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Crafting and conducting a Learner Assembly – an adaptable framework that amplifies the learner voice

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Cover Page Footnote

This work was supported by the Republic of Ireland Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Technological University Transformation Fund. Learner Assembly Working Group Members: Mr. John Carroll (Student Success Manager), Dr. Fionnuala Darby (University Education Model Team), Mr Shaun Ferns, (University Education Model Team), Ms. Jennie Fitzpatrick (Change Manager), Dr. Dave Kilmartin (Assistant Principal Officer Student Services and Wellbeing), Mr. Brian Jordan (Students Union President), Mr. Peter McCann (Students Union Vice-President, City Campus), Dr. Sarah McElwee (Head of Change Management), Dr. Ciaran O’Leary (Faculty Head of Teaching and Learning), Ms Sarah Rennick (Clerical Officer, Careers) and, Dr. Barry Ryan (University Education Model Team).

Crafting and conducting a Learner Assembly – an adaptable framework that amplifies the learner voice

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Abstract

Making learner needs the focus in all aspects of their learning journey is increasingly important in higher education. However, ensuring a sustained and impactful voice for learners can be challenging given the multifaceted demands on learners. Here we detail how we built and used a Learner Assembly to address some of these challenges in a large Irish university. Guided by an initial design vision, a set of Learner Assembly Principles and Implementation Framework were collaboratively crafted using a Vision-Based Design approach. Our Learner Assembly manifested as a gathering of learners which convened to explore a topic that was important to the learner population and the university; the TU Dublin Education Model and this is subsequently explored as a use-case. The Learner Assembly permitted a deeper understanding of our learners educational lived realities and enhanced learner participatory engagement. Data gathered during the Learner Assembly was collaboratively thematically analysed and provided clarity on a new, and shared, direction for the TU Dublin Education Model. This was formalised through an integration of the Learner Assembly outputs into the university quality enhancement structures. Through realising the Learner Assembly Principles of autonomy, inclusivity, and accountability, the Learner Assembly offers a robust model for ensuring that learner voices contribute meaningfully to institutional strategy and, ultimately, decision-making processes.

Keywords: Learner Assembly, Student Voice, Learner Empowerment, Strategic Change

Introduction

This article describes the design, development and delivery of a Learner Assembly in a new, Irish technological university. A Learner Assembly, in this context, is a semi-formal gathering of learners that provides a platform for collective discussion, advocacy, and decision-making on topics that relate to university life, with a particular focus on shaping the strategic direction of the university.

Literature Review

Learner engagement, as a formative rationale for a Learner Assembly, is itself an important focal point for enhancing both the quality of education and institutional effectiveness in higher education. This echoes the shift from traditional educational models towards more collaborative frameworks where learners are co-creators of their learning experiences (Bovill, 2020, Cook-Sather & Matthew, 2021). This shift also aligns with the growing recognition that learner engagement not only improves academic outcomes, but also fosters a sense of belonging and motivation (Pedler et al., 2022). The seminal Student-As-Partner (SAP) philosophy (Healey, Flint & Harrington, 2014), conceptualised an approach wherein learners are involved in decision-making processes that can enhance the quality of education by integrating diverse perspectives (Cabral et al., 2023). However, it is critically important that learners are valued as genuine partners, as opposed to simply tokenistic participants (Varwell, 2023). In doing so, learners can meaningfully contribute to, and enhance, institutional goals and strategies (Liang & Matthews, 2021). This concept of partnership in learning, and influence, provides the foundation for the TU Dublin Learner Assembly, and is the basis for the design and research detailed here.

Learner Assemblies can, therefore, play a crucial role in ensuring that learners' voices are heard by university leadership, fostering participatory engagement, and influencing institutional decision-making and strategy. Learner assemblies can have various functions including:

Representation and Advocacy

Learner Assemblies typically represent the broader learner body and therefore, serve as the connection between learners and the university. This representative role can provide a mandate for the Learner Assembly to advocate for issues such as academic reforms and sustainability practices. For example, the European

Student Assembly provides opportunities for learners to propose, debate, and vote on issues to inform the European University Alliance (*About the European Student Assembly*, n.d.).

Policy Development and Feedback

Learner Assemblies can collaborate with university stakeholders to co-develop or review policies related to academic affairs, learner welfare, or diversity and inclusion. Learner involvement in policymaking enhances policy legitimacy and ensures responsiveness to learner needs (Resch, 2023).

Accountability

Learner assemblies can introduce more accountability to the university by voicing concerns and being vigilant of policy implementation, including querying budget allocations or the handling of learner complaints to ensure institutional transparency. An example of this is McMaster University's Student Representative Assembly (*Student Representative Assembly*, n.d.) where a structured, learner-led, platform influenced governance and empowered McMaster's learners to explore and critique key university decisions.

Fostering Inclusivity

Learner assemblies can serve as a platform for diverse learner voices, empowering under-represented groups to influence decision-making processes, and in doing so, promote inclusivity and equity within sectoral and university strategies, systems, policies and practices (Crossen et al., 2022).

Despite these promising examples, challenges remain in achieving sustained learner engagement and influence, particularly given the transient nature of learners as they navigate their time-bound educational journeys. The Learner Assembly detailed in this study was informed by the literature on learner engagement that notes the need for engagement to be holistic and not limited to surface-level participation (Kahu & Nelson, 2017), and the importance of participatory methods in promoting authentic learner voice (Seale, 2010). It sought to deliver true representation, real depth of engagement and tangible action through feedback loops. The *You Said, We Did* model, whereby Learner Assembly output is integrated into institutional actions and communicated back to

participants, provided a simple, central ‘sense check’ to support addressing these challenges by the TU Dublin Learner Assembly.

Study Context

The design and research detailed here was conducted in TU Dublin, a relatively new Irish university established in January 2019 as the first, and largest, Technological University in Ireland. This followed more than seven years of collaboration between the composite Institutes of Technology (Blanchardstown, Tallaght and Dublin). TU Dublin now comprises three significant campuses distributed across the greater Dublin region: Blanchardstown, Tallaght and City Centre. The composite Institutes strongly valued a learner-centric approach to education. As a rapidly evolving ‘new’ university, TU Dublin sought to extend this learner-centric approach and empower learners to shape, at a strategic level, their university and in line with the three core pillars of TU Dublin; People, Planet and Partnership. This was actioned through the TU Dublin Education Model, an institutional framework that holistically embedded learner-centred, interdisciplinary, and sustainable education within the university’s structures. This position, informed by local and international practice in empowering learner gatherings in higher education, guided the design question and research question that bounded this study:

Design Question: How might we create a framework for TU Dublin learners to sustainably shape strategically important topics within TU Dublin?

Research Question: What are the most strategically important next steps for the TU Dublin Education Model as detailed through a Learner Assembly.

For clarity, we note here that this paper uses the term *learner*, rather than *student*, so as to provide a broader, more inclusive perspective on education that recognises learning as a lifelong, participatory process, extending beyond traditional classroom environments. The term *learner* aligns with contemporary educational frameworks that focus on active engagement, self-direction, and co-creation, reflecting a shift from passive receipt of knowledge to a more holistic, empowered role in the educational journey (Fry et al., 2015).

Methodology and Methods

An investigative case-study methodology (Priya, 2021) was used to encompass the design, development and delivery of the TU Dublin Learner Assembly. This was an important decision in the context of collaborative work across the scale of a university. The authors collectively took a collaborative and flexible approach to understand, create and interpret the use of the Learner Assembly Framework (Carson et al., 2001). Such a purposeful approach encouraged open dialogue during all aspects of the design and development phases and harmonised with the collaborative thematic data analysis and study's grounding theory of social constructivism.

Crafting a Learner Assembly

Lerdahl's Vision-Based Design Methodology (VBDM) (Lerdahl, 2005) was used to guide the development of the Learner Assembly Framework (LAF). This methodology supported the design movement from the abstract to the concrete, without constraining the creative processes with limiting specifications. The four steps of VBDM (*Intention, Expression, Conception, Production*) were used to iteratively create the LAF, actioned through enhancing cycles of collaborative design in a group workshop setting (n=4). The collaborative group comprised Student Union Representatives (n=2), Student Support Staff (n=3), Academic Manager (n=1), Academic Staff (n=3) and Academic Support Staff (n=2). Trigger questions were used to illicit LAF values (*Intention*), which subsequently shaped the context (*Expression*) and principles (*Conception*), ultimately leading to the LAF (*Production*).

Conducting a Learner Assembly

The Learner Assembly comprised three learner gatherings across the three main campuses of TU Dublin (n=139; Blanchardstown Campus: 63, City Campus: 33, Tallaght Campus: 43), over three sequential weeks in March 2024. Each gathering took place from 12.30pm to 1.30pm. From a logistical perspective, there would be potentially higher levels of learner footfall over the lunchtime period, the staggered 'on the half hour' start/finish would minimise 'on the hour' lecture clashes. Additionally, this timing would allow the participants to use lunch vouchers issued after learner participation in the Learner Assembly. The topic of the Learner Assembly, the sub-topics and the allied questions are detailed in Supplementary Information - T1.

In brief, an open approach was taken for the Learner Assembly whereby participants were facilitated in engaging with the Learner Assembly topic through qualitative and quantitative data gathering activities over the course of one hour, with no defined start or end time for each participant. These activities were scaffolded around A0 size posters which invited engagement across the Learner Assembly topic. A Learner Assembly facilitator (academic or professional services staff member) provided a balanced overview of the topic and guided discussion through reflective questioning on the trigger question presented on the A0 poster (Supplementary Information - T1). Participants were free to engage with none, one, some or all A0 size posters and their corresponding activities. Finally, a staff member hosted an exit question 'station' at the exit point from the room, and it was observed that most participants spent between 15 and 20 minutes engaging with the activities.

Data collection was conducted following the British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2018) ethical guidelines. The principles of transparency (including informed, verbal consent by participants to partake in anonymous data gathering and subsequent reporting and dissemination), volunteer participation (self-selection, including the right to withdraw), proportionate incentive to partake (participants were offered a lunch voucher as a token of appreciation for their time) and appropriate data storage (including digitisation of the paper-based data) were employed in this study.

Analysing Learner Assembly output

As participants engaged with the Learner Assembly topic, via facilitated discussion scaffolded by six A0 size posters, initial data visualisation was conducted in real time. This approach deepened the facilitated dialogue at each poster board. Following the three gatherings, all data were gathered, visualised and thematically analysed, through inductive and deductive Thematic Analysis to interpret the full data set. Thematic Analysis was conducted as per Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, with the three authors independently inductively and deductively coding the qualitative data sets. Constant comparison and iterative coding, in the case of inductive coding, and code checking, for deductive coding, brought the data together under four themes. Findings were presented at the three main university campuses and also at the university level, with key outcomes visualised via heat maps, dot maps, histograms and schematics to supplement the deep thematic analysis.

Findings and Discussion

Crafting a Learner Assembly

Intention

A key part of the Vision-Based Design Methodology is the overarching vision statement.

This was iteratively created by the design group as follows:

The TU Dublin Learner Assembly brings together learners who represent our University population in all its diversity, to explore important topics relevant to both learners and the University. In the Assembly, participants are encouraged to actively contribute and engage with each other through open and respectful dialogue, with a commitment to equality and fairness. We want the culture of TU Dublin to be a more equal partnership between our learners and our University. Through the Assembly we will build an ongoing conversation to address challenging issues together and guide our strategic goals.

Expression and Conception

Building on this vision statement, the context of the Learner Assemblies was informed by idealistic considerations, such as facilitated discussion creating avenues to new understanding as based on lived experiences, as well as practical considerations such as the physical locations of TU Dublin which is distributed across Dublin city over three main campuses. ‘*Think globally, but live locally*’ underpinned the practical understanding of the context for the Learner Assemblies and this informed the Learner Assembly Principles (LAPs) as the concept realisation (Table 1).

Principle	Description
Autonomous	The Assembly is free from outside control or coercion and does not report to any university group.
Agency	Learners have the power to choose Assembly topics and how the Assembly is conducted, making it a fair and inclusive process
Agency	Learners have the power to choose Assembly topics and how the Assembly is conducted, making it a fair and inclusive process
Advising	Every learner contribution is important, drawing from their personal experiences and perspectives
Advocacy	The Assembly outcomes are documented and promoted by supporters across the University
Accountability	The Assembly outputs are integrated into university actioning systems, ensuring a closed communication and feedback loop

Table 1: The 5A Principles of TU Dublin Learner Assembly Framework

Production

The practical realisation of the Learner Assembly vision statement, context and principles required a TU Dublin Learner Assembly Framework as the final step of the Vision-Based Design Methodology (Table 2 and Figure 1).

Step	Description
1	Transparently select the topic for the Learner Assembly.
2	Base the Learner Assembly on suitable trigger questions to encourage open discussion and debate.
3	Execute a 'flipped' ¹ Learner Assembly (if possible).
4	Facilitate peer/group sharing, and discussion, bounded by the Learner Assembly topic.
5	Scaffold conversation towards convergence ² .
6	Collate, analyse, synthesise and share the Learner Assembly output/findings.
7	Close the communication loop.

Table 2. The TU Dublin Learner Assembly Framework.

¹ A flipped event is where much of the time participants engage with each other having prepared before the event. This can be achieved by, for example, sharing a brief topic overview before the event and make the trigger questions available beforehand to allow participants to come to the event with some pre-thinking/reflection already completed. Alternatively, a just in time approach may also be adopted, where a balanced discussion is supported by having short synopses presented before discussion starts.

² Convergence of a wide-ranging discussion could be achieved by framing with a synthesis question. For example, 'how might the points shared at this table be brought together and shared with the rest of the Learner Assembly'?

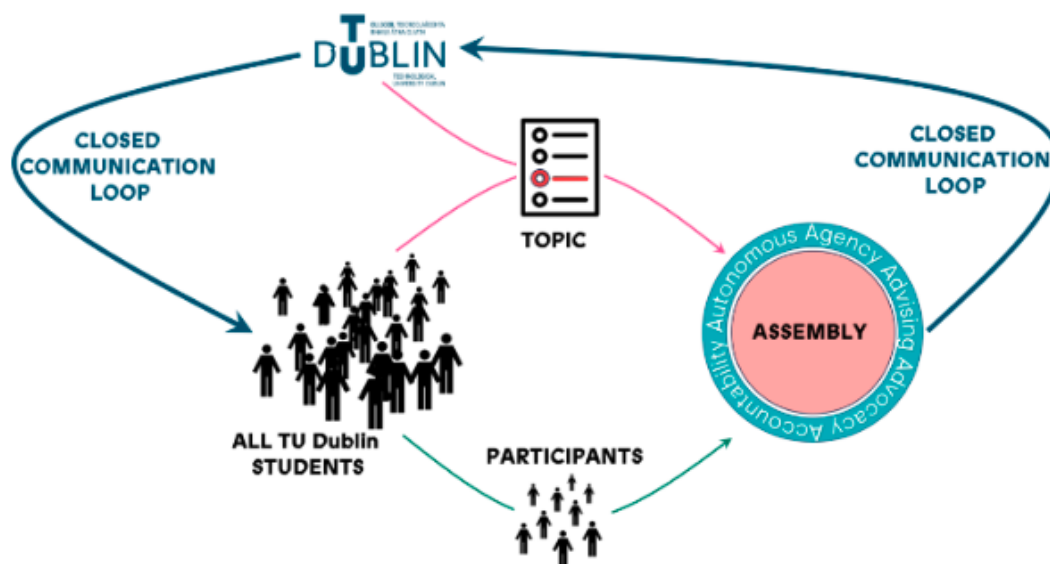


Figure 1: Schematic of the TU Dublin Learner Assembly denoting the central position of the learner population and the Learner Assembly participants. The topic of the Learner Assembly is an important strategic topic to both learners and the University and is selected collaboratively. The outputs of the Learner Assembly are directed to the most appropriate university structures and the communication loop subsequently closed through communication with the learner population.

Central to the development of the TU Dublin Learner Assembly Framework was the partnership approach taken. Learner representatives shaped and informed all aspects of the development and implementation. This echoes the Irish National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP, 2021) which seeks to centralise learner involvement in decision-making. The LAPs foster meaningful learner input through the aligned structured Learner Assembly, and this reflects the NStEP partnership-based model and their focuses on building capacity for learner engagement in governance.

Conducting a Learner Assembly

Once the Learner Assembly was crafted, the next step was to conduct a Learner Assembly using the outputs of the Vision-Based Design Methodology to structure the events, analysis and follow-up. The topic of the Learner Assembly was TU Dublin's education model. Initially, the findings are presented under the three sub-topics that scaffolded the Learner Assembly; Learner Choice, Learner Support and Learner Experience. Subsequently the thematic exploration of the findings is detailed. The findings presented here are a synthesis of the qualitative and quantitative data sets.

Learner Choice

Overall, the participants (n=147) indicated that two was the preferred number of free choice modules (44%, n= 65) per academic year; however, there was some variation noted across the three campuses (Supplementary Information - F1). Overall, learners strongly suggested that choice around formal and timetabled events is an important '*must have*'. Choice within modules, including multi-modal formats of delivery, was also a strong '*must have*'. This chimes with previous research which notes learners appreciate the ability to select programmes and modules based on their interests and career goals, to tailor their education to their personal and professional aspirations (Ma et al., 2021). However, judicious integration of choice is required, especially considering the challenges facing learners undertaking a more personalised learning path such as timetable conflicts and limited academic guidance (Shulman, 2016).

Learner Experience

Participant responses indicated that their preferred places to experience learning were on campus and in a real-world setting. A small group of learners (n=12) indicated that an

equal mixture of all places of learning was preferred. A sub-group of learners, based on the Blanchardstown campus (n=12), indicated that online learning was their preferred place of learning (Supplementary Information – F2). These findings are consistent with recent trends, post-Covid19, whereby in-person learning experiences are the most preferred, followed by blended learning, with online synchronous learning being the least preferred by learners (Mehta, Aula-Blasco & Mantaj, 2024). However, it is important to recall that participants were self-selecting and on-campus on the day of the Assembly.

Practice-based Teaching, Learning and Assessment, including authentic pedagogy, were seen as the most transformative learning experiences, as based on inductive coding. This theme reflects learner comments detailing the positive influence that teaching staff have through considered curriculum design and guidance (for example, in relation to wellbeing) (Upsher et al., 2023). Other experiences noted by participants, such as self-development (e.g. time management skills), social and co-curricular activities, (e.g. class representative), showcase the importance to learners of their personal development outside the formal learning environment (Shakil et al., 2024).

Learner Support

Participants indicated that they strongly preferred in-person and hybrid modes of learning; however, there are some campus-by-campus variations with a proportion of Blanchardstown-based learners indicating they value blended learning also (n=5, Supplementary Information - F3). Again, it should be noted that all participants were learners present in-person, and therefore there may be a bias in the dataset towards in-person learning.

Learners indicated that they strongly seek Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Feedback (TLAF) supports, particularly in the first three years of their learning journey. Examples of such supports include authentic and scaffolded learning, appropriate assessment, transparent assessment criteria, timely and constructive feedback (Carless, 2015). Course structure supports are seen as important for learners before they come to TU Dublin echoing previous sectoral guidance (Thomas et al., 2017). Many learners in TU Dublin complete a work-placement in third year and the need for career support mirrors this new learning opportunity, with supports including CV writing, interview preparation and network development (Schlesinger et al., 2021). This type of career support is also needed

following a learner's journey and aligns with graduates seeking guidance on employment or further study options. Financial supports, and facilities and services, were noted as being particularly important for final year learners. Campuses specific supports, such as transport, were also observed.

Thematic data synthesis

Following initial coding, all inductive codes were scaled, as based on frequency count, and mapped against the three components of the TU Dublin Education Model; *Learner Support*, *Learner Choice* and *Learner Experience*. A visualisation of how the inductive codes grouped within three components of the TU Dublin Education Model is provided in Supplementary Information – F4. Such visualisation acted as an intermediary step towards full thematic analysis and assisted in assuring all codes generated were linked to the research question. Subsequently, the inductive codes were explored for high level themes. Four high level themes were identified as: TU Dublin Enablers (supports), Connected (belonging), Choice (agency) and Framework of Learning Experience (aspects of learning (Supplementary Information - T2), and visualised through scaled inductive code mapping (Figure 2).

The Learner Assembly - a mechanism to sustainably amplify the learner voice

Almost all participants agreed with the exit question (96%, n=71), that the Learner Assembly was a positive way to have their voice heard on a strategically important topic (somewhat 36%, n=42; or a lot 60%, n=71). Following data analysis, a report was presented to TU Dublin senior leadership team. This subsequently allowed for further amplification of the learner voice, through the TU Dublin governance structures and committees, namely the University Quality Enhancement Plan and a sub-committee of Academic Council; the Student Experience Committee. To integrate with the University Quality Enhancement Plan, each thematic area and code within was mapped against a prioritised single action, with progress to be monitored and reported on annually (see Supplementary Information - T3).

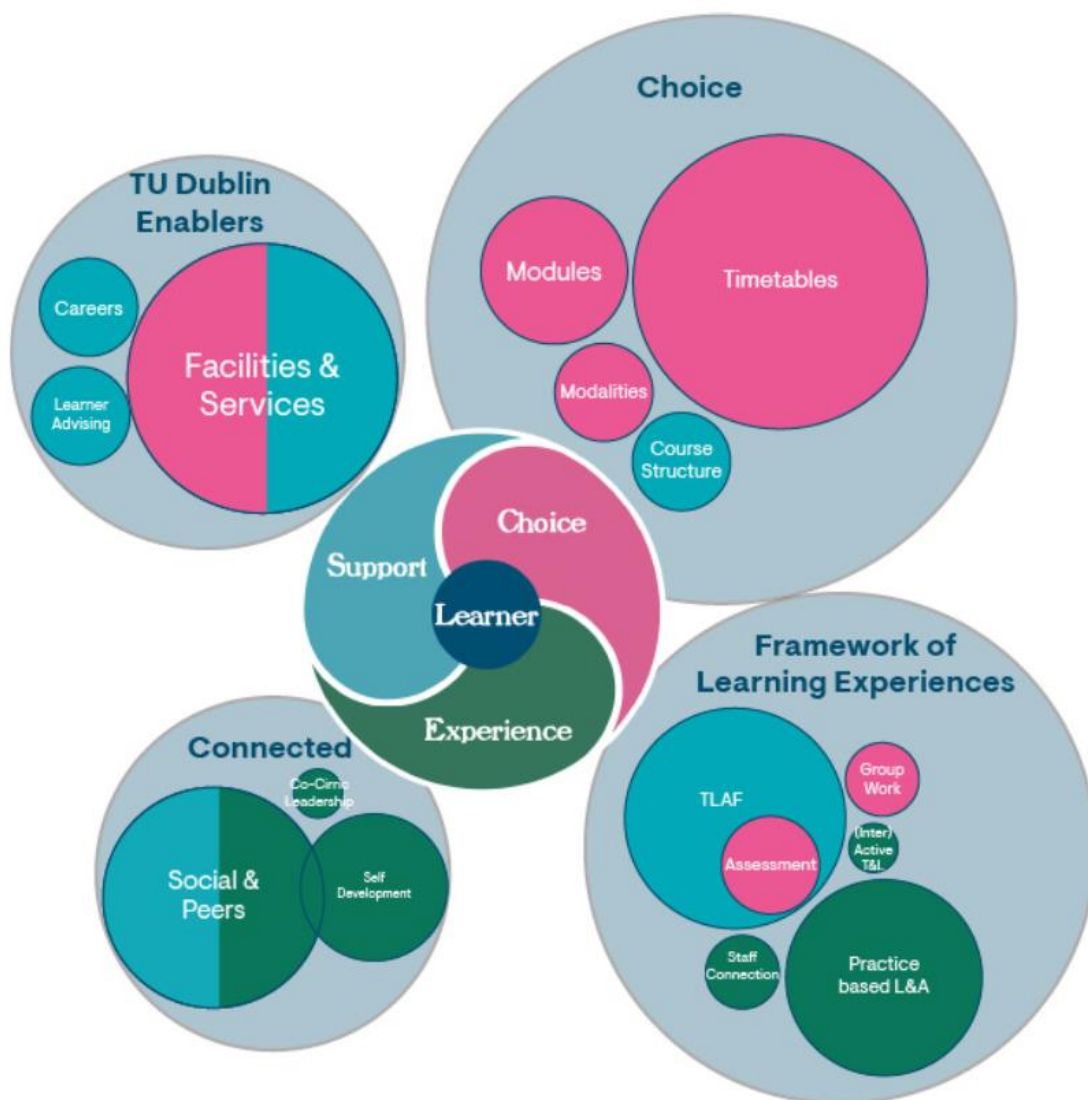


Figure 2: Visualisation of the four themes from the pilot Learner Assembly identified as part of the thematic analysis. The inductive codes noted are scaled, as are the themes in grey. Definitions of the inductive codes, and themes, are available in Supplementary Information - T3.

Conclusion and Implications for Practice

This study sought to create an adaptable framework through an instigative case-study approach to give learners at TU Dublin a sustainable voice on strategically important topics. In the use-case explored here, TU Dublin learners engaged with this adaptable framework to explore a strategically important topic at TU Dublin; this being the next steps for the TU Dublin Education Model. Learnings, from both the framework development and use, have important implications for practice in TU Dublin and for others in the higher education sector that seek to centralise learners in their strategically

important decision making. These learnings are categorised below as recommendations for practice:

Learner Assembly Responsibility – in order to elevate the Learner Assembly beyond the status of a(nother) focus group, to enhance the impact of the output of the Learner Assembly and to truly live the partnership model of learner/university engagement, it is important to fully integrate it into the fabric of the University. This requires judicious ownership of the Learner Assembly in a way that concurrently allows the Learner Assembly Principles to be lived and also ensures that experience of the running a Learner Assembly is maintained and shared over time. Given the Learner Assembly operates at the interface of the learners and the university, the TU Dublin Learner Assembly now is homed in the Student Support and Wellbeing function. The importance of the Learner Assembly is reflected in the allocation of appropriate resources to support the coordinated and continual enhancement the Learner Assembly in conjunction with TU Dublin learners.

Learner Assembly Execution – in this investigative case-study an ‘open-hour’ approach was explored, and it worked well as a flexible way for learners to drop in and engage; it attempted to meet the learners where they were at. The TU Dublin Student Ambassadors supported the Learner Assembly and engaged with passing peers to make them aware of what a Learner Assembly was and to encourage them to engage. This convenience recruitment resulted in participants that were on-campus and available at the time of the Assembly. A more strategic approach to recruitment may be needed to create a Learner Assembly that truly reflects a university in all its diversity. For example, a future TU Dublin Learner Assembly will comprise a defined number of learners from each School/Discipline that are reflective of our diverse learners, including learner type (i.e. full-time, part-time, apprenticeship etc.) and ethnicity.

Learner Assembly Evolution – through a partnership approach and collective responsibility the Learner Assembly should evolve within the context in which it operates. The evolutionary trajectory should be shaped by the strategic needs of the university and its learners, with both having an equal input. For example, in the near future TU Dublin development areas of mutual interest include enhancing the terms of reference, developing guidelines for respectful engagement during a Learner Assembly and creating role descriptors and vignettes for novice Learner Assembly

participants so they can understand the Learner Assembly and their expected contribution during a Learner Assembly. Learner Assembly participants will also be issued a digital badge, formally recognising the important role active and engaged participants play in both the Assembly and also the wider strategic direction of the university.

Declaration of interest statement

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

Data availability statement.

The data underpinning this research are freely available at <https://zenodo.org/records/14639596>

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Supplementary Information

T1. The TU Dublin Learner Assembly Topic and aligned sub-topics and sub-questions. The sub-questions are categorised as qualitative and quantitative, with the available quantitative options detailed.

Overall Topic	TU Dublin Education Model	
Overall question	What are the best next steps to take to ensure our learner-centric Education Model sustainably enables learner choice and supports transformational learning experiences?	
Sub-topic	Learner Support	
Sub-questions	What is your preferred modality of learning? – Select One	Quantitative • In person, technology enabled, • Online, • Hybrid, and • Hyflex.
	What specific support might be best for you at TU Dublin?	Qualitative • Free text response
Sub-topic	Learner Choice	
Sub-questions	How many modules would you like choice in? – Select One	Quantitative • 1 module per year, • 2 module per year, • 3 module per year, and, • 4 module per year.
	What things are important to you to have a choice in?	Qualitative • Free text response
Sub-topic	Learner Experience	
Sub-questions	Where is your preferred place of learning? – Select One	Quantitative • In a classroom, lab or workshop, • Online, or a virtual learning environment, • In an organisation, community or another ‘real world’ setting.
	What was the learning experience at TU Dublin that most developed you as a person?	Qualitative • Free text response

T2. The study's code book containing the definition of all codes, categorised by the University Education Model three components of Learner Support, Learner Choice and Learner Experience. A short development of the code, along with examples, are provided for each code.

Code	Definition, development and examples.
<i>Learner Support</i> categorised codes	
Teaching Learning Assessment and Feedback (TLAF)	This code details aspects that enhance the educational experience. • Learners seek direct learning support, especially in challenging subjects like maths [Code S34]. • Applying theoretical knowledge to real-world scenarios is crucial [Code S11]. • Personalised guidance from lecturers and one- to-one support aids understanding [Code S88]. • Timely feedback on assignments allows continuous improvement [Code S103]. • Practical learning through group projects, interactive activities, and clear module explanations enhance engagement [Code S124].
Services and Facilities	This code encompasses improvements and enhancements desired by learners. • Creating a welcoming atmosphere involves better communication with heads and management to address concerns and foster community [Code S15]. • Streamlining orientation to one day with a clear schedule ensures a concise and effective introduction to campus life [Code S25]. • Addressing accessibility concerns include improving Wi-Fi, computer hardware, and support for people with disabilities [Code S32]. • Prioritising health services, including mental health support, underscores the holistic approach to learner well-being that learners desire.
Careers	This code highlights aspects related to learners' career readiness and opportunities. • Learners seek more industry visits, information on first-time job opportunities, and career paths [Code S16]. • Clear communication about available options is crucial. Assistance in finding jobs and securing internships is highly valued [Code S148]. • Learners appreciate guidance in navigating the job market. They also desire more internship choices, allowing them to explore different fields and gain practical experience. Support for placements, impactful internships, and career preparation classes is essential. These experiences bridge the gap between academia and professional life. [Code S95]. • Beyond undergraduate studies, learners need support on postgraduate options. The transition after fourth year can feel daunting, and personalised advice is important [Code S168].
Course-structure	This code identifies aspects related to the organisation and presentation of academic programmes. • Learners express the need for TU Dublin representatives to visit secondary schools and provide accurate information about courses, this personalised outreach can help prospective learners make informed decisions [Code S3]. • Keeping course information current and accurate is crucial as it helps learners to align their expectations with the actual course content [Code S27]. • Learners seek more information about timetables, Wi-Fi access, and learner handbooks [Code S76].

	• Additionally, having accessible resources on the virtual learning environment, including exam papers, enhances the learning experience [Code S21].
Learning Advising	This code involves a holistic approach to learner advising as highlighted by participants. • Providing general advice on 1st-year programme/module updates ensure learners stay informed [Code S6]. • Personalised guidance counselling for careers and academic performance catered to individual needs [Code S118]. • Creating awareness about mental health supports within the college environment is crucial [Code S22]. • Connecting learners across different years through class tutors, icebreakers, and peer mentoring enhances understanding, experience sharing, and project insights [Code S127].
Events-Social	This code encompasses aspects of related to campus life. • Organising nights out allows learners to socialise beyond the academic context [Code S27]. • Active participation in sports teams fosters camaraderie and physical well-being [Code S13]. • Hosting on campus events, from workshops to cultural festivals, creates a dynamic engaged learning environment [Code S56]. • Establishing bars and pubs provide relaxed spaces for socialising [Code S46].
<i>Learner Choice</i> categorised codes	
Timetables	This code emphasises the need for personalised and efficient scheduling within educational contexts. • Learners advocate for more flexibility, allowing them to choose class times and locations that suit their preferences [Code C32]. • This extends to the use of modalities of modules, where learners can opt for in-person or online options [Code C56]. • A desire for earlier release of timetables and exam dates, enabling better planning and preparation [Code C1]. • The impact of timetables on learners' lives, including considerations like long gaps between classes or inconvenient timings for commuters [Code C116].
Modules	The code resonates strongly in the learner observations highlighting the importance of personal agency and customisation in educational pathways. • Learners express a desire for flexibility, valuing the ability to pick their own modules based on their interests and goals [Code S157]. • Beyond individual modules, there's a call for grouping options, allowing learners to choose their module groups [Code C64]. • This choice enhances social interactions and collaborative learning, especially when classmates are not seen frequently. Learners recognise the need for adaptability, advocating for the ability to change modules or even courses [Code C149].
Services and Facilities	The code spotlights the essential elements that contribute to a positive learner experience. • Learners advocate for free access to sports facilities, including gyms and performance rooms, as an integral part of their courses [Code E47]. • Learners highlight the importance of providing uniform kits for University teams, with transparent and manageable costs [Code E48]. • Transportation services also play a crucial role, especially for commuting learners, and there's a call for better availability and flexibility [Code E73].

	• Learners value resources such as free laptops, access to book labs and materials, and the ability to view grades even with outstanding fees [Code E114]. • The desire for affordable accommodation, more microwaves, private study areas, diverse canteen options, and free parking underscores the need for a comprehensive and supportive campus environment [Code E126].
Modalities	This code emphasises the need for flexibility and adaptability in educational settings. • Learners express a desire for Hyflex modality, combining online and in-person elements, especially for theory classes [Code S50]. • Learners advocate for remote lab work, personalised timetables, and more recorded lectures [Code S110].
Assessment	This code encompasses aspects relating to the importance of a holistic, learner-centred approach to assessment design and execution. • The challenge of balancing in-class continuous assessments with active lecture participation underscores the need for effective time management [Code C29]. • The grading structure—whether a blend of exams and assignments or a 50/50 split—reflects learners’ desire for fairness and comprehensive evaluation [Code C36]. • The call for assignment variety advocates for creative expression beyond traditional essays [Code C127]. Fourth, individualised feedback, emphasising the importance of constructive critique alongside grades [Code 99]. • Administrative considerations, such as deadlines, extensions, and learner involvement in grading decisions, complete the multifaceted assessment landscape [Code C167].
Group Work	This code emphasises the importance of choice and autonomy for learners. • Learners cite their desire for flexibility to select their own class groups, recognising the value of compatibility and shared interests [Code S62]. • The option to work independently is highly valued, acknowledging that some tasks are better suited for individual effort. Cross-group collaboration is also highlighted, emphasising the benefits of interdisciplinary teamwork [Code S58].
<i>Learner Experience categorised codes</i>	
Practice-based Learning & Assessment	The code highlights aspects related to practical experiences and hands-on learning. • Learners actively engage in practical work, whether in restaurants, labs, or placements. These experiences provide real-world context and enhance learning beyond theory [Code CE2]. • Learners value internships and taking part in sports activities, bridging classroom learning with practical skills and professional exposure [Code E10]. • Facing real-life challenges in professional settings has a profound impact [Code E61].
Self-development	The code highlights valuable experiences related to personal growth and learning. • Learners recognise the value of independence, whether it’s managing their own study routines, making decisions, or learning without parental involvement [Code E37]. • Being forced out of comfort zones—whether through public speaking, meeting new people, or tackling challenges—has contributed significantly to personal development [Code E41].

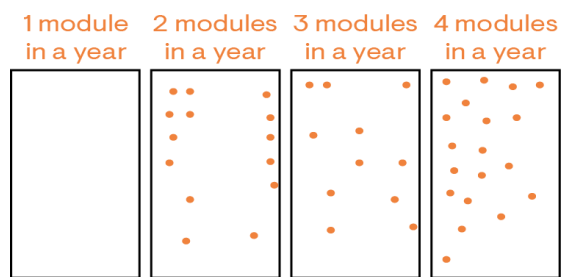
	Engaging in self-reflection through theory and philosophical modules, understanding personality traits, and recognising personal strengths contribute to self-awareness [Code E56].
Social & Peers	The code relates to aspects of social interactions and connections within an academic context. - Learners value meeting people within their course who share similar interests [Code E39]. - These connections foster a sense of belonging and provide a supportive network. Engaging in group work and participating in society activities allow learners to interact with peers [Code E54]. - These experiences enhance communication skills and build confidence, along with forming strong friendships, play a significant role in personal development [Code E112].
Staff Connection	This code highlights aspects related to interactions with TU Dublin staff and their impact on learners. - A really good lecturer plays a pivotal role in shaping a learner's passion for their discipline [Code E1]. - Engaging teaching style and personal connections make a lasting impact. Learner's value one-on-one sessions with lecturers, with personalised interactions providing guidance, addressing doubts, and enhancing learning. Teaching approaches that foster learner engagement and understanding are highly valued [Code E115].
(Inter)Active T&L	This code resonates strongly with learner involvement in their own learning pathway, in a holistic, learner-centred approach that empowers learners to thrive. - Learners underline the value of interactive classes, where participation and engagement drive meaningful learning experiences [Code E5]. - Learning opportunities that foster dynamic interactions and encourage learners to take an active role in their education, with, for example, guest speakers and opportunities for placements/practical work enriching learning beyond textbooks. Real-world insights and hands-on practice enhance understanding and prepare learners for professional contexts. [Code E21]. - The experience of independent learning underscores the importance of exploring topics beyond the classroom, fostering deeper understanding and self-directed growth [Code E42].
Co-curricular (Leadership)	The code spotlights aspects related to leadership development and active involvement beyond an academic setting. - Learners actively engage in leadership roles, such as being a chairperson, class representative, or captain, cultivating essential leadership skills [Code E34]. - Learners explore their interests, whether it's availing sports options, developing an artistic side, or joining a society. Learners participate in group work that involves coaching in schools, working with people with disabilities, and providing personal training, fostering community engagement and leadership [Code E103].

T3. Identified themes, including definitions and composite codes (overall count and percent), from this study. The prioritised action for each code, under each theme is also noted for the University Quality Enhancement Plan.

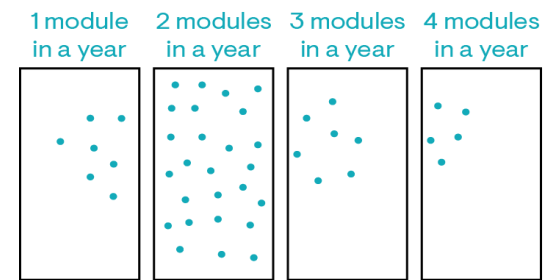
Theme and definition	Composite inductive code and overall count & percent	Prioritised action for the University Quality Enhancement Plan
<i>Framework of Learning Experiences.</i> The theme encapsulates elements that shape and enrich the educational pathway of learners.	Teaching Learning Assessment and Feedback (n=43, 9%) Practice-based L&A (n=37, 8%) Assessment (n=20, 4%) Staff Connection (n=15, 3%) Group Work (n=16, 3%) (Inter)Active T&L (n=10, 2%)	Develop an integrated Learner support hub. Increased use of authentic learning experiences, that reflect the roles students may have after graduation. Include learners in the design and development of UDL-based assessments. Develop a coordinated approach to Holistic Advising (academic & professional services) A timetable that enables learner choice and a range of experiences Create dynamic and engaging learning environments that prioritise interaction, real-world experiences, and independent exploration
<i>Connected</i> The theme encompasses elements that created interconnectedness and sense of belonging within the academic community.	Self-development (n=29, 9%) Social & Peers (n=22, 5%) Events-Social (n=18, 4%) Co-curricular (Leadership) (n=9, 2%)	Integrated opportunities to develop personal skills and capabilities Increased diversity of student social events Increase visibility of leadership opportunities through co/extra-curricular activities
<i>Choice</i> The theme aligns with elements that provide learners with a sense of personal agency and customisation in the educational experience.	Timetables (n=55, 12%) Modules (n=27, 6%) Modalities (n=21, 4%) Course-structure (n=19, 4%)	A timetable that enables learner choice and a range of Experiences. Action TU Dublin Education Model Fundamental 1 and 4 throughout each programme and realise through Student Experience Transformation implementation. Programme teams to make full use of approved modalities. Enhanced diversity and use of continual assessment.
<i>TU Dublin Enablers</i> The theme includes elements that contribute to	Services and Facilities [Learner Support] (n=27, 6%)	Extend financial support for students in need and laptop loan scheme.

supporting, and enhancing, the learning experience for learners.	Services and Facilities [Learner Choice] (n=23, 5%) Careers (n=21, 4%) Learning Advising (n=19, 4%)	Enhanced food and beverages options on campus (including cost). Enhance the engagement of Career Services in Stage 3 and post TU Dublin. Develop a coordinated approach to Holistic Advising (academic & professional services)
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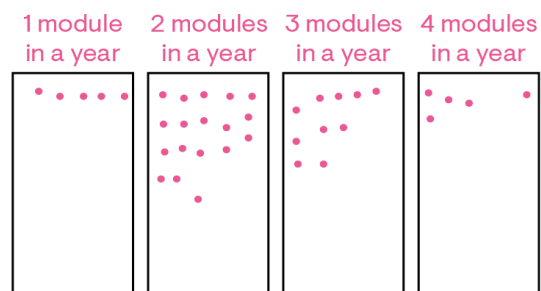
BN Learner Choice



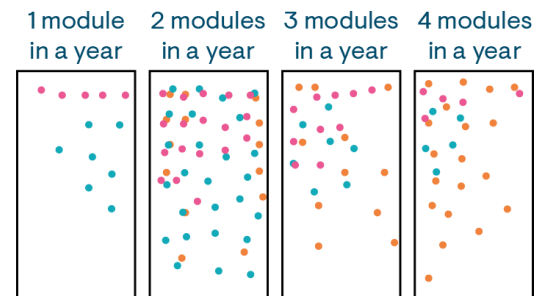
TT Learner Choice



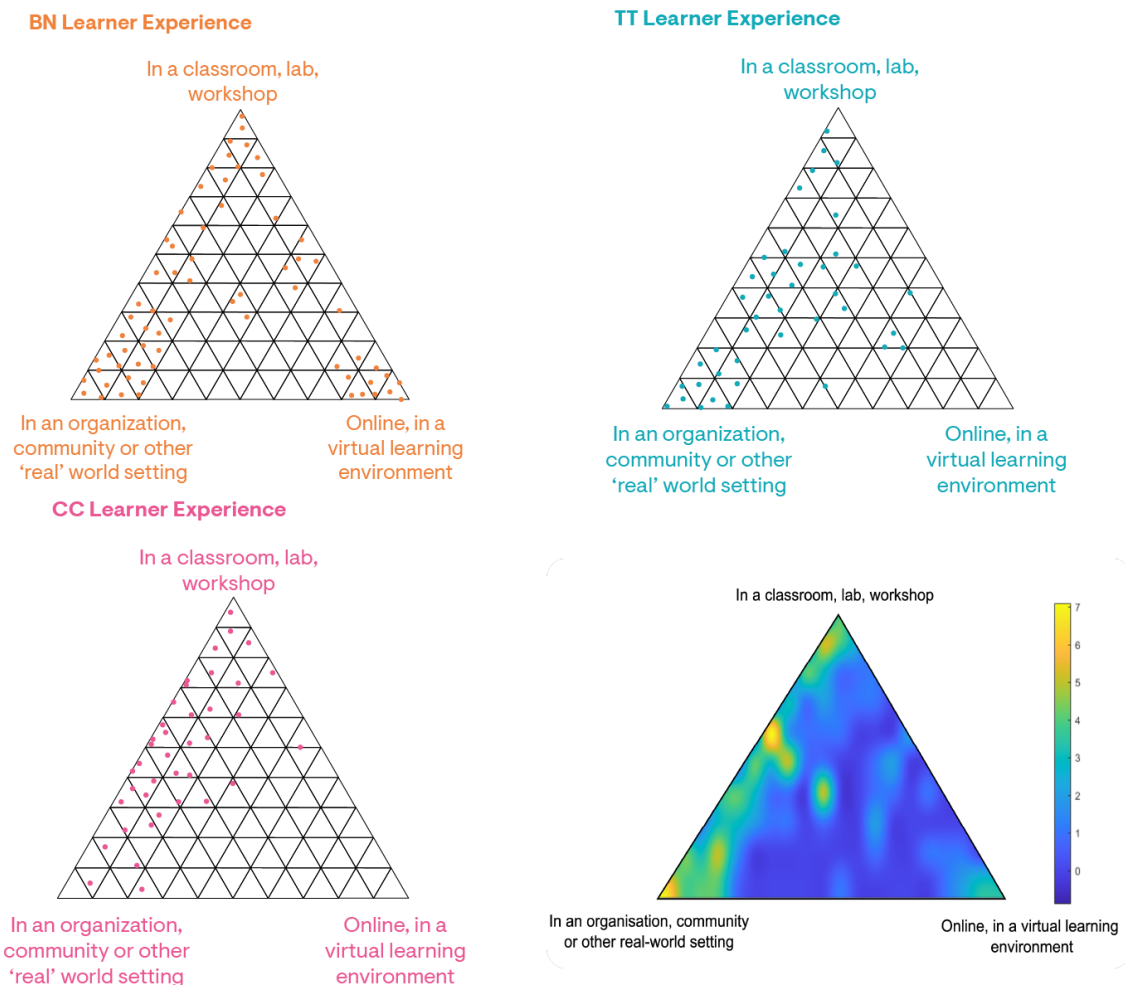
CC Learner Choice



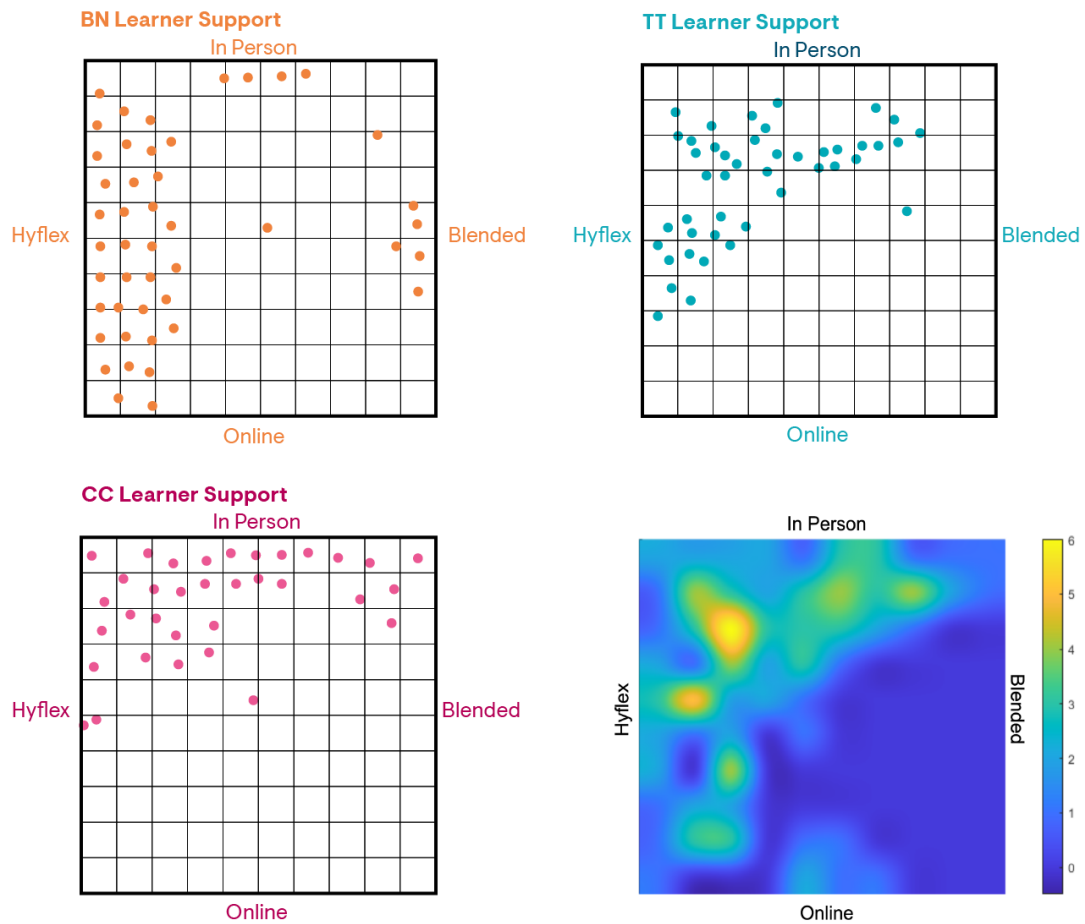
TU Dublin Learner Choice



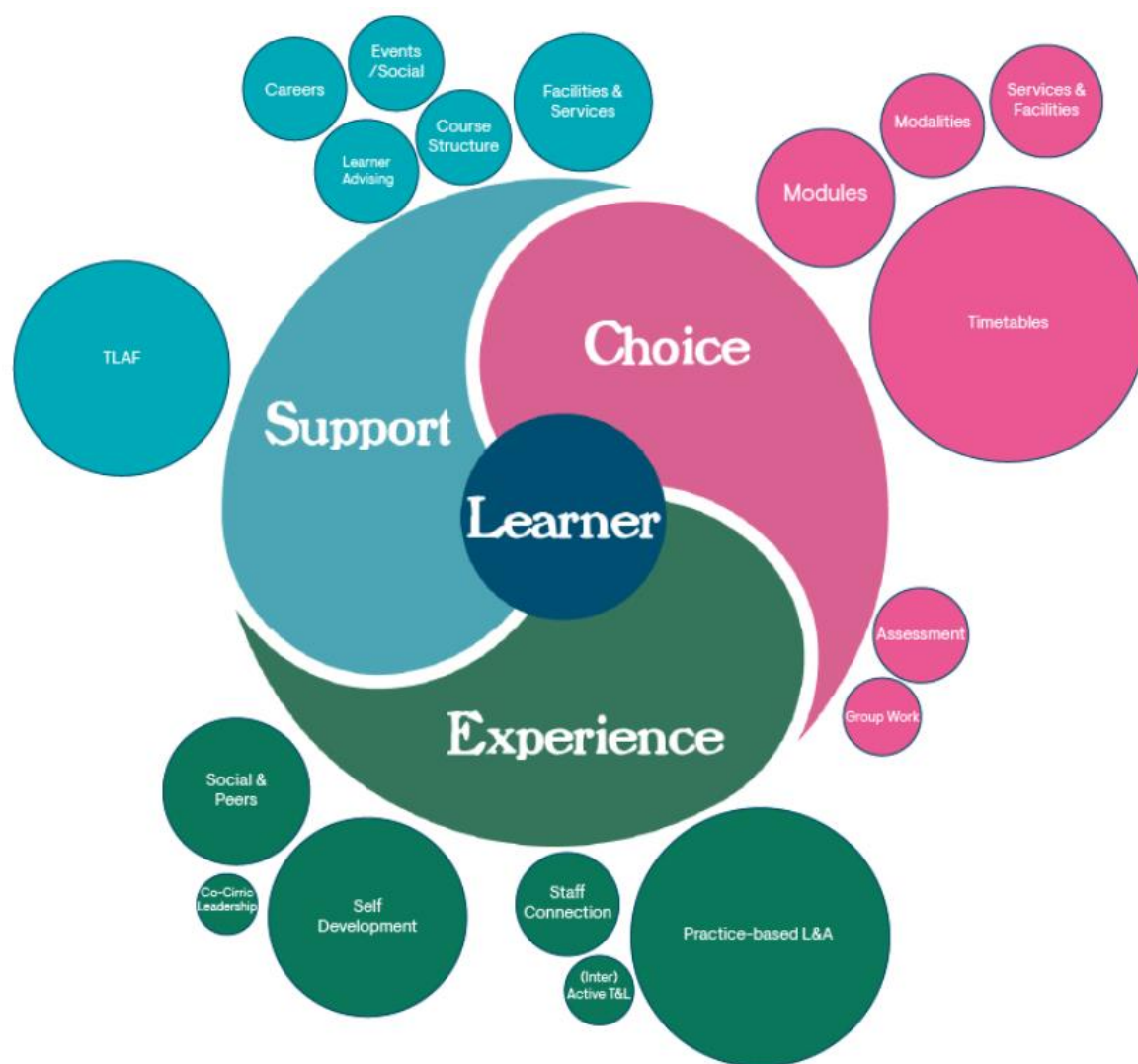
F1. Campus-by-campus and overall Dot Plots depicting the preferred number of modules which learners would like a choice in.



F2. Campus-by-campus Dot Plots and overall Heat Map depicting the preferred place of learning across on campus, online and in a real-world settings.



F3. Campus-by-campus Dot Plots and overall Heat Map depicting the preferred modalities of learning across the TU Dublin approved modalities: In Person Technology-enabled, Online, Blended and Hyflex.



F4. Grouping and mapping of scaled inductive codes against the three components of the TU Dublin Education Model (Learner Choice, Learner Experience and Learner Support). Definitions of the inductive codes are available in Supplementary Information – T3.

S1. Themed-trigger question used during the Vision-Based Design Methodology

Impact

What will the impact of the Learner Assembly be and how might it drive change
What is the timeframe for change and, therefore, will Learner Assembly participants
'feel' the impact?

Communication

Where will the outputs of the Learner Assembly go and how will they be used?

How will the Learner Assembly communication loop be closed?

How might we adopt a "You Said, We Listened/Did" approach?

Synthesis

Can the Learner Assembly be used to explore and build on existing learner survey data
already available to avoid repeat data gathering and 'survey fatigue'?

Can the Learner Assembly focus on enable the learner voice on strategically important
topics?