

## Venue in Edinburgh between March 20<sup>th</sup> and March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017 or About SPARQS excellence in everything they did

Three events have been conducted by SPARQS (Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland) between March 20<sup>th</sup> and March 24<sup>th</sup>:

1. on 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> of March: ESPAQ – 4<sup>th</sup> Management Meeting;
2. on 22<sup>nd</sup> of March: International Delegates' Day
3. on 23<sup>rd</sup> of March: SPARQS Conference 2017

### Day 4

### SPARQS Conference

#### Celebrating the impact of the student voice on quality enhancement

After three excellently organized previous days, Thursday, the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March was the SPARQS sparkling day!! The 17<sup>th</sup> SPARQS biennale Conference was organized at the "Surgeons' Hall", Edinburgh. The conference was a great success, with a stunning turnout of around 200 delegates from Scotland and all over the world.

The first impressive experience was the building itself! Located in Nicolson Street, the present building houses the headquarters of the "Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh" one of the oldest surgical corporations in the world (chartered in 1505 as "The Barbers Surgeons of Edinburgh").

The "Surgeons' Hall", was designed in classical style by the leading Edinburgh architect William Henry Playfair, completed and opened in 1832 to shelter the "Surgeons' Museum".



Between 9.00-9.45 o'clock AM the participants were guided for registration to the Quincentenary Center. Everybody was then invited for the opening session in the Wolfson Hall, a large space suitable for a multitude of purposes.

Meanwhile every participant received folders, leaflets and brochures about sparqs, The Students' Engagement Framework for Scotland, Scottish Universities and Higher Education, Scottish Colleges and Further and Higher Education, the Outlines of the Workshop and Presentation Sessions, the List of Delegates, and a sparqs' selection of news Articles from 2016-2017.





At 9.45 Eve Lewis, Director of SPARQS welcomed the participants, introducing the main activities aimed at celebrating the impact of the student voice on quality enhancement of the student learning experiences and institutional decision-making.



engagement and shared thoughts on some key policy areas.

The first keynote speaker was Rebecca MacLennan, Programme Manager - Young Engineers and Science Clubs Scotland, Scottish Council for Development and Industry to take the floor. Rebecca looked at how the experience of previously being a sparqs Associate Trainer has been applied in her career.



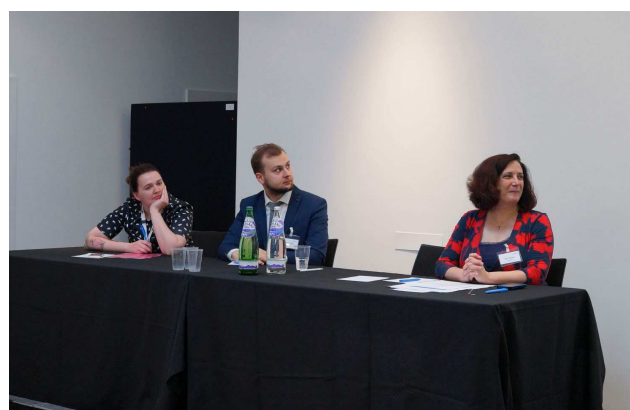
The third key-speaker was Adam Gayek who is a member of the ESU Quality Assurance Student Experts' Pool and a student expert of the Polish Accreditation Committee. In his presentation "Democratising outcomes of the students' participation in the Quality Assurance", Adam considered issues from a European perspective looking at the importance of student engagement in developing ideas around citizenship and participative democracy.



After Eve's introductory speech, the participants were delighted listening to the opening speaker, Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP, Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science, who set out the Scottish Government's commitment to student



The second keynote speaker, Vonnie Sandlan - NUS Scotland President for two years consecutively 2015/16 and 2016/17 detailed the way the student engagement can impact on the success of the widening access agenda, involving also her experience as a member of the board of the Commission on Widening Access.



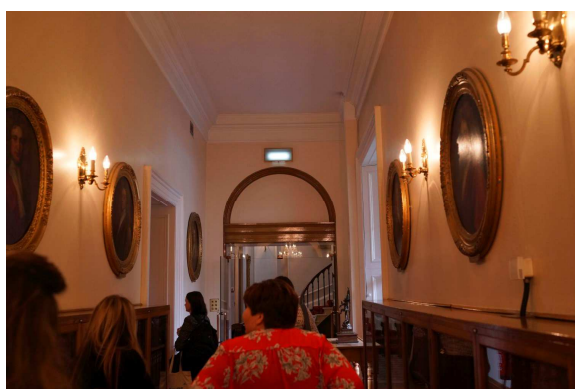




After lunch, at 13.00 o'clock, last but not least, took the floor Stewart Hay a former deputy head at Anderson High School in Lerwick, Shetland where he used to be a teacher from 1973 until retirement in 2011. He is a founder of the Global Classroom, an international partnership that allows staff and students at secondary schools across the world to share experiences on learning and teaching. Stewart's presentation also involved input from his Global Classroom colleague Jan Balac from the Czech Republic. Their presentation explored learning partnerships, global learning and involving students as researchers.



the use of technology and an international project



There were three breakout sessions. All the presentations were very interesting and much interactive.

The participants were distributed in three rooms of *Quincentenary Center* – "GB Ong Room", "Tausend Room" and "Wadsworth Room", and three rooms of *Playfair Building* – "Playfair Hall", "Reception Room" and "Committee Room", respectively. The historic ambience of oak-paneled walls adorned by portraits of famous surgeons, or contemporary beautiful spaces created a very special mood for

the speakers as for the attendees.

The Conference had four themes, chosen to support the engagement with delegates from across the UK and internationally. The themes were Governance, Democracy and Formal Quality Processes; Diversity; Co-creation in curriculum design and delivery; Student-led initiatives.



Before lunch, between 11:00-12:15, was deployed the Breakout Session 1. There have been six presentations. Simply mentioning their titles reveals the authors' deep involvement in a diversity

of aspects concerning the ways students can be engaged and enhanced in QA: "Student Engagement in Gender Action Plans"; "A curriculum that works for all"; "International perspectives on student engagement in quality assurance and university decision-making"; "The pupil voice – setting the groundwork for sustainable student engagement?"; "Hearing the student voice in the quality enhancement of learning and teaching"; "Enhancing structures for effective representation and partnership."





At 13:45 began Breakout Session 2, which ended at 15:00. The presentations and the debates were not less interesting: "Maximising the student voice in institutional reviews", "How good is our college?", "Co-creation in the curriculum—research and initiatives from the Scottish sector", "Apprentice Engagement-enhancing the Apprentice Learning Experience", and "Responding to Diversity".



From 15:15 to 16:30 the Breakout Session 3 included the following challenging presentations: "Partnership Agreements", "Student engagement in the quality of transnational education", "International approaches to enhancing the student voice in higher education", and "Student-led initiatives across the college sector".

After the closing remarks at 16:30, the day ended with the Student Engagement Awards Reception between 17:00 and 18:30. The reception was hosted by Mike Day, Director of Devolved Nations and Internationalism, National Union of Students.

The four days spent in Edinburgh were a great experience for the members of the ESPAQ project, especially for the Armenian guests.

We congratulate all the SPARQS and NUS organizers and all the participants for their efforts and commitment!