The Development of a Framework for an Irish National Student Survey (INSS)

Draft Minutes of the Steering Group Meeting

Present:

Niamh Brennan, TCD
Stephen Cassidy, CIT
Tim Daly, IT Tralee (by video link)
Aoife Flanagan, NUIG
Brian Gormley, DIT
Jean Hughes, DCU
Laura McElwain, NUIM
Maura McGinn, UCD
Jim Murray, IOTI
Déirdre O’Byrne, UCC (admin.)
Muiris O’Connor, HEA
Rónán Ó Dubhghaill, UCC (Chair)
Vivienne Patterson, HEA
Lewis Purser, IUA

Apologies:

Patrick Connolly, CHOICE
Mark Glynn, IOTI
Natalie Nic an Ghaill, UL
Aengus Ó Maoláin, USI

Summary

1. The minutes of the previous meeting, 9th February, 2012, were approved.

2. It was confirmed that all HEIs are committed to participating in the INSS process next year (February 2013). A number of possible options were identified to ensure the successful implementation of the INSS within this timeframe. These options were considered in detail.

3. Given the window of opportunity and the body of work involved, it was deemed unrealistic to roll out a credible pilot between now and Easter 2012, and therefore that a full-scale pilot of any instrument in the current academic year is not possible. In order to ensure that the full INSS could be rolled out in Spring 2013 as previously agreed, an alternative piloting strategy was devised involving a small number of students in all HEIs rather than full cohorts of students in a small number of HEIs.
4. It is proposed that this piloting will be on the basis of a re-worked draft Irish National Student Survey questionnaire, to be developed and agreed by a newly constituted project structure representative of all institutions, relevant agencies and the Union of Students of Ireland (USI). This will include senior academic representatives, student representatives and appropriate technical expertise. It is proposed that this piloting should take place in Autumn 2012 on a national sample (of c. 500 students, i.e. c. 20 per institution) and will be an iterative process involving focussed group feedback on the questionnaire, User Acceptance Testing and assurance of technical feasibility within each institution.

5. It is proposed that the students unions could assist in identifying the national sample, possibly through the class reps system which would ensure cross-disciplinary input. This would facilitate questionnaire testing as well as assessment of students’ attitudes to proposed survey methodology. This would allow for early resolution of technical and other operational issues for full roll out in Spring 2013, through active student engagement and feedback. This piloting methodology would focus on validation of the survey instrument at the national level rather than at the level of individual institutions. It was agreed that this project direction will be communicated to all HEIs immediately.

6. It was agreed that it is vital that a national approach be maintained in the pilot, in the process and in the development of the main INSS survey instrument.

7. It was agreed that a package of outputs from the Steering Group would be finalised. These reports will be made available to a newly re-constituted Steering Group and will include:

   • An overview of survey development including rationale, research question, literature review, methodology, requirements, validation (by Insight Statistical Consulting), the original draft INSS questionnaire and a compendium of feedback received to date.

   • A report on the development of the technical process to include an overview of system requirements, technical review of existing surveys, online survey testing, data protection and feasibility testing.

8. It is planned that the final report will be approved at the next and final meeting on April 3rd.

9. Date of next meeting: 11am April 3rd, IUA Offices