The Development of a Framework for a National Student Survey System (NSSS)
Summary of Steering Group Meeting
24 November 2011

Summary:

1. Introduction
Karen Jones of QQAI and Jim Murray, Director of Academic Affairs, IOTI were welcomed to the steering group.

2. Summary of Previous Meeting / Matters Arising

Letter of Communication: The letter of communication to the Presidents, Registrars, executive teams and Students Union Executive of each institution is overdue. A draft is being prepared by Muiris and Lewis and will be circulated to the group by Muiris next week, prior to circulation to the institutions.

Research Ethics: It was agreed to bring the survey to the research ethics board of one institution with the understanding that this would suffice for the project. Jean agreed to bring the survey to the DCU research ethics board.

Validity of Survey Tools: Vivienne reported that a quote of €5k was received by the HEA from ‘Insight’ for the pilot. Insight will confirm the statistical validity of the survey, analyse the results and write the report on the pilot survey results.

3. Work Package Updates

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

a. WP2 Survey Development

1. The proposed core set of questions was reviewed and reduced from 86 questions to 53 questions. These are posted on the Moodle site. Institutions are requested to review this list and advise any suggested changes to Aoife by Friday, December 2nd at the latest. Note: demographic details are to be pulled into the survey using the student ID.

2. The draft set of questions will be reviewed and signed off at the next meeting.

3. The survey should take no more than 15 minutes for respondents to complete.

4. A question bank is being created of optional questions that may be used for the institution specific needs. This question bank may include open-ended, free text questions.

5. It was decided that costs incurred in the purchase of the benchmarked questions should be borne centrally to exploit economies of scale and to avoid duplication in procurement costs across institutions.

6. 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.

7. Maura will explore charges for the use of questions and the availability of benchmark data from NSS and NSSE.
b. 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. Mark to investigate LimeSurvey supported by HEAnet.

2. 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.

3. Mark to document the process/extract steps required.

4. Project Schedule and Plan Updates

1. While the teacher training colleges are affiliated to universities, it was decided that a representative from the Council of Heads of Irish Colleges of Education (CHOICE) should be invited to attend. Rónan to contact CHOICE, Vivienne to advise a potential suitable point of contact.

2. Consideration needs to be given to the inclusion of private institutions in the survey. This may be reflected in a phased roll-out plan during full implementation.

3. It was decided that a combination of small and large institutions, in Dublin and outside Dublin, should be included in the pilot. It was thus proposed that the pilot survey would run in:
   - Teacher Training Colleges: St Pats
   - IoTs: Institute of Technology Tralee and Cork Institute of Technology
   - Universities: NUIM and UCD

4. Lewis and Jim to communicate with the Registrars and Presidents on the plans for the pilot and to get agreement on the proposed institutions above.

5. 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.

6. 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.

7. The March 1st returns are to be used as the base data for the survey.

8. The first year students to be surveyed should be new entrants only.

9. Validation of the survey by ‘Insight’ needs to be completed by February 10th.

10. The survey will be live for 3 weeks in March.

11. It was decided to add the following tasks to WP6 (Recommendations for Full Implementation):
   - Generate benchmarking guidelines
   - Phase roll-out plan
   - Develop communications plan for institutions
   - Specify the requirement for the plan to be bilingual


Date of next meeting: Monday, 12 December, IUA Offices