The Development of a Framework for an Irish National Student Survey (INSS)
Minutes of Steering Group Meeting
9 February 2012

Present:

Stephen Cassidy, CIT
Patrick Connolly, CHOICE
Aoife Flanagan, NUIG
Mark Glynn, IOTI
Jean Hughes, DCU
Laura McElwain, NUIM
Maura McGinn, UCD
Natalie Nic an Ghaill, UL
Muiris O’Connor, HEA
Rónán Ó Dubhghaill, UCC (Chair)
Vivienne Patterson, HEA
Lewis Purser, IUA
Gary Redmond, USI

Apologies:

Niamh Brennan, TCD
Brian Gormley, DIT
Karen Jones, IUQB
Jim Murray, IOTI
Aengus Ó Maoláin, USI

Summary:

1. Consideration of Feedback from Consultation and Agreement on Next Steps
   1. The wealth of constructive comments arising from the consultation on the draft INSS questionnaire across the HE sector was noted and welcomed. It was noted that the comments represented a strong endorsement of the work carried out by the INSS steering group to date.
   2. It was noted that the University Registrars are supportive of the development of the INSS. It was noted that they had decided that the development of the INSS questionnaire will require the work of a group of academics with a minimum of one academic from each university. It was noted that it would be appropriate for academics from other HEIs to also participate in this exercise. It was agreed therefore that the questionnaire would not be developed further by the existing INSS Framework Steering Group members.
   3. It was noted that the University Registrars had decided that – in order to progress the INSS pilot framework within the agreed project timeframe - the universities should focus on piloting the process with the “off the shelf” NSSE tool, and with a small sample cohort from each university.
   4. Given the recommendation of the National Strategy that ‘a national student survey system be put in place’ HEA representatives deemed it unacceptable that two different questionnaires (an “off the shelf” NSSE tool and a draft INSS questionnaire) be used by different sets of institutions during the pilot. It was noted that the agreed common objective is to have one single validated questionnaire developed for the Irish HE sector and context. It was noted that it would be appropriate that engagement occurs between
the most senior level of HEIs and the HEA to ensure that agreement exists on the expected outcomes for the recommendations of the National Strategy.

5. Given the time required to assemble the group of academics and for that group to produce an agreed output, it was agreed that meeting a March deadline for the pilot is unrealistic.

6. In light of the above, it was agreed that the timeline for questionnaire development and piloting needs to be revised and that the earliest a pilot could be conducted is in the spring of 2013. This timeframe is beyond that supported by the INSS Framework Steering Group. It was agreed therefore to cancel the proposed pilot training workshop of 16 February and to inform the pilot HEIs of the revised timeline. IOTI will inform the IOTs concerned, and IUA will inform the universities and colleges of education.

7. It was therefore agreed that the realisable scope of work on the development of the framework by the INSS Framework Steering Group was advanced as far as it possibly could. It was agreed that the work completed by the group would be documented in the form of three reports to inform the future development of an INSS and be submitted to NAIRTL as the final project report. These reports are as follows:

   a. A report on the Development of the Draft INSS Questionnaire. This would include the research question considered, the rationale for development and the report from Insight Consulting on the validation of the questionnaire.

   b. A report capturing all feedback comments on the draft questionnaire.

   c. A report on the Development of the Technical Process including how data is used throughout the process and recommendations on intended data reporting.

8. The importance of communicating the above to all HEIs was noted. It was agreed that the Communications Work Package would prepare a statement on the situation, and that this statement would be finalised once the HEA had notified the Steering Committee of its intentions.

9. It was agreed that the Work Packages would work on compiling the reports over the next few weeks with a view to having advanced drafts for agreement at the next meeting on March 6th.

**Date of next meeting:** Tuesday, 6 March 2012, IUA Offices, 11-1pm