

Student Success Strategy

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Approving Authority:	Academic Council				
Responsibility	Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Registrar				
Consultation undertaken:	Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee				
Supporting documents, procedures & forms of this strategy:	All academic policies and Quality Manual				
Reference(s)	All academic policies and Quality Manual				
Audience:	Public – accessible to anyone				
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Category:	Quality Assurance and Enhancement				

1. Version Control and Change History

Version Control	Date Effective	Approved By	Amendment(s)
1	01/03/2019	Academic Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strategy approved for the first time.

Introduction and Context

There has been a steady increase in student enrolments in higher education over recent decades, coupled with an increase in the diversity of the student body. Ensuring the successful participation of such a diversity of students in Irish higher education institutions is a key element of national policy frameworks. It is supported at national level through a range of instruments including the third National Access Plan for Equity of Access in Higher Education (2015-2019) which was launched in December 2015. Its vision is to ensure that the student body entering into, participating in and completing higher education at all levels reflects the diversity of Ireland's population. Higher education institutions are expected to achieve increases in the participation rates for specified groups and to participate in and develop access initiatives and pathways that facilitate this.

The National Access Plan forms part of the backdrop for the most recent Higher Education Authority (HEA) Higher Education System Performance Framework (2018-2020) which has objectives aimed at improving the quality of opportunity in Higher Education. Coupled with this is a requirement to put in place an Institute wide Student Success Strategy which embeds 'whole of HEI' approaches to student access and completion. While much of the emphasis to date has been on access, recent sectoral achievements in this area must now be supported to ensure that students entering higher education have the best possible opportunity to achieve success.

The DkIT Strategic Plan recognises the importance of enhancing the student experience and supporting students to succeed. A core focus of the plan is a commitment to facilitate meaningful student engagement and work with students as partners.

*Using the standards defined by the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) as its benchmark, the Institute aims to offer value added learning in a **Student-Centred Approach**.*

In the strategic plan, DkIT commits to providing a quality student experience with an inclusive learning environment through the provision of a range of learning support services.

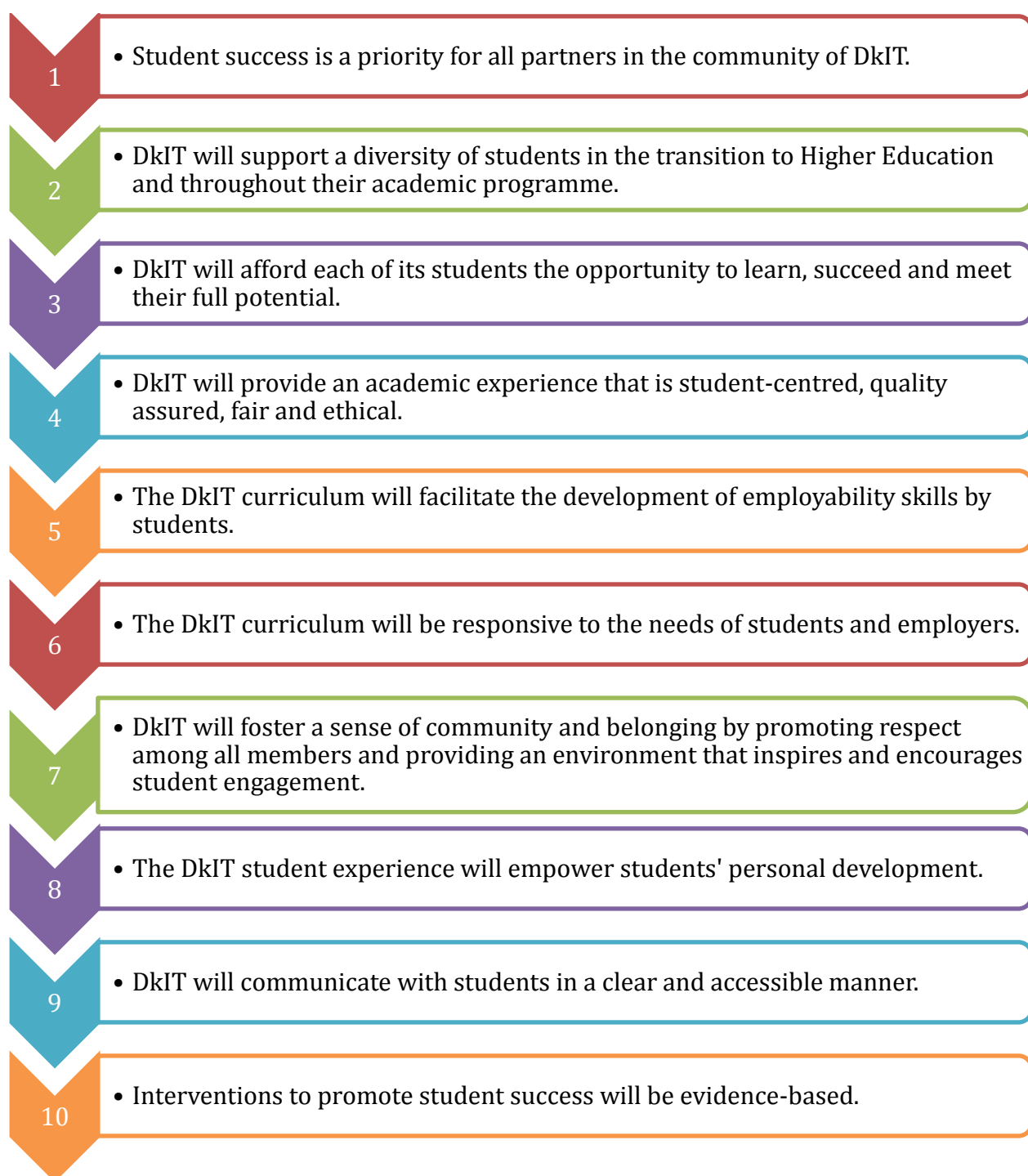
As one of its core values, DkIT believes in the empowerment of the individual learner and in affording every learner the opportunity to learn, succeed and meet their full potential academically, in the workplace and in the community.

Aims of Strategy

The aim of this strategy is to develop a holistic, student-centred strategy across all dimensions of the student experience to foster measurable improvements in:

- Retention, progression and completion rates;
- Student achievements;
- Student engagement;
- Graduate outcomes.

Guiding Principles



Implementation

DkIT provides a framework of policies, procedures and services to support student success at all stages of the academic lifecycle (see *Appendix 1*). The core elements of the strategy are:

1. Access and Admission:

- Student preparedness for and transition to higher education.

2. Academic Programme Experience:

- Detection of at-risk students coupled with appropriate and tailored interventions and supports.
- Quality of the learning, teaching and assessment experience.
- Student engagement and the campus experience.

3. Award Stage and Alumni:

- Preparing students for employment, further study and citizenship.

1. Access and Admission

DkIT's administrative and communication policies and structures have been developed with a view to:

- Encouraging and facilitating prospective students to make fully informed decisions about their chosen programme of study.
- Facilitating the widening of participation at third level.
- Supporting students through the transition to the higher education environment.

1.1. Programme Information

DkIT provides considerable information to current and prospective students, staff, graduates, other stakeholders and the public through its website (www.dkit.ie). This includes:

- Information on academic programmes and associated awards.
- Application processes and entry requirements.
- Curriculum documentation (including programme learning outcomes, programme structure and module descriptors (<https://www.dkit.ie/courses/>, <http://courses.dkit.ie/>)).

Information on financial and time commitments is included to assist applicants in making choices regarding their academic programme and to facilitate realistic student expectations. Marketing and promotion activities are cognisant of the importance of prospective student expectations matching the reality of the experience.

Other sources of programme information include:

- DkIT is open to the public (and to invited guests) for various events which facilitate the provision of information on academic programmes and admission procedures to secondary schools, further education providers and the general public. These events include opportunities for stakeholder representatives (e.g. career guidance counsellors) to provide feedback.
- The DkIT Schools Liaison Office participates in Higher Education expos and other national and regional events.
- Visits to individual schools are carried out as part of the Institute's ongoing promotional activities.
- Programme information is published in hardcopy prospectus format. These documents are available at promotional events, school visits and at DkIT Reception.

1.2. Entry Requirements and Widening Participation

Entry requirements are clear, fair and as far as possible promote diversity of entry to include a range of ages, nationalities, ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds. Opportunities for applicants to apply through Recognised Prior Learning routes (RPL) and to transfer from further education programmes are provided. Access is maximised within the constraints of the academic standards and available physical resources for the programme.

A range of entry routes are specified for different candidate cohorts, including those for CAO applicants, candidates from Northern Ireland or the UK, mature students and further education award-holders. Alternative entry requirements are provided where appropriate and practically possible. Alternative entry routes are approved by DkIT Academic Council to ensure that they are consistent with DkIT academic policies and standards.

Example(s): Alternative Entry Requirements in DkIT

- International candidates who do not meet the English language requirements for a programme may matriculate by successfully completing one of the two 60-credit foundation programmes available.
- Candidates who do not meet the mathematics entry requirement for certain programmes may take an alternative examination of equivalent standard hosted by DkIT.

1.3. Pre-Entry Preparation

Entry requirements are set to ensure appropriate readiness for participation in the programme of study. In some cases, additional pre-entry preparation is provided to support candidates academically, prior to entry.

Example(s): Pre-entry Academic Preparation

- International candidates may enrol on one of three foundation programmes with a view to improving English language and other skills of relevance in preparing for higher education.
- Mature candidates may avail of pre-entry mathematics, IT and academic writing support.

1.4. Support with Transition

Candidates who are offered a place on a programme in DkIT are supported in the transition to the higher education environment. Timely access to institute services such as IT facilities, library and other supports is provided through an efficient registration process. Students are provided with information about their programme of study and other institute facilities through:

- An extensive induction process which introduces them to academic life at DkIT and equips them with information on the range of DkIT's supports services. Additional induction

processes are arranged for particular student cohorts such as advanced entry, mature and international students.

- The provision of Institute and Department handbooks.
- The provision of website information through the 'Current Students' portal.
- The provision to students of a continuous assessment schedule and individual assessment briefs.
- Opportunities for social integration, particularly in the first few weeks including specific events for particular student cohorts such as international and mature students.
- Where appropriate, the implementation of diagnostic tests (e.g. in mathematics or language skills) during the first few weeks to assist lecturers to assess the preparedness of students in their class group.

2. Academic Programme Experience

DkIT strives to deliver programmes in a manner that encourages students to take an active role in their learning process. Learning, teaching and assessment in DkIT:

- Respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths.
- Is fair, ethical, consistent and learner-centred.
- Uses a variety of delivery modes and pedagogical methods, which are regularly evaluated and adjusted.
- Provides opportunities for bi-directional feedback.
- Encourages autonomy in the learner while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the lecturer and promotes mutual respect within the learner-lecturer relationship.

Professionalism, collegiality and respect of all members is encouraged throughout the organisation and supported through codes of conduct and other policies such as the Social Networking Policy, Dignity at Work Policy and Digital Citizenship training. Students are encouraged to support their peers through participation in group work, peer mentoring and class representative or student ambassador schemes.

2.1. Quality Assurance and Enhancement

A number of academic policies ensure that learning, teaching and assessment remain learner-centred:

- Curriculum development and validation processes ensure that academic programmes are relevant, appropriate and meeting the needs of employers and society.
- Programmes are subject to five-yearly reviews to ensure ongoing relevance and validity.
- Students have the right to appeal examination or assessment results and where grounds are demonstrated, they may have assessment work reviewed externally.
- Cases where students have mitigating circumstances which affect their opportunity to succeed academically are considered by Examination Boards and this may result in students' results being deferred.
- In the case of students who wish to withdraw or transfer to another programme in DkIT or elsewhere, support is provided by the Careers and Employability Office, Academic Department and Admissions Office.

- DkIT utilises the ECTS credit system and 'ladder system' of NFQ awards, facilitating a variety of progression and transfer pathways across the higher education sector.

2.2. Student Voice

In DkIT, the student voice is valued. The Institute is committed to being responsive to student feedback and work in partnership with students. The Institute recognises that students have a major contribution to make through review and feedback on their experience in the Institute.

Students have representation on a range of DkIT committees and functional units:

Governing Body	The Students' Union President and Vice President are ex-officio members.
Academic Council	The Students Union President and Vice President are ex-officio members. There are student representatives on some sub-committees. 'Student Voice' is a rolling item on the agenda for Academic Council meeting.
Programme Boards	Each programme stage has student representation on these boards.
Review and Development Activities	Students are invited to participate in such activities as they arise, e.g. Programmatic Reviews, Institutional Reviews, Learning and Teaching Scholarship activities.

The following formal mechanisms are employed to obtain student feedback on their experience in DkIT:

- Programme level feedback (QA3) to Heads of Department on a semester basis.
- Annual participation in the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE).

Other student surveys are carried out from time to time, including:

- Student surveys that are carried out as part of five-yearly School Programmatic Reviews.
- First year students are surveyed following the induction process.
- Surveys are carried out to ascertain student views on various services and/or academic initiatives.
- Recent graduates are surveyed each year as part of the Graduate Destination Survey.

The data collected by these surveys, and subsequent analysis, enables the Institute to monitor and continuously enhance the student experience along both academic and non-academic dimensions. DkIT values the importance of informed decision making and so student intake, progression and graduation data is provided to Academic Schools each year for consideration by programme boards as part of the programme monitoring process.

2.3. Staff Development

DkIT is cognisant of the changing role of the lecturer due to the increasing diversity of the student body and stronger focus on learning outcomes and a learner-centred approach to educational provision. This informs both the recruitment and professional development of staff. DkIT is committed to supporting and upskilling its staff to the highest standards of learning, teaching and assessment. At DkIT, the development of quality standards in learning, teaching and assessment is led by the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT):

- CELT provides learning, teaching and assessment advice, guidance and support to both staff and students.
- CELT engages in scholarly activities in these areas, through the delivery of accredited programmes in Learning, Teaching and Assessment and participation in quality enhancement research activities. The outcomes of such activities inform policy and enhance practices across the Institute.
- An essential element in enhancing learning and teaching has been the establishment of a professional development pathway through the Institute's Master of Arts in Learning and Teaching.
- Financial support is provided to individual staff for professional development activities, including study for postgraduate awards.
- A significant number of academic staff members are engaged in research and the supervision of postgraduate students.
- Opportunities to share expertise and experience with colleagues are provided.
- High quality teaching and research is recognised both internally and externally.

2.4. Programme Management

Programme management structures facilitate the prompt identification of vulnerable at-risk students, allowing the introduction of early interventions:

- At School level, the Head of School, Heads of Department and Programme Boards have responsibility for local implementation and monitoring of academic quality policies and procedures.
- Programme Directors and Stage Convenors are in place for all programmes of study and they act as a point of first contact for students and a link to student supports.
- Convenors monitor individual student performance and attendance, following up with students where appropriate and keeping programme boards informed. This facilitates early intervention in cases where issues with individual student engagement or attendance are identified.
- Programme monitoring is carried out on an annual basis by Programme Boards. An annual report reviewing all aspects of programme delivery and quality assurance for the previous academic year is submitted to the Registrar's Office and a summary of the main issues with recommendation(s) is reviewed by Academic Council.
- Examples of methods used at School, Department and programme level to enhance student success are outlined in *Appendix 2*.

2.5. Student Supports

In DkIT, there are a range of student supports available, along both academic and non-academic lines.

Examples of DkIT academic supports for students:

Student Learning and Development Centre

- The SLDC provides academic support in the areas of academic writing, basic IT, study skills, group work and examination technique. Support is offered via one-to-one or group tutorials and on-line resources are also available.

Mathematics Learning Centre (MLC)

- This is based in the School of Informatics and Creative Arts and provides students from across the Institute with support in Mathematics and related areas through one-to-one or group tutorials.

IT learning Centre (ITLC)

- This is based in the School of Informatics and Creative Arts and supports students with one-to-one or group tutorials in a wide range of computing subject areas.

DkIT Library

- The Library supports learning formally and informally. This includes the curation of physical learning spaces, services to support learners and the development of collections to enable intellectual inquiry. The Library offers training on Information Literacy and Scholarly communication including one to one support.

Examples of DkIT non-academic supports for students:

Careers and Employability Centre:

- This Centre provides a range of services to students during their academic career and beyond, including careers advice, placement support and CV and interview skills training.

Student Services:

- All students have access to a suite of support services such as a Health Centre, Chaplaincy, Student Counselling Service and Students Union.

International Office:

- Provides supports to international and Erasmus students registered at the Institute.
- Services include practical arrangements (e.g. visas, accommodation), pastoral care and liaison with Academic Schools in relation to student progress or attendance.

Disability Office

- Provides specific supports to students with learning or physical disabilities. Students who register with the Disability Office are furnished with a learning contract, agreed by their academic school, which outlines their specific entitlements in relation to physical or academic supports.

Access Office

- Provides specific supports to students who are admitted through non-standard routes, e.g. mature students.

Life Long Learning Centre

- Provides dedicated support to part-time students.

Research and Graduate Studies Office

- Provides support and assistance to research postgraduate students.

Regional Development Centre (RDC)

- Provides support to students and graduates who are interested in developing entrepreneurial skills and opportunities.

3. Award Stage and Alumni

The DkIT Careers and Employability Centre provide a range of services to students during their academic career and beyond:

- Qualified guidance counsellors provide one-to-one advice, group workshops and information on career profession opportunities.
- Dedicated placement officers support and manage the student placement process, including personal and professional profiling, CV and interview skills, work place culture and etiquette training and ongoing guidance while on placement.
- A briefing session is held at first year induction to encourage students who are contemplating leaving their programme to consult with the Careers Officer.
- In partnership with AHECS, DkIT have established a dedicated and integrated careers website for students, graduates and employers (<http://www.careersconnect.dkit.ie>).
- A Careers and Industry Fair is held on campus annually to provide opportunities for employers to engage directly with students. Presentations and workshops are also delivered by employers and industry throughout the year.

Academic Schools facilitate opportunities for students to engage with the workplace and society through the inclusion of accredited work placements on academic programmes where practically possible. Students are also encouraged and facilitated to participate in 'live' projects with industry and in local, national and international competition events in their discipline area. Employability Statements (outlining graduate attributes for each programme of study) are provided as part of programme information and are a useful tool for graduates seeking employment.

Ongoing support is provided to graduates. The Awards Office and Academic Schools provide award verification services, parchment and transcript replacement and access to a European Diploma Supplement (EDS). Information on employment and postgraduate opportunities is also available.

Targets and Responsibilities

DkIT Strategic Plan 2017-2019-Current Targets of Relevance to Student Success:

- Increase the number of registered learners from Further Education (FE) across all programmes by 5%.
- Increase the percentage of flexible learners (WTE) by 3%.
- Meet the % national norms set for targeted underrepresented groups.
- Increase participation in the ISSE survey and demonstrate action taken as a response to feedback.
- Provide two additional common entry level programmes.
- Proactively support learner retention and completion through implementation of effective policy.
- Increase the number of learner work placements by 3% annually.
- Increase the number of learner projects with industry/community/cultural organisations by 10% per annum.

Future Targets:

Relevant future targets will be published in the 2019-2024 Strategic Plan.

Supporting the Development of Student Success:

The following activities will facilitate the implementation of the strategy and development of further initiatives:

- Establish an Institute Data Office and develop protocols and resources for inputting and extracting data of relevance to the Student Success Strategy.
- Identify and safely collect and process data of relevance to student academic success.
- Set targets in relation to student progression rates:
 - Maintain overall Institute progression rates for major awards > 80%.
 - Maintain overall Institute progression rate for first year students on major awards of > 75%.
 - Set and maintain appropriate programme-level progression rates as part of School Strategies.
 - Review and improve (where appropriate) completion rates for specific access cohorts, such as:
 - International students
 - Further Education entrants
 - RPL entrants

- Mature students
 - Socio-economic groups which are underrepresented in Higher Education
 - Students with disabilities
 - Part-time, blended and on-line students
- Continue to broaden entry routes in line with the Transitions agenda.
- Continue to develop our relationship with students as partners and develop metrics to monitor this.
- Support opportunities for dissemination of best practice in relation to student retention.
- Continue to ensure the resourcing and development of student support services including learning support for a diversity of learners.

Appendix 1: Policies and Procedures with Reference to the Quality Manual

Core Element:	Relevant Policies and Procedures	Quality Standard (Quality Manual)
<i>Access and Admission</i>	<p>Equal Access and Participation Policy</p> <p>Admissions Policy</p> <p>Transfer and Progression Policy</p> <p>Recognition of Prior Learning Policy</p>	4.Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification
<i>Academic Programme Experience</i>	<p>Policy on Design and Approval of Programmes</p> <p>Policy on Collaborative Provision, Transnational Provision and Joint Awards</p> <p>Monitoring of Programmes Policy</p> <p>Assessment and Standards</p> <p>Academic Integrity Policy</p> <p>Assessment and Learning Policy</p> <p>Group-work Framework Guidelines</p> <p>Examinations Policy</p> <p>Continuous Assessment Policy and Procedures</p> <p>Social Networking Policy</p> <p>Student Voice Policy</p> <p>Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Awards by Research and Thesis</p>	<p>2.Design and Approval of Programmes</p> <p>9.Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes</p> <p>3.Student Centred Learning Teaching and Assessment</p>
<i>Award Stage and Alumni</i>	<p>Assessment and Standards</p> <p>Posthumous Award Policy</p> <p>Exit Awards Policy</p>	4.Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification

Appendix 2: Examples of Activities in Schools and Departments that Contribute to Enhancing Student Success

Activity	Description
<i>Systematic Monitoring of Individual Students</i>	<p>A number of metrics can be used to monitor student engagement with their programme of study. Ongoing collection and review of this data can facilitate early interventions by programme teams in the case of students at risk of non-completion. Normally the Programme Director or Year Convenor collects and reviews this information and follows up with the student and/or programme team.</p> <p>The following are examples of sources of information that can be used for this purpose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance data; • Moodle analytics; • Results of diagnostic tests; • Results of continuous assessment events; • Results of semester examinations; • Outcomes of regular meetings with individual students.
<i>Systematic Monitoring of Programmes</i>	<p>This is carried out by Programme Boards on an annual basis. It allows Programme Boards to review all aspects of the programme and develop an action plan for the coming year. It includes reviewing and reporting on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student intake, progression and graduation data. • Student feedback (obtained from ISSE, QA surveys and class representatives). • Opportunities for student engagement with employers and other external stakeholders. • Effectiveness of administrative structures such as timetabling and provision of information. • Issues related to programme content, learning outcomes, Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LTA) strategies and delivery.
<i>Actions which Encourage Student Engagement</i>	<p>There are a number of activities that encourage and facilitate student engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that students are represented on Programme Boards, School Boards and other fora. • Responding to student feedback (where possible and appropriate) and communicating responses to students. • Easy access to lecturing staff. • Provision of online learning resources and/or use of Technology-Enhanced Learning (TEL) tools. • Opportunities for learner input to programme design and development.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of student engagement activities, through the provision of credits or other certification/recognition. • Career events and other external engagement activities (see below). • Provision of feedback on academic work in an effective and timely manner. • Effective management and assessment of group projects. • Use of variety of LTA techniques appropriate to diverse student body. • Provision of appropriate physical facilities. • Provision of tutorials to support difficult subject areas. • Use of effective methods of communication with students, e.g. social media. • Provision of opportunities for voluntary activities. • Opportunities for interdisciplinary student collaborations.
<i>Provision of clear, accurate and relevant information to prospective students, learners and graduates</i>	<p>Published and other written information provided by Departments includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme information on website and in prospectus; • Programme information provided at Institute open events; • Timetable; • Programme Handbook; • Continuous Assessment Schedule; • Assessment Briefs; • Employability Statement.
<i>Activities to Support Transition</i>	<p>All Departments provide an extensive first year induction process. The following additional induction activities are arranged where appropriate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Induction or networking events for specific student cohorts (e.g. mature, FET, International, part-time); • Follow-up mini-induction events for first year students; • Induction for advanced entry students; • Induction for award stage students; • Social events and/or events that facilitate integration of diverse student cohorts; • Peer Mentoring.
<i>Participation in External Engagement Activities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion of work placement on programme. • Professional body accreditation of programme. • Participation in annual Industry Day. • Opportunities for 'live' student projects in conjunction with industry partners. • Opportunities for students to participate in performances or competitions. • Opportunities for studies abroad (e.g. Erasmus) and/or participation in international projects. • Industry site visits and guest lectures.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry student mentorship programmes. • Involvement of students in outreach activities. • Opportunities for Graduate Internships.
<i>Exit Interviews</i>	These can take the form of face-to-face interviews, completion of a form or telephone interviews with students who have decided to leave their programme. They provide useful information to Programme Boards in assessing the reasons for student non-completion.