STUDENT VOICE POLICY

Date approved:	24th April 2026	**Date policy will take effect:**	24TH April 2026	**Date of Next Review:**	24th April 2029
Approving Authority:	Academic Council				
Responsible School/Unit:	Registrar, Teaching and Learning Sub-Committee				
Consultation undertaken:	Academic Council, Student Services, The Students' Union.				
Supporting documents, procedures & forms of this policy:	Not applicable				
Reference(s)	Not applicable				
Audience:	Public – accessible to anyone				
Category:	Student-Centred Learning, Teaching and Learning				

1 Version Control and Change History

Version Control	Date Effective	Approved By	Amendment(s)
1	05/12/2014	Academic Council (AC:DOC:140:09:01)	□ Adopted for the first time.
2	27/11/2020	Academic Council (AC:DOC:171:05:01)	□ All sections amended.
3.	24/04/2026	Academic Council (AC:DOC:204:07:01)	

Contents

1 **VERSION CONTROL AND CHANGE HISTORY** **2**
2 **PURPOSE OF POLICY** **3**
3 **APPLICATION & SCOPE** **3**
4 **INTRODUCTION** **3**
5 **POLICY PRINCIPLES** **3**
6 **FRAMEWORK FOR SUPPORTING THE STUDENT VOICE** **4**
7 **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES** **7**

2 Purpose of Policy

2.1 To promote student participation in decision making.

2.2 To set out how DkIT staff and students communicate and engage with each other, working in partnership to improve our students' experience.

3 Application & Scope

3.1 All registered students and all staff in the institute, and the Students' Union of DkIT.

3.2 This policy informs how we implement our policies and procedures and how we ensure democratic decision making.

4 Introduction

4.1 Dundalk Institute of Technology values student participation as a key driver of continuous improvement in learning, teaching and student experience on campus. The Institute's Strategic Plan (2024-2028) recognises that "it is critical that students have a voice and feel they are co-creators in enhancing their student experience" (DkIT Strategic Plan 2024-2028 p 15). In doing so, as articulated by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), "we strive to ensure the learner voice and perspective is included in decision-making, and that we have an up-to-date and comprehensive understanding of the learner experience".

4.2 Student engagement is a shared responsibility and requires a culture of partnership. To this end the Institute engages with its students through a variety of mechanisms with a view to engaging students in quality enhancement and learning from and responding to the student voice from students individually, collectively or through their representatives.

4.3 Student engagement in quality assurance and participation in decision making depends on supportive institutional policy, processes and culture. For the purposes of this policy:
Student Engagement is defined as:
'*The investment of time, effort and other relevant resources by both students and their institutions intended to optimise the student experience and enhance the learning outcomes and development of students, and the performance and reputation of the institution.*' (Trowler and Trowler, 2010).

Student Voice is defined as '…the act of students sharing their individual and collective lived experiences within the learning community, expressed through views and perspectives, demonstrated by formal and informal conversation, debate, feedback, and ultimately, active listening and being heard' (NSTEP, 2021).

4.4 The Institute actively encourages student contributions to decision making and recognises that students' feedback regarding their student experience at DkIT is an essential part of the quality enhancement cycle.

4.5 The Institute has a clear commitment to excellence in learning and teaching and enhancing the student experience through student-centred evaluation and feedback practices.

5 Policy Principles

The following key principles underpin the Institute's approach to learning from and responding to the student voice, and set out clear expectations in this regard.

5.1 DkIT seeks to build a culture of partnership between staff and students to ensure positive change.

5.2 DkIT is committed to enabling, supporting and recognising student engagement and to building capacity within the student body for meaningful dialogue.

5.3 This policy adhere to sectoral standards and national frameworks supporting student voice, including QQI's Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2024), and the NStEP framework for Student Engagement (2021). These guide inclusive, structured and transparent student engagement at all levels of governance and engagement.

5.4 Student engagement structures must be inclusive, accessible and representative of the student body. DkIT supports structures to ensure such representation together with transparent analysis and feedback.

5.5 Feedback from students will be valued as a key mechanism for positive action to ensure improvement. Students will be engaged as equal partners in understanding and improving their student experience.

5.6. Digital tools and co-creation projects will be used to amplify the student voice.

5.7 These principles will be supported by a cycle of

- Empowering students through training so that their voice can be heard.
- Ongoing development and use of mechanisms designed to 'listen' to the student voice, analyse, respond and communicate to the student body in a transparent manner.

6. **Framework for Supporting the Student Voice**

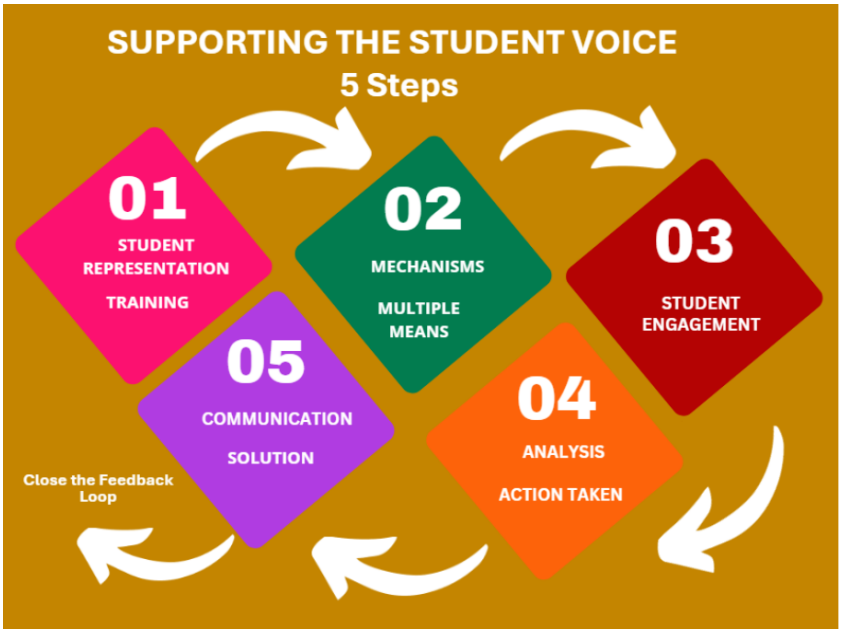


Figure 1: Framework for Supporting the Student Voice.

6.1 Dialogue: Student Representation and Feedback

(i) Institute use both consultative and representative methods in gathering feedback from students. Consultative methods engage the student community in broad reflective quantitative and/or qualitative feedback e.g. Surveys etc. The student representation system facilitates student engagement in decision making at a number of levels including:

- Student Union Elected Representatives
- Class Representatives
- Programme Board Representatives
- School Board Representatives
- Student Representatives on Academic Council
- Student Representatives on Governing Body
- Student Forums and Student Focus Groups.
- Student Ambassadors
- Sports Scholars
- Sport and Societies Representatives

The DkIT Annual Monitoring of Programmes Policy outlines the role of student representatives on Programme Boards. https://www.dkit.ie/about-dkit/policies-andhttps://www.dkit.ie/about-dkit/policies-and-guidelines/academic-policies.htmlguidelines/academic-policies.html. At School level, students are represented on School Boards. The Students' Union represents students at all levels, particularly at institute level.

(ii) Training: The Institute recognises the need to train and support students to ensure meaningful participation in decision making. To do this training will be facilitated at a number of levels as outlined in (i).

(iii) Students should be considered work as partners in quality assurance activities and, particularly, in all student life enhancement activity.

(iv) The primary purpose of gathering feedback is to assure the quality of learning and teaching and Institute services and facilities, and to enhance the student experience.

(v) All students will have opportunities to provide feedback on their student experience both formally and informally. Interpretation of data must draw on multiple sources of evidence in addition to contextual factors which may include evaluations by staff and other stakeholders.

(vi) Students must be informed and give their consent to the use of their comments and opinions for purposes other than quality assurance and enhancement (e.g. for marketing, research etc.) in line with Institute GDPR Policy. Confidentiality and anonymity of respondents must be ensured where required. Surveys and feedback mechanisms should safeguard against 'survey fatigue' by avoiding over surveying students. Care should be taken to ensure that samples are as representative as feasible. Mechanisms for feedback include (not exhaustive):

- Student Forums and Focus Groups.
- End-of-module evaluation surveys (QA1).
- Programme evaluation surveys (QA3)).
- Mid-module reviews that may be undertaken by lecturer(s).
- National Student Surveys, e.g. StudentSurvey.ie
- Feedback surveys on Institute Services.

(vii) Any data gathering from students must be conducted in accordance with the DkIT Research Ethics principles. However ethical approval is not required if the data is being gathered solely for internal quality enhancement purposes, such as programme evaluation. Data integrity must be maintained by developing systematic approaches to collection and management at all levels within the Institute. Confidentiality and anonymity of respondents must be ensured. The reporting process must not identify any individual student respondent unless their permission is explicitly sought and granted. Attention should be taken if sample sizes are very small to avoid inadvertently identifying individual students. Students must be informed of the uses that may be made of the data, including the level of aggregation used in analysis and reporting of results and the possible use of anonymised quotes. The specific purpose of any survey or other data gathering should be clearly defined to the student before data collection commences. Due care and attention must be taken with regards to the use of surveying during examination periods and prior to assessment deadlines to avoid undue stress and to ensure students have the opportunity to participate outside of these periods.

(viii) The methods used to survey the student opinion should not disadvantage any student from participating. The benefits of surveying student opinion must outweigh the costs. The design and implementation of surveys should safeguard against 'survey fatigue' by avoiding over-surveying students. Care should be taken to ensure that samples are as representative as feasible. Methods used must take account of the mode of study (on campus, part-time, online) and use plain English.

6.2 Analysis

(i) Interpretation of findings should draw on multiple sources of evidence in addition to contextual factors and other stakeholder input. Where relevant, the analysis of data should allow for benchmarking (e.g. against previous years, other internal survey data or external sectoral data).

(ii) Any department, unit or individual that seeks feedback from students should consider, in advance, how the findings will be used and how and when this will be communicated to students, including actions taken (closing the loop). This information should be included as part of any request for feedback. Feedback to students should be overseen by an appropriate committee. Student survey results may be aggregated at different levels (programme, subject area, School, Service). The appropriate level of aggregation for reporting of student survey results depends on the specific purpose(s) of the particular instrument used.

(iii) Key trends, areas for enhancement and development, and key responses, form a major element of quality enhancement reports from the Institute (e.g. Institutional Review reports), Schools (e.g. Programme Board reports, Programmatic Review reports) and Support Services (e.g. Annual Reports and Strategic Plans).

6.3 Response

(i) Feedback from is valued as a key mechanism for positive action to ensure improvement.

(ii) Every endeavour should be made to respond to feedback in a timely manner. Students should be informed of any outputs, improvements and actions taken.

(iii) Some mechanisms for gathering student opinion (such as Programme Boards) provide more immediate opportunities for response and action and the issues arising from such discussions will be reported in different ways (e.g. via minutes). Issues arising from feedback received may be addressed at various levels within the Institute.

6.4 Communication

(i) DkIT will listen to, and engage with, students as equal partners to assist us in understanding and improving their student experience

(ii) Students will be informed of the actions taken to respond to their feedback. Numerous strategies can be used to communicate actions arising from feedback received including (not exhaustive):

- Verbal report from Institute staff, lecturer(s) and student representative.
- Information posted on noticeboard(s), via email, website and/or social media.
- Report to student-related committees (e.g. Student Representative Forums).
- Student newsletters.
- Posting on the Institute's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).
- Overview of improvements in programme prospectus/programme handbook.
- Summary of key results and actions on leaflets and flyers.
- Formal/informal meetings with student representatives.

7 Roles and Responsibilities

7.1 The department, unit, service or individual responsible for seeking feedback has an obligation to analyse and report the issues arising from the survey and to inform students of actions taken in a timely manner.

References

National Student Engagement Programme (2021*). Steps to Partnership: A Framework for Authentic Student Engagement in Decision-Making.* Available: https://studentengagement.ie/framework/

Trowler, P. & Trowler, V. (2010). *Student Engagement Evidence Summary*. York. Higher Education Academy.