous scholarly work encompasses quality assurance and student engagement or more prevalently the term student voice is used from a regulatory perspective such as within the quality assurance process (QAA, 2012a).

The literature provides knowledge and learning associated with both internal quality assurance and how student feedback can be utilised to develop and advance the quality of the education provided to students. This is done predominately through the ‘compulsory’ anonymised questionnaires at the end of term (Shah & Nair, 2012) and used to determine teaching quality and in some instances academic performance.

Throughout the literature, the term student engagement is attributed with an infinite list of features that contribute to student experience. These include concepts of academic and social integration, student : staff relations, student representation, student ambition, active learning, collaborative learning, online/blended learning, intellectual challenge, personal development, feedback, student satisfaction, retention, performance/good degrees, employability, outreach activities, extra-curricular activity, peer relationships, institutional policy and processes and curriculum design (Hardy and Bryson, 2010). Trowler (2010) in trying to bring some semblance of order to this subject acknowledged three distinct themes on engagement in the literature. These were identified as learning, identity and governance, but acknowledged that the themes overlapped. Moreover, they all require the university to offer democratic and inclusive practices, thus the HEI ‘controls’ the student engagement. Trowler (2010) states that student engagement is an intellectual, emotional and behavioural agreement that can be reflected in relation to the tenure and dispersal of authority. The student experience cannot be assumed Mann (2008) maintains that the student experience cannot be assumed without recognition of the power dynamics within an HEI’ This is grounded in the detail that students have little say in what curriculum is taught, how it is taught and how their education is assessed.

The literature contains much published work in relation to the level of engagement, but generally maintains the position that engagement is an active undertaking; either the student collaborates or abstains. This abstention questions whether the non-engagement is passive or resistant, the latter being expressed in other ways (Pabian & Minksova, 2011). The challenging concept for most students is the power dynamic that exists within HEI’s between themselves as students and the academics (Grant, 1997). Resistance although seen as passive, may in fact reveal an active process of withdrawal from the programme/process through for example non-attendance.

Kay et al (2010) suggest that there are four main roles for students:

- Students as evaluators
- Students as participants
- Students as partners, co-creators and experts
- Students as change agents

Where the students sit within the HEI’s hierarchy of influence and power will impact upon the engagement accomplishments that they can undertake.

Within Sri Lanka the academics are concerned about how best to support student involvement in their education experience and the negative impact that this may have on the quality assurance process and the quality of the content of the learning. Student Unions in Sri Lanka have strong political motivation and agenda and there is concern as to how students can be educated to provide ‘constructive feedback’ and participate in a collegiate manner with the quality assurance process.

Fielding (2001) offers the four different roles for accessing student voice, these being:

- Students as a data source
- Students as active respondents
- Students as co-researchers
- Students as researchers

What is key in both these models is that how the students engage is controlled by what the HEI allows. Comparable models most aligned to ‘developed’ student engagement practices encourage student engagement in the form of being reactive, responsive, collaborative and progressive as a HEI.

The emphasis for all students is to have their voices heard and to impact outcomes (Walker and Logan, 2008). Inspiring engagement necessitates actively listening to students in response to their education; appropriate communication of student views to those involved in the change process; operating in partnership with students to appreciate their learning experiences; and encouraging students to be receptively involved in the advancement of their education. Consequently, the ‘student voice’ can be identified as a multifaceted model observed in connection with transformative manner, (McLeod, 2011). Within Sri Lanka, there is a perceived risk that the ‘student voice’ is viewed from a perspective of speaking out, and participating in demonstrations. What McLeod (2011) identifies is that the key element is listening to the student voice to create a moral sequence in the student engagement cycle which incentivises students further. How the students are listened to will be embedded within institutional and cultural dimensions. Seale (2010) emphasizes that exploring this can clarify, “…whether higher education is only interested in a particular kind or dimension of student voice: a voice that expresses views but doesn’t necessarily demand equality or empowerment, in other words a voice that does not impel action.” (p999)

The student voice, and hence engagement, may be inhibited by the control and power of the HEI, or in the case of Sri Lanka this may be at a higher level within the UGC. Some students may be uncomfortable with participating pro-actively in feedback cycles, preferring a more passive study experience. These students will be unable to contribute to the student voice (Robinson, 2012). Therefore, the possibility is that the student voice will be that of the assertive and articulate student, and in Sri Lanka potentially politically motivated, with the weaker and less confident student rendered silent. This could as noted by Harper and Quaye (2009), identify intensify social inequalities and strengthen exclusion of some students.

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6. Moving Forward – Reflections and Opportunities for Enhancement

The amount of student engagement in QA was mixed across institutions. In some universities (but not all), student, academic and CQA responses were broadly aligned and did give examples of good practice. However, the concern remains regarding the efficacy and impact of the student voice.

There was a sense that, although the team witnessed a general desire from Sri Lankan stakeholders for the students to be involved in the Quality Assurance process, many academics felt that the students should be engaged both in the way the faculty would like and only to the extent that it fits with existing ‘knowledgeable’ stakeholder intentions. Phrased alternatively, the team did not often hear that the student had been put at the heart of the decision making in order to truly understand what they needed. Rather, feedback gathering was either used as confirmation bias to reaffirm the beliefs or wishes of those in power, or (commonly) as a way of satisfying some of the criteria of the QAC Quality Standards manuals. Those involved in the focus groups often felt that students should not necessarily be the ones to decide what they should know; that there should be boundaries and limitations to their involvement and power within decision-making processes. By way of illustration, staff within one institution suggested that peer review feedback from colleagues across the sector was likely to be a more reliable and valuable form of review (than student participation).

We must also ask whether students (as well as the academic and management teams) are ready to work in a student-centred quality assurance environment. Are the institutions prepared and able to respond objectively and constructively to student participation in these activities? Equally, are the students confident and capable of collaborating with the faculty, department or academics to contribute to their own learning experience, and be as self-aware as their quality assurance peers in the academic community may need to be? Our research suggests that the educational environment in Sri Lanka has often expected students to play a passive role in their own learning. Recent years have seen a shift towards a more student-centred and outcome-based approach to education and curriculum design, however students in many institutions do not yet feel fully empowered to challenge established systems, processes or methods of teaching. Where they have seen a lack of response to concerns that have been raised, their dissatisfaction has manifested in strikes, protests or poor attendance, which has rarely resulted in meaningful constructive dialogue and a satisfactory resolution for all parties. Students will require support in order to both engage in a meaningful way with the quality assurance activities and to build trust within their faculties and wider institutions.

Given the academic and cultural context in which they are working, the student engagement processes followed in other countries (for example in Scotland) may not be appropriate. Thus, it is appropriate to consider – **What is the Sri Lankan Student Voice?** Is this a term that might be more widely understood than student engagement?
7. Empowering the Student Voice

7.1 Immediate opportunities for enhancement
The team recommends a series of tools to enable better engagement in the short term:

• Mid module review to allow for more immediate actioning of student feedback
• Use of Mentimeter or equivalent where possible to gather anonymised feedback (recognising not all buildings have internet access, e.g. Law faculty Colombo)
• Better articulation of the nature and value of representation
• ‘You said, we did’ activities
• Assembly of National Student Representatives
• National conference to share examples of good practice (for example one day academics, one day students)
• Opportunities for students to vote for best/most supportive academic staff (STARS Awards or similar)

7.2 Enabling conditions for future growth
A series of bigger steps may be required to prepare a launchpad to the next stage of QA in Sri Lanka

• Completion online of planned workshops and Mentimeter to close the loop on the initial project
• Training and enhancement for faculty quality staff
• Training and enhancement for Student Representatives
• Development of an annual student satisfaction survey
• National conference to share examples of good practice, one day academics, one day students
• Opportunities for students to vote for best/most supportive academic staff (such as an equivalent to UWS STARS Awards)
• Development and training of a Student Enhancement Developer (or equivalent)
• Embedding student engagement within the Independent Review Process
• Ensuring parity across the whole student body (e.g. language)
• Enabling student feedback on a programme to have a more immediate impact than currently (QA processes can take more than 1 year)
8. The future challenge

Challenges facing increasing Student Engagement in Quality Assurance are wider than the remit of this project; the team advises that some challenges are engrained in both the institutional culture and the wider traditions, expectations and conflicts of Sri Lankan heritage and persona.

The existing approach to Quality Assurance has provided a clear foundation; however, this could be at the cost of empowerment, flexibility and a ‘deep engagement’ with the higher order elements of quality assurance. We must therefore question:

• How do we get deeper engagement?
• Are there quick wins that would help to build this, and give immediate feedback to faculty?
• How do we close the ‘feedback loop’ for Sri Lankan institutions?

A significant cultural shift in State Institutions may be necessary to support change in an effective way. That said, we met with individuals (and groups of individuals) who are keen to see progress and passionate about inclusivity and student engagement.

Some challenges identified include:

- **Infrastructure & resources**
  - Clear challenges were identified with obtaining and reviewing feedback, with issues associated both with paper-based and online feedback collection but no resources available to address these
  - Physical and financial resources, human resources and readiness
  - Need to have a range of platforms and opportunities for informing and engaging with students
  - Language skills problematic. Feedback often collected in English but students did not feel comfortable with expressing themselves in this language.
  - Differing start dates between institutions and even within institutions between faculties make it hard to collaborate meaningfully on national approaches to student engagement

- **Education & awareness**
  - Lack of awareness of QA, outdated attitudes of some academics
  - Aware of benefit not just existence
  - Need clear understanding of QA by students. Distinguish between logistical wish lists and real QA aspects. Simplified version of QA guidelines needed for implementation
  - Education is hierarchical and traditional.
  - Shortage of appropriate academic advisors and support both pre and post-enrolment in some institutions

- **Building trust and engagement**
  - Lack of trust
  - Perception that students not interested in anything other than scoring grades, political interest
  - Confidence and trust in engagement activities – do they set feedback on feedback – you said we did, you said we didn’t
  - Resistance to change, fear of change
• There is a fear to have students involved
• Need to mark boundaries, political and cultural

During the second visit, the same questions were to be asked of both students and academics to ascertain common areas where the loop can most easily be closed, and clarify actions moved forward.

Visit one identified differing start dates; could an induction into higher education and expectations/student journey could occur prior to commencement of studies?

This time could be used to look at QA and prepare students for expectations of them in respect of feeding back and impacting the development of their degree programmes; and the fact that they need to ‘seek’ employment (we found there is often be expectation that employment will be guaranteed post-graduation).

We should also question:

• How do institutions link in with external agencies and employers in a consistent manner, to ensure that they also inform QA?
• How do we get issues answered at the appropriate level?
• How can we build support from the Vice Chancellor?
• How can institutions differentiate between differing approaches of QAC – understanding what is a directive and what is guidance?
9. Supporting Sector Cultural Change

9.1 National Surveys and national alignment; students ready for higher education

In implementing any national policy and/or national survey (and feedback associated with student experience to influence their education moving forward) a standardised calendar is imperative. Whilst there may be (as seen in the UK) fluctuations within a few weeks of term starting – all Universities teach 30 weeks of the year (except programmes in Nursing, Medicine, Dentistry and some other allied health subjects, which with statutory placement hours – their study encompasses 43 weeks). Most deliver learning over two 15-week terms commencing September/October and January/February. This permits national surveys to be undertaken in the second part of the academic year across the whole of the UK. It also permits standardised offer and entry to students of their place at University and a defined /absolute period of study. In Sri Lanka, the general school year operates from January to December, with O Level examinations sat in December and A level examinations sat in August. Applications to University then open generally somewhere in the region of January-March following A level examination the previous August. It generally takes several months to be offered a State University place and students start their University studies sometimes a year after receiving an offer of a place. In the NEC 2016 documentation24 it acknowledges that O Level and A level marking and release of results could be accelerated to allow students to enter University at an earlier age. The earlier age recommendation is 17 years, which matches that of Scotland, where students can enter University aged 17 and complete 4 years of study for an Honours degree. Entering University early is not necessarily the issue here, what is, is the duration students wait to commence University post completion of A levels and being offered a place. A standardised University calendar would prevent this occurring. A standardised calendar could also be utilised to prepare students for their tertiary studies, in respect of expectations, graduate attributes, their role in quality assurance of their programmes and also English Language skills.

Within General School education the medium of instruction at primary school is Sinhala/Tamil; it is acknowledged that oral English could be introduced to develop communication skills from an early age25. In addition, it is recognised that students can sit the O and A level examinations in the language of their choice, which is Sinhla/Tamil or English26 (p5/28). This provides students with the best opportunity to achieve excellent grades in the formal examinations, but stores up potential problems at University when generally the medium of instruction is in English. The few students that we spoke with in the first visit highlighted that English language as the medium of instruction was difficult/problematic for some students. Therefore, to afford students the best opportunity to succeed and progress to University, this opportunity should not be removed. The standardised calendar/earlier engagement with their tertiary studies could be utilised as a ‘common first period of study’ to prepare and educate the students in in respect of expectations, graduate attributes, their role in quality assurance of their programmes and also English Language skills.

10. Areas identified outside of the scope of the project

The team advises that the following areas were mentioned within focus groups and could have impact on the efficacy of student engagement and the wider QA processes in the longer term:

- Impact of Fixed tenure on QA processes and capacity building/knowledge building.
- Revision of the Independent Review process to incorporate best practice
- Standardised job descriptions, terms of reference and term of office for Quality Assurance staff, from the Director of QAC down across the Universities
- Minimising the impact of strikes on academic studies – differing opinions from academic and students
- A standardised academic calendar
- Review of application/entry to University.
- Review of employment of academic staff (currently only Sri Lankan Nationals permitted employment) and appointment of Vice Chancellors
- Review of the allocation of Government funding and free education
- Establishment of QA that governs both public and private sector
- Link in with external agencies and employers to ensure that they also inform QA and the degree programmes
11. Summary

In Scotland, Student Participation in Quality Scotland (SPARQS) identify the need for a ‘culture of engagement’ where students and academic staff ‘learn from each other’s perspectives and hard work’ (SPARQS 2013, 9). The objective being to achieve significant engagement between students and the university that is based on genuine cooperation that is based on trust. In moving forward with student engagement Robinson (2012)\(^{27}\) concedes that the student / university partnership takes no account of power associations. Within Sri Lanka, the power associations could be student to university / student to UGC or university to UGC/QAC, all of which impact ‘true partnerships’ that are built on trust. Within the UK the QAA state that, ‘Student engagement is all about involving and empowering students in the process of shaping the student learning experience’\(^{28}\) (NUS/QAA 2012, 8). However the quality code on student engagement (QAA 2012), for example, makes no mention of student power or how this is achieved. What is important in ensuring appropriate and meaningful engagement in Sri Lanka is understanding the power dynamics and ensuring that the UGC/QAC or the University is cognisant of this power imbalance and seeks to regulate it. The stance taken in respect of students’ hierarchy of power within the University/UGC/QAC characterises their engagement. Carey’s (2018) nested hierarchy of student engagement (Figure 1)\(^{29}\) establishes the accountability for engagement at University level. It builds on the work of Kay et al, (2010)\(^{30}\) to clearly differentiate different types of student engagement that can be ‘controlled’ by the University depending on the level of interaction required. This model would suit Sri Lanka, as it would allow the gradual development, ‘power’, and understanding of students in their role of engagement/voice with their education and associated quality assurance process. Carey identifies that the four roles are not role specific and the nested hierarchy permits for synchronicity. He also states, “The model also allows for multiple sources of information from students that may be contradictory”. This is supported by Fielding who recognises that the engagement of students can produce random, whimsical, undesirable and unwanted feedback. In such instances, they both acknowledge that the University or ‘body of power’ needs to respond with some flexibility to ensure engagement continues. Consequently, universities need to ensure that students remain comfortable to speak, feedback and that the University is steadfast in its position of listening and responding to students.


\(^{29}\) Kay, J et al. (2010). Rethinking the Values of Higher Education-students as Change Agents? Gloucester: QAA.

11.1 Sri Lankan Quality Assurance: A strong foundation

The research conducted outlined many strengths in the current approach to Quality Assurance in Sri Lanka on a wider basis.

• The role of Director of the Quality Assurance Council is pivotal to obtaining the support of the University Grants Commission, the commitment to QA from institutions and ensuring that best practice in Quality Assurance continues to advance. Professor Nilanthi, in this role, demonstrates a real passion for, and commitment to, continuous improvement in QA in the country.

• Numerous colleagues with responsibility for QA (at various levels of their organisations) also showed commitment to improving their institutions through enhanced QA, and an interest in increasing student engagement in these processes.

• The QA handbook provides a comprehensive set of standards (156) against which institutions can benchmark and measure their activities.

• Guidelines are in place for external subject and institutional reviews, with plans in place for regular (and more frequent reviews). New faculties and programmes are being set up with these guidelines in mind.

• Certain QA processes have been standardised across the country, including QA structure within organisations and nationwide.

• Students are routinely providing some level of feedback on their academic experience in all institutions, and academic colleagues are requesting this.

These activities and strengths have created a strong basis from which to increase student engagement in QA activities in a meaningful and sustainable way.
11.2 Encouraging Student-centred quality assurance through active learning

The figure below illustrates barriers and obstacles faced in the student engagement domain, and correlating opportunities and enabling conditions.

Outcomes of the discussion with academic staff as to why students could not contribute (or would struggle to contribute proactively to their education in the QA process) revolved around the fact that the academic staff inferred that the students were driven through their ‘schooling’ to only be interested in passing their exams; they suggested that exam-based secondary education needs to change. This has been well documented over the last decade\textsuperscript{16} by many who have identified exam-controlled education – with a disproportionate time spent on teaching and preparing for the exams. As formulated by the National Committee for Formulating A New Education Act for General Education (NEC 2017 p88): “Our schools today have become large-scale factories that encourage children to consider the examination as an end in itself. The children in such systems learn mechanically and superficially to get good results.” A further question highlighted predictable examinations and the fact that students can predict examination content. This “has encouraged students to write answers to model questions and cram facts, paying little or no attention to internalising concepts, principles and theories that form the heart of good practice requirement for students” (NEC 2017 p87) as well as “a generation that is deficient in thinking skills, social skills and personal skills” (NEC 2017 p74). The NEC publication (2016)\textsuperscript{32} indicates that Teacher Guides should be abolished and “have only a text book to be strictly followed by the teacher”. This in turn perpetuates the idea that general education is fixed instruction and that variation in methods of learning and assessment could be beneficial. It is understandable that academics within the HE sector have concerns that their students are driven by the need to learn by rote and not develop the wider ‘graduate attributes’ that are afforded with a HE education.

In order to ensure that students are able to proactively contribute to their HE education and quality assurance processes, it is imperative that support and training is provided to both academics/professional support staff and students on what ‘student engagement/voice’ is and how students can contribute to their learning experience in a positive way.

The intention should be, mirroring Carey’s (2013) Nested Hierarchy of Student Engagement Interactions (see fig 1), to create environments where Sri Lankan students transition from their current role as a data source, through more engaged phases, to become fully active change agents in a progressive HE sector.


Appendices

Appendix I: Background to the Higher Education QA context

- **Overview of Higher Education**

Sri Lanka has 15 state universities and a number of affiliated higher education institutes. The first universities were set up in the late nineteenth century, with the subsequent creation of University College in Colombo in 1921 (which later became the University of Ceylon). These initial colonial institutions were designed to train the Sri Lankan middle class for leadership within the English-led bureaucracy, and access was limited. However, a policy of free education for all was implemented in 1945, giving all Sri Lankans the right to funded education from primary school through to first degree. From 1960, the official medium of instruction changed from English to Swasbasha (Sinhalese & Tamil), allowing students to study in their first language. Literacy rate is high (98.8% for those aged 15-29)\(^33\). (NGSL, 2019).

The University Grants Commission (UGC) was established in 1978 to oversee funding, quality and admissions for the state universities. They have four core values (integrity, commitment, respect, loyalty) and recently released their strategic plan to 2023 – looking to promote academic excellence, improve infrastructure, strengthen governance and increase equitable access.

Despite funded access, actual admissions to university are low – due in part to limited capacity. Of the 40–60% who pass the entrance exam (GCE A/L) annually, only 20% of these will be offered a place to start an undergraduate degree. Places are allocated on a merit-based basis, although assigned geographically (for the majority of programmes and universities, 55% to local students, 40% to island-wide applicants, 5% assigned for applicants from designated ‘deprived’ districts.) This means that only approximately 20,000 (19%) of the students who are successful at the GCE exams required to enter university will ultimately be offered a place at a state university. The UGC has set an objective to increase intake numbers by 15% per year\(^34\), however this aim is restricted by teaching capacity and capability, the courses offered by institutions, and the facilities available to students.

Sri Lanka currently only offers a limited range of postgraduate qualifications and the UGC has identified the need for the continuing education of the professional workforce; something that is currently not a priority for most institutions. UGC has also identified the need for increased provision in distance and online learning; currently the only university to routinely offer such programmes is the Open University of Sri Lanka.

The Sri Lankan government has made education integral to their policy of growth and regeneration.

“Higher Education is central to the creation of a knowledge based society, and the development of a country depends primarily on its ability to produce and make use of knowledge for development”\(^35\).

The vision of the UGC is ‘to provide better knowledge leadership for a better Sri Lanka and better world’\(^36\).

They are keen to establish world-leading, internationally-renowned institutions and political will is high to make a change; however challenges exist in making this a reality.

As demand outstrips capacity, the government has attempted to increase delivery through the creation of new HEIs. In some areas implementation has been unsatisfactory, with inadequate infrastructure, poor transport links, a lack of appropriately trained teaching staff (particularly in more remote areas) and little consultation with the community or student...
body leading to low satisfaction. In some cases this has contributed to an increase in tension: “lack of leadership & management capabilities has sometimes resulted in escalating student unrest” (NEF citation).

In other institutions, there is dissatisfaction about programmes offered, with calls for greater relevance, more modern teaching techniques or flexibility in assessment. Both students and industry call for improved links between academia and the world of work; employers complain that graduates lack the competencies they require.

Questions also exist around admission criteria. Although provision is made to support those from rural or more deprived communities, a competent ‘middle ground’ of students in urban regions are not performing well enough to be selected for a place available to their location (despite perhaps performing better than others who are selected) – meaning students who are willing and able to attend tertiary education are force to finish study after high school.

The National Policy Framework (2009) acknowledges that the challenges are great: “HEIs are expected to improve quality, relevance and access, all at the same time” (p.57).

- **Quality Assurance in the HEI context**

“Quality in HE is a multi-dimensional concept which embraces all its functions and activities”.

HEIs in Sri Lanka have accepted that a rigorous approach to quality in their establishments will be a key to growth and improvement on a national and international stage. However, it is not clear to what extent this has been understood and implemented at regional or individual level.

Following recommendations, a Quality Assurance Council was formed in 2005 and has worked to establish frameworks and baselines in quality across the sector. Common credit and qualifications frameworks have been agreed and broadly adopted in the last ten years, with the goal to allow greater understanding of the value of an award, and greater mobility between institutions for students. Qualification descriptors have been laid out, however it seems that they are not often used by institutions in designing and aligning their programmes.

- **Relationships between students and other groups (both in universities and the wider community)**

Multiple sources cite issues with indiscipline and violence amongst student bodies. In some institutions, student unions and associations regularly criticise university leadership, administration and offerings; often these protests or calls for change have political undertones. The practice of ‘Ragging’ (similar to hazing in the US or initiation) and the struggle to control this behaviour has led to a very negative public perception of both the governance of state HEIs and the students who attend them. 10% of students in a recent BC study stated that they had been caught or involved in a riot or violent demonstration.

Graduate employers and the government alike seem to have a low view of the student population; Industry bodies consider that there is a shortfall between the skills required by the workplace, and the competence levels of students upon graduation.

“There is a negative perception of university students due to frequent violence in the universities, ragging, wrong attitudes, lack of social skills, inability to solve problems skilfully, lack of presentation skills and speech... due to this overall deprivation of students at university they end up being jobless and the general tendency is to depend on the government for jobs” (NEF, 2009 p.29).

- **Understanding student engagement in the wider political & social landscape**

73.7% of young Sri Lankans do not believe that ‘Sri Lanka is heading in the right direction’. (Next Generation Sri Lanka, 2019).
Policy 41 in the National Policy Framework suggests that management should ‘have a continuous and meaningful dialogue with student groups, so that they can share their problems and express their opinions’. While students are regularly consulted as part of internal quality reviews, there is some concern over the efficacy of this process and officials admit that students are not routinely at the centre of decision making.

There is little mention of student consultation in the desk research consulted for this study. In general, papers refer to students as lazy, lacking in discipline, with poor attendance or low levels of respect for their academic superiors. In turn, some researchers have reported students as having low levels of confidence in their teachers, the administration or the process of study.

Are the youth as a whole disenfranchised? In a recent study the majority of those questioned were unsure whether democracy had been a positive step for Sri Lanka, despite believing that democracy as a concept was a good idea on the whole. ‘Their uncertainty regarding the benefits of democracy in delivering real benefits stems from a real world that they see as unjust, saturated with nepotism, and discriminating based on ethnicity, religion and class.’

In a recent British Council study, a cross-section of Sri Lankan youth were asked which areas in the Sri Lankan education system (primary through to higher education) needed to be improved. The three most popular responses were the quality of teaching, the curricula and the facilities. It was also noted that there was a lack of qualified teachers in all three languages (Sinhalese, Tamil, English), particularly with respect to teaching minority languages in other majority areas. (Next Generation Sri Lanka, 2019).

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Appendix II: Examples of Source Material consulted

• References


Trowler, V. (2010), Student Engagement Literature Review, published for the Higher Education Authority.


Appendix III: Questions for focus groups and meetings of visit one

- **Focus Group Questions**
  - Higher Education Ministry
  - Can we get an update on the status of the Higher Education (Quality Assurance and Accreditation) Bill.
  - How is quality assurance perceived by Universities/Academic Staff/Students?
  - What benefits do you hope to secure through implementing a formal system of student engagement in quality activities?
  - What will be the main challenges in adopting a formal system of student engagement?
  - How do you engage the academic community in the development of UGC policy and practice?
  - How engaged are the academic community in Quality Assurance activities?
  - How do you currently capture the student voice when considering changes to policy and practice?
  - Is there a formal system of student representation/representatives – at what level is this – module/programme/school/institution?
  - Is the Quality Assurance Council (QAC) open to embedding of student engagement activities?

- **University Grants Commission (UGC)**
  - Can we get an update on the status of the Higher Education (Quality Assurance and Accreditation) Bill.
  - How is quality assurance perceived by Universities/Academic Staff/Students?
  - What benefits do you hope to secure through implementing a formal system of student engagement in quality activities?
  - What will be the main challenges in adopting a formal system of student engagement?
  - How do you engage the academic community in the development of UGC policy and practice?
  - How engaged are the academic community in Quality Assurance activities?
  - How do you currently capture the student voice when considering changes to policy and practice?
  - Is there a formal system of student representation/representatives – at what level is this – module/programme/school/institution?
  - Is the QAC open to embedding of student engagement activities?
  - What does he understand by the term student engagement? Is he familiar with this concept?
  - What is the academic calendar?
  - What would he hope to achieve by this short project?
  - Where would he like to see student involvement in QA in the universities?
  - Does he see students playing a role in programme/institutional reviews?
  - How do you currently speak to students, does this happen?
• What do you see the issues and barriers being with increasing student involvement in the QA process?
• Are you intending to take the QAA Bill back to Parliament? What are the timescales?
• What are your views on private education?
• Do you think the UGC should have more control over it?
• Would you like to see a university league table?
• Julie to explain the system of funding in the UK by discipline, capped numbers etc: How does funding for unis in general and degree programmes work in SL? How autonomous are the universities in how they spend this funding?

• **Quality Assurance Council**
  • What does the term student engagement mean to you?
  • What does the term quality assurance mean to you?
  • Tell me about how students are consulted for feedback in a university.
  • Who do students go to provide feedback on their course or facilities?
  • How do you communicate with students?
  • What is the relationship between the students in departments/faculties and the academic and administrative teams?
  • Are there any students or groups of students who could have had a different experience? Why?
  • How is Quality Assurance Council perceived by Universities/Academic Staff/Students?
  • What benefits do you hope to secure through implementing a formal system of student engagement in quality activities?
  • What will be the main challenges in adopting a formal system of student engagement?
  • How do you currently engage the academic community in the development of UGC policy and practice?
  • How engaged are the academic community in Quality Assurance activities?
  • How do you currently capture the student voice when considering changes to policy and practice?
  • Is there a formal system of student representation/representatives – at what level is this – module/programme/school/institution?
  • Tell me about the perception of State versus private Universities in relation to:
    • Quality Assurance
    • Student Support
    • Student Engagement
    • Costs
    • Employment opportunity/salary post-graduation?
    • How are degrees viewed by employers?
    • What language are the programmes taught and assessed in?
• **Academic Staff**
  - What does the term student engagement mean to you?
  - What does the term quality assurance mean to you?
  - Tell me about how students are consulted for feedback in your university.
  - Who do students go to give feedback on their course or facilities?
  - How do you communicate with students?
  - What is the relationship between the students in your department/faculty and the academic and administrative teams?
  - Are there any students or groups of students who have had a different experience? Why?
  - How do you currently capture the student voice when considering changes to policy and practice?
  - What is your view on the Higher Education (Quality Assurance and Accreditation) Bill?
  - What are your views on the current Quality Assurance activities/Quality Assurance Handbook 2002?
  - What opportunities do you have to ensure your voice is heard in policy and practice development at your institution?
  - Do you feel that the academic voice is heard at your institution and that your view are regular sought?
  - How do you currently engage with students in respect of their programme content, changes and feedback?
  - What opportunities do you have for staff development at your institution?
  - Are there any sector wide organisation or initiatives in place to support your continuing development?
  - Tell me about the perception of State versus private Universities in relation to:
    - Quality Assurance
    - Student Support
    - Student Engagement
    - Costs
    - Employment opportunity/ salary post-graduation?
    - How are degrees viewed by employers?
    - What language are the programmes taught and assessed in?

• **Students**
  - What does the term student engagement mean to you?
  - What does the term quality assurance mean to you?
  - Tell me about how students are consulted for feedback in your university.
  - Who do you go to if you need to give feedback on your course or facilities?
  - How do you communicate with them?
  - What is the relationship between the students in your department/faculty and the academic and administrative teams?
• Are there any students or groups of students who have had a different experience to you? Why?
• What opportunities do you currently have for providing feedback on your student experience?
• How is the student voice currently heard?
• How effective do you consider these approaches?
• Do you have a student representation system at your institution?
• How are representatives identified – is there a nomination or voting system?
• Is there training support for Student Representatives?
• Do you get feedback on the feedback you provide – closing the loop?
• Do you have an opportunity to input into institutional policy development?
• Do you have an opportunity to inform/enhance the approaches to learning, teaching and assessment used in your programme of study? If not would you like to?
• Would you welcome the opportunity to work in partnership with your university to review/enhance intuitional policies and practice?
• What current process would you like to be involved in or have your view represented?
• Do any students sit on institutional committees currently?
• Would you welcome the opportunity to have a student representative on university committees – which ones and why.
• Do you have the opportunity to be involved in QAC Subject Review activities/QAC Institutional Review/QAC Internal Evaluation of Individual Institution/Study Programmes by IQAU?
• Tell me about the perception of State versus private Universities in relation to:
  • Quality Assurance
  • Student Support
  • Student Engagement
  • Costs
  • Employment opportunity/ salary post-graduation?
  • How are degrees viewed by employers?
  • What language are the programmes taught and assessed in?
• **British Council (not part of focus group, additional questions asked)**
  • Can we get an update on the status of the Higher Education (Quality Assurance and Accreditation) Bill.
  • What benefits do you hope to secure through implementing a formal system of student engagement in quality activities?
  • What will be the main challenges in adopting a formal system of student engagement?
  • Will the academic community welcome a formal approach to student engagement in quality activities?
  • Will there be any funding available to support the implementation (for the 15 State HEIs)?
• Is there an equivalent in Sri Lanka to the UK Advance HE? (Advance HE objective is to support strategic change and continuous improvement through the development of individuals and organisations of higher education)

• Are there formal league tables or rankings used in Sri Lanka to compare state institutions?

• Without out top down support and recognition of the value of student engagement activities there will be limited success and take up – how can we best launch this approach to maximise success – who do we need to get on side?

• Are there any existing activities that you feel would best be suited to piloting student engagement opportunities?

• **Extra Questions added**
  
  • Tell me about how students are consulted for feedback in your university.
  
  • Who do you go to if you need to give feedback on your course or facilities?
  
  • How do you communicate with them?
  
  • What is the relationship between the students in your department/faculty and the academic and administrative teams?
  
  • Are there any students or groups of students who have had a different experience to you? Why?
  
  • What does the term student engagement mean to you?
  
  • What does the term quality assurance mean to you?
  
  • Tell me about the perception of State versus private Universities in relation to:
    • Quality Assurance
    • Student Support
    • Student Engagement
    • Costs
    • Employment opportunity/ salary post-graduation?
    • How are degrees viewed by employers?
    • What language are the programmes taught and assessed in?
Appendix IV: Example student feedback form

UNIVERSITY OF KELANIYA

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHER EVALUATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Unit</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
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<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
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<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The following questionnaire is designed to help the lecturer to determine the effectiveness of the lecture series. Yours responses will be useful for the lecturer to conduct teaching activities effectively during forthcoming semesters. Your genuine responses are the most valued for this purpose. Please do not write your name. Your answers would be strictly confidential. Approximate time expected for the completion of this questionnaire is 20 minutes.

1 = strongly disagree  2 = disagree  3 = uncertain  4 = agree  5 = strongly agree

Fill in the square around the response which most accurately reflects your view on the item.

1. The learning outcomes were clearly explained at the commencement of the course unit
   1 2 3 4 5

2. The lecturer came prepared for the class
   1 2 3 4 5

3. Lecturer were well organized
   1 2 3 4 5

4. The lecturer was very clear in teaching and was easy to understand
   1 2 3 4 5

5. Lecturers were clearly audible
   1 2 3 4 5

6. The pace of lecturing was right for me
   1 2 3 4 5

7. The method of lecturing held my attention
   1 2 3 4 5

8. The lecturer used audio visual equipment when necessary
   1 2 3 4 5

9. Used examples and / or case studies to provide practical insight
   1 2 3 4 5

10. Students were encouraged to ask questions
    1 2 3 4 5

11. Attempted to involve students in the learning process
    1 2 3 4 5

12. Additional activities outside the class were recommended
    1 2 3 4 5

13. Assignments have been helpful in understanding the subject matter
    1 2 3 4 5

14. Interest in the subject was stimulated
    1 2 3 4 5

15. New and useful knowledge was gained by following this course unit
    1 2 3 4 5

16. Following this course unit helped to improve my analytic skills
    1 2 3 4 5

17. Following this course unit helped to improve my problem solving skills
    1 2 3 4 5

18. Any other comments related to teaching of this course unit

..........................................................................................................................................................................................
### Agenda for Session with Students 10 March 2020

#### 12.00pm Arrival – Welcome and Introduction
- Get students to state name, institution, programme and level
- Make name stickers/nameplates
- Agree rules for the day – respect all views/ Chatham House/everyone is equal

#### 12.30pm Outline the Student Engagement in QA Project
- Introduction to British Council Project – Nishika
- Visit 1 Activities and Impressions – Julie/Nina
- Visit 2 Planned Activities – What we want from you! Julie/Nina
- Student University Decision Making – Mentimeter

#### 12.45pm ACTIVITY 1 – Seeking Your Views (world café stations flip charts – 5 groups)
- Who should ask you for your views?
- When should your views be sought?
- What activities/decisions should your views be sought on?
- Why should your views be included?
- How should your views be sought?

#### 1.30pm Lunch Break

#### 2.00pm Student Feedback & Representation – Mentimeter Activity
- UWS Approach
- Their Universities approach to Student Representation
- What are the barriers
- Closing the Loop
- Introduce Student Engagement at UWS

#### 3.00pm ACTIVITY 2 – Student Engagement Versus Student Voice
- What approach would work best for Sri Lanka – SE or SV;
- Develop a potential set of sector wide principals for SE/SV.

#### 4pm Training and Support for Students
- SPARQS & Student Rep Training – Institutional Associate Trainer
- Mentor role in Midwifery UWS
- Role of Student Enhancement Developer
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.30am</td>
<td>Arrival and Coffee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.00am</td>
<td>Welcome and Introductions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.30am</td>
<td><strong>ACTIVITY 1 – Seeking Students Views (world café stations flip charts – 5 groups)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Who should ask students for their views?</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• When should student views be sought?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What activities/decisions should student’s views be sought on?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Why should student’s views be included? What are the benefits?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How should student’s views be sought?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.30am</td>
<td>Sharing Practice – Institutions to share an example of a current student feedback approach and how it is shared and the outcomes addressed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.30pm</td>
<td><strong>ACTIVITY 2 – Student Engagement Versus Student Voice</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What approach would work best for Sri Lanka – SE or SV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Develop a potential set of sector wide principals for SE/SV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.30pm</td>
<td>Lunch Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.15pm</td>
<td><strong>ACTIVITY 3 – Training and Support for Students</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Identification of staff and student training needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00pm</td>
<td>Sharing Practice – Student Support Approaches</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• SPARQS &amp; Student Rep Training – Institutional Associate Trainer</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Mentor role in Midwifery UWS</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Role of Student Enhancement Developer</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.30pm</td>
<td><strong>ACTIVITY 4 – Reward and Recognition – Engaging Academics!</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• STAR Awards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Big Awards</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What awards would you support for your institution?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.30pm</td>
<td>Coffee Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.45pm</td>
<td>Q&amp;A session and identification of next steps (alert to 2pm mentimeter on 12/03/2020)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.30pm</td>
<td>Departure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Agenda for Thursday 12 March 2020

**Morning work at Cinnamon Red.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12.00pm</td>
<td><strong>Arrival at British Council</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Preparation of Mentimeter for dissemination to Quality Directors</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Test Questionnaire</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Draft and circulate communication with instructions</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.00pm</td>
<td><strong>Live Mentimeter Activity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.05pm</td>
<td><strong>Catch up Session with Nishika and Professor Nilanthi De Silva</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.00pm</td>
<td><strong>Close Mentimeter</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.05pm</td>
<td><strong>Review Results &amp; Draft Preliminary Outcomes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.00pm</td>
<td><strong>Share guidance and supporting materials</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.15pm</td>
<td><strong>Return to Cinnamon Red</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix VI: Planned questions for visit 2

- **Students**
  - Why did you apply to go to University?
  - What month does your academic year start?
  - What month does your academic year finish?
  - Should all Universities/programmes start and finish at the same time?
  - How long did you wait between getting your offer and starting University?
  - Did you get your first choice University?
  - Are you happy with the University you are studying at?
  - Are you happy with your degree programme?
  - What is the single most important factor to you about University study?
  - What makes a good quality education?
  - Are you clear on all the opportunities you have to provide feedback or participate in decision making at your University?
  - Do you have student representatives at your University?
  - What is the main purpose of the student representatives at your University?
  - Is training provided for Student Representatives at your University?
  - How are Student Representatives at your University identified/recruited?
  - Do you feel you have regular opportunities to provide feedback to your university on your student experience?
  - What are the main barriers to giving feedback?
  - Can you share a good example from your University of how your feedback is gathered?
  - Do you get feedback on actions taken as a result of YOUR feedback?