



National Student Engagement Programme

Clár Rannpháirtíochta Náisiúnta na Mac Léinn

December 2016

NStEP: A National Collaboration

The National Student Engagement Programme was launched in April 2016 by the Higher Education Authority (HEA), Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) and the Union of Students in Ireland (USI). 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 April 2017.



The National Student Training Programme

Developing Student Capabilities

The NStEP Working Group is comprised of the Pilot HEIs, partner agencies and national experts from the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) and the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. The working group met for the first time in May 2016 to design the Class Rep Training Programme. Over the summer months the training programme materials were developed with sparqs and the trainers attended the sparqs residential training in Dundee. Throughout the first semester class reps in each of the pilot HEIs took part in the training which covered the different aspects of the class rep role. The training covers the following topics through an interactive session of group exercises and activities.

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.

To date over 400 Class Reps have participated in one of the 19 Class Rep Training events held across the five pilot institutions. Class Reps were asked to indicate how valuable they found the training on a scale of 1-5 and results indicated an average 4.3 rating. 99% of responses also indicated they would recommend the training to other class reps. The training was delivered by the five NStEP Trainers: Dannii Curtis, Molly Kenny, Laura O'Connor, Catherine Ryan and Joanna Siewierska who were selected from over 30 applicants in April 2016. The 2017 call for trainers will be issued in late January.

Pilot Institutions



Cork Institute of Technology



Letterkenny Institute of Technology



National College of Ireland



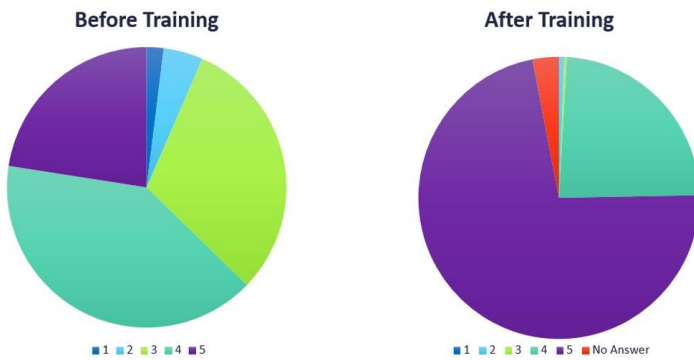
NUI Galway



Waterford Institute of Technology

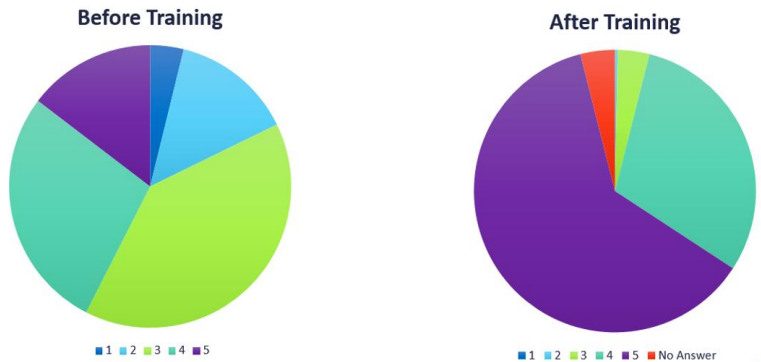


Fig. 1 Understanding the Role of Class Rep



The first section of the training module explores the purpose, tasks, skills and benefits of the Class Rep role. This has been very transformative for many reps as is seen in the charts in Fig. 1 indicating their level of understanding before and after the training session on a scale of 1 to 5. Class Reps have also stated they leave the training with more confidence from the knowledge they have gained and the network of Class Reps they have become a part of. It has become clear that the role

Fig. 2 Understanding the Mechanisms for Engagement



of Class Reps is very diverse and students often have a limited understanding when asked to apply or volunteer. The recruitment of Class Reps also faces many challenges and may be a focus of a future work stream. The Student Learning Experience Tool developed by sparqs is used in the training to explore the different mechanisms for engagement and participants have found this very useful. We can see that their understanding of the different mechanisms for engagement, depicted in Fig.2, improves significantly after taking part in the training session. The existing training programme is best suited for new or first-time class reps. The training and support needs of returning reps has been discussed by the pilot working group and are likely to be raised in one of the national work streams established in April 2017. The training programme review report will be available in January.



Institutional Analysis Sessions

The second work stream which focuses on institutional practices and procedures is underway in the pilot institutions and will be completed in early March. The outputs will inform the development of five national work streams which will be agreed at the next working group meeting in April.

Quality Assurance Student Reviewers Pool

In January 2017 a national call will be issued for students interested in taking part in quality reviews. The call will seek to recruit students across the different disciplines, institution types and regions. Training will be provided by QQI and USI for both internal and institutional reviews. Institutions will have access to the pool through the National Student Engagement Coordinator who will provide administrative assistance and support.

2017 Programme Roll Out

A call for institutions to express interest in the programme will be issued in December 2016. In April 2017, the Pilot Working Group will select 5 national work streams which will be open to institutions outside of the pilot. The National Student Training Programme will be available to institutions who will be required to participate in a preparatory event on April 6th. The institutional capacity building work stream will also be expanded in a phased approach due to capacity limitations. A national network for enhancing student engagement will be established and supported by the NStEP Coordinator.

Further information will be sent in the call and posted on usi.ie/nstep. Follow @NStEPie on twitter for regular updates.

The National Student Engagement Programme is funded and supported by:

