

Developing the 'Digital Footprint' in the TU Dublin Partners

This institutional approach...

...was developed by the
TU Dublin partners.

...has a particular focus
on supporting students
in first year.

...intends to create a
clearer picture of student
engagement through
the enhancement and
capture of interactive
VLE data.

...leveraged the expertise
of the three collaborating
partners.

Identified Need

In order to develop an improved ability to support first year students, particularly in courses where retention is an issue, a number of first year experience initiatives have been established across the three TU Dublin partners. A need was identified to investigate better indicators, consistent across the institutions, of the kinds of students that may benefit most from the initiatives on offer. Recognising the value of a data-enabled approach, the project team also sought to capitalise on opportunities for embedding better data use in the everyday practice of lecturers, thereby enriching the overall digital experience of student and staff.

Solution

The team identified engagement data as being the best means of identifying the students who could benefit from institutional supports. The most readily available data on student engagement was activity logs from the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Cognisant, however, that high-level activity data, such as the number of VLE clicks, does not measure quality of engagement, the team is currently working with academic colleagues to enhance their use of more interactive VLE features during the first six weeks of term. It is expected that this will both provide a richer seam of information on student engagement, and improve the learning experience for all students.





Enablers and Challenges

With the development of the new TU Dublin digital campus, the support of academic staff teaching first year programmes where retention is an issue, coupled with an interest in developing learning analytics, have been significant enablers. An expertise in VLE analytics and statistics across the coordinating group was also required. The willingness of the coordinating group to participate on a voluntary basis in planning and delivering the pilot was key. The current pilot phase of the study has not encountered challenges, as staff engaging with the project have been willing and able to use interactive VLE features. If the current phase is successful, a significant future challenge will be more widespread adoption of interactive features within a VLE.

Advice

The advice from the project team to institutions that are interested in developing their own VLE footprint capabilities is to work closely and collaboratively with first year academic staff, as their support and input are critical. Take all requisite steps to ensure that your data analysis approach is compliant with the GDPR and with your institutional data usage policies. It is also essential to have academic colleagues that recognise the value of a data-enabled approach to student success and are willing and able to amend their approach to using the VLE. Having your educational technologists on board is very important.

Further Information

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