



student survey.ie

Final Report of the StudentSurvey.ie Survey Review Group

Introduction

The StudentSurvey.ie Steering Group agreed in 2015 that the StudentSurvey.ie (Irish Survey of Student Engagement) survey instrument should undergo thorough periodic review, initially with the view to implement a revised version of the survey in the next fieldwork period, and approximately every five years thereafter. This led to the introduction of an updated survey instrument for fieldwork 2016.

A newly constituted StudentSurvey.ie Survey Review Group was formed. This group operated from March to December 2021. The StudentSurvey.ie Survey Review Group was chaired by Dr. Vivienne Patterson (Head of Skills, Engagement and Statistics, Higher Education Authority), who is also a member of the StudentSurvey.ie Steering Group. The Chair acted as the main liaison between the StudentSurvey.ie Survey Review Group and StudentSurvey.ie Steering Group.

The group met virtually and on a regular basis during the period from March to June 2021. Field testing activities of resulting revised survey instrument took place in October 2021. The review initially took account of existing feedback from institutions, evidence such as response rates to individual questions, and the evolution of the higher education system in the intervening period since the last review. Field testing of the revised survey instrument and potential new questions consisted of group focus groups and individual interviews. A total of 89 students across 12 higher education institutions participated. This period also included a short consultation period with relevant stakeholder groups, including participating higher education institutions. The group met after this field testing and consultation to consider the feedback from students and other stakeholders, finalise the revised survey instrument and make recommendations to the StudentSurvey.ie Steering Group.

Summary of the outcomes

A comprehensive review of the StudentSurvey.ie survey instrument was carried out in 2021 as part of the periodic review of StudentSurvey.ie. The Survey Review Group considered international good practice, feedback from students, and recommendations from relevant stakeholders in revising the existing questions and considering where additional questions could add value. The outcomes of the review were:

1. Revised StudentSurvey.ie objectives

- The StudentSurvey.ie objectives were revised to remove all uses of the word “satisfaction” and reflect the increasing emphasis on analysis of the data and impact of the results.

2. Minor revisions to the clarity of the existing StudentSurvey.ie questions

- Minor revisions were made to a small number of StudentSurvey.ie questions.
- Four questions were discontinued (none of which were part of one of the nine “indicators”).
- Eight questions have been combined to create a new indicator (*Learning, Creative and Social Skills*).
- A question on consideration of withdrawal previously used by some participating institutions has been added as a standard question for all institutions.

3. New questions for 2022

- The inclusion of new questions about students’ background is being piloted in 2022.
- Students will be asked to self-identify characteristics which are not currently included in the student characteristics collected for the purposes of StudentSurvey.ie, namely having a disability, ethnicity, caring responsibilities, gender, socio-economic and socio-cultural status and sexual orientation.

4. Optional questions for 2022 – Topical Modules

- Topical Modules are small sets of pre-tested standardised questions which institutions can add on to their survey. Institutions may select one to add for all students as part of the pilot study in 2022.
- The four optional Topical Modules are:
 - Topical Module 1: Career & Workforce Preparation
 - Topical Module 2: Civic Engagement
 - Topical Module 3: Experiences with Online Learning
 - Topical Module 4: Inclusiveness and Engagement with Diversity

5. International Comparators Factsheet

- Desk-based research on international developments relating to similar student surveys in higher education was carried out.
- The results informed the Survey Review Group in their deliberations.
- The results were consolidated into the International Comparators Factsheet for use as a reference document by others.

Next Steps

- Results from the new questions added will be analysed at a national level only in 2022. The data generated by the pilot will not be returned to the individual higher education institutions, but the outcomes of this pilot will inform decisions for future associated data collection.
- The impact of the Topical Modules in terms of value added and impact on response rate, among other factors, will be evaluated after the pilot study. This evaluation will inform a larger consideration by the StudentSurvey.ie Steering Group of the operating principles for optional questions in StudentSurvey.ie, included but not limited to the existing Topical Modules and future Modules on other topics relevant to the higher education system in Ireland.

Chairperson’s Remarks

As Chairperson of the StudentSurvey.ie Survey Review Group, I first wish to acknowledge the time, effort and expertise shared by all members of the Survey Review Group. Conducting a detailed review of an already detailed instrument during a global pandemic, depending on virtual platforms as the primary mechanism for collaboration, was not easy. Despite the challenges, the membership, including international representation, of the review group was effective, balancing the need for in-depth consideration of the questions and their technical delivery with a local, national and international perspective on what is important for a survey of student engagement. The decisions of the group were driven, to a great extent, by the feedback received from students during field testing. We sought to reflect the priorities, concerns and vision of the very students whose feedback is collected through StudentSurvey.ie. As it is intended that the survey of student engagement is written into legislation in the Higher Education Authority Bill, the recommendation of the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* that higher education institutions put in place systems to capture feedback from students to inform institutional and programme management, as well as national policy, is firmly cemented into the higher education system apparatus in Ireland. It is my hope that this review strengthens the instrument used to collect this feedback, and that it remains relevant and important to the students and participating higher education institutions who use it. The *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* also recommended that every higher education institution put in place structures to ensure that action is taken promptly in relation to student concerns. I hope the outcomes of this review add depth and flexibility to the instrument to facilitate and encourage that action.

Dr. Vivienne Patterson, Head of Skills, Engagement and Statistics, Higher Education Authority

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the 89 students who participated in the field testing, and to the staff in DBS, DKIT, IADT, IT Carlow, MIC, NCAD, NCI, RCSI, TUS, UCC, UCD, and WIT who hosted the field testing and recruited students.

Thank you to everyone who made written submissions which were considered during the review (in alphabetical order by surname):

Lisa Bennett (UCD), Billy Kelly (DCU & NAIN), Ger Lardner (UCD & AHECS), Ciara McCaffrey (UL), Maura McGinn (UCD), Violeta Morari (MTU & NAIN), Kate Morris (Campus Engage), Eavan O’Brien (PROPEL & RPL), Deirdre Quinn (MIC), Dara Ryder (AHEAD), Róisín Smith (TCD), Nora Trench Bowles (IUA), Ross Woods (HEA), and anonymous students in MTU, IT Sligo and UL who made suggestions for revisions through various feedback mechanisms.

Thank you to the members of the StudentSurvey.ie Survey Review Group, StudentSurvey.ie Steering Group, StudentSurvey.ie Communications Group, and StudentSurvey.ie Analysis and Impact Group, who all contributed to this review.

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Revised StudentSurvey.ie Objectives

Why do we run these surveys?

The main reason for the surveys is to provide benefits to each institution and its students by helping to improve feedback and appropriate follow up action. The objectives of StudentSurvey.ie are:

- To increase transparency in relation to the student experience of and engagement with higher education.
- To enable direct student input in expressing their experience and engagement with their higher education institution.
- To facilitate higher education institutions' efforts to reflect that engagement and those experiences in their policy and practice in an impactful way.
- To help institutions identify areas of strength in how students engage, so they can continue and strengthen these practices.
- To help institutions identify areas requiring further development or improvement in how students engage so they can respond.
- To serve as a guide for continual enhancement of institutions' teaching and learning and student engagement.
- To facilitate comparison with other higher education systems nationally, sectorally and internationally.



Core StudentSurvey.ie Questions for 2022 onwards

Thank you for taking StudentSurvey.ie in 2022. The anonymous answers you give will be returned to your higher education institution so they can use your feedback to enhance the experience for students. Some of the questions may seem less relevant while your access to campus is limited but please answer them as accurately as possible, based on your experience of the academic year (to date).

We want to let you know that you will be asked some extra questions about yourself on the last page of the survey. This is for a national pilot study to look at how some aspects of your circumstances may have an impact on how you engage with your higher education institution. There is more information about this on the last page of the survey.

Question A: During the current academic year, about how often have you:

1	Asked questions or contributed to discussions in class, tutorials, labs, studios, or online?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
2	Attended class, tutorials, labs, studios, or online without doing the preparation expected of you (completing readings or assignments, etc.)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
3	Asked another student to help you to understand course material?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
4	Explained course material to one or more students?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
5	Prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
6	Worked with other students on projects or assignments?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
7	Made a presentation in class, tutorials, labs, studios, or online?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
8	Combined ideas from different subjects / modules when completing assignments?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
9	Connected your learning to problems or issues in society?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
10	Included diverse perspectives (political, religious, racial, ethnic, gender, etc.) in discussions or assignments?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
11	Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often

12	Tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from their perspective?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
13	Learned something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
14	Connected ideas from your subjects / modules to your prior experiences and knowledge?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Question A (continued): During the current academic year, about how often have you:

		Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
15	Talked about career plans with academic staff?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
16	Worked with academic staff on activities other than coursework?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
17	Discussed course topics, ideas, or concepts with academic staff outside of scheduled class, tutorials, labs or studios?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
18	Discussed your performance with academic staff?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
19	Reached conclusions based on your analysis of numerical information (numbers, graphs, statistics, etc.)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
20	Used numerical information to examine a real-world problem or issue (unemployment, climate change, public health, etc.)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
21	Evaluated what others have concluded from numerical information?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
22	Identified key information from recommended reading materials?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
23	Reviewed your notes after class, tutorials, labs or studios?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
24	Summarised what you learned in class, tutorials, labs or studios, or from course materials?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
25	Explored how to apply your learning in the workplace?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
26	Exercised or participated in physical fitness activities (whether related to your course/ institution or in your life outside your institution)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
27	Blended academic learning with workplace experience?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
28	Worked on assessments that informed you how well you are learning?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Question B: During the current academic year, how much has your coursework emphasised:

		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
1	Applying facts, theories, or methods to practical problems or new situations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Analysing an idea, experience, or line of reasoning in depth by examining its parts?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Evaluating a point of view, decision, or information source?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Forming an understanding or new idea from various pieces of information?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Question C: During the current academic year, to what extent have lecturers / teaching staff:

		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
1	Clearly explained course goals and requirements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Taught in an organised way?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Used examples or illustrations to explain difficult points?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Provided feedback on a draft or work in progress?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assessments?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Question D: Which of the following have you done or do you plan to do before you graduate from your institution:

		Have not decided	Do not plan to do	Plan to do	Done or in progress
1	Engage in voluntary activity (whether related to your course/ institution or in your life outside your institution)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Question E: At your institution, please indicate the quality of interactions with:

	Poor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Excellent	NOT APPLICABLE
1	Students	<input type="checkbox"/>								
2	Academic advisors	<input type="checkbox"/>								
3	Academic staff	<input type="checkbox"/>								
4	Support services staff (careers services, student activities, accommodation, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>								
5	Other administrative staff and offices (registry, finance, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>								

Question F: How much does your institution emphasise:

	Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much	
1	Providing support to help students succeed academically?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Using learning support services (learning centre, computer centre, maths support, writing support etc.)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Contact among students from different backgrounds (social, racial, ethnic, religious, age-groups etc.)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Providing opportunities to be involved socially?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Providing support for your overall well-being (recreation, health care, counselling, etc.)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Helping you manage your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Attending events that address important social, economic, or political issues?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Attending activities and events (special speakers, cultural performances, sporting events, etc.) organised by your institution?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Question G: How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills and personal development in the following areas:

1	Writing clearly and effectively?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
2	Speaking effectively?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
3	Thinking critically and analytically?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
4	Analysing numerical and statistical information?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
5	Being innovative and creative	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
6	Working effectively with others?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
7	Solving complex real-world problems?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
8	Being an informed and active citizen (societal / political / community)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
9	Acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Question H: Final questions

The following questions provide you with an opportunity to comment on the overall academic experience at your institution.

		Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
1	How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Definitely no	Probably no	Probably yes	Definitely yes
2	If you could start over again, would you go to the same institution you are now attending?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

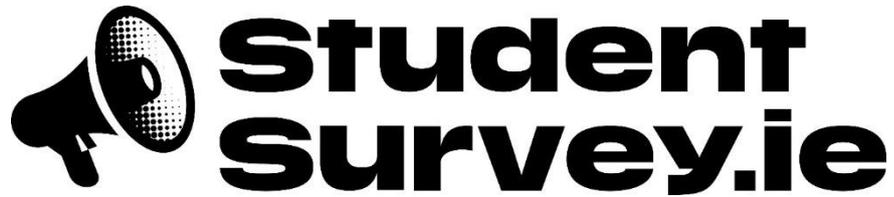
Have you ever seriously considered withdrawing from your degree programme? [select all that apply]

3	No, I have not seriously considered withdrawing	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Yes, for financial reasons	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Yes, for personal or family reasons	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Yes, for health reasons	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Yes, for employment reasons	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Yes, to transfer to another institution	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Other (please state)	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Other (please state)

4	What does your institution do best to engage students in learning?

5	What could your institution do to improve students' engagement in learning?



List of all revisions made to existing questions

Revisions to questions which contribute to an indicator score

The text at the beginning will note that the anonymous results will go back to their institution.

Question A: During the current academic year, about how often have you:

- 23 Reviewed your notes after **class, tutorials, labs or studios**?
- 24 Summarised what you learned in **class, tutorials, labs or studios**, or from course materials?
- 10 Included diverse perspectives (political, religious, racial, ethnic, gender, etc.) in discussions or assignments?

Question A (continued): During the current academic year, about how often have you:

- 17 Discussed course topics, ideas, or concepts with academic staff outside of **scheduled class, tutorials, labs or studios**?

Question C: During the current academic year, to what extent have lecturers / teaching staff:

- 5 Provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed **assessments**?

Question F: How much does your institution emphasise:

- 3 Contact among students from different backgrounds (social, racial, ethnic, religious, **age-groups** etc.)?
- 7 Attending activities and events (special speakers, cultural performances, sporting events, etc.) **organised by your institution**?

Revisions to questions which do not contribute to an indicator score

Retained

1. Asked questions or contributed to discussions in class, tutorials, labs, **studios, or online**
2. Blended academic learning with workplace experience
3. Worked on assessments that informed you how well you are learning
4. **Attended class, tutorials, labs, studios, or online** without **doing the preparation expected of you** (completing readings or assignments, etc.)?
5. Made a presentation in **class, tutorials, labs, studios, or online**
6. Exercised or participated in physical fitness activities (**whether related to your course/ institution or in your life outside your institution**)
7. **Engage in voluntary activity** (**whether related to your course/ institution or in your life outside your institution**)
8. Explored how to apply your learning in the workplace

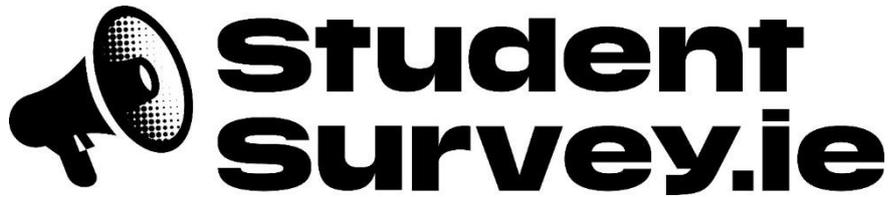
9. Acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills
10. How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution?
11. If you could start over again, would you go to the same institution you are now attending?

Discontinued

1. Memorising course material
2. Work with academic staff on a research project
3. Spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work
4. Improved knowledge and skills that will contribute to your employability

Group into new indicator (Learning, Creative and Social Skills)

1. Writing clearly and effectively
2. Speaking effectively [revised wording: the words "clearly and" removed]
3. Thinking critically and analytically
4. Analysing numerical and statistical information
5. Working effectively with others
6. Solving complex real-world problems
7. Being an informed and active citizen (societal / political / community)
8. Being innovative and creative [new question]



Pilot Study 1 - New questions for 2022

Information for students [on the final page]

For the first time, StudentSurvey.ie have decided to ask students directly to share more information about themselves. We plan to use the answers to consider if your background and personal experience have an impact on your engagement with your higher education institution, with the aim of improving the experience for all students.

A few key things to remember when answering these questions:

- Your responses will be anonymous.
- Your responses to the following questions will not be shared with your higher education institution.
- You may not know the answer to every question and not all questions may apply equally well to you as to others.
- Like all the questions in StudentSurvey.ie, you don't have to answer them if you don't want to.
- We also invite you to give feedback on these questions at the end.

1. Do you have a disability or condition that impacts on your learning, working, or living activities?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know
- Prefer not to say

2. If Yes, please indicate the nature of the disability or condition. Select as many as apply to you:

- Autistic Spectrum Disorder (including Asperger's Syndrome)
- Attention Deficit Disorder/ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD/ ADHD)
- Blind/ Vision Impaired
- Deaf/ Hard of Hearing
- Developmental Coordination Disorder (dyspraxia)
- Mental Health Condition (e.g., depression, anxiety)
- Neurological Conditions (e.g., multiple sclerosis)
- Speech & Language Communication Disorder
- Significant Ongoing Illness (e.g., Crohn's Disease, fibromyalgia)
- Physical Disability (e.g., spina bifida, amputations)
- Specific Learning Difficulty (e.g., dyslexia, dyscalculia)
- Other disability or condition, please specify: _____
- Prefer not to say

3. What is your ethnicity? Select as many as apply to you.

- Arab

- Arab-Irish
 - Arab - mixed/multiple
 - Any other Arab background
 - Asian
 - Asian - Irish
 - Asian - Bangladeshi
 - Asian - Chinese
 - Asian - Indian
 - Asian - Pakistani
 - Asian - Mixed/multiple
 - Any other Asian background
 - Black
 - Black - Irish
 - Black – African
 - Black – Caribbean
 - Black - mixed/multiple
 - Any other Black background
 - Hispanic
 - Hispanic - Irish
 - Hispanic - mixed/multiple
 - Any other Hispanic background
 - White
 - White Irish
 - White - Roma
 - White - Irish Traveller
 - White - mixed/multiple
 - Any other White background
 - Any other ethnic background
 - Any other mixed/multiple background
 - I don't know
 - Prefer not to say
4. Do you have substantial caring responsibilities now, or did you at any point since you began your current programme? Select as many as apply to you.
- Yes - childcare, with shared caring responsibilities
 - Yes - childcare, with sole caring responsibilities
 - Yes - elder care, with shared caring responsibilities
 - Yes - elder care, with sole caring responsibilities
 - Yes - other caring responsibility, with shared caring responsibilities
 - Yes - other caring responsibility, with sole caring responsibilities
 - Little or no caring responsibilities
 - Prefer not to say
5. Do you have any of the following further education and training major awards (QQI/ FETAC) at NFQ Level 5 or Level 6? Select as many as apply to you. *Click here for more information about what this is.*
- A Level 5 Certificate
 - An Advanced Certificate
 - An equivalent award from another country/ qualifications awarding body
 - No
 - I don't know

- Prefer not to say

Just a quick reminder:

Your responses will be anonymous. Your responses to these background questions will not be shared with your higher education institution.

6. Did you qualify for the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) alternative entry scheme? *Click here for more information about what this is.*
- Yes
 - No
 - No, but I qualified for an equivalent alternative entry scheme from another country/ education system
 - I don't know
 - Prefer not to say
7. What was the highest level of educational qualification of your parents/ guardians?
- Junior Certificate or equivalent
 - Leaving Certificate or equivalent
 - Advanced Certificate/ Higher Certificate or equivalent
 - Ordinary Bachelor Degree or equivalent
 - Honours Bachelor Degree/ Higher Diploma or equivalent
 - Masters Degree/ Postgraduate Diploma or equivalent
 - Doctoral Degree/ Higher Doctorate or equivalent
 - I don't know
 - Prefer not to say
8. Which of the following forms of formal financial support are you receiving? Select as many as apply to you.
- SUSI grant
 - Back to Education allowance
 - Scholarship based on financial need
 - Scholarship based on other criteria, e.g. sport, music
 - Loan
 - Some other formal financial support
 - I'm not receiving any formal financial support
 - I don't know
 - Prefer not to say
9. Please describe your gender. A short list of frequently used words is provided below. If you prefer, use the text box to describe it in your own words.
- Female
 - Male
 - Gender non-binary
 - Transgender woman

- Transgender man
- Prefer not to say
- I'd prefer to describe it in my own words: _____

10. Please describe your sexual orientation. A short list of frequently used words is provided below. If you prefer, use the text box to describe it in your own words.

- Heterosexual/ Straight
- Lesbian
- Gay
- Bisexual
- Asexual
- Queer
- Prefer not to say
- I'd prefer to describe it in my own words: _____

11. Is there anything you think we should know in deciding whether to include these questions in future years, or do you have any other feedback about these questions you want to share?

QUESTION 5 More information

These major awards include the Level 5 Certificate and the Advanced Certificate (which is at Level 6). They were issued by FETAC until 2012 and by QQI since 2012. Level 5 Certificates, for example, are often awarded upon successful completion of one-year post leaving certificate (PLC) programmes and also after [some apprenticeships](#). Advanced certificates are awarded after completing a further year of PLC studies. Also, many apprenticeships, including many four-year craft apprenticeships, lead to an Advanced Certificate award.

QUESTION 6 More information

The Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) is a college and university scheme that offers places on reduced points and extra college support to school leavers from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds who are resident in the Republic of Ireland. HEAR has been set up by a number of colleges and universities, as evidence shows that socio-economic disadvantage can have a negative effect on how well a student does at school and whether they go on to college. HEAR applicants must meet a range of financial, social and cultural indicators to be considered for a reduced points place and extra college support. You can find more information on the HEAR website [here](#).



Pilot Study 2 - Using Topical Modules in StudentSurvey.ie 2022

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) in the USA and Canada remains of key relevance to StudentSurvey.ie, as the StudentSurvey.ie survey instrument is rooted in NSSE and contains many of the same questions. A new direction for StudentSurvey.ie explored by the StudentSurvey.ie Survey Review Group was to incorporate NSSE “Topical Modules” into the survey instrument used in Ireland.

Topical Modules are short sets of pre-tested standardised questions on designated topics such as academic advising, civic engagement, development of transferable skills, experiences with diverse perspectives, learning with technology, and experiences with writing.

The Survey Review Group considered all of the available Modules. Five Topical Modules were tested with students in October 2021, and four were retained for rolling out in the form of a national pilot study in fieldwork 2022. The four optional Topical Modules being piloted in 2022 are:

- Topical Module 1: Career & Workforce Preparation
- Topical Module 2: Civic Engagement
- Topical Module 3: Experiences with Online Learning
- Topical Module 4: Inclusiveness and Engagement with Diversity

How are the Topical Modules being used?

Individual institutions will determine whether to offer a Topical Module to their own students. Institutions may select no more than **one** to add for all students as part of the pilot study in 2022. This selection is communicated to i-graduate (the survey company) via the In Touch platform for survey preparation information no later than three weeks before the beginning of fieldwork.

A group of institutions may decide to select a Topical Module to run in a given year and agree to their data being combined and analysed centrally to understand students’ responses across the group of institutions. An additional possibility would be for all institutions to agree to run the same Topical Module to allow for national analysis of the data and a national set of results. This would require agreement across all participating institutions and the StudentSurvey.ie Steering Group no later than the end of November in advance of the next fieldwork period in the springtime.

Why should I add a Topical Module?

Topical Modules give institutions the flexibility to get rich data from a large number of students in their institution on a specific topic in one year without having to write the questions and run a separate survey on the topic. Institutions can choose a different Module every year to inform institutional strategies, planning, concerns and priorities. Topical Modules will also be useful to inform institutions’ annual or cyclical quality assurance reviews with QQI or other agencies, and this could inform the decision making around which Topical Module to include.

Next Steps

The impact of the Topical Modules in terms of value added, data generated, ease of use and impact on response rate, among other factors, will be evaluated after the pilot study. This evaluation will inform a larger consideration by the StudentSurvey.ie Steering Group of the operating principles for optional questions in StudentSurvey.ie, included but not limited to the existing Topical Modules and future Modules on other topics relevant to the higher education system in Ireland.

Topical Module 1: Career & Workforce Preparation (14 items)

To what extent do the following apply to you?

		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
1	Your experience at this institution has helped clarify your career plans	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
2	You have received supportive feedback from faculty, career advisers or other advisers about your career plans	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

How much confidence do you have in your ability to do the following?

		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
1	Demonstrate effective work habits (punctuality, working productively with others, time and workload management, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
2	Network with alumni or professionals to make potential career connections	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
3	Communicate your knowledge, skills, and experiences to potential employers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
4	Use career-specific technology (devices, programs, or tools used by those in the field)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
5	Work effectively with people of other backgrounds (economic, racial, ethnic, political, religious, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Which of the following have you done, or do you plan to do at this institution before you graduate (whether in person or online)?

		Have not decided	Do not plan to do	Plan to do	Done or in progress
1	Take a career exploration, planning, or development course	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Have not decided	Do not plan to do	Plan to do	Done or in progress
2	Attend a talk, panel discussion, or workshop about careers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Have not decided	Do not plan to do	Plan to do	Done or in progress
3	Interview, shadow or network with someone in a career that you are considering	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Have not decided	Do not plan to do	Plan to do	Done or in progress
4	Participate in a career-related co-curricular activity (student organisation, professional society, co-curricular award, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Have not decided	Do not plan to do	Plan to do	Done or in progress
5	Use resources and information (database or other digital tools, videos, guides, books, etc.) from career services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Have not decided	Do not plan to do	Plan to do	Done or in progress
6	Meet with career services staff to explore your interests and future plans	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Is there anything this institution could do better to help students develop their career plans or gain work-related skills? Please describe.

Topical Module 2: Civic Engagement (7 items)

How much does your institution emphasize the following?

		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
1	Discussing important social, economic, or political issues with others				
		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
2	Being involved in an organization or group focused on important social, economic, or political issues				
		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
3	Voting in campus, local, or national elections				
		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
4	Encouraging free speech and expression				
		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much

How much do you feel encouraged addressing important social, economic, or political issues in the following?

		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
1	In course assignments				
		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
2	In course discussions				
		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
3	Outside of class				
		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much

Topical Module 3: Experiences with Online Learning (20 items)

During the current academic year, how comfortable have you been doing the following in your entirely or partly online courses?

		Not at all comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable	Not applicable
1	Participating in online discussion boards, forums, or other discussion tools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Not at all comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable	Not applicable
2	Participating in live course discussions online	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Not at all comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable	Not applicable
3	Taking proctored (invigilated/ monitored) online exams	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Not at all comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable	Not applicable
4	Interacting with other students in the course online	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Not at all comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable	Not applicable
5	Interacting with your lecturer/ teaching staff to discuss course topics, ideas, or concepts online	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Not at all comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable	Not applicable
6	Using learning support services (tutoring services, writing center, etc.) online	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Not at all comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable	Not applicable
7	Seeking feedback and guidance from your lecturer/ teaching staff online	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Not at all comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable	Not applicable
8	Turning camera on while online	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

To improve the online course-taking experience, how important is it that your institution do the following?

		Not at all important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
1	Increase interactions between students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Not at all important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
2	Increase interactions with lecturer/ teaching staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Not at all important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
3	Improve responsiveness of lecturer/ teaching staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Not at all important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
4	Improve online tools for student collaboration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

		Not at all important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
5	Provide more online learning support services (tutoring services, writing center, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Increase availability of recorded lectures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Considering your experience taking partly or entirely online courses during the current academic year, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	Internet service (availability, speed, reliability, etc.) where you live has been sufficient to participate in the course.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	The hardware (computer, tablet, mobile phone, printer, etc.) and software where you live have been sufficient to participate in the course.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Study spaces where you live have been sufficient for your needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Technology support has been available.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	The online course platform has been user-friendly (available when needed, easy to access and navigate, etc.).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Please describe one way online learning at your institution could be improved and one thing that should <u>not</u> be changed.

Topical Module 4: Inclusiveness and Engagement with Diversity (12 items)

During the current academic year, how much has your coursework emphasized the following?

		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
1	Developing the skills necessary to work effectively with people from various backgrounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
2	Recognizing your own norms and biases	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
3	Learning about other cultures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
4	Respecting the expression of diverse ideas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

How much does your institution emphasize the following?

		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
1	Demonstrating a commitment to diversity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
2	Providing students with the resources needed for success in a multicultural world	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
3	Providing information about anti-discrimination and harassment policies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
4	Taking allegations of discrimination or harassment seriously	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
5	Helping students develop the skills to confront discrimination and harassment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

During the current academic year, about how often have you done the following?

		Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
1	Attended events, activities, or presentations (including online) that reflect an appreciation for diverse groups of people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
2	Participated in activities related to the inclusion of specific groups (racial, ethnic, LGBTQ+, religious, gender, age, socio-economic group, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
3	Participated in a demonstration for an inclusion-related cause (rally, protest, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



International Comparators Factsheet

Introduction to the periodic review

The StudentSurvey.ie Steering Group agreed in 2015 that the StudentSurvey.ie (Irish Survey of Student Engagement) survey instrument should undergo thorough periodic review, initially with the view to implement a revised version of the survey in the next fieldwork period, and approximately every five years thereafter. This led to the introduction of an updated survey instrument for fieldwork 2016, which was shorter than the original survey, and also included refinement to the retained questions.

The StudentSurvey.ie Steering Group initiated the next periodic review of the StudentSurvey.ie survey instrument in early 2021. A newly constituted StudentSurvey.ie Survey Review Group was formed for the 2021 review. This group will operate for a fixed term of March-December 2021 and the primary deliverable will be an appropriately revised survey instrument for fieldwork 2022. The StudentSurvey.ie Survey Review Group membership reflects the needs and expectations of the survey respondents, the users of StudentSurvey.ie data, and harnesses the experience and expertise of the StudentSurvey.ie Steering Group, Communications Group, and Analysis and Impact Group.

Objectives of the periodic review

The objectives of the Survey Review Group are:

- i. To conduct desk-based research on international developments relating to similar student surveys in higher education.
- ii. To review the current StudentSurvey.ie survey instrument to identify relative strengths and weaknesses in the national context, for each of the cohorts of students (first year undergraduate, final year undergraduate and taught postgraduate), and in light of the experiences of staff and students in completing the survey and analysing the data. This review will also include re-examining objectives of the survey, and the reliability and validity of the instrument.
- iii. To develop and test a revised survey instrument to be used in fieldwork 2022 and in multiple subsequent iterations, including the possible development of optional question banks, and/or the establishment a formal policy on the use of bespoke optional questions.
- iv. Make recommendations to the StudentSurvey.ie Steering Group about optimal delivery of the survey following consideration of related aspects of the survey administration, including (but not limited to) which cohorts of students should be invited to participate; how eligible respondents are notified of the survey, how frequently the survey should be implemented; which formats the results should be presented in to encourage effective and efficient analysis; and the appropriateness of the methods in light of recent updates to data protection obligations.

This International Comparators Factsheet is the first output from the work of the StudentSurvey.ie Survey Review Group 2021 and relates to objective i., which is to conduct desk-based research on international developments relating to similar student surveys in higher education and, in particular.

Part 1: Other NSSE-rooted surveys worldwide:

USA & Canada

Australia & New Zealand

UK

South Africa

Chila

China

South Korea

Indonesia

USA & Canada

Name of survey: National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) & NSSE Canadian English Version

Background: NSSE obtains, on an annual basis, information from four-year colleges and universities nationwide about student participation in programs and activities that institutions provide for their learning and personal development, or student engagement. Administered by the Center for Postsecondary Research at Indiana University-Bloomington since 2000, NSSE has attracted nearly 1,500 four-year institutions in the United States and in Canada to participate in the annual survey.

The survey was reviewed in 2013 and the results of this review were incorporated into the StudentSurvey.ie survey instrument during the last periodic review in 2016.

Relevance to review of StudentSurvey.ie - NSSE: The NSSE surveys remains of key relevance to StudentSurvey.ie, as the StudentSurvey.ie survey instrument is rooted in NSSE and contains many of the same questions. A possible development for StudentSurvey.ie could be to incorporate NSSE Topical Modules into the survey instrument. The topics available for inclusion are:

- Academic Advising
- Career & Workforce Preparation
- Civic Engagement
- Coping with COVID
- Development of Transferable Skills
- Experiences with Online Learning
- Experiences with Writing
- First-Year Experiences and Senior Transitions
- Global Learning
- Inclusiveness and Engagement with Cultural Diversity

Relevance to review of StudentSurvey.ie - NSSE Canadian English Version: This survey contains some questions not included in StudentSurvey.ie, which could be considered for inclusion in a revised survey instrument. They include the following:

Which of the following categories best describes your ethnic or cultural background?

Do you have a disability or condition that impacts your learning, working, or living activities?

During the current school year, about how often have you had discussions with people from the following groups?

- a) People of a race or ethnicity other than your own
- b) People from an economic background other than your own
- c) People with religious beliefs other than your own
- d) People with political views other than your own

About how many of your courses at this institution have included a community-based project (service-learning)?

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- a) I feel comfortable being myself at this institution.
- b) I feel valued by this institution.
- c) I feel like part of the community at this institution.

Australia & New Zealand

Name of survey: Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE)

Background: The Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) was run by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) in conjunction with participating higher education institutions. The AUSSE was designed to help stimulate evidence-focused conversations about students' engagement in university study and provide institutions with information that they can use to monitor and enhance the quality of education they provide to their students. The AUSSE was run for the first time with Australian and New Zealand universities in 2007 with 25 institutions. In 2012, this number had increased to 32 institutions. The AUSSE has formative links with the USA NSSE and AUSSE results can be benchmarked with NSSE results. Institutions which participated in the AUSSE could also run the Postgraduate Survey of Student Engagement (POSSE) with their postgraduate coursework students and the Staff Student Engagement Survey (SSES) which is a survey of academic staff about their students' engagement.

The AUSSE has not run since 2013.

Relevance to review of StudentSurvey.ie: Australian institutions are now using the data from the University Experience Survey (see Part 2 of this Factsheet) to power a university comparison website, including data from the Student Experience Survey, Course Experience Questionnaire and Graduate Outcomes Survey. This includes breakdowns by subject area.

Also, of relevance are the AUSSE Enhancement Guide templates. They are still available here: <https://www.acer.org/gb/ausse/enhancement>. These Enhancement Guide templates were intended to assist staff and students with the enhancement of student engagement with learning. Templates available for download include:

- Enhancement guide for senior managers
- Enhancement guide for quality assurance staff
- Enhancement guide for planning managers
- Enhancement guide for academic development staff
- Enhancement guide for course/program coordinators
- Enhancement guide for institutional researchers
- Enhancement guide for marketing departments
- Enhancement guide for librarians and libraries
- Enhancement guide for academic skills staff
- Enhancement guide for career guidance staff
- Enhancement guide for undergraduate students
- Enhancement guide for international students
- Enhancement guide for parents and partners of students
- Developing a graduate engagement statement
- Broadening staff involvement in student learning
- Developing institution-wide approaches to student engagement
- Engaging students in the AUSSE survey
- Enhancing interactions between students and staff
- Establishing student expectations
- Learning more about student engagement
- Monitoring quality data over time

UK

Name of survey: UK Engagement Survey (UKES)

Background: UKES is run by Advance HE, which is the same organisation which runs the PRES survey (which PGR StudentSurvey.ie draws from) in partnership with participating institutions. UKES aims to provide confidential results to help drive enhancement of teaching and learning. UKES was piloted during 2013 and 2014. Unlike the National Student Survey (NSS, see Part 2 below), which collects data in an undergraduate student's final year, the UKES takes place across all years of an undergraduate degree. This allows time to reflect on student responses and implement changes that will benefit students while they are in their institution.

There are seven overall engagement sections (five of which are compulsory and two optional), 12 items covering skills development (optional), and sections measuring time spent on academic work (two question items – both optional) and extra-curricular activity (five question items – optional).

Relevance to review of StudentSurvey.ie: The project produces shorter reports than StudentSurvey.ie but do not include the same depth of results. Key findings from their 2021 report (Neves, 2021) include:

- Students surveyed since the spring lockdown report higher levels of engagement in four out of seven areas. Most notably, there is higher engagement in partnering and interacting with staff, two of the areas of engagement where students have reported generally less positively than other aspects.
- Students responding during lockdown are in fact 2% less likely to have considered leaving their course, which is a positive endorsement of how they have been supported, as well as how they have adjusted and adapted to learning under lockdown.
- In new analysis, students who live away from campus and/or other students show high levels of engagement which indicates that geography and living arrangements do not need to be a barrier to the quality of learning.

Skills development items

Some of the analysis in this report groups together the skills development items into two overall categories of six items each – Learning skills/Creative and social skills. These categories are specified below.

Skills development item	Category
Writing	Learning skills
Speaking	
Thinking critically	
Analysing	
Career skills	
Independent learning	
Being innovative and creative	Creative and social skills
Working effectively with others	
Developing personal values or ethics	
Understanding people of other backgrounds	
Exploring complex real-world problems	
Being an informed and active citizen	

South Africa

Name of survey: South African Surveys of Student Engagement (SASSE)

Background: The SASSE is a survey that gathers comprehensive information from universities relating to high-impact experiences and behaviours identified as having an influence on the teaching and learning experience. The questionnaire collects information about

- Students' participation in dozens of educationally purposeful activities;
- Students' interaction with lecturers and their peers, and the degree to which they engage with diversity;
- The way students perceive the university environment;
- Estimates of educational and personal growth since starting higher education; and
- Background and demographic information.

Relevance to review of StudentSurvey.ie:

Cohorts identifiable in the results

Strydom, Kuh, G and Mentz (2010) examined the psychometric properties of the South African Survey of Student Engagement (SASSE), providing a sound basis on which to promote large-scale studies of student engagement-related interventions. A key finding was that student engagement appeared to exercise a **compensatory effect for minority and historically underserved students**. By engaging in effective educational practices, the performance of at-risk students in terms of grades and persistence significantly improves. Thus, one key to improving student success and institutional effectiveness is to enact policies and practices that channel student energies toward appropriate activities.

"Positive relentlessness" & faculty reports

Institutions that are effective at engaging and nurturing success are characterised by 'positive relentlessness'. The Quality Enhancement Project of the Council on Higher Education with its appreciative inquiry approach provided a systemic example of how institutions can build on and develop confidence in their initiatives through the use of evidence to continuously improve and contextualise interventions to be effective and efficient. By integrating student engagement data into monitoring and evaluation frameworks, institutions can monitor the improvement in the student experience.

Internal reflection has resulted in detailed faculty reports, developed by Student Development and Success, to help faculties identify and develop interventions that can help to improve engagement and to further improve the conditions required for student success. For example, SASSE findings have resulted in critical engagement in the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences regarding curriculum reform. A further example is the use of SASSE results to inform student affairs projects such as the university orientation programme for first years.

Extract from *Engaging the #StudentVoice Report 2016* (Centre for Teaching and Learning in the University of the Free State, 2016, p. 24):

Chile

Name of survey: Chilean version of NSSE

Background: The Chilean version of NSSE was launched in 2018 in the Universities of Valparaíso, Católica and Chile. It is sponsored by the National Council of Education (CNED). It was piloted in 2017 with Nursing, Psychology, Design, Commercial Engineering and Chemistry and Pharmacy students. When piloting, rather than seeking representativeness, maximum heterogeneity was sought in the context of Chilean universities. The Chilean version of NSSE has 140 items and can be accessed [here](#). Zapata, Leihy and Theurillat (2018) examined the adaptation and validation and deemed reasonable the addition of a greater number of variables to the questionnaire, which better respond to local characteristics.

Relevance to review of StudentSurvey.ie: Zapata, et al (2018) noted that, considering the relevance of the subject of student aid in the country, some new questions were incorporated regarding the socioeconomic background of the students, based on previously validated question formats and scales, but do not specify what these questions were.

China

Name of survey: NSSE-China

Background: The NSSE-China project is a research project initiated at Indiana University in collaboration with Tsinghua University in China (Cen, 2012). The NSSE survey was translated into Mandarin and adapted to the Chinese context by a research team from Tsinghua University and Indiana University (Wu, Parkay & Pitre, 2016). The instrument was pretested in China with pilot surveys in six institutions in Beijing in 2007 and further tested in five institutions of various types and in different regions in China in 2008 (Luo, Ross, & Cen, 2009; Ross, Luo, & Cen, 2008). In 2009, the survey was first used nationwide, and about 27 higher institutions participated. By 2013, this had increased to 77 (Wu et al, 2016).

Relevance to review of StudentSurvey.ie: There are some research papers available which examine the psychometric properties of NSSE-China and its suitability for use. However, many, for example Luo, Guo & Shi (2018), examine quite China-specific variables.

South Korea

Name of survey: Korea National Survey of Student Engagement

Background: The K-NSSE questionnaire was jointly developed by the Korea Basic Education Center and Leading University Council for Advanced Undergraduate Education, affiliated with the Korea University Education Council, to conduct research into the status of undergraduate education (Sang-Hoon Bae, Hye-Jung Kim, 2012). It is a web-based survey which runs once a year among undergraduate students. It is run by the Korea Council for University Education.

Relevance to review of StudentSurvey.ie: There is not a lot of information available online about the use of the K-NSSE or its effectiveness.

Indonesia

Name of survey: Indonesian Survey of Student learning Activities

Background: The Indonesian adaptation of NSSE, entitled ISSLA (Indonesian Survey of Student learning Activities), was funded by United States Agency for International Development as a research activity in the Higher Education Leadership and Management (HELM) project (Sutton, 2018). It was piloted in 2015 and expanded in 2016 to 50 universities.

Relevance to review of StudentSurvey.ie: There is not a lot of information available online about the use of the ISSLA or its effectiveness.

Part 2: Other surveys of student engagement:

UK

EU

Portugal

Australia

USA

USA

UK

Name of survey: National Student Survey (NSS)

Background: The National Student Survey is an annual census of all final year undergraduate students at UK universities. It has been conducted since 2005 and attracts a response rate of around 70% annually. The survey is conducted between January and April each year before most students have completed their final exams or assessments. The NSS currently asks 27 questions covering various aspects of the student academic experience. It also has the potential to ask additional topical questions.

Relevance to review of StudentSurvey.ie: A review of the National Student Survey by the Office for Students (OfS) is ongoing, with the goal of reducing bureaucratic burden while ensuring the NSS remains an important indicator of students' opinions and experiences. The review follows a request by the universities minister to address concerns about how survey may be creating burden and impacting on standards, while ensuring the NSS remains an important indicator of student opinion.

The OfS Board approved the following conclusions from phase one of the research:

An annual census is the most appropriate level at which the NSS could continue to provide reliable data on the student perspective on their subjects, their providers and the wider system.

Phase two will review current questions to ensure they remain fit for purpose and stand the test of time. This will include the removal of the term 'satisfaction' from any summative question or aggregate score to replace question 27.

The continued publication of the NSS results in line with the robust requirements official statistics whilst retaining the right not to publish in exceptional circumstances, in accordance with the OfS scheme of delegation for data publication.

The OfS should improve user guidance to providers and students' unions on responsible statistical use of NSS results. The OfS should also improve the data dissemination site to help remove burden on providers.

The OfS should raise student and students' union awareness of the allegation of inappropriate influence process, including what may constitute inappropriate influence.

Extract from the *NSS Review Report (Phase 1)*

In phase two of the NSS review, there will be extensive discussion across the UK with students, universities, colleges and the UK funding bodies and regulators about possible new questions for the survey, including consulting with the management of StudentSurvey.ie to inform considerations with evidence from the success of StudentSurvey.ie. The possible new questions and revised data dissemination site is planned for launch in time for the 2023 survey results.

EU

Name of survey: Eurostudent

Background: Irish higher education institutions also participate in the Eurostudent survey. The most recent survey took place in 2019. The survey is run by the HEA, and analysis is conducted by Insight Statistical Analysis. One of the primary purposes of the Eurostudent project is to collate comparable data to enable cross national comparisons. As such, it is necessary for the student populations in each country (and there were over 30 in 2019) to be comparable. For the purposes of the Eurostudent project, all students that are enrolled in programmes at NFQ Level 6, 7, 8, and 9 at the time of the survey make up the survey population. Approximately 20,000 valid student responses were collated in 2019. This represented a response rate of 9.8% of all students (almost identical to the response rate of 10% achieved for Eurostudent VI, 2016).

The survey examines the social and living conditions of higher education students in Ireland (Erskine & Harmon, 2019). Topics included include College Entry Route, Transition and Access; Course Characteristics – including satisfaction with their choice of course; Income and Expenditure; Accommodation; Course Workload, Student Employment and Time Budget; Student Support; Student Mobility.

Relevance to review of StudentSurvey.ie: Eurostudent has a different focus and rationale compared to StudentSurvey.ie. Reviewing these topics, in the knowledge that many of the institutions that participate in StudentSurvey.ie also participate in Eurostudent, should assist the Survey Review Group in deciding which topics to include in StudentSurvey.ie in any future iterations of the survey. Topics should not be included in StudentSurvey.ie that result in the creation of the same feedback generated by Eurostudent, e.g., time management, income and expenditure, or student mobility.

There is already some overlap with Course Characteristics questions and Student Support questions. Further work could be done to compare the results for these similar questions as a method of validation of the results, in order to capitalise on the existence of similarity between some of the questions.

Portugal

Name of survey: University Student Engagement Inventory (USEI)

Background: The University Student Engagement Inventory (USEI) is a 15 item, self-report, Likert type inventory which measures the behavioural, cognitive and emotional dimensions of academic engagement of third level students (Maraco et al., 2016). The behavioural dimension is related to positive class behaviours such as attending class and arriving on time. The cognitive dimension is related to students' thoughts, perceptions, and strategies related to the acquisition of knowledge or development of competencies to academic activities, such as their study methods, and learning approaches. The emotional dimension relates to positive and negative feelings related to the learning process, class activities, peers and teachers, such as a sense of belonging, enthusiasm and motivation (Sinval, Casanova, Morocco, & Almeida, 2018).

Relevance to review of StudentSurvey.ie: Assunção et al (2020) argue that the behavioural aspect of student engagement dominates the variance attributed to the USEIs global score. In addition, Morocco et al. (2016) suggest a limitation of the USEI is that it comprises no items relating to life in on-campus residence which may be an important aspect of the college experience and as such may miss an important aspect of a students' academic experience. University of Maryland (n.d.) also suggest that, while the instrument is not as campus-centric as NSSE, it would still require additional adaptation for use with students who are predominantly working adults pursuing their degrees part-time online.

USA

Name of survey: Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) & Survey of Online Student Engagement (SOSE)

Background: Established in 2001, CCSSE works in partnership with NSSE to provide a student engagement survey specifically designed for community and technical colleges. The five key indices are used are 1) Active and Collaborative Learning; 2) Student Faculty-Interaction; 3) Student Effort; 4) Support for Learners; and 5) Academic Challenge. The Survey of Online Student Engagement (SOSE) is an online companion to the CCSSE. SOSE helps community and technical colleges gather engagement data from online-only students at their institutions by asking questions that focus on aspects of student engagement in the online learning environment.

Relevance to review of StudentSurvey.ie: CCSSE includes optional questions on topics including Academic Advising and Planning; Academic Mindset; Assessment and Placement; Information Literacy; Student Financial Health; and The Working Learner.

A review of the questions was carried out in 2016-2017. The scale of responses on some questions was amended to eliminate ambiguity in the old response scale

Table 1. Response scale changes for Part 1 of item 12.

Old responses	New Responses
0 = Don't know / N.A.	0 = Never
1 = Rarely / Never	1 = 1 time
2 = Sometimes	2 = 2-4 times
3 = Often	3 = 5 or more times

USA

Name of survey: Student Experience in the Research University (SERU)

Background: The Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) Undergraduate Survey is designed as census and online survey that offers a systematic environmental scan of the student experience within major research-intensive universities. It employs a modular design in order to include a greater number of items, and to decrease individual response times. It has a set of core questions administered to every respondent, as well as five unique modules of additional questions that are randomly assigned. There are several items designed to gather information on students' academic and civic engagement, students' learning and development, and students' participation in other areas of campus. Additionally, students respond to items that provide insight into students' perceptions of the campus climate for diversity, students' overall satisfaction, and students' evaluation of their academic major. It provides insight into students' academic and co-curricular engagement (or disengagement). The diversity in responses provides the opportunity to explore students' experiences through a variety of lenses. There is also customisable module available whereby colleges and universities can create items that reflect topics and issues of particular interest to them.

GradSERU is an on-line, census survey of all graduate students. Developed in collaboration with North America and International member campuses, the design of the survey recognizes the complexity of the graduate student experience within institutions, and the differing structures and cultures of graduate programs, in the US and internationally.

Relevance to review of StudentSurvey.ie: This survey contains some questions similar to those included in StudentSurvey.ie, but which are phrased slightly differently, and this phrasing could inform decisions to revise existing StudentSurvey.ie questions. This survey also contains some questions not included in StudentSurvey.ie, which could be considered for inclusion in a revised survey instrument.

Australia

Name of survey: University Experience Survey (UES)

Background: The UES focuses on aspects of the student experience that are measurable, linked with learning and development outcomes, and for which universities can reasonably be assumed to have responsibility (Radloff, Coates, Rebecca Taylor, James & Krause, 2012). The survey yields results that are related to outcomes across differing institutional contexts, disciplinary contexts and modes of study (e.g. distance, mature age, part-time students). Also prioritised was the development of a set of key non-core items and scales in consultation with the higher education sector to allow universities access to items and scales to assist with their individual continuous improvement needs. A final key goal was to develop qualitative analysis software to analyse responses to open ended questions in the instrument.

Relevance to review of StudentSurvey.ie: Australia ceased using the AUSSE in favour of the UES.

Institutions and stakeholders are increasingly unresponsive to results from student surveys, which in many instances are detached from lived practice, increasingly used for external purposes and reinforce approaches convenient to institutions rather than serving students... As a result of these and other muddles, we seriously lack insights into just who students are, how people approach higher education, the ways in which they learn and how people change as they progress

Coates, Kelly, Naylor & Borden, 2016

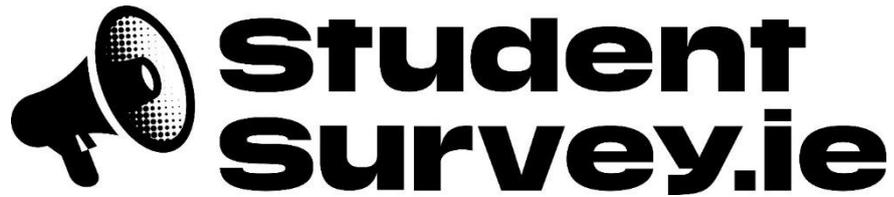
Survey method

The Australian Council for Educational Research has worked with higher education institutions internationally and in Australia to build capacity and confidence in scientific sampling as a viable and encouraged method of gathering data (Radloff et al, 2012).

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Membership of the StudentSurvey.ie Survey Review Group

The StudentSurvey.ie Survey Review Group membership reflected the needs and expectations of the survey respondents, the users of StudentSurvey.ie data, and harnesses the experience and expertise of the StudentSurvey.ie Steering Group, Communications Group, and Analysis and Impact Group.

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Lydia Devenney, LYIT

Oisín Hassan, NStEP

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Megan O'Connor, USI

Paul O'Leary, WIT

Vivienne Patterson, HEA (Chairperson)

Lee Richardson, DBS

Sinéad Roche, UCCSU



StudentSurvey.ie Survey Review Group 2021 Terms of Reference

Need for periodic review

The StudentSurvey.ie Steering Group agreed in 2015 that the StudentSurvey.ie (Irish Survey of Student Engagement) survey instrument should undergo thorough periodic review, initially with the view to implement a revised version of the survey in the next fieldwork period, and approximately every five years thereafter. This led to the introduction of an updated survey instrument for fieldwork 2016, which was shorter than the original survey, and also included refinement to the retained questions.

The following (draft) Terms of Reference are proposed for a newly constituted StudentSurvey.ie Survey Review Group. This group will operate for a fixed term of March-December 2021 and the primary deliverable will be an appropriately revised survey instrument for fieldwork 2022. It is expected that membership of the StudentSurvey.ie Survey Review Group will reflect the needs and expectations of the survey respondents, the users of StudentSurvey.ie data, and will also harness the experience and expertise of the existing StudentSurvey.ie Steering Group, Communications Group, and Analysis and Impact Group.

Objectives

The objectives of the Survey Review Group are:

- i. To conduct desk-based research on international developments relating to similar student surveys in higher education and, in particular, on developments relating to engagement surveys such as NSSE and UKES¹.
- ii. To review the current StudentSurvey.ie survey instrument to identify relative strengths and weaknesses in the national context, for each of the cohorts of students (first year undergraduate, final year undergraduate and taught postgraduate), and in light of the experiences of staff and students in completing the survey and analysing the data. This review will also include re-examining objectives of the survey, and the reliability and validity of the instrument.
- iii. To develop and test a revised survey instrument to be used in fieldwork 2022 and in multiple subsequent iterations, including the possible development of optional question banks, and/or the establishment a formal policy on the use of bespoke optional questions.
- iv. Make recommendations to the StudentSurvey.ie Steering Group about optimal delivery of the survey following consideration of related aspects of the survey administration, including (but not limited to) which cohorts of students should be invited to participate; how eligible respondents are notified of the survey, how frequently the survey should be implemented; which formats the results should be presented in to encourage effective and efficient analysis; and the appropriateness of the methods in light of recent updates to data protection obligations.

¹ The AUSSE had also been very relevant to StudentSurvey.ie but is no longer in use in Australia and New Zealand.

Competences of group members

To achieve these objectives, the following competences are required within the group:

- Understanding of and experience in the implementation of surveys at local, national and/or international levels. In particular, expertise and experience in areas such as survey design, psychometric testing to test survey reliability and validity, data protection, and analysis of large datasets is sought.
- Appreciation of the potential value of StudentSurvey.ie data to inform quality enhancement activities at local, sectoral and national levels, as well as an awareness of the objectives, currency and developmental influences of other surveys, nationally and internationally.
- Be in a position to disseminate relevant information to colleagues and students across the institution/ organisation and relevant sector of HE, and to seek their feedback as required.

The StudentSurvey.ie Project Manager, on behalf of the StudentSurvey.ie Steering Group, may also approach HEIs and/ or relevant stakeholders to seek individuals with particular skills and experience which may be required in order to ensure a balance across the StudentSurvey.ie Survey Review Group.

Operation

The StudentSurvey.ie Survey Review Group will be chaired by Vivienne Patterson (HEA) as a member of the StudentSurvey.ie Steering Group. The Chair will act as main liaison between the StudentSurvey.ie Survey Review Group and StudentSurvey.ie Steering Group and will report on progress to the StudentSurvey.ie Steering Group.

The group will meet virtually and on a regular basis during the period from March to June 2021 (an appropriate frequency of meetings will be decided at the first meeting). This period will be dedicated mainly to objectives i - iii. It is expected that pre-testing activities of any resulting revised survey instrument will take place in September and October 2021. The group will meet after this pre-testing to consider the results, finalise objective iii and make recommendations related to objective iv to the StudentSurvey.ie Steering Group.