National Student Engagement Programme

Clár Rannpháirtíochta Náisiúnta na Mac Léinn

HEA | HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY AN tÚDARÁS um ARD-OIDEACHAS

QQI
Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

USI
Union of Students in Ireland
Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn

National Pilot Training Analysis

December 2016 and Revised April 2017

About NStEP

The National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP) was developed by the Higher Education Authority (HEA), Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) and the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) and launched in April 2016. The collaborative initiative began with two key strands of work: A National Student Training Programme and the Development of Institutional Capacity. The Student Partnerships in Scotland agency, sparqs, were engaged as consultants and five institutions were selected for the pilot stage of the Programme. NStEP builds on the work previously undertaken by the HEA Working Group on Student Engagement which developed ten principles of student engagement published in April2017.

For additional information on the pilot visit usi.ie/nstep and follow @NStEPie on twitter for regular updates.

About the Training

The National Student Engagement Programme training for class reps was developed by the NStEP Working Group and sparqs from May 2016 and delivered by the NStEP Student Trainers throughout October and December. The Working Group is comprised of representatives from the HEA, QQI, USI (chair), CIT, CITSU, LYIT, LYITSU, NCI, NCISU, NUIG, NUIGSU, WIT, WITSU, ISSE, National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning and sparqs. The trainers were recruited through a general call in April and attended the sparqs residential training in August.

Feedback Analysis

This report looks at the feedback received from class reps who participated in the NStEP training through the evaluation forms provided. Initial recommendations have been drawn up by the NStEP Coordinator, Cat O'Driscoll, which may be amended once additional feedback is received from the trainers and pilot colleges throughout January before being adopted at the next meeting of the NStEP Working Group scheduled for April 5th 2017.

This report follows the structure of the feedback forms:

1. About the Participants
2. Levels of Understanding
3. Value of Training
4. Trainer Rating
5. What did you like?
6. What would you change?
7. What will you do differently?
8. Recommendations to consider

Session details:

HEI	Sessions	Time	Participants	Value Rating Average
NUI Galway	5	Early Oct to Early November	169	4.3
Letterkenny IT	5	Late October to Early December	77	4.5
Cork IT	3	Early November	48	4.3
Waterford IT	5	Late November	55	4.5
National College of Ireland	1	Early December	17	4.2

About the Participants

Class reps were asked to identify the title of their course, full time or part time, year of study and international student/EU student status. They were also asked if they have been a class rep before and if so, how many times.
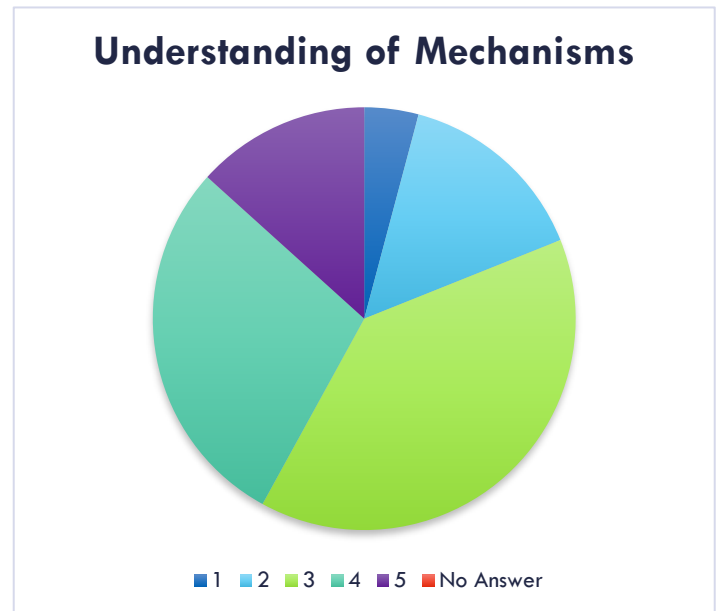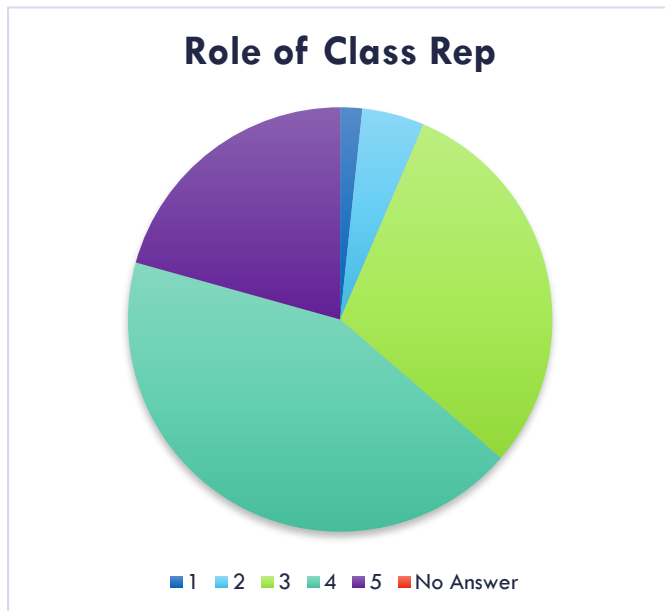
From the 366 completed response forms we find that 8 identified themselves as international students and 4 were studying on a part time basis.
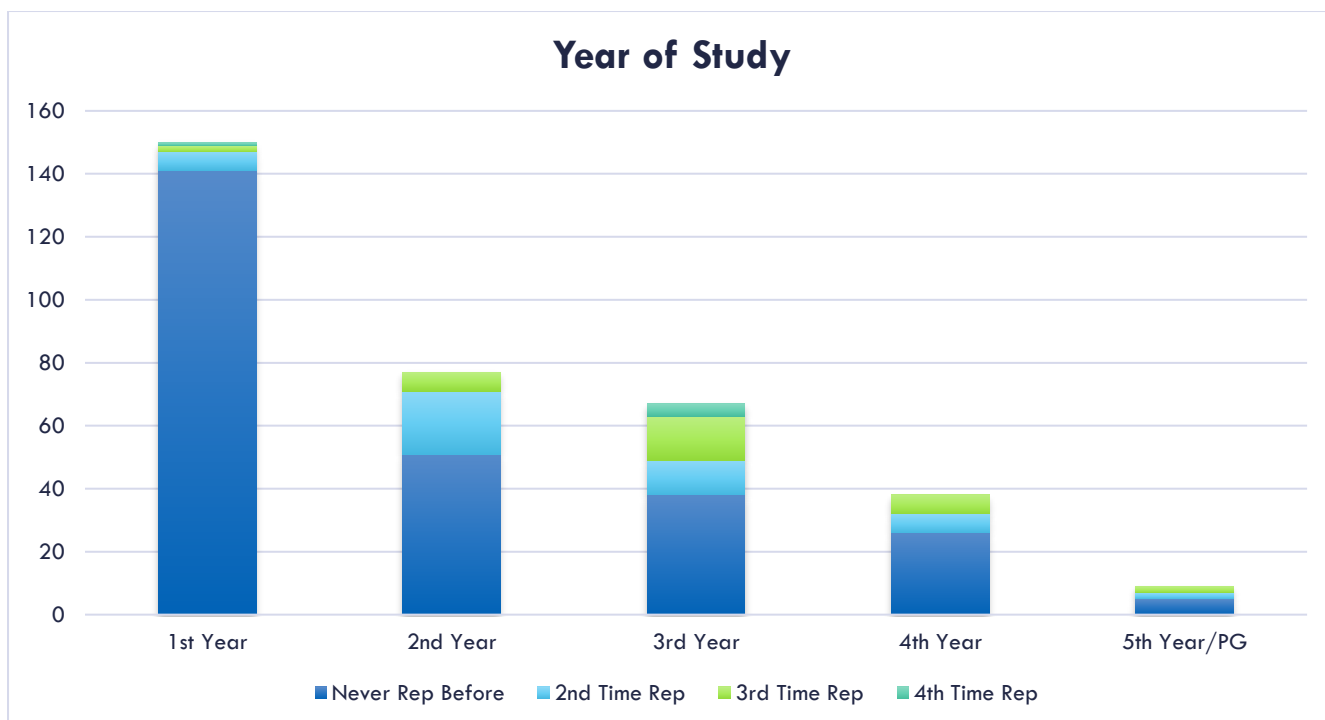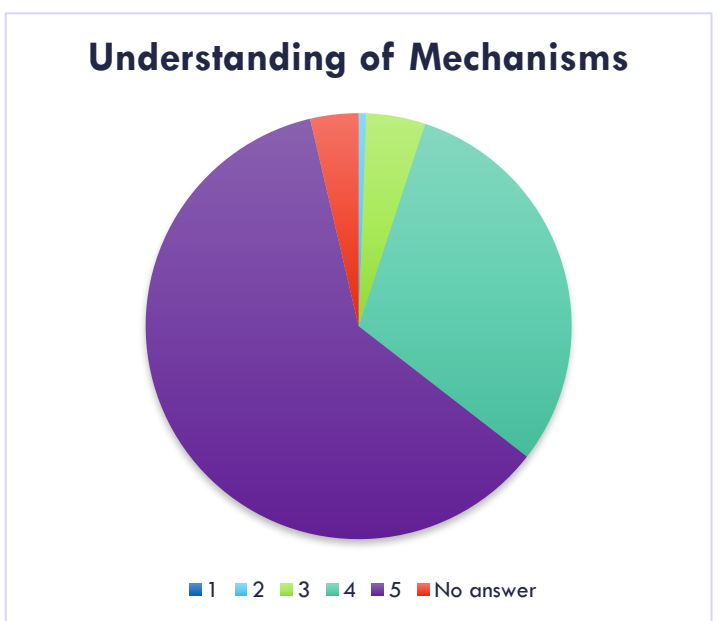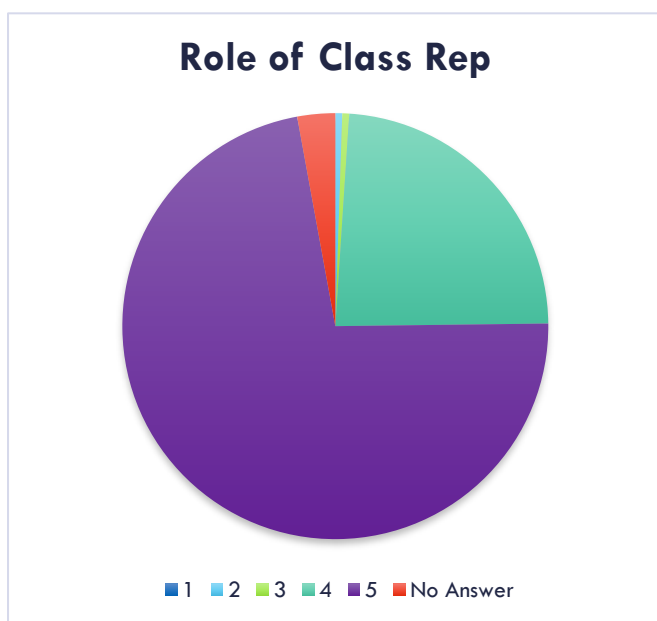
Level of understanding

Class Reps were asked to rate their level of understanding on a scale of 1 to 5 of the class rep role and the mechanisms for student engagement and representation within their institution.

Before training

Role of Class Rep

1 2 3 4 5 No Answer

Understanding of Mechanisms

1 2 3 4 5 No Answer

After Training

Role of Class Rep

1 2 3 4 5 No Answer

Understanding of Mechanisms

1 2 3 4 5 No answer

Value of the training

Class reps were asked to indicate how valuable they considered the training to be and if they would recommend NStEP training to other class reps.

Value of the training

Legend: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, No answer

Recommend to other reps

Legend: Yes, No, No answer

Trainer rating

The sessions were delivered by the NStEP Student Trainers, Dannii Curtis, Molly Kenny, Laura O'Connor, Catherine Ryan, Joanna Siewierska and NStEP Coordinator, Cat O'Driscoll.

The NStEP Student Trainers are all full time students who were recruited in April and attended the sparqs residential training in August. The feedback for the trainers has been very positive.

Completed evaluations included the following statements:

'Informative. Friendly atmosphere, didn't feel awkward. Laura was great'

'Catherine got us engaging with each other and she was a great trainer'

'Joanna is a very good speaker'

'Molly was amazing'

'Dannii was very friendly and engaging'

'Cat was great, very good speaker'

'Fantastic trainer, very informed'

'Trainer is really friendly, felt included'

'Good advice given and presented very well'

Trainer Rating

Legend: Poor, Fair, Good, Very Good, Outstanding

What did you like?

The open responses to this question can be grouped into three topics, the methodology, the content and the opportunities for participants.

Methodology: The training sessions were organised is small groups of mainly less than 30 class reps and delivered by an NStEP Trainers who is a full time student. The structure includes a number of group exercises and reflective activities which contributed greatly to the accessible, interactive and engaging atmosphere noted by the class reps in their feedback. The trainers, open layout and refreshments also ensured the training was upbeat, relaxed and fun. The use of a workbook and presentation made the content accessible to many who found the materials useful.

Content: The information explained and resources provided in the training were referred to as useful, informative, comprehensive, helpful, and confidence building. Specifically, the section on the role of a class rep was highlighted by many participating reps who left the training with a better or broadened understanding of their role. The tools used which include the Student Learning Experience and ABCD of Effective feedback were very well received. Some class rep also appreciated the advice they received from the trainer, Students' Union officer or other class reps.

> **Training Content:**
> Introduction to the NStEP pilot
> The Class Rep role
> The Student Learning Experience
> Gathering student opinion
> Effective feedback
> Developing solutions
> Making change happen
> Closing the loop

Opportunities: The many opportunities within the training sessions which class reps valued included chance to meet other class reps, to work on issues and explore solutions together with other class reps, to gain confidence in both their role and themselves, to bring issues to the attention of the Students' Union Officers and to learn from returning class reps.

In terms of content and delivery, what would you change?

Most participants responded 'nothing' to this question but suggested changes include:

Time: 'way too long' 'start earlier in the day' 'slow down delivery of content' 'incorporate more discussion time'

Content: 'less slides' 'some more materials' 'more interactive exercises' 'less exercises' 'personal stories and videos would be good' 'Music! Always helps' 'narrow down the content' 'make available as Gaeilge'

Venue and facilities: 'remove tables' 'a bigger classroom' 'fix the projector'

Groupings: 'have separate training for postgrads' 'it was hard to work between courses e.g. arts and engineering'

What will you differently?

The response rate to this question was very high and included the following topics (in order of frequency).

1. Communicating, feeding back to and engaging more with their class
2. Attend meetings and communicate with teaching staff better/more often
3. Take a different or solution based approach to issues
4. Use the Student Learning Experience and ABCD of Effective Feedback tools
5. Liaising with and learning from fellow reps
6. Be more confident and assertive
7. Be better prepared
8. Be more neutral/representative
9. Give more positive feedback
10. Engage with the Students' Union more

Recommendations to consider

The following recommendations have been drawn up by the NStEP coordinator from the initial feedback provided but participants. Additional feedback is also being provided by the NStEP Student Trainers and pilot institutions which may amend or add to these initial recommendations.

1. Focus the training on first time class reps

Though the feedback from the training was very positive from both first time and returning reps it was noted that returning reps did not get as much out of it and the communication of the training as *introductory* needs to be clearer. Class Reps also suggested the NStEP session should be mandatory for first time reps.

2. Provide additional supports for returning class reps

Returning class reps have different needs which should be explored and catered for. They often communicated the need for more time together to address issues using the solutions based approach promoted in the training.

3. Review the timing of training events

The pilot training events were delivered in mornings, afternoons and evenings. In particular, the evening sessions were found to be too long by participants and should be taken into consideration when planning future training events. A preferred time is impossible to suggest as programmes, timetables and campuses vary greatly.

4. Coordinate the training on a school/faculty unit basis

The training events in WIT and LYIT were delivered in school or faculty groups and participants found this very beneficial. This also eased some of the difficulties with timetabling training sessions.

5. Include a member of the Students' Union Executive in each training session

Most of the pilot training events were delivered with a member of the Students' Union present and this was noted as a benefit by many participants and this also arose in the initial feedback from the trainers.

6. Reduce the number of slides in the presentation

Feedback often referred to the slides as having too many words, being repetitive or inaccessible. The materials will be reviewed taking all the feedback into consideration.

7. Ensure the training venues are large and free of tables

Several issues with the rooms and facilities were noted in the feedback forms. Open plan rooms are much better suited for the NStEP sessions which includes interactive exercises. Rooms being too hot or too cold also caused discomfort for class reps.

8. Investigate training for postgraduate class reps

A small number of postgraduate class reps participated in the training events and found them useful but noted their experience is different to undergraduates and could be catered for separately.

9. Host SU Class Rep Training ahead of NStEP Training

During the pilot, WIT, CIT and NCI hosted the annual Class Rep Training before NStEP Sessions were run while NUIG and LYIT hosted the annual training after the NStEP Sessions. The feedback from class reps shows they were more prepared for NStEP training when they had gained a basic understanding of the college and union structures and supports.

10.   Always provide refreshments

The references to food and hot beverages appear throughout the feedback forms and were highly valued by class reps who often attended the training in the middle of or after a busy day. Refreshments also contributed to the relaxed and accessible atmosphere which was valued highly by participating class reps.

The Student Learning Experience
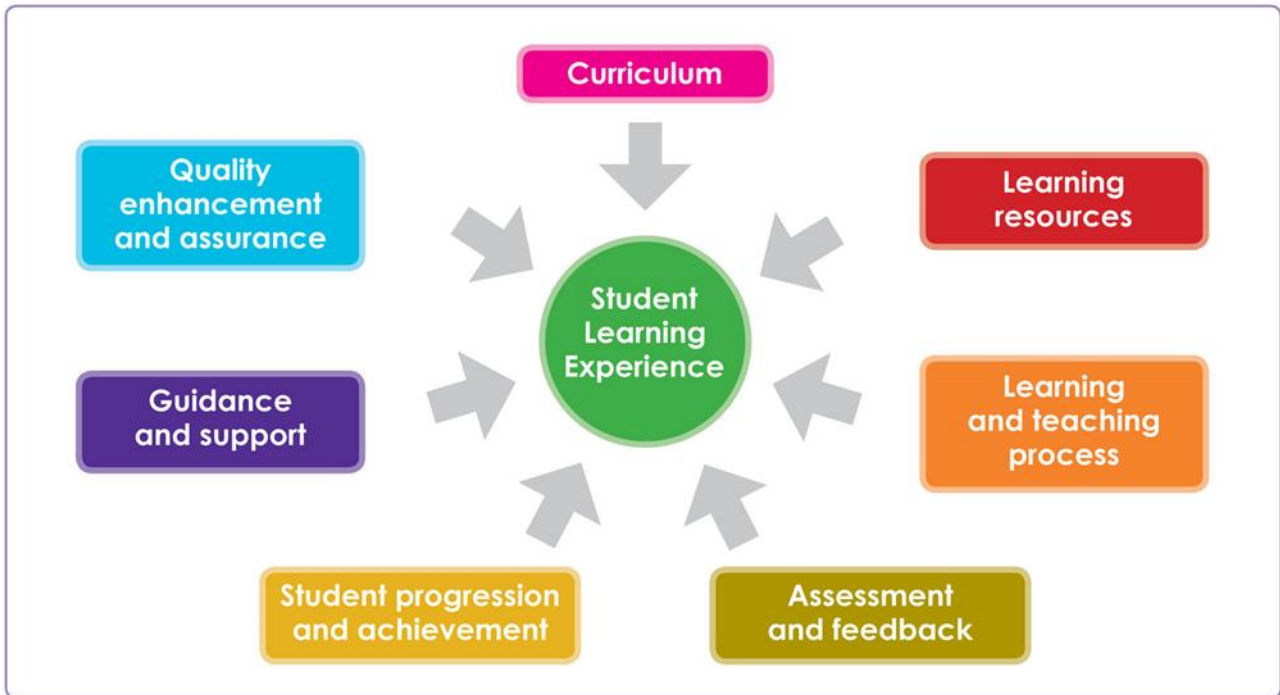
The ABCD of Effective Feedback
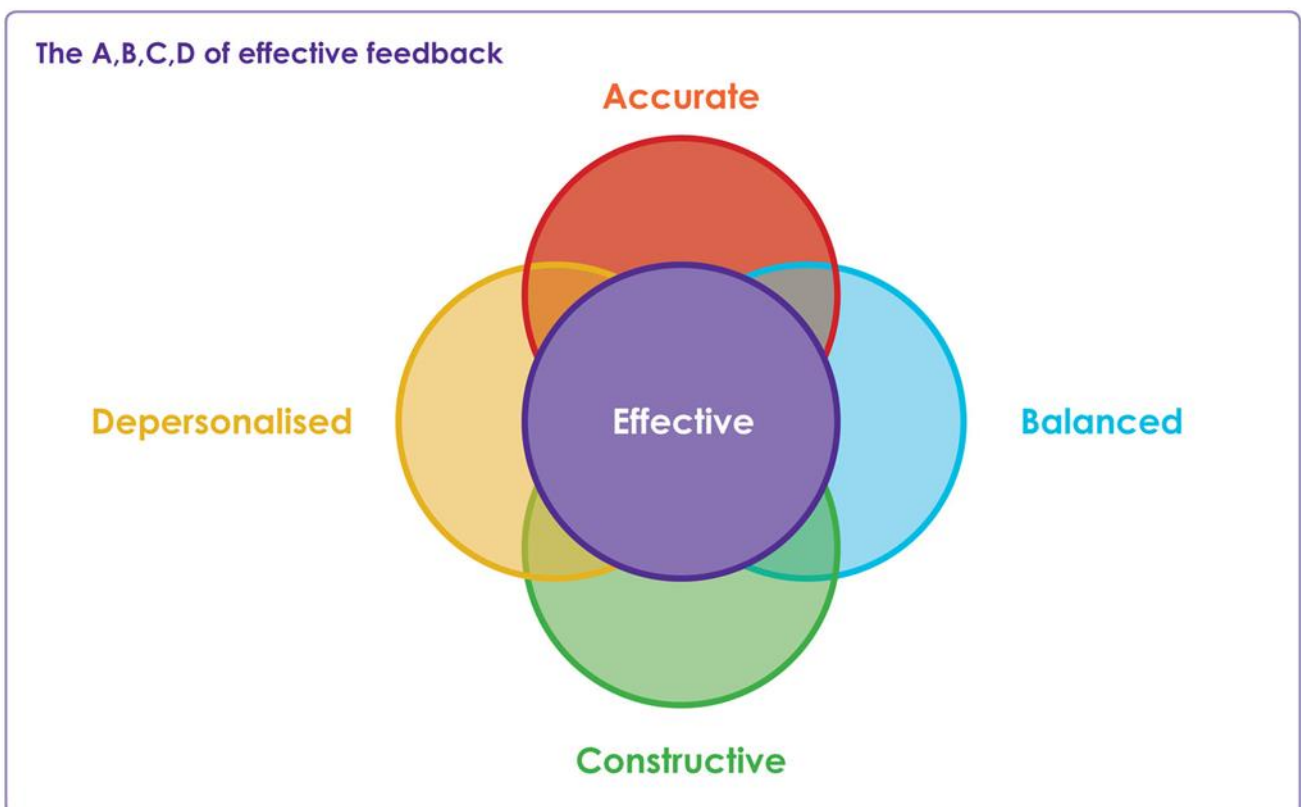
2017-2018 Timeline of NStEP Events

April - May 2017

- **April 5th**: 3rd National Working Group Meeting
- Establishment of 5 new work streams
- **April 6th**: Induction Event for Insitutions new to NStEP
- Student Trainer Pool Recruitment
- Student Engagement Digital Badge creation

June - July 2017

- Redesign of Student Training Programme materials
- Establihsment of National Student Quality Assurance Reviewers Pool

August 2017

- National Event for Student's Union Officers
- Student Trainers complete sparqs residential training programme

September - Novemeber 2017

- Student Training Programme delivery

November - December 2017

- Inagural meeting of the National Student Engagement Network

March 2018

- NStEP Conference

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National Student Engagement Programme

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