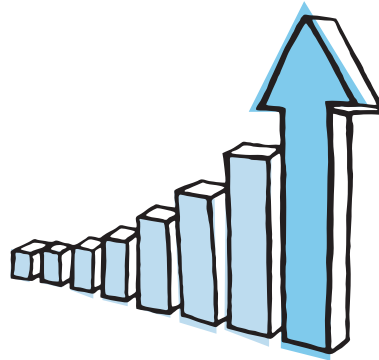




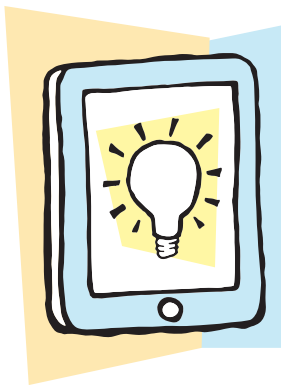
TRANSITIONS



IMPROVING



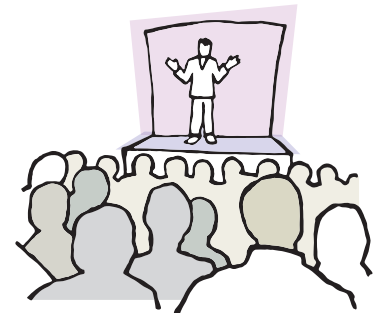
INNOVATING



DIGITAL LEARNING



FORUM



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Summary Report of Sectoral Dialogue Sessions in Irish Higher Education

November – December 2013
Emerging Themes

Emerging Themes

While the structure of the Sectoral Dialogue Sessions focused on the five strands of the National Forum's work plan (Partnership and Collaboration, Scholarship in Teaching and Learning, Learning Impact Awards, Professional Development, Building Digital Capacity), a number of additional overarching themes emerged during the discussions that took place. These themes focused on the importance of recognising the inputs and priorities of different groups within Irish Higher Education, and the role the National Forum can play in promoting, supporting and connecting excellent practice the key common goals that we share, and the interconnectedness of different dimensions of teaching and learning,

Identifying the key voices in enhancing teaching and learning

Students and their diverse contexts, values, and voices must be recognised as having a central role when it comes to enhancing teaching and learning and are among the most valuable contributors to the development of teaching and learning in higher education.

Senior management play key leadership roles in the creation of cultures and institutional policies where teaching and learning is explicitly valued and aligned to practical issues such as funding and the allocation of time for preparation, innovation, evaluation and development.

People who play a teaching role in higher education are a diverse group that extends beyond lecturers to include those who work in teaching and learning units, the library, or other spaces of scholarship for teaching and learning.

The role of the Forum in promoting, valuing and informing teaching and learning

The National Forum works towards the enhancement of the sector as a whole. Participants suggested that the Forum should lobby for the prominence of teaching and learning in the national policy context, to coordinate resources, to connect networks, to develop national databases, to support existing networks and to distribute information across the sector.

European and international developments in policy and practice must inform the work of the Forum and vice versa.

A robust national evidence base is seen as being critically important in mapping current practice, allowing the sector to draw comparisons with international standards, to demonstrate proven areas of excellence and to highlight areas of concern. This evidence base should capture institutional contexts, department level activity, and individual practice.

Educational technology and its use must be embraced and supported but should enhance, not replace sound pedagogy. The discussions about using technology in teaching and learning focused on the importance of developing a coherent approach to the use of effective digital pedagogy in higher education and what processes/infrastructures can best support such an approach.

Participants revealed a strong appetite for professional development frameworks and opportunities among staff (academics and administrators) across a range of areas such as enhancing digital pedagogy, developing teaching and learning methods, engaging in leadership and building on collaboration. Many participants also spoke about the benefits that they perceived in existing accredited and non-accredited programmes available throughout the sector and of the importance of support and time for professional development.

We exist in diverse contexts but we share common, interconnected goals

The five strands of Forum work (Partnership and Collaboration, Scholarship in Teaching and Learning, Learning Impact Awards, Professional Development, Building Digital Capacity) are interdependent.

Many participants felt strongly that a national professional development framework must work in tandem with an understanding of digital practice. Other suggestions included, a recognition that collaborations and partnerships were essential in building the profile of scholarship in teaching and learning, and that any awards system must be informed by the values present in the other Forum projects.

Build on, rather than re-create. There was a strong desire that existing work, networks, strategies, frameworks already in existence in the area should be built on and further developed rather than reinvented.

Collaboration is desirable with an effective support. Many participants highlighted the importance of the development of an infrastructure that supports collaboration e.g. disciplinary, inter-institutional, or intra-institutional collaboration. The need for specialised professional development for those who undertake collaboration and the challenge of collaborating in what is often experienced as a competitive environment was also raised.

The importance of communication and dialogue to inform the future work of the Forum. There is a need for an ongoing communication between the sector and the Forum. This dialogue must continue to encourage active participation and engagement from all institutions across many teaching and learning related roles.

Acknowledgements

The National Forum would like to thank all participants in the sectoral dialogue. A full list of those who attended is available on the Forum website www.teachingandlearning.ie