



Analytics Policy Development in IT Blanchardstown

This institutional approach...

...is based in IT
Blanchardstown.

...was developed in-house.

...involved the
development of a policy
and strategy for engaging
with learning analytics.

...is based on
international
exemplars and involved
representation from
across the institution.

Identified Need

IT Blanchardstown has long recognised the value of data for enabling an evidence-based approach to decision-making. Given an increasing interest in maximising the power of that data, but cognisant of the importance of using it in an ethical and sustainable way, the need was established for an institute-wide policy and strategy that would set boundaries and guidelines for operationalising learning analytics initiatives. It was a necessary first step in ensuring appropriate use of student data for learning analytics, and to collaboratively define a roadmap for next steps in implementing data enabled student success initiatives.

Solution

Following approval from Academic Council, a working group was convened which represented all departments within the institute including academic schools, professional services and the students' union. Supported by the DESSI initiative, the group looked to international exemplars and research to provide a framework for developing institutional goals and identified a number of potential data-informed initiatives that could support student success. A final draft of the strategy was submitted to academic council via the Quality Assurance subcommittee for approval. To date, it has enabled greater awareness across campus regarding the data we have and how it might be used. Going forward, it offers a roadmap for appropriate and worthwhile uses of learning analytics within the institute.





Enablers and Challenges

Given the broad range of staff involved in the working group and the wide spectrum of familiarity with analytical approaches, the development of a shared, informed awareness was a challenge. The short book *Learning Analytics Explained* by Niall Sclater was a significant enabler in terms of demystifying the process. The second challenge lay in creating a document that encompassed a range of requirements from across the institute and compiling a strategy that was realistic in terms of what can be accomplished by data analysis, while safeguarding the interests of all stakeholders. Reference to examples from other institutes and resources from the National Forum's Online Resource for Learning Analytics (ORLA) helped with this.

Advice

The advice of the working group is to ensure that the initiative has the backing of senior management and is supported by a senior project champion. It is also essential to spend time exploring what can and cannot be achieved by learning analytics, and how it can be used to support existing and proposed student success initiatives in your institute. It is critical to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are involved and onboard at each stage of the process. The group also recommends availing of the supports available from the National Forum, including ORLA and DESSI.

The group also found the following resources particularly useful:

- Learning Analytics Principles and Practice from: University of Edinburgh; Open University UK; Charles Stewart University;
- Resources from the SHEILA project: <http://sheilaproject.eu/>

Further Information

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