Forum Insights

DIGITAL SUPPORTS FOR TRANSITIONING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS INTO THE IRISH HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR

Overview of the project as it has developed

The project has just come to the end of Phase 1: Needs Analysis, which involved researching the challenges facing international students and the staff that support that transition. Research conducted included:

- Literature Review
- Online survey of current international students at each of the partner sites
- Interviews with staff in each of the partner sites

An initial look at some of the options for hosting the digital supports has been considered, as has possible design features.

The project had its kick off meeting at the start of December, which directly followed the International Transitions Webinar. The webinar proved an opportunity for the team to come together and work on a common goal, the impetus of which carried over into the start of the project.

Communication during the first few months of the project was not initially regular and consistent, which was addressed at the second face-to-face meeting in Cork IT, March. Since then, fortnightly conference calls, have maintained momentum and clarification.

The main issue of phase one has been achieving ethical approval at five separate sites to conduct the research, which while time-consuming ultimately was rewarding in that it allows for the potential to publish the research, offering added value to the project outcomes.

Partners

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Key outcomes of the project (link to any available material/resources) to date

Research Phase

- Literature review exploring approaches to aid transitioning International Students and to equip them with the skills and knowledge they will need to benefit from Higher Education in Ireland
- Comprehensive online survey, with over 570 responses, on the experiences of international students on coming to Ireland to live and learn.
- Partner and Cluster-based reports on the teaching and learning experiences of international students and the teaching and support staff who work with international students.
- Recorded webinar on Transitioning International Students

5. Outline how the project benefits the higher education sector nationally

On top of producing open source digital objects to assist the transition into Ireland for Students, the project will produce digital objects to assist third level staff who are working with International students. The research conducted to inform the creation of these objects will also be of value to those working with international students, offering insight but also the potential for further research avenues. The project will also contribute to the larger aim of Digital Literacy for those involved in the project and those who interact with the resulting objects.

6. Outline how the project benefits students

Initially, the creation of these objects was seen as assisting international students, but they will also be of value to Irish-based students in that they will offer an insight into what their international peers find challenging when coming to Ireland. These objects and the research behind them will also offer a reflection on how Irish education, students and society as a whole is viewed by visiting students.

7. Other national/international development work that complements this project

International officers and staff on the project have been liaising with their international agents in order to both inform them of the nature of the project and garner from them any insights that may in turn inform the development of the digital objects.

8. Next steps

A pilot object will be built for testing with incoming international students in August and September 2015. Following the results and feedback on this testing, the remaining objects will be built and tested between September 2015 and January 2016. The team is currently identifying conferences and publications to disseminate the research findings. Submitting a poster/demo proposal to the Ireland International Conference on Education (IICE-2015) in October has been suggested. Preparation for dissemination of the objects will begin in the next semester.