National Student Engagement Programme

Clár Rannpháirtíochta Náisiúnta na Mac Léinn

National Projects: Call for Project Teams

Introduction

On April 5th, the National Working Group of the National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP) Pilot selected five national projects as a focus for the next 18 months following a review and analysis of the Pilot Institutional Analysis report. The objective of each project is to establish guidelines, suitable for the diversity of the sector, on the project area. These projects are as follows:

1. The Role and Recruitment of Class Representatives
2. The Design, Review and Delivery of Programmes
3. Student Feedback Opportunities, Data and Follow Up
4. Students in formal system level procedures, strategy and decision making
5. Staff Roles and Capacity Building

The programme partners are now seeking nominations from institutions to the project teams. This document outlines a structure for the projects and details some initial information on each project topic.

NStEP Work Streams — National Student Training Programme | Institutional Analysis Work Stream | 5 Projects — Student/Staff Partnership

The projects will work along side the existing programme workstreams, further information about which is available on the website usi.ie/nstep and regular updates are posted on twitter by @NStEPie.

Timeline

It has been agreed the projects will be led by the five institutions involved in the pilot programme and each project team will not exceed 15 members. Project team nominations must be made before August 5th. Each project team will meet to adopt terms of reference and design a work plan before September 1st. The work plan will be submitted to the NStEP Steering Group for review and feedback. A minimum

of six team meetings will be included in the 18-month work plan. Each project work plan will be presented at the National Student Engagement Network Launch event in November. Project updates will also be presented at the NStEP conference in March 2018 and a second network event in autumn 2018 before the final project results being published in Spring 2019.

Project Lead Institution

Each project will be led by one of the institutions that completed the pilot of the National Student Engagement Programme. The lead institution will be responsible for convening and chairing the project team meetings and ensuring the partnership ethos of the programme is championed.

The projects leads have been allocated as follows:

Project	Lead Institution
The Role and Recruitment of Class Representatives	National College of Ireland
The Design, Review and Delivery of Programmes	NUI Galway
Student Feedback Opportunities, Data and Follow Up	Waterford Institute of Technology
Students in formal system level procedures, strategy and decision making	Letterkenny Institute of Technology
Staff Roles and Capacity Building	Cork Institute of Technology

Project Teams

Each institution may make up to three nominations to project teams. All nominations must be co-signed by an institutional representative and students' union officer. Nominations must be sent to the programme coordinator before 5pm August 5th by email to cat.odriscoll@usi.ie. The NStEP Coordinator will act as secretary to each programme team, provide administrative support and ensure smooth communication between project teams and the steering committee.

Institutions and their students' unions are encouraged to engage with projects that align with existing work and to nominate individuals with expertise relevant to the project.

Resources and administrative support

The resources that have been allocated to each project include 5 days of research, training or facilitation from sparqs. The NStEP Co-ordinator will provide administrative support to each project. The online platform provided by the National Forum for The Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (nstep.teachingandlearning.ie) is available for hosting discussions, scheduling events, and maintaining and sharing files. Resourcing is not available to buy out staff time however the projects should link to current roles and initiatives in the lead institution.

Appendix A outlines a draft terms of reference for the projects.

Out puts and dissemination

Each project will be required to share a note of each meeting with the programme partners and steering group within 10 working days of the meeting. Each project will conclude with a final report which will include best practice guidelines and identified case studies. The project team will also present updates to a wider audience on three occasions:

November 2017: Introduce their project and plan of work at National Network for Student Engagement.

March 2018: Present findings or developments at the National Student Engagement Conference.

March 2019: Present final guidelines at a dissemination event.

Project Details

1. The Role and Recruitment of Class Representatives

Reports from the National Student Training Programme Pilot and the Institutional Analysis Pilot will inform the work of this project. The work should address the challenges institutions face with recruiting, maintaining and working with Class Representatives.

In addition to creating national guidelines the project work plan may include:

- Drafting a Class Rep Role definition guide
- Selecting best practice case studies for class rep recruitment
- Exploring and analysing the systems in place to monitor and mentor Class Reps
- Investigating and reporting on the options available to recognise/reward the work of Class Reps
- Determining how the partnership ethos of NStEP may be embedded in the coordination of Class Rep structures.

2. The Design, Review and Delivery of Programmes

The pilot workshops found the engagement of students in programme level developments and decisions making ranges from partnership to tokenism and on occasion does not involve any students. With students recognised as co-creators in the Irish Principles of Student Engagement[1] and the involvement of learners in Programme development and approval included in the Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines[2] the structural groundwork needs practical guidelines and approaches to enhance the engagement of students in programme design, approval and review.

In addition to creating national guidelines the project work plan may include:

- Establish shared standards for assessment and feedback at the programme level
- Identify suitable case studies from existing work by networks such as the Learning Innovation Network
- Lay down stepping stones to co-creation
- Review the training and activities of the National Student Reviewers Pool

3. Student Feedback Opportunities, Data and Follow Up

The availability of opportunities for student feedback across the pilot institutions was very mixed and often ineffective. Trust needs to be built on all sides for the feedback mechanism to work effectively. The consistency of communication to students about feedback poses a challenge for many areas in the sector. The continuing improvement of the response rates to the Irish Survey of Student Engagement[3] and the availability of student feedback data from many other sources has led to the need for national guidelines on the use of survey data for enhancing the student experience.

In addition to creating national guidelines the project work plan may include:

- Explore the effectiveness of course board/programme committee feedback structures
- Establish guidelines for student engagement in feedback mechanisms
- Investigate the work underway in other countries to 'close the feedback loop'
- Identify good practice case studies for feedback communication

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[1] http://www.hea.ie/sites/default/files/enhancing_student_engagement_in_decision_making_1.pdf

[2] https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf

[3] http://studentsurvey.ie/survey-results/

4. Students in formal system level procedures, strategy and decision making

National legislation enshrines the inclusion of students in high level decision making and quality arrangements, and the Irish Principles for Student Engagement recognise students as partners but in practice a number of challenges inhibit the meaningful engagement of students in strategic development, quality reviews and decision making. The annual turnover of student representatives and sometime poor handover arrangements contribute to the tokenism student leaders report. With training opportunities for student leaders in place further solutions need to be identified and promoted.

In addition to creating national guidelines the project work plan may include:

- Examine the handover arrangements between student representatives
- Investigate the barriers inhibiting the meaningful engagement of students at the system level
- Establish protocols for the National Student QA Reviewers Pool
- Identify key activities which may address the challenges when completed by staff
- Create national best practice guidelines for formal system level student engagement

5. Staff Roles and Capacity Building

The role of staff in different positions is intrinsic to enhancing student engagement. While recognising the need for staff involvement across all projects the support and development of staff is an important outcome for the National Student Engagement Programme.

In addition to creating national guidelines the project work plan may include:

- Explore ways to make staff aware of the student representation structures.
- Propose different articulations of student engagement for different staff roles in higher education
- Review the take up of the Digital Badge for Student Engagement hosted by the National Forum for Teaching and Learning.
- Determine the training needs of staff
- Create national guidelines for supporting staff role and capacity building in student engagement.

Appendices

Appendix A: Draft Terms of Reference

Project Project Team

Purpose
The project team will lead and coordinate the work of the National Student Engagement Programme on PROJECT TITLE.

Scope
The work of this project team is limited to investigating and identifying best practice and establishing best practice guidelines.

Governance
The project lead will report to the NStEP Steering Group and coordinate the project in accordance with good governance principles.

Membership
The balance of staff and student representatives should ensure each group makes up at least one third of the team. The team will be led by one institution and involve no more than 15 individuals from other institutions.

The National Student Engagement Coordinator will provide administrative support and advice for the team.

Meeting arrangements
A minimum of six team meetings will be included in the 18-month work plan. Meeting facilities in the offices of HEA, QQI and USI are available. Videoconferencing will be utilised at each meeting. A minimum of 50% of the team must be in attendance, in person or through video conference, for the meeting to go ahead.

Reporting
A note of each team meeting will be made available to the programme partners: HEA, QQI and USI. Quarterly updates will be included in the NStEP Newsletter in addition to the following events:

November 2017**:** Introduce their project and plan of work at National Network for Student Engagement meeting.

March 2018**:** Present findings or developments at the National Student Engagement Conference.

March 2019**:** Present final guidelines at a dissemination event.

Resources
The resources that have been allocated to this project team include 5 days of research, training or facilitation from sparqs. The NStEP Co-ordinator will provide administrative support, advice and guidance. The online platform provided by the National Forum for The Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (nstep.teachingandlearning.ie) is available for hosting discussions, scheduling events and keeping files. Resourcing is not available to buy out staff time however the projects should link to current roles and initiatives in the lead institution.

Deliverables

1. National guidelines for PROJECT TITLE
2. Final Report
3. Case studies