

Forum Insights for Teachers in Higher Education

REPORTS:

The Irish Survey of Student Engagement – Results from 2014

Effective feedback and uses of ISSE data: an emerging picture

- National results from the 2014 Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) - published in November 2014
- Examples of how Irish institutions are providing feedback on results to staff and to students and how they are beginning to explore potential uses of the data – published in January 2015



What is ISSE?

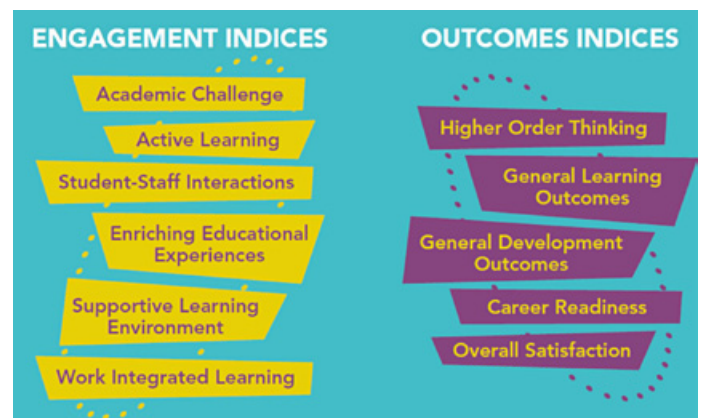
- Online survey offered to first year undergraduate, final year undergraduate and taught postgraduate students
- ISSE explores student engagement i.e. how students engage with their learning environments. Student engagement may be defined as students' involvement in activities and environments that are likely to generate high-quality learning. Students are ultimately responsible for their own learning but this depends on institutions and staff creating an environment that encourages and promotes student involvement in educationally-relevant activities.
- The 2014 survey followed a successful national pilot in 2013 which gained responses from over 12,700 students in twenty six higher education institutions
- Almost 20,000 students in thirty higher education institutions participated in the 2014 survey
- Based on international best practice as demonstrated by the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE, in use since 2007) and the US National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE, in use since 2000)

Why does it exist?

- To develop an additional valuable source of information about students' experiences of higher education in Ireland
- To add value at for staff and students at institutional level by contributing to an evidence base, by supporting effective feedback and by enabling institutions to analyse data for their own students in the context of similar institution-types and all institutions nationally
- As a response to the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* which recommended that a national student survey system should be put in place and that institutions should put in place an anonymous feedback system
- ISSE is NOT DESIGNED to be used in superficial ranking exercises or league tables

What about the results?

- Data is structured for your institution, each institution-type (universities, institutes of technology, other institutions) and all participating institutions nationally
- Data files returned to institutions have been 'cleaned' to replace student IDs and to delete any names that may have been included in free text responses
- Percentage responses are provided for each individual question and individual questions offer greatest insight into teaching and learning
- In addition, questions are grouped into overarching indices relating to student engagement or student outcomes



- For example, questions relating to relationships with other students, with teaching staff and with administrative staff are among the six questions that contribute to the index Supportive Learning Environment. In 2014, the percentage of students reporting positive relationships with each of these groups was 83%, 67% and 49%
- Index scores are not percentages but they provide an indication of the experiences of different groups of students i.e. indices should be treated as signposts towards areas for further exploration
- If particular results prompt interest, check the number of responses and the actual questions asked to ensure that responses can be regarded as representative and that data addresses the aspects of the student experience that you expect

How are institutions dealing with ISSE?

- The report, *Effective feedback and uses of ISSE data*, demonstrates that institutions are actively discussing the survey and potential uses of the data
- Feedback and discussion of results has taken place at Academic Councils, Governing Bodies, Executive Management, Heads of School, Quality Committees and Teaching and Learning Committees as well in a variety of committees
- Feedback has been provided to students' unions officers and wider student groups via meetings, presentations, infographic posters, email and student feedback websites
- Institutions have reviewed the free text responses to two questions about how they address student engagement, identifying issues for immediate action
- Institutions have analysed percentage results to individual questions to consider how their students responded in comparison to students in similar institution-types nationally
- Some institutions have begun to explore the data for sub-groups of their student population and identified potential uses of this data when statistical reliability can be confirmed at this level. In straightforward terms, a greater number of student responses increases statistical reliability

Overall messages

- Nationally, results from the Irish Survey of Student Engagement compare favourably with similar surveys internationally
- There is much greater variation within institutions than exists between institutions
- The ISSE is designed as a comprehensive, internationally validated and robust survey instrument. This means that it generates a rich and detailed data set
- Individual staff, units or faculties do not have to navigate the entire dataset but should identify particular subsets of the data – identify smaller components of the survey to explore with the intention of matching existing interests or priorities
- Teachers should feel confident to explore responses to individual questions, or groups of questions, or data for student groups, such as first years
- The overall national response rate in 2014 was 15.6% with responses for individual institutions ranging from 8.7% to 45%
- Higher response rates offer greatest potential for analysis of data on the experiences of sub-groups of the student population at institution level.