



# Student Survey.ie

## StudentSurvey.ie reflection and planning for the future

### Context

StudentSurvey.ie (the Irish Survey of Student Engagement) is generally regarded as a successful initiative in Irish higher education following its establishment on an annual basis from 2014 after a successful national pilot in 2013. StudentSurvey.ie was created following a recommendation in the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* that every higher education institution put in place a comprehensive, anonymous student feedback system. Great success has been achieved in this endeavour, as all publicly funded and an increasing number of private colleges use StudentSurvey.ie and PGR StudentSurvey.ie as essential mechanisms to capture and amplify the voices of students.

It has earned the trust of staff and students, with a strong and consistent response rate from students and positive attitudes from staff. The operational demands of running the survey have been met consistently by participating institutions, and the promotion of survey data collection during the fieldwork period has become well operationalised across the sector.

The StudentSurvey.ie initiative is managed by a unique collaborative partnership involving the co-sponsoring organisations (HEA, IUA, THEA, USI) and the StudentSurvey.ie Steering Group. The Steering Group wish to maximise the benefits for participating institutions, and other stakeholders, by facilitating a reflection on current operation and practices. They seek to shift the focus to making greater strides in the second component of what the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* called for, which are accessible, strong, and responsive structures to ensure that action is taken promptly in relation to student concerns.

There are benefits to doing so. The rich dataset has facilitated the identification and capture of student feedback about academic, social and person experiences. It offers the opportunity to use this feedback to make real lasting changes to enhance and improve these experiences, for the good of the whole institution. There are also challenges to doing so. Matters of strategic importance, such as the uses of data in public facing fora, the operating principles for the survey, and the integration of StudentSurvey.ie data into institutional and sectoral systems, are at risk of becoming fragmented.

There is a risk that the ambitious and shared goals of the national project will be limited, and the true potential of the initiative not achieved. The co-sponsoring organisations believe that now is the time for reflecting on the progress of the StudentSurvey.ie initiative to do, and for active contemplation of the strategy for the years ahead. This paper puts forward the structure necessary to achieve this.

For StudentSurvey.ie, achieving impact is understood to mean identifying the value which has been added, and continues to be added, to the student experience by this data collection, analysis and the subsequent integration of results into policy and practice. In other words, what real positive impacts has the survey had over its duration to date in terms of highlighting indicative areas which appear to be working well, areas for improvement and areas for further development. And in having this focus, what unexpected impacts have also taken place which have required or benefited from a strategic or procedural review and change.

## **Purpose and objectives**

StudentSurvey.ie represents a rich and ever-growing source of a rich purposeful range of student-generated data. The challenge is to have channels through which to share this, reflect on it in relation to strategic objectives and policy-making, and consequently take actions to enable the data to have ongoing impact. In using learner data as the catalyst for development and improvement, as well as for identifying risks and threats, the institution can take an approach to impact identification, evaluation and cultivation which will mean the learner is firmly situated at the centre of decision-making, and that their experiences and feedback drive the development of the institution.

The objectives of this reflection and planning process therefore are:

- To maximise the impact of our collective endeavours while taking care recognise significant efforts and commitments of all parties to date.
- Consulting with all relevant and interested parties with the goal of identifying priority issues.
- Engaging with the StudentSurvey.ie community to action the most prioritised as appropriate for achieving the goals of this national initiative.
- Addressing questions such as the frequency of the survey and the project governance, which we know from previous consultation with stakeholders are areas which require reflection and planning.

## **Overall timeline for consultation process**

Consultation begins – June 2022

Consultation runs through to – Mid-October 2022

Consolidation of emerging key messages and findings, and report writing – October & November 2022

Results examined by co-sponsors and Steering Group and approach developed – November & December 2022