The Development of a Framework for a National Student Survey (NSS)
Minutes of Steering Group Meeting
12 December 2011

Present:
Niamh Brennan, TCD
Stephen Cassidy, CIT
Aoife Flanagan, NUIG
Mark Glynn, IOTI
Jean Hughes, DCU
Karen Jones, IUQB
Laura McElwain, NUIM
Maura McGinn, UCD
Jim Murray, IOTI
Natalie Nic an Ghaill, UL
Muiris O'Connor, HEA
Rónán Ó Dubhghaill, UCC (Chair)
Aengus Ó Maoláin, USI
Vivienne Patterson, HEA
Lewis Purser, IUA

Apologies:
Brian Gormley, DIT
Patrick Connolly, CHOICE

Summary:

1. Introduction
Aengus Ó Maoláin, USI was welcomed to the steering group.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting / Matters Arising

   Research Ethics: Jean reported that the NSS is not the type of project that would require approval through the Research Ethics board. It was agreed that each institution would deal with this as appropriate for their institution.

   Benchmark Questions: Maura reported that NSS do not charge for the use of their questions but request that the use of NSS questions is acknowledged. NSSE costs are dependent on the number of questions used.

   Representation from the Council of Heads of Irish Colleges of Education (CHOICE): Rónán has invited Patrick Connolly to join the Steering Group.

3. Work Package Updates

   Work Package groups met in the morning and reported progress to the steering group.

   a. WP1 Project Management

      1. The draft letter of communication to all HEIs was reviewed and approved. Lewis will organise the logos of the participating organisation to be added and the letter will be issued to Presidents and Registrars on Thursday 15th December.

      2. A set of ‘Powerpoint’ slides were also circulated to facilitate consistent communication of the project within HEIs.
3. It was agreed that the minutes of this meeting and of future meetings would be made publicly available on the project website. The summaries of the previous meetings are also to be put on the website.

b. WP2 Survey Development
1. The proposed core set of questions is to be redrafted and sent to Insight for validation. It will then be circulated to the Steering Group and to the HEIs.
2. It was agreed that pilot institutions would be requested to add institution-specific questions to the pilot survey.
3. It was noted that some HEIs do not currently conduct any survey and that this needs to be taken into consideration.

c. WP3 Resource Acquisition & Technical Development
1. It was decided that one centralised common survey tool would be sourced and used across the sector to avoid the duplication of activities across the institutions. LimeSurvey is supported by HEAnet and it provides the lowest cost solution (HEAnet will host the LimeSurvey software for an annual cost of €800). It also has the advantage that approximately one third of it is already translated into Irish. Mark to confirm that it meets requirements.
2. An IT person from each pilot institution is required to liaise with Mark to enable the survey to be set up. Ger Cully will be the CIT contact. Other pilot HEIs to notify Mark of the appropriate IT person.
3. It is planned that the technical feasibility of LimeSurvey will be tested by Thursday 22 December.
4. Confirmation is required from the Steering Group representatives of the pilot institutions that the HEIs agree to the pilot.
5. WP3 to draft a letter for circulation to the pilot institutions. Karen to join WP3 and to provide Niamh with assistance on drafting this communication.

4. Project Schedule and Plan Updates
   a. WP5 Implement & Complete Pilot
1. Lewis and Jim to communicate with the Registrars and Presidents on the plans for the pilot and to get agreement from the proposed pilot institutions below. Lewis to contact Olivia Bree in St. Pats.
   a. Teacher Training Colleges: St Pats
   b. IoTs: Institute of Technology Tralee and Cork Institute of Technology
   c. Universities: NUIM and UCD
2. It was agreed that a workshop should be held in advance of the pilot with attendance of one technical expert and one project expert from each participating HEI, together with the Steering Group. The workshop will include:
   a. a clear schedule of events and milestones for the HEI
   b. a clear set of expectations
   c. the seeking of guidance from the HEIs on communications
3. It was agreed that the travel costs to the workshop for the pilot HEI representatives would be covered from the project budget.
4. It was agreed that each Work Package would have draft points set out for the workshop at the January meeting.

5. It was agreed that a date for the workshop would be set at the next meeting on 11 January.

6. It was decided that incentives would not be provided to institutions to complete the survey as it would not reflect the planned process for the NSS when rolled out to the sector.

7. It was agreed that Karen Jones would circulate communication templates used in the rollout of the UK NSS.

8. It was agreed that a debrief session would be organised after the pilot. Structured templates to capture the required information from the pilot to be devised by each Work Package.

Date of next meeting: Wednesday, 11 January 2012, IUA Offices

Ongoing Actions from Previous Meetings

1. The sample survey is to be provided to the Presidents, Registrars, Quality Officers, Teaching & Learning Officers and Student Experience Officers, HEA Management Team, IHEQN in January.

2. A sign-off process/mechanism will be required to ensure the survey has been made available to all final and first year students in the institutions.


4. The cost of purchased questions is dependent on the size of the student body to be surveyed. In this regard only those in first and final year should be counted.

5. It was noted that the extract from the Student Records Systems needs to be specific to first and final years across all undergraduate programmes and that it should include age, nationality, gender, socio economic group, programme, year of study, fulltime or part-time. WP3 to document the process/extract steps required.