
Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE)

...supporting the enhancement of
Teaching & Learning within
disciplines

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**STUDENT
SURVEY.IE**
WE'RE
LISTENING,
WE'RE
LEARNING

Clarity about student engagement



Engagement is a “popular” concept...

1. Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE)
2. Enhancing Student Engagement in Decision-Making
3. National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP)

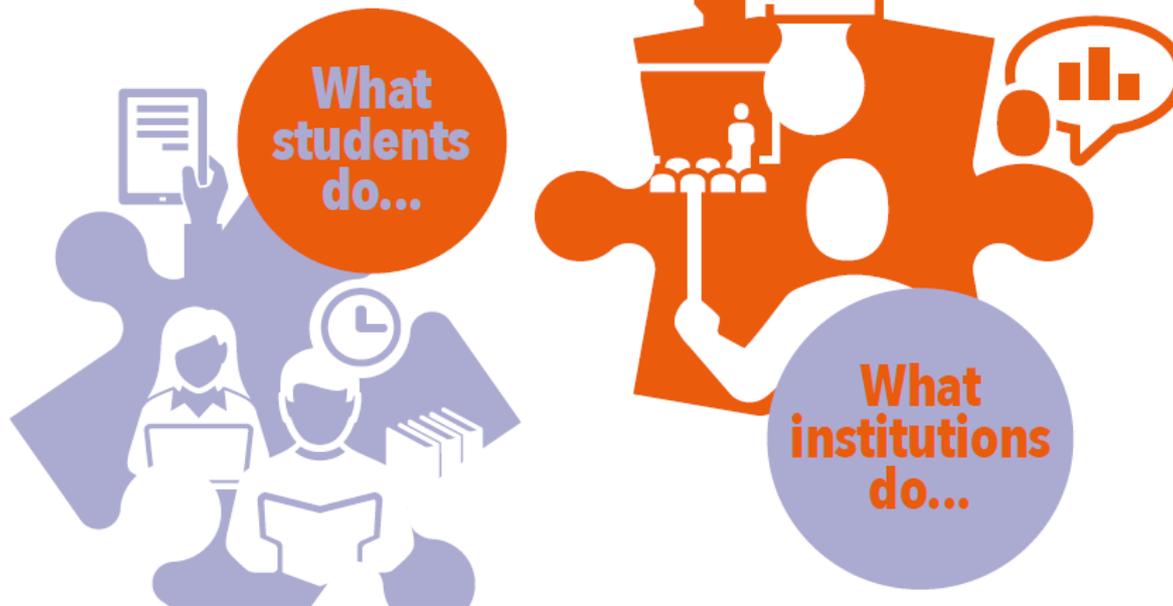


ISSE – What?

The term 'student engagement' is increasingly used to refer to a range of related, but distinct, understandings of the interaction between students and their higher education institutions. Most, if not all, interpretations of student engagement are based on the extent to which students actively avail of opportunities to involve themselves in "educationally beneficial" activities and the extent to which institutions enable, facilitate and encourage such involvement. The ISSE focuses on students' engagement with their learning and their learning environments and does not explore, for example, students' involvement in institutional decision-making.

Accordingly, for the purposes of the ISSE, student engagement reflects two key elements:

The first is the amount of time and effort that students put into their studies and other educationally purposeful activities. The second is how institutions deploy resources and organise curriculum and other learning opportunities to encourage students to participate in activities that are linked to learning.



ISSE – What?



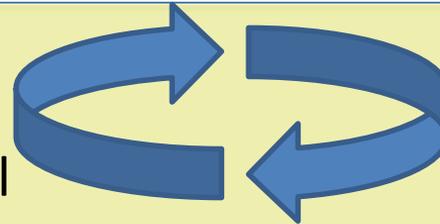
- ❑ 2013 national pilot → 2014, 2015 surveys → 2016, 2017 revised survey
- ❑ 30 institutions from 2014, 27 from 2017
- ❑ **59,965 total responses** in first 3 yrs
- ❑ 29,173 respondents in 2016; 35,850 in 2017; **65,023** total (revised ISSE)
- ❑ First and final year undergraduates, taught postgraduates
- ❑ First national student survey in Ireland
- ❑ Survey opens for 3 weeks for each institution in February - March

ISSE – Why?



- ❑ To develop a valuable information source on students' experiences of higher education

- ❑ To close the feedback loop
- ❑ To add value at institutional level



WE'RE LISTENING,
WE'RE LEARNING



SHARED INSIGHTS,
SHARED OUTCOMES



NATIONAL SURVEY,
LOCAL IMPACT





Structure of revised ISSE

Higher Order Learning

Reflective & Integrative Learning

Quantitative Reasoning

Learning Strategies

Collaborative Learning

Student-Faculty Interaction

Effective Teaching Practices

Quality of Interactions

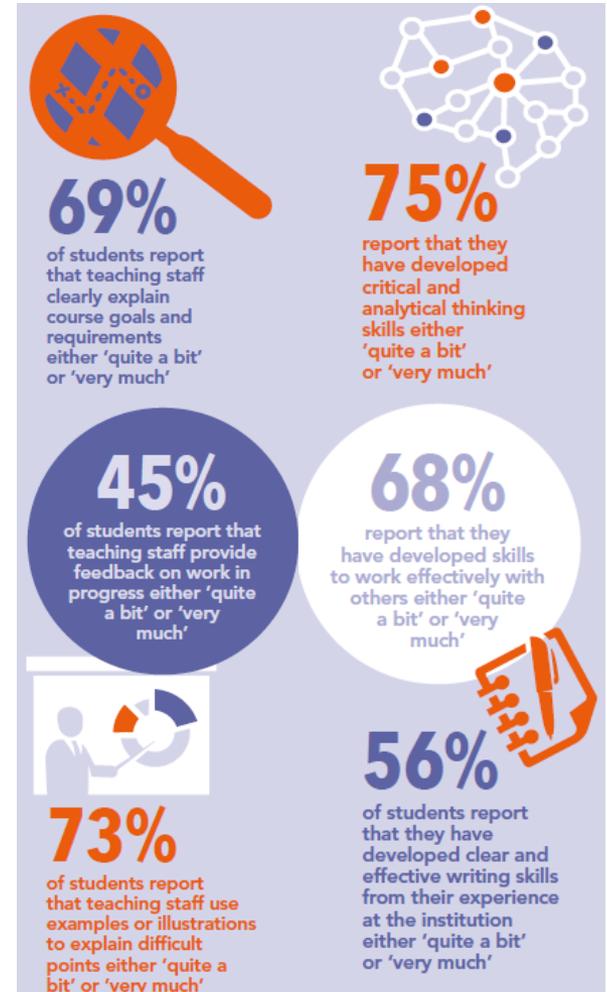
Supportive Environment

Other 'non-index' question items

Selected aspects of 2016 report



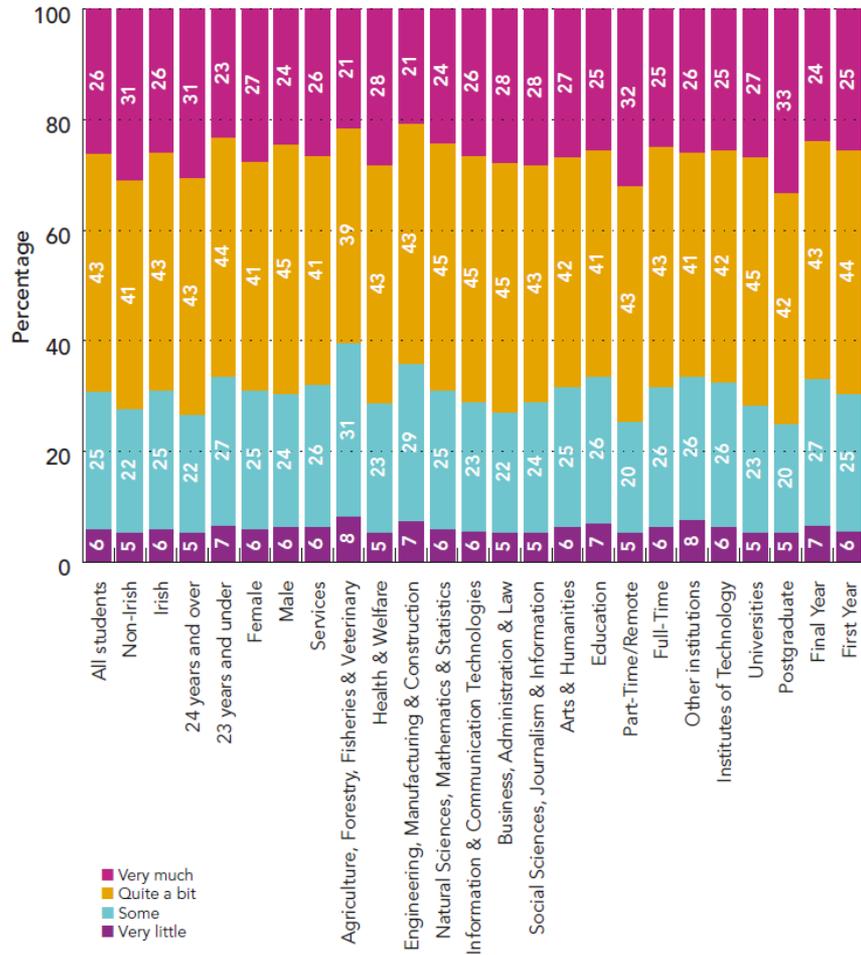
- ❑ Looking Deeper – **Effective Teaching Practices** and selected *skills development* items
- ❑ Mixed picture – reflecting the fact that greatest variation occurs within, rather than between, institutions
- ❑ Greatest insight offered in the detailed breakdown of results for individual question items
- ❑ Different indices have been explored in each annual report to illustrate potential of data



Effective Teaching Practices



Q1: During the current academic year, to what extent have lecturers / teaching staff clearly explained course goals and requirements?



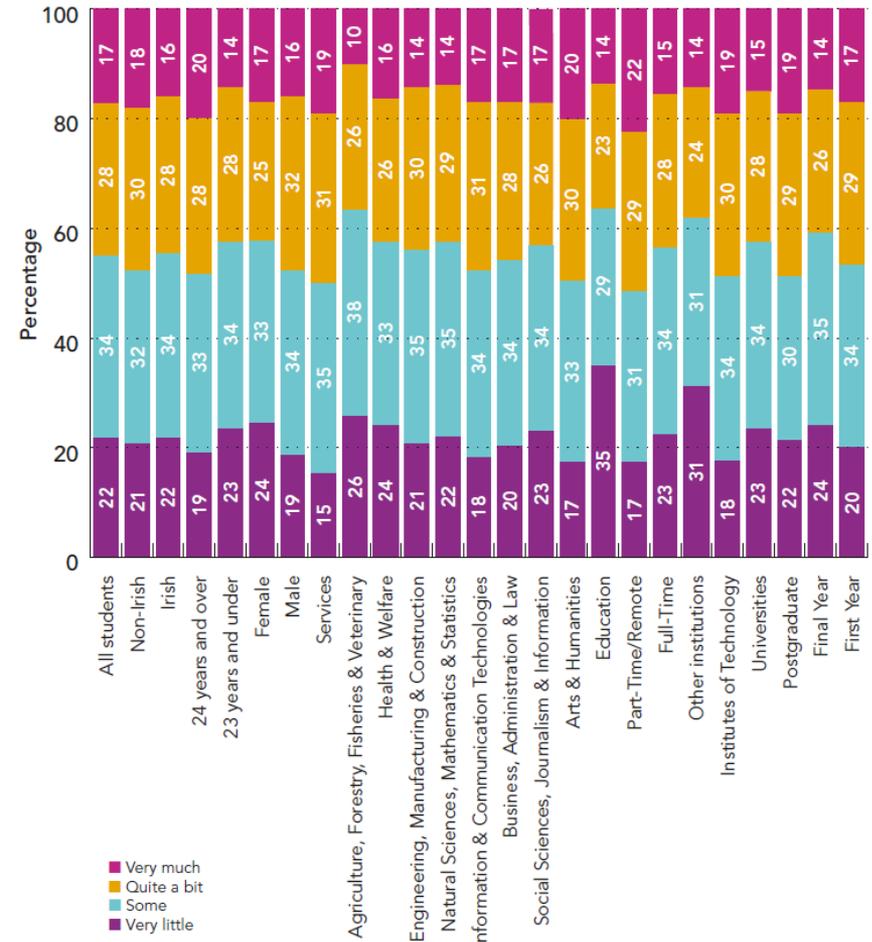
- ❑ New index from 2016
- ❑ Four new question items, plus one amended item, contribute to this index
- ❑ Responses to each item presented by demographics, broad field of study, mode of study, institution-type, cohort

Effective Teaching Practices

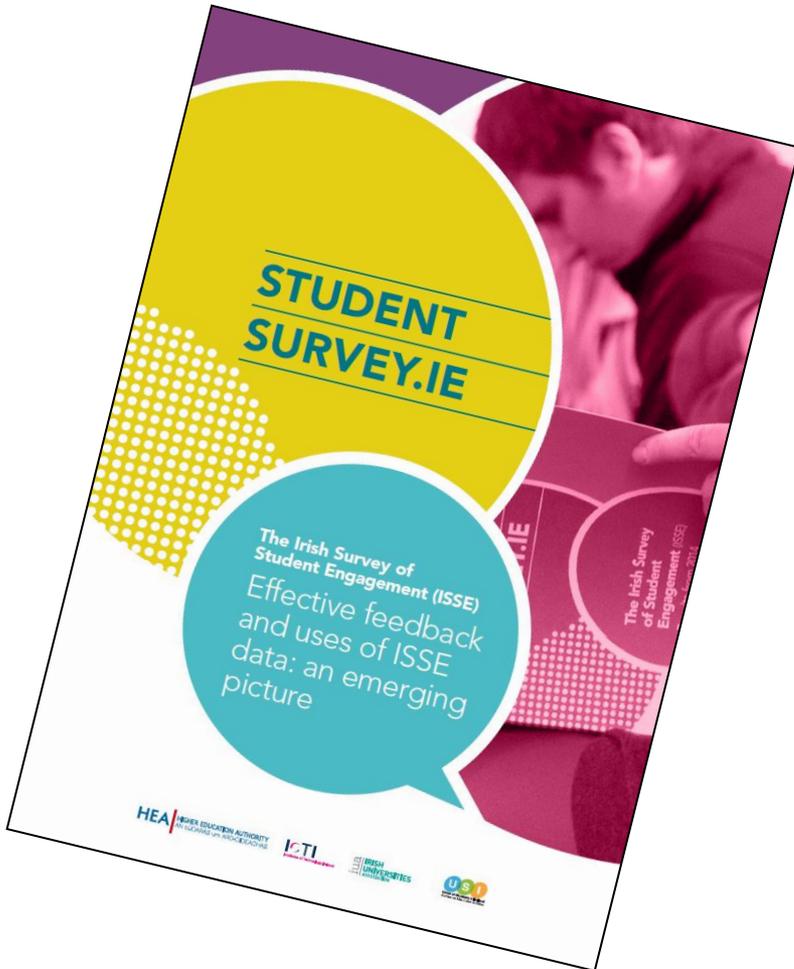


- ❑ Questions relating to assessment prompt greater consideration
- ❑ Assessment identified as an enhancement theme for the National Forum
- ❑ 24 questions identified to inform related activities, potentially at national and institutional levels

Q5: During the current academic year, to what extent have lecturers / teaching staff provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments?



Uses of the data



Within institutions and externally
e.g. National Forum ETL

- Individual item responses
- Alongside existing information sources
- Free-text responses
- Data for particular student groupings
- Greater variation within institutions than between institutions

Awareness and understanding



In the **University of Limerick**, ISSE featured in specific briefings of the Vice-President Academic and Registrar's Management Group as well as in discussions of the Teaching and Learning Committee (a sub-group of Academic Council). ISSE reports were distributed to all faculties for discussion and the specific ISSE themes were aligned with the Student Evaluation of Teaching Survey. In addition, in February 2014, the university hosted a seminar on the ISSE as part of the Seminar Series funded by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning.



In **NUI Galway**, briefing sessions on the ISSE report, incorporating significant discussion, have been provided to all senior leaders and members of Student Services, and results from the survey were presented to Academic Council. In addition, ISSE data has featured in discussions with staff in relation to the transition of new students to the University.

Within **Dublin City University (DCU)**, formal sharing and discussion of ISSE results has taken place primarily through key university committees. These communications have taken the form of presentations and reports to committees including the Education Committee, Quality Promotion Committee, Academic Council, and Faculty Teaching Committees or Management Boards.



Maynooth University has completed an in-depth analysis of the institutional data for each cohort of students (first year, final year and taught postgraduates) and compared Maynooth students' responses to those of students in all universities in order to identify areas of comparative strengths and weaknesses. The analysis has been undertaken by the Vice-President for Strategy and Quality. The review has been particularly useful as the ISSE provides data that is highly pertinent to the most extensive curriculum reform ever undertaken by the university.

Awareness and understanding



In communicating the results of ISSE to staff and students, **Athlone Institute of Technology** has identified the following aims:

- To provide specific information in relation to particular areas such as the quality of teaching and learning within the institute in order that improvements can be made
- To provide a rich source of data that can inform self-assessment and quality assurance enhancements and also provide both quantitative and qualitative analysis
- To create a greater awareness of this national survey and increase understanding of the ISSE and what it can tell us about the student experience.

Athlone Institute of Technology presented local ISSE results directly to the SU President as well as through SU class representative meetings. The institute plans to develop a video presentation to students which, it is hoped, will highlight specific findings from ISSE 2014 and signal the role of ISSE as a key feedback tool in the future.

Trinity College Dublin has distributed the ISSE report to student union officers and holds regular meetings with them on specific projects within the College Strategic Plan (that are supported by use of ISSE data). A general communication was sent to all students presenting the areas where feedback had identified positive aspects and also areas where feedback identified a desire for improvement or greater focus by the college.



Active support from the Union of Students in Ireland is an important element of the collaborative national partnership structure developed to implement ISSE.

Local partnership between institutions and students is key to ensuring that participation rates increase sufficiently to realise the value of the ISSE data (for all parties) and that students appreciate that 'their' institution is committed to acting appropriately on survey findings. At local level, class representatives can and should play a key role in disseminating information of the ISSE and in promoting participation.



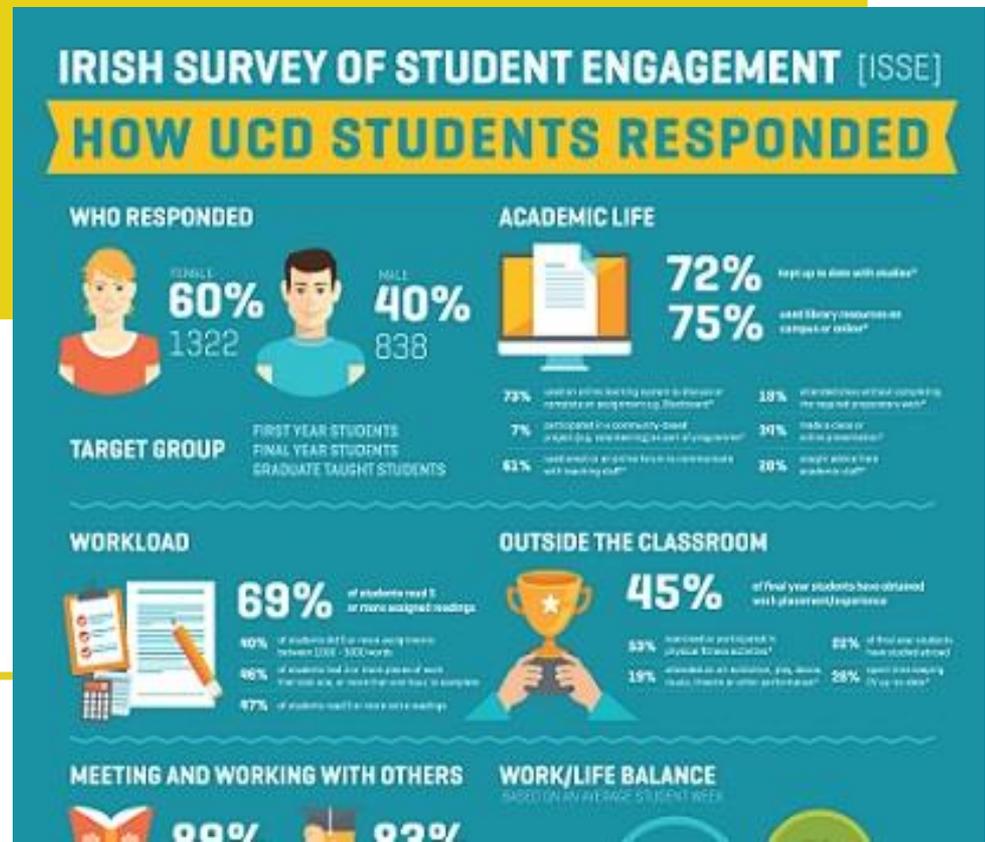
Awareness and understanding



University College Dublin designed a specific infographic, "How UCD Students Responded" for distribution to Colleges, Schools and other groups throughout the university.

After 2014 survey fieldwork, the university established a small working group to consider how to provide effective feedback to UCD students and staff. It was decided to present findings and feedback in the form of posters to be distributed across the campus. The presentation of the ISSE Indices in poster form was considered too complex and open to simplistic misinterpretation. It was decided that it would be more suitable and of greater interest for both the anticipated audience and the medium of distribution, to present individual items from the questionnaire.

To present results, all questions from the ISSE questionnaire were categorised into themes. The working group reduced these to 40 items for inclusion in the infographic poster. The themes devised included "Respondent Demographics", "Academic Life", "Workload", "Life Outside the Classroom", "Meeting and Working with Others", "Work-life Balance" and "Overall Satisfaction". The graphics developed for the poster were



Benefits of ISSE data



A video thumbnail showing Victor Lazzarini, a man with a beard and glasses, wearing a grey blazer over a black shirt. He is standing in a modern building hallway with a glass railing. A white play button icon is overlaid on the video.

Victor Lazzarini, Dean of Faculty of Arts,
Maynooth University



A video thumbnail showing Regina Murphy, a woman with short brown hair, wearing a black jacket over a pink top. She is standing in a library or study area with bookshelves. A white play button icon is overlaid on the video.

Regina Murphy, Director of In-Career
Education, DCU - St Patrick's Campus



A video thumbnail showing Annette Cosgrove, a woman with long brown hair, wearing a blue blazer over a white top and a necklace. She is sitting at a desk in an office or classroom setting. A white play button icon is overlaid on the video.

Annette Cosgrove, Lecturer in
Computing, School of Science, GMIT



A video thumbnail showing Eoin Langan, a man with glasses, wearing a grey suit, white shirt, and patterned tie. He is standing in a modern building hallway. A white play button icon is overlaid on the video.

Eoin Langan, Dean of Faculty of Business,
Athlone Institute of Technology.



Benefits of ISSE data

- **“The Irish Survey of Student Engagement gives easy access to data that has validity. There are now lots of opportunities for us to mine the data from three years of the survey, and see where the trends are going.”**
- **“The national student survey is the one instrument that has the capacity to leverage really powerful learning and get at the core business of the university, which is about engagement of students in ways that are meaningful, comprehensive, in-depth and authentic.”**
- **“....a great source of information for us to understand how our institution is doing in the sector, but also how we are doing within the different areas in which we work.”**
- **“....I have always found it hard to get data. The ISSE data is fantastic in the sense that if I feel the students are challenged in a particular area, it allows me to zone in on this area based on the data.”**

Current enhancement theme:

ASSESSMENT



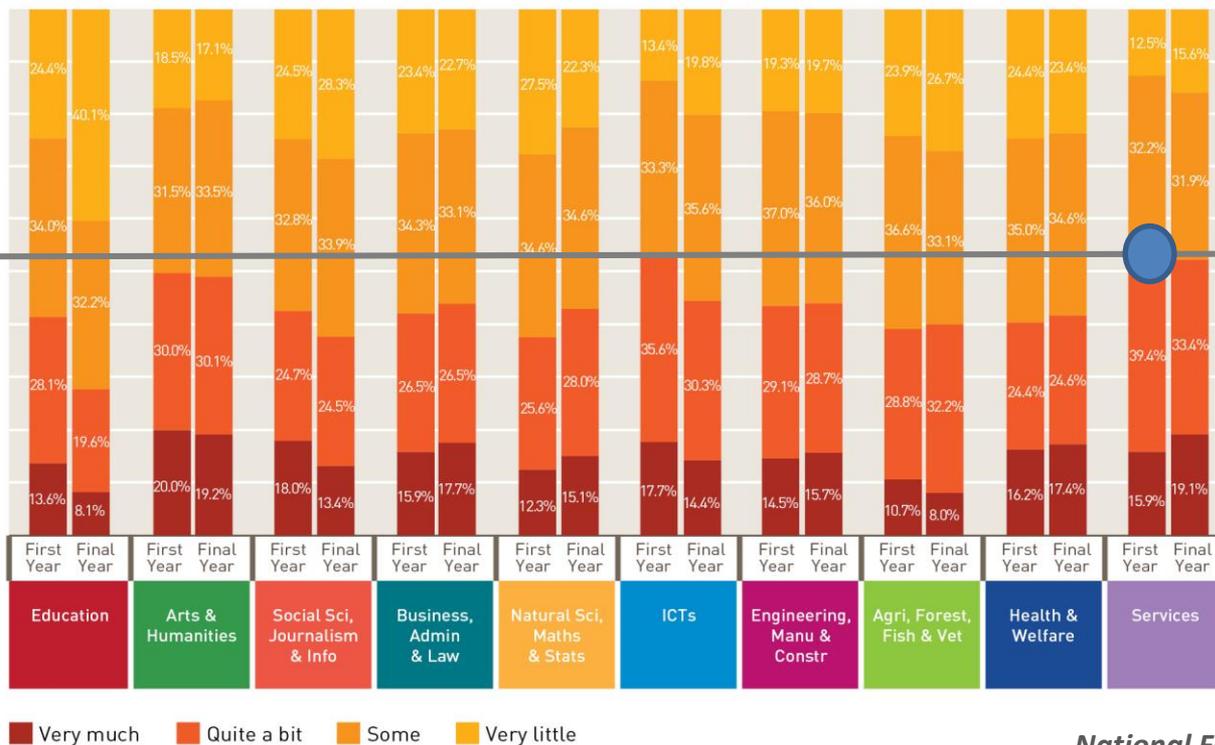
LEARNING

ISSE Data,
>10,000 students.
National Forum,
2016b

To what extent have lecturers/teaching staff provided feedback on a draft or work in progress?



55.3%
Quite a bit
and very
much



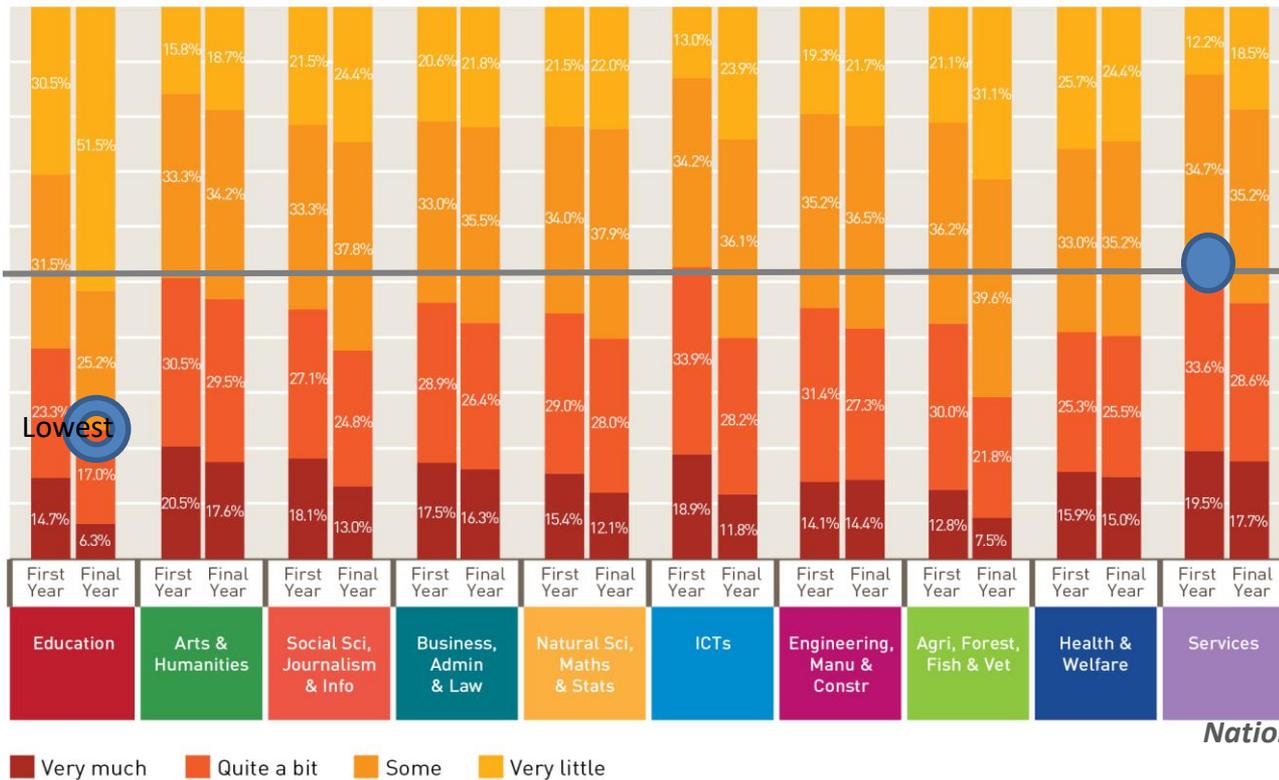
National Forum (2016)

To what extent have lecturers/teaching staff provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments?



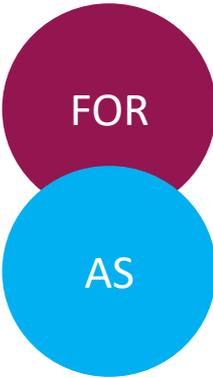
53.1 %

Quite a bit and very much

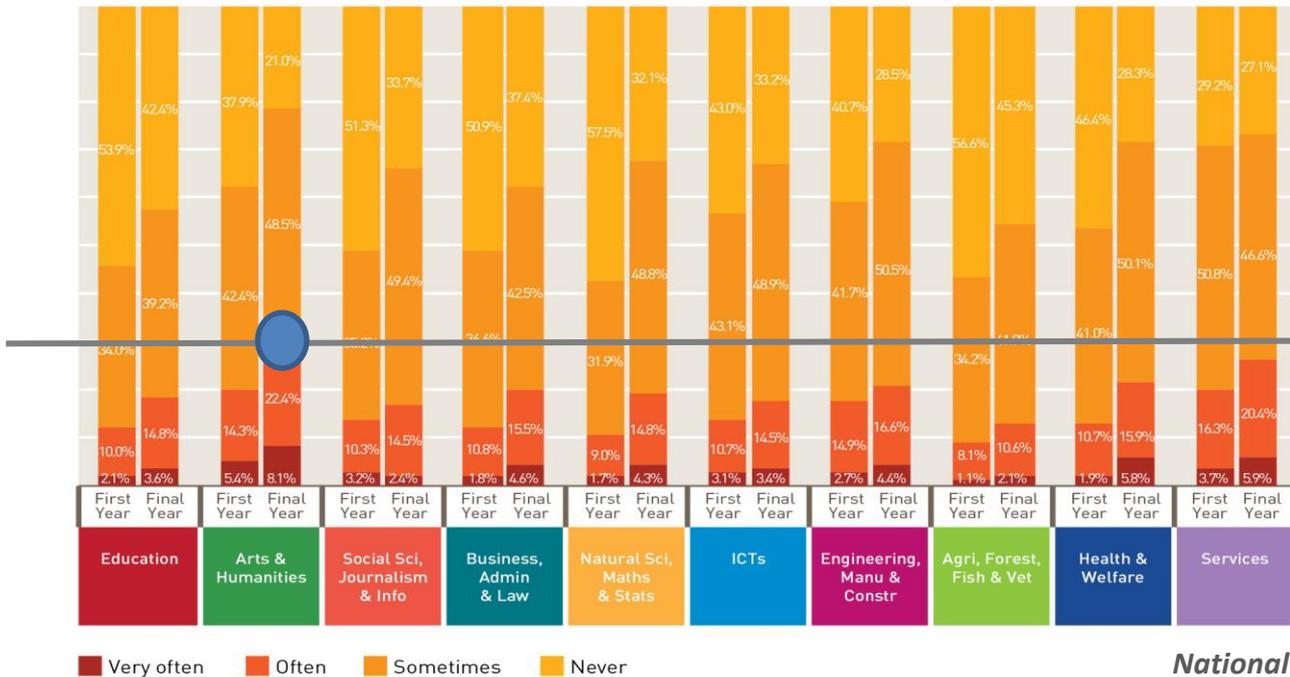


National Forum (2016)

About how often have you discussed your performance with academic staff



30.5 %
Often and very often



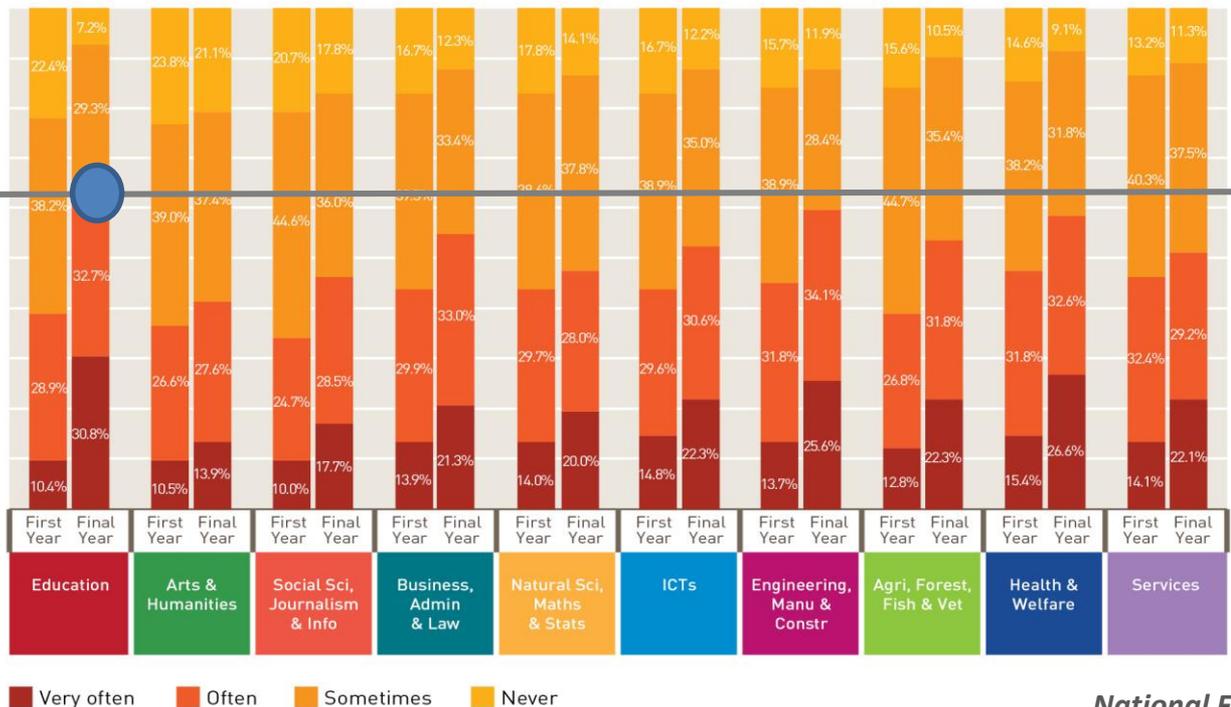
National Forum (2016)



About how often have you prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students

63.5%
Often and very often

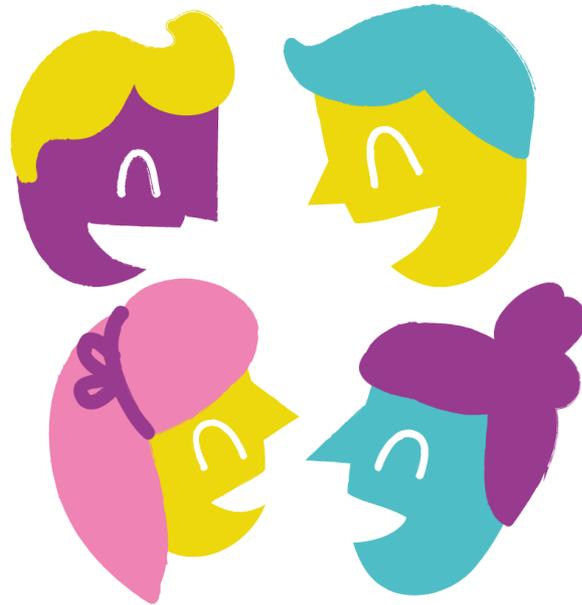
Note: Education:
Lowest on staff giving feedback in final year and highest on students discussing with other students



National Forum (2016)

A teaching and learning perspective

☐ So what?



How can ISSE be used to enhance Teaching and Learning?

First Step – request the data set that you need and that reflects your local context

Focus on the question responses that you feel are important to your department



Which questions should you focus on?



Some Questions to Consider

General Overview

- What is the data actually saying and are you happy with this? (Think about the way you courses are delivered)
- If not, what profile of responses would be acceptable?
- What can be done at a department level to help achieve this outcome?
- Are the results for first year students as you would have expected?
- Are the results for final year students as you would have expected?
- Are the results for taught postgraduate students as you would have expected?



Some Questions to Consider

Some Comparisons

- Are the differences between first year and final year and final year and taught postgraduate as you would expect?

Can you explain why similarities and differences are observed? Any surprises?



Enhancing Teaching and Learning Using ISSE

Steps

1. Institutional Data – Discipline Specific
2. Check Number of respondents (Representative?)
3. Compare your institution with similar institution type nationally – Are there any differences?
4. If so, can you explain them? Are they important to address? How?
5. Are there other questions that might give you more insights to help interpret?
6. What would you like the profile to be?

Enhancing Teaching and Learning Using ISSE

Open ended questions

Can give some insight as to what is
happening at a local level

What We Learned About Assessment

Students value variety and choice in assessment methods.

‘Wide variety of module assessments . . . I feel this gives students a fair testing to use their different skills.’

‘They conduct a mix of ongoing and end-of-module assessment, including continuous feedback on work and learning. This is very engaging for students as it allows for gradual progress towards objectives in partnership with lecturers/tutors. It also makes us feel part of our learning because it is not all dictated to us. A lot of innovative ways of assessing are also used, including various online collaboration methods.’

What We Learned About Assessment

Students value timely feedback in advance of subsequent assessments to facilitate learning.

'You get a lot of feedback as to how well you are performing which gives you time to improve if needs be. Often, the lecturers put up quizzes/ learning resources of the topics that you can complete after the lecture which really helps you understand the topics and learn the information.'

'Better feedback [is needed] on assignments, give our graded assignments back before the next one is due so that we know where we have gone wrong and can try and improve.'

What We Learned About Assessment

Students appreciate practical, relevant assessments that highlight the value of what is being taught.

'I personally enjoy relating theory modules to hands on work as it solidifies the principles learned within class. This is also helpful as it continues on to professional working environments where often the protocol must be learned and understood before being physically acted out.'

'In my course in particular, we have a lot of practical work. So instead of attempting to understand a theory off a page, we instead carry it out and apply the theory. It is a much more hands on approach and means we learn by doing which I think is very good.'

What We Learned About TEL

Students appreciate the active participation that technology can facilitate.

'I have one lecturer that uses the improvements in technology to make lectures more fun and enjoyable while also learning, e.g., we have quizzes where we answer through our devices that is linked to the server the lecture created.'

'We have an online Loop programme where students and the lecturer for each module can post questions , queries, topics, and exams, etc . Everyone can see and discuss in detail.'

What We Learned About TEL

TEL also enhanced students experience of assessment.

‘Use of different methods of assessment such as assignments, online classes, online tests, tutorial homework and tests and labs.’

‘Online systems and forums for assignment/coursework submission - makes full use of the technology available.’

Perspectives at local level



Data for my field(s) of study in context of my institution



Data for my field(s) of study in context of my discipline nationally



Index scores - local level



Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE)
Sample Institution
Index Statistics Report (Index Scores)

<i>Institutional Profile</i>		Sample Institution 2016									
		Field of Study									
<i>Code</i>		Education	Arts and humanities	Social sciences, journalism and information	Business, administration and law	Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics	Information and Communication Technologies	Engineering, manufacturing and construction	Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary	Health and welfare	Services
HO	Higher-Order Learning	33.5	42.0	28.3	36.6	37.0	34.1	34.9	0.0	40.1	32.6
RI	Reflective and Integrative Learning	36.8	36.4	31.8	29.9	28.7	26.7	28.0	0.0	35.5	26.2
LS	Learning Strategies	38.5	33.5	38.9	33.7	31.5	27.0	29.7	0.0	31.5	27.4
QR	Quantitative Reasoning	16.5	17.7	10.8	20.0	25.8	18.0	22.1	0.0	16.0	15.9
CL	Collaborative Learning	32.0	32.8	41.4	31.9	32.9	35.0	33.8	0.0	32.4	32.8
SF	Student-Faculty Interaction	25.9	18.8	16.3	12.2	17.5	13.0	16.4	0.0	14.7	15.4
ET	Effective Teaching Practices	28.6	39.7	47.2	37.6	39.4	33.6	35.5	0.0	37.1	32.9
QI	Quality of Interactions	33.0	40.6	46.9	38.1	40.1	40.1	39.3	0.0	39.2	37.4
SE	Supportive Environment	24.6	25.0	41.0	25.4	31.5	28.0	24.7	0.0	27.4	27.5

Respondents - local level



Sample Institution Report Programme Characteristics

Field of Study (Number)	Sample Institution 2016				Sample Institution 2015				All ISSE				ISSE Uni	
	First Year	Final Year	PG Taught	All students	First Year	Final Year	PG Taught	All students	First Year	Final Year	PG Taught	All students	First Year	Final Year
Generic programmes and qualifications	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	15	16	1	0
Education	0	0	4	4	0	0	6	6	916	753	869	2,538	406	111
Arts and humanities	34	30	40	104	39	34	27	100	2,619	1,774	478	4,871	1,646	922
Social sciences, journalism and information	6	0	0	6	2	0	0	2	719	492	403	1,614	604	366
Business, administration and law	103	94	39	236	130	153	44	327	2,522	1,949	1,050	5,521	1,150	602
Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics	24	44	0	68	38	56	0	94	1,595	1,159	238	2,992	1,029	606
Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)	44	50	11	105	72	53	18	143	1,145	751	485	2,381	379	145
Engineering, manufacturing and construction	44	72	0	116	53	82	0	135	1,506	1,162	285	2,953	463	235
Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	194	171	1	366	78	58
Health and welfare	121	97	25	243	140	182	10	332	1,917	1,762	548	4,227	840	525
Services	30	20	0	50	39	27	1	67	942	677	75	1,694	36	6
Total	406	407	119	932	513	587	106	1,206	14,076	10,650	4,447	29,173	6,632	3,576
Field of Study (%)														
Generic programmes and qualifications	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.1	0.0	0.0
Education	0.0	0.0	3.4	0.4	0.0	0.0	5.7	0.5	6.5	7.1	19.5	8.7	6.1	3.1
Arts and humanities	8.4	7.4	33.6	11.2	7.6	5.8	25.5	8.3	18.6	16.7	10.7	16.7	24.8	25.8
Social sciences, journalism and information	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.2	5.1	4.6	9.1	5.5	9.1	10.2
Business, administration and law	25.4	23.1	32.8	25.3	25.3	26.1	41.5	27.1	17.9	18.3	23.6	18.9	17.3	16.8
Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics	5.9	10.8	0.0	7.3	7.4	9.5	0.0	7.8	11.3	10.9	5.4	10.3	15.5	16.9
Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)	10.8	12.3	9.2	11.3	14.0	9.0	17.0	11.9	8.1	7.1	10.9	8.2	5.7	4.1
Engineering, manufacturing and construction	10.8	17.7	0.0	12.4	10.3	14.0	0.0	11.2	10.7	10.9	6.4	10.1	7.0	6.6
Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.4	1.6	0.0	1.3	1.2	1.6
Health and welfare	29.8	23.8	21.0	26.1	27.3	31.0	9.4	27.5	13.6	16.5	12.3	14.5	12.7	14.7
Services	7.4	4.9	0.0	5.4	7.6	4.6	0.9	5.6	6.7	6.4	1.7	5.8	0.5	0.2

Data – take care



Q: How can I make best use of index scores?

Index scores provide greatest benefit when used as signposts to explore the experiences of different groups of students - for example, final year full-time students and final year part-time students. In particular, index scores provide an insight into the experiences of comparable cohorts over multiple datasets e.g. the experiences of 2016 first year students relative to 2015 first year students. If a particular index score prompts interest, it is most appropriate to investigate further by considering the number of respondents (to check if responses may be regarded as representative of that group) and by reviewing responses to contributing questions.



Index score appears higher / lower than for other groups

Review number of respondents to form view on how representative the data may be

Review responses to related questions

Potentially, explore further with student groups

Rel'ship: survey value, feedback, action



Student understanding
→ greater participation →
data more representative →
institutional analysis →
feedback and action
→ further encouragement to
take part