

Quality of Teaching in Higher Education

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‘Quality teaching has become an issue of importance as the landscape of higher education has been facing continuous changes: increased international competition, increasing social and geographical diversity of the student body, increasing demands of value for money, introduction of information technologies, etc.’



(Henard F. and Leprince-Ringuet, S. (2008) The Path To Quality Teaching In Higher Education; OECD, IMHE)



Overview of presentation

- Introduction
- Responding to national agendas
- Complexity of defining and measuring quality in teaching
- Emergent research base around dimensions of quality in teaching
- Institutional approach to enhancing and ensuring teaching quality
 - Quality assurance/enhancement processes
 - Quality of student experience (DIT student engagement strategy)
 - Quality of teaching/academic development (DIT LTTC)
- Plans for the future – reimagining our curriculum

Responding to a National Agenda

- Promote participation
- Regulatory environment
- National finances
- Value for money
- Accountability & transparency
- Movement towards consolidation



IRELAND
National Development Plan
2007-2013
TRANSFORMING IRELAND
A Better Quality of Life for All

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Strategy for Science, Technology and

GLOBAL IRISH ECONOMIC FORUM
DUBLIN, 18-20 SEPTEMBER 2009

GLOBAL IRISH ECONOMIC FORUM

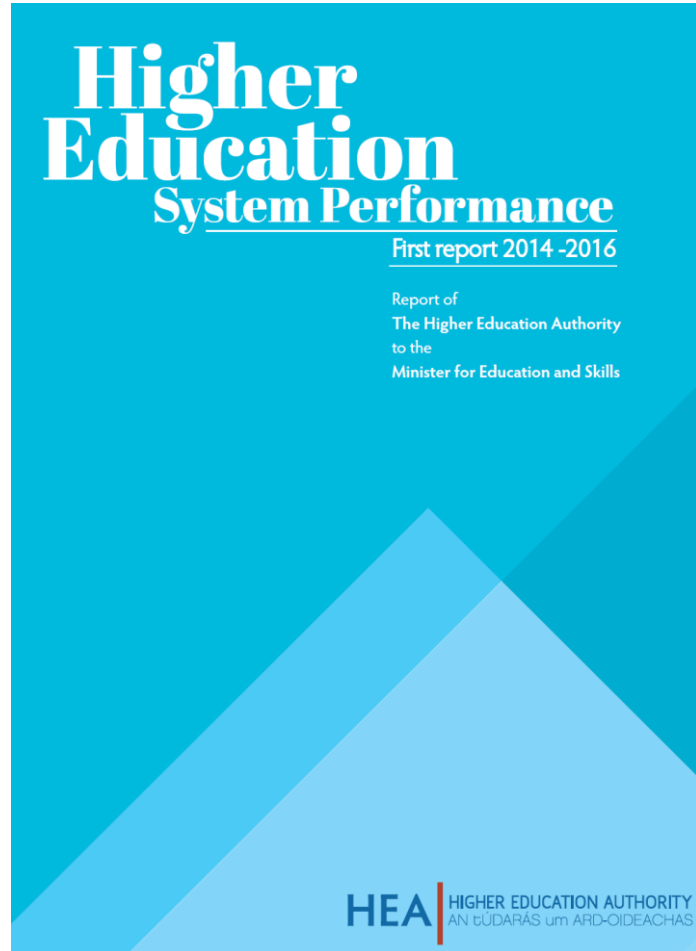
Building Ireland's Smart Economy
A Framework for Sustainable Economic Renewal

HEA
Higher Education Authority
An tArd-Chomhairle

Strategic Plan
2008-2010



HEA Performance Framework – first report 2014-6



System objectives:

1. Meeting Ireland's human capital needs – HE responding to the jobs crisis
2. Equity of access and student pathways
3. Excellence in teaching and learning to underpin a high quality student experience
4. Excellent public research and knowledge exchange actors
5. Globally competitive and internationally oriented institutions
6. Restructuring for quality and diversity – a HE system engaged in and committed to reform
7. Accountability for public funding and public service reform

- ‘Quality Teaching’ as a concept is complex and difficult to define.
 - Teaching can't be viewed in isolation and teaching quality disconnected from wider debates on Quality or Quality culture.
- Concepts of teaching quality might take different forms in full-time, distance learning or learning in the workplace. Students value different skills and support at different stages of a programme.
 - Quality Teaching is also ‘stakeholder relative’



(Henard F. and Leprince-Ringuet, S. (2008) The Path To Quality Teaching In Higher Education; OECD, IMHE)

What makes some teachers “extraordinary”?

Quality teaching is necessarily student centred; its aim is to facilitate student learning. Thus, attention should be given not simply to the teacher’s pedagogical skills, but also to the learning environment and associated supports.

Extraordinary teachers are those teachers who produce unique and memorable educational experiences. They know what to teach, how to teach, and how to improve. ‘Extraordinary teachers’ have passion for four things, learning, their fields, their students and teaching’ (Stephenson, 2001).





What Works? Model of Student Retention & Success

- Early Engagement: to promote belonging must begin early and continue across the student life cycle;
- Engagement in the Academic Sphere: nurtured throughout the HEI - academic, social and professional services
- Developing the Capacity of Staff & Students to engage
- Institutional Management & Co-ordination

(What Works? Liz Thomas 2012)

Thomas, L. (2012) Building student engagement and belonging in Higher Education at a time of change: final report from the What Works? Student Retention & Success programme. London: Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

‘Most institutions have not yet been able to translate what we know about student retention into forms of action that have led to substantial gains in student persistence and graduation’

(Tinto, V. (2006) Research & Practice of Student Retention)



Engagement has to be an institution-wide commitment, not confined to individual academics or projects. It has to embrace teaching as well as research, students as well as academics, and the full range of support services. All universities need to develop strategies to guide their engagement with wider society, to manage themselves accordingly and to work with external partners to gauge their success’

(John Goddard, cited in Hunt 2011: 77-8).



Student Engagement...



-“represents both the time and energy that students invest in *educationally purposeful activities* and the effort that institutions devote to *using effective educational practices*” (Kuh 2001)
- is influenced..“ by student expectations and perceptions, between challenge and appropriate course workload, degrees of choice, autonomy, risk and opportunities for growth and enjoyment, trust relationships, communication and discourse.” (Bryson et al 2007)



Student Engagement Trinity (NSSE, 2007)

1. What students *do* -- time and energy devoted to educationally purposeful activities
2. What institutions *do* -- using effective educational practices to induce students to do the right things
3. Educationally effective institutions channel student energy toward *the right activities*

'Belonging' has emerged as a key factor in student retention and is closely aligned with concepts of academic and social engagement.

'Belonging' recognises relatedness or connectedness to the institution



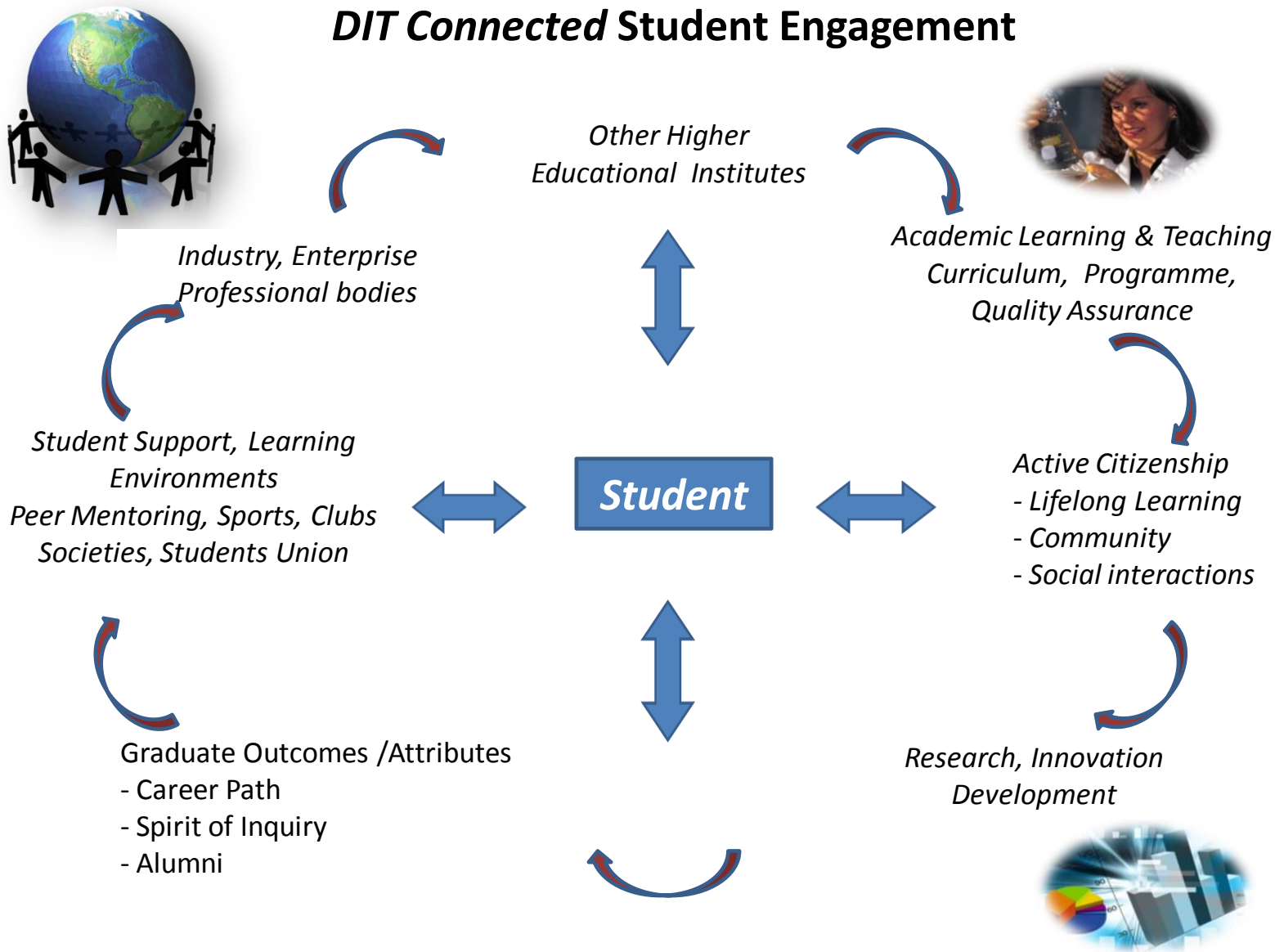
DIT Case study example

‘Creating connections’

DIT STUDENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY



DIT Connected Student Engagement



Integrating

(Local, Regional, National & International)

Creating Connections: Principles into practice across the 1st year

- Active Learning within the Curriculum e.g.
 - At least one lecture per module to be replaced by a student directed activity e.g. case study, literature review etc
- Learning as a shared responsibility e.g.
 - All students registered with DIT will be assigned a year tutor (sometimes called a year co-ordinator) to advise them on academic and related aspects of the programme.
- Enriching Educational Experiences e.g.
 - Teaching and learning resources to be used to support and enhance first year of programme.
- Involvement as part of community e.g.
 - As soon applicants register for a programme they are sent a '*Welcome to DIT*' message, '*Preparing for Study Pack*' and link to FYI website and Facebook page.



Creating Connections: Principles into practice across the 1st year

- Supportive Learning Environment eg
 - Students are assigned a learning set involving continuing students /associated tutor during their first week
 - First year informal learning/study spaces established in all campus buildings
- Importance of Staff development eg
 - academic development supports, eg workshops, short courses in place for all staff involved in teaching first year students, building upon current best practice to support the first year student (incl. non traditional students)
- Student involvement in Quality process eg
 - Modifications to first year programmes made on the basis of feedback from students through Q6c and student surveys
- Informed by DIT's Internal Knowledge of Capabilities
 - Support Teaching Fellowships that focus upon the first year experience and build upon research outputs and recommendations.

DIT: enriching educational experiences : developing student graduate attributes



Engaged

Enterprising

Expert in chosen
subject discipline



Effective

Enquiry
based

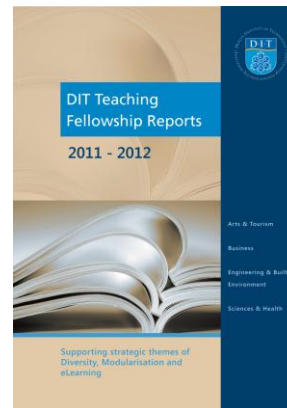


An overview of levels of LTTC engagement with DIT staff

Institutional level



Academic Development /support



Irish Journal of Academic Practice
Published by the Learning, Teaching and Technology Centre



Recognition of Teaching/ building knowledge base

Academic Writing
Centre



Curriculum change



Re-imagining our curriculum: proposed TU4D model for learning

- Preparation and Empowerment: eg managed series of tailored activities and supported learning opportunities
- Discovery and Opportunities eg Flexible pathways with tailored learning support



- Practice and Application eg significant internal/external collaboration activities and experience of workplace learning
- Consolidation and Reflection eg personal development framework to guide and support student success

ADDITIONAL REFERENCE SLIDES/NOTES

Teaching Quality: Institutional perspective (Gibbs, 2015)

- Institutional funding predicts student performance by impacting upon student cohort size as well as the quality of teachers attracted to work there. The best students tend to go to the best resourced institutions.
- However, internal allocation of institutional funding is important in determining quality. Is teaching or academic development encouraged and supported? Are appropriate and timely supports put in place for students?
- Most teachers will try to improve the quality of their teaching, if they believe that the university cares about teaching. (Hence, if an institution wants its teaching to be of good quality, it must give concrete, tangible signs that teaching matters)

Factors influencing teaching quality (Gibbs, 2007)

- Training of teachers improves several teaching metrics
- There are normally demonstrable higher learning outcomes for students when there are low staff/student ratios - Close contact with teachers is a good predictor of whether students will reach their potential. Who teaches is important and at what stage of a programme. The 'best teachers' might be better involved in the earlier years when key concepts are being formed.
- Level of student effort /active engagement during contact hours is more important in determining quality than the total no of contact hours. Students should know why they are working, should be able to relate to other students and to receive help if needed.
- Volume, quality and timeliness of feedback on student assignments is important (linked to low SSRs)

What it takes to be a “good” teacher

- Sensitivity to class level and progress, empathy with students...Leadership, Modern management, Global understanding of institutional mission... Experience of teaching ... Taking into account various & changing types of learning...
- Teachers’ teaching methods depend on how they conceive the essence of teaching and how the teacher is judged (Henard F. and Leprince-Ringuet, S. (2008))
- No relationship between teachers research and measures of quality of teaching has been demonstrated(Gibbs, 2010)
- National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning: insights from their Teaching heroes awards identified the following as important for their nominated teachers: COURAGE, CARE, CREATIVITY, COMMUNICATION, COMMITMENT



Scholarship of teaching (Trigwell, et al. (2000))

The “Scholarship of teaching” is more than “excellent teaching’ It involves :

- a) The extent to which academics engage with the scholarly contributions of others, including the literature of teaching and learning of a general nature, and particularly that in their discipline;
- b) The focus of their reflection on their own teaching practice and the learning of students within the context of their own discipline: whether it is un-focused, or whether it is asking what do I need to know and how do I find out;
- c) The quality of the communication and dissemination of aspects of practice and theoretical ideas about teaching and learning in general and teaching and learning within their discipline
- d) Their conceptions of teaching and learning: whether the focus of their activities are on student learning and teaching or mainly on teaching.



Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education (Chickering A.W. and Gamson Z.(1987))

Good practice in undergraduate education:

- encourages contact between students and faculty,
- develops reciprocity and cooperation among students,
- encourages active learning,
- gives prompt feedback,
- emphasizes time on task,
- communicates high expectations, and
- respects diverse talents and ways of learning.

How can we know if teaching is effective? (Gibbs 2015)

- International rankings rely heavily on research as a yardstick of the universities' value and leave aside the quality of teaching.
- Scores on outcome measures are highest in institutions with higher student entry standards – these are also linked to research income not to student learning gains.
- Indicators (eg value of graduates, satisfaction of teachers, retention rates etc) to assess the quality of teaching of an institution are useful but are often misleading and carry various meanings
- Indicators should measure what you do with whoever students – student engagement is one possible measure
- 'Learning gains' indicate the difference before and after studying. They are an important measure because a good deal of student performance is predicted by their prior educational performance, rather than by educational practices, while learning gains are predicted by educational practices