

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT STRATEGY 2020 -2022

1. Background and context

Student Support is a collaboration of services involving many areas of the Institute community including Student Services, Students Union, Student Learning and Development Centre, Academic Schools and Administration. The Strategy for Student Support, is vital to the overall delivery of the Institutes Strategic Priority for Excellent Teaching and Learning and Quality of Learner Experiences and operates in partnership with the LTA sub strategy. This strategy sets out DkIT priorities in relation to student support and provides a framework to support student success and engagement in line with the DkIT Strategic Plan, Strategic Goal 3 - **To maintain a high-quality, inclusive learner experience that supports all our learners, holistically, and in their diversity, to achieve their potential** and Strategic Goal 4 - **To foster the development of learners as graduates, personally and professionally, who can contribute positively to society.**

It is the mission of Student Services, to offer the highest quality student experience and support for all DkIT students and to ensure effective communication and planned actions between the various student services supports. The Student Services team is committed to continuously improving the quality of the service provision and adapting to the evolving needs of students and the Higher Education environment.

This strategy supports the Institutes values and places students at the centre of what we do:

Learner Centredness – delivering high quality services with an emphasis on student welfare and wellbeing, providing feedback and guidance on student support issues across the Institute.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity – empowering all students to feel part of the DkIT Community by supporting them to actively engage with student services and influence decision making connected to the student experience

Transparency and Accountability- working in partnership with students for continuous quality enhancement of our Services.

2. Strategy

The strategy focuses on 3 key priorities in supporting the student experience:

- Student wellbeing with an emphasis on health, wellness and respect for the diverse needs of students
- Student engagement that can lead to meaningful student and staff collaborations and the development of a culture of partnership
- Support students in becoming self-aware and confident graduates who make meaningful contributions to society.

The Student Services Strategic Commitments are outlined below together with the action plans to support the Institutes Strategic Goals and Objectives.

Strategic Goal 3: To maintain a high-quality, inclusive learner experience that supports all our learners, holistically, and in their diversity, to achieve their potential

Strategic Objective: To enhance the provision of effective learner-centred support for all our learners

Strategic Commitments/KPI's

1. Service Development for full-time and part-time students
2. Develop additional supports for students at key transition points.
3. Develop additional supports and facilities for students with disabilities

Actions

1. Data informed service design and delivery for all students
2. Review and publish supports that can be provided to Part-time students
3. Review, update and develop service resources and videos for digital hub
4. Explore effective models that enhance the student experience by learning from others within and outside the HE sector.
5. Explore and developing technology solutions to enhance the accessibility of student services to all students.
6. Develop Student Facing Web App as a quick guide to student supports
7. Develop digital application process for Student Assistance Fund

8. Provide students with a choice of both digital and face-to-face services
9. Develop an Assistive Technology Training and Support Service for students
10. Commence planning for Autism friendly campus
11. Develop on-line video introduction to Services for pre entry students
12. Develop meaningful collaborations and initiatives across and between all student services functions to support student engagement
13. Establish Student Enhancement panel in collaboration with CELT
14. Build on leadership capacity and skills across all of our student services to motivate staff to achieve excellence by creating opportunities for personal and career development

Strategic Objective: Provide increased opportunities within our region by offering a wide range of programmes and access routes to learners and extending our provision of postgraduate, flexible and lifelong learning provision.

Strategic Commitments/KPI's

1. Increase Student Numbers
2. Widen participation and access from targeted underrepresented groups
3. Support retention initiatives

Actions

1. Recruit Community Connector for development of new outreach initiatives in the region, to be funded under PATH 3 College Connect Project.
2. Increase number of applicants through the HEAR and DARE Schemes through continued promotion of the schemes
3. Increase the number of partner arrangements on socio-economic initiatives
4. Increase number of organisations provided with outreach visits
5. 'First Time' Mature Entrants to represent 12% of first year intake
6. Increase formal entry agreements with FE Partners
7. FET Award holders to represent 18% of first year students

8. Continue to review ways to target most in need for Student Assistance Funding
9. Develop peer mentoring programme
10. Review of withdrawal/deferral process to capture data to inform retention supports

Strategic Objective: To actively promote and support wellbeing and positive mental health.

Strategic Commitments/KPI's

1. Develop and support strategies for student mental health
2. Develop campus and community partnerships to support student mental health
3. Build campus knowledge and skills on mental health and suicide prevention.
4. Create a safe, connected, nurturing, inclusive and compassionate culture
5. Establish a culture of mental health awareness, recognition and compassion.
6. Provide students with safe, accessible and well-resourced mental health support.
7. Develop critical incident protocols for varying levels of student mental health crises.
8. Frequent data collection and analysis

Actions.

Review current guidelines with a view to creating a Mental Health Policy in line with the National Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Framework:

1. Establish a Mental Health Committee with student and staff representation.
2. Continue to develop links with local services established to communicate the new risk management policy – CAMS
3. Develop training programme for staff: Provide ASIST Safetalk training for staff and students, CAMS training
4. Continue to roll out training on 'Dealing with Distressed and At Risk Students'
5. Provide annual Health & Wellbeing Fair for staff and students in conjunction with local supports and organisations
6. Assistant Psychologist to develop social media campaigns to help reduce social isolation and promote a culture of belonging
7. Identify and provide targeted supports for 'at risk' groups

8. Review section 13 of Critical Incident Policy
9. Support and advise on campus audit to restrict access to lethal means
10. Provide STI testing/screening on campus
11. Complete baseline of current practice – UK Stepchange self-assessment tool

Strategic Goal 4: To foster the development of learners as graduates, personally and professionally, who can contribute positively to society

Strategic Objective: To enhance student engagement.

Strategic Commitments/KPI's

1. Development and implementation of framework to support and promote student engagement

Actions

1. Establish a Communications Group to ensure clear messaging to students on student services, support and initiatives.
2. Identify priority themes annually to support student engagement and develop actions across and between all student services functions.
3. Participate in the National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP) with the Students Union and implement NStEP enhancement initiatives
4. Develop process and systems for student engagement with services
5. Develop a graduate intern position for Student Services
6. Develop a role for Disability Student Ambassadors to support 1st year students
7. Develop peer mentoring programme
8. Promote and support Elevate Award Framework to increase student participation
9. Provide employability workshops for Student Ambassadors and Class Reps.
10. Develop a Careers & Employability Ambassador role per School/Department to assist in the promotion of employability events on campus.
11. Develop a graduate engagement action plan.
12. Develop protocols for graduate engagement with final year students.

13. Monitor and develop engagement with Clubs and Societies.

Strategic Objective: Ensure that employability is identified as a key aspect of the learning experience.

Strategic Commitments/KPI's

1. Development of graduate attributes.
2. Development of Institute Employability Statement and Framework
3. Provision of Employability Workshops
4. Development of Employability Module
5. Support student placement as a learning and employability priority
6. Promote Graduate Outcomes Survey findings to inform strategic and curriculum development

Actions

1. Funding secured from SATLE to support Embedding Employability at DKIT
2. Employ project Graduate Intern
3. Consult with students, staff and employer representatives
4. Agree Graduate Attributes
5. Agree Employability Statement and Framework
6. Continue to support academic departments and staff in the management and development of student placement
7. Develop a class engagement plan for Careers inputs, relevant to each academic year
8. Successful validation of employability module
9. Conduct Annual Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS)
10. Identify Data Analysis Platform to report and present GOS findings to inform strategic and curriculum development

Strategic Objective: To enhance engagement between employers and learners.

Strategic Commitments/KPI's

1. Increase number of placements and review trends in growth, enterprise and location.
2. Increase number of employers/employability events on campus
3. Increase number of graduate programme partners on a national and regional basis
4. Increase communication with Employers
5. Conduct Placement Host Site survey and Placement Student Survey

Actions

1. Identify growth areas for Placements.
2. Research platform to support Placement Management and Data Collection
3. Increase number of employer engagement events on campus
4. Develop Employer engagement plan
5. Conduct AHECS Labour Market Survey with Employers within the region and share survey report with industry partners
6. Conduct annual feedback survey with placement host sites and report to relevant Schools.
7. Conduct Programme specific feedback survey with placement students.
8. Establish a skills development tracker section to identify impact of placement on skills development
9. Develop Employability Forum which will inform Employability development and implementation in the Institute
10. Continue to participate on Careers & Employability national organisations.

3. Strategy Implementation Considerations

There will be a need to evaluate the impact of increased provision of all support services on an ongoing basis. The development and expansion of services and their long-term sustainability will have a direct impact on resource requirements.

The Counselling Service have successfully secured HEA funding for mental health services which will greatly enhance the provision of service in the short term. Sustainability of mental health services will rely on continued resourcing of the Counselling Services as it is anticipated there will be a significant requirement for mental health supports once the pandemic is over. The Service will need to continue to meet demand and provide comprehensive mental health supports.

To ensure consistency in the measurement and monitoring of student engagement and sustainable and responsive service delivery, there is a need for effective data management and analysis expertise; including IT support systems and staff training.

The development and implementation of a framework to support and promote student engagement will be dependent on a strong collaboration between the Institute and the Students Union. There is a need to ensure students are aware that their voice is important and broad representation is facilitated. In addition, to ensure that the student remains at the centre of service delivery and decision making, there must be a strategic and resourced commitment to ensure genuine student engagement and partnership.

CONCLUSION

The impact of remote teaching and learning has highlighted the need for more accessible on-line supports for students. There are challenges and opportunities in the new mode of delivery in replicating a campus community on line and we know this will impact on student engagement. The good work by Services, such as Sports and Societies, in organising online activities and the Counselling Service with their Outreach activities, will continue to develop specialised social support groups. This strategy aims to continue to develop and enhance our services with a strong focus on the Institute values and placing students at the centre of what we do.