

Cross Institutional VLE Usage Survey : Points of Understanding for Participating Institutions

Purpose

This document sets out the general principles for institutions sharing data from the 2008 Cross Institutional VLE Usage Survey. We ask that institutions read and agree to the general terms set out below.

Participation

The Learning Technologies Unit, University College Cork (LTU UCC), is leading and co-ordinating the project.

The LTU undertakes to co-ordinate the project in a fair and even handed manner, to take all reasonable precautions to ensure the confidentiality of the data.

We note that participation is entirely voluntary and for the purpose of participating institutions gaining a greater understanding of how their own Virtual Learning Environments are used, and to facilitate comparison between institutions.

Survey Instrument

The survey instrument has been designed by University College Cork in consultation with some other institutions who provided comment.

Participants are asked, where possible, to present the survey to students with as little alteration from the standard as possible to facilitate direct comparison of results.

Where you require a specific alteration to the survey due to your own institutional requirements we request that:

- You discuss the alteration with the survey co-ordinator (UCC LTU) in advance to try to minimise the impact of the change on cross comparisons.
- You note in the accompanying metadata what questions were altered or added.

The Term 'Blackboard' is used in the survey instrument as that is the system used at UCC. We advise that you change the name where it appears to that of the relevant system at your institutions, as it is known to the students.

Data Formats

Data will be shared in a .csv/ Excel format following a template to be agreed.

Each institution will be responsible for providing its own data for sharing in a tidy and appropriate format for use.

Each institutions data shall undertake to exclude from the data submitted the name or student ID number of students who responded to the survey. Survey responses from each institution should be given a new, unique number on the format institution code-autonumber e.g. UCC1, UCC2 etc. Including the institution abbreviation in the number will prevent confusion of rows from different institutions.

Removing student names, eMails and identifiers is a requirement to protect the individual survey respondents privacy.

Data Sharing and Storage

Data files will be eMailed to ltu@ucc.ie in the first instance.

Once data files and a signed letter of understanding (see below) have been received at the Learning Technology Unit, the files from the institution will be placed in a secure web location and with password access restrictions. A password access to the shared data will then be provided to the institution who provided the data. This will ensure that no institution can access the shared data without first providing their own data into the shared pool.

For speed and efficiency, LTU UCC will arrange for the web sharing location. An open but secure tool such as Google Docs or a Wiki is the preferred option at this stage, although ILTA or NDLR may be able to provide a venue. It is anticipated that the same web location could be used for sharing analysis and discussion on the findings.

Participating institutions are also asked to provide some additional data (metadata) about the survey to facilitate comparison and analysis, such as survey dates, durations etc. (See Questions in Appendix A)

Shared data will be held in the online space for a period of 24 months from the submission of the last shared dataset, after which, the shared data is to be deleted. Each institution remains the custodian, and retains responsibility for, their own data.

Publication

In general, the points below are intended to ensure that no individual or institutions involved can use the survey data provided in good faith by other institutions in a manner which would breach the co-operative, collegial nature of the project, for example, by claiming undue credit, or misrepresenting their institution in comparisons. Thus:

No participating institution shall present or publish findings from the survey in the public domain containing or using data provided from other institutions without prior consent of those institutions.

In this instance, the public domain is understood as anyone outside the unit concerned with learning technology and that units direct reports.

Thus, on campus presentations, conference papers, journal articles, media releases etc are considered public domain.

Parties wishing to publish or present information based on survey data provided by other participating institutions agree to seek their consent in advance by circulating a final draft of the material to be published to the other institutions and allow 4 weeks for them to raise objections. If no objections are raised they may then proceed with publication.

Any such publications or reports based on the survey findings must include in the list of authors all the parties involved in the survey in the participating institutions.

While not subject to prior agreement, it is anticipated that, for efficiencies sake, a common report or research paper, and a common set of presentation slides will be developed for use by the participating institutions. The Lead institution (UCC LTU) is happy to co-ordinate this once the survey work is complete.

Survey Metadata

The following information is asked of those institutions conducting the survey. As you can see, the questions are aimed at ensuring that we understand any limitations or issues that might arise when comparing the data.

Question	Response
To whom was the survey sent (all students in the institution, or a subset, eg one school or faculty, day students only etc.)	
How many students were sent the survey	
Was the survey conducted using an electronic survey tool within your VLE environment?	
When was the survey first sent (date)	
Was a reminder sent (date)	
Specify if you removed any questions from the standard set.	
When (date) was the survey closed to further responses.	
Specify if (and how) you altered any questions from the standard set	
Specify if you added any questions to the standard set.	
Are there any other factors in how	

you conducted the survey which might affect the responses, response rate or the data collected?	
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Letter of Understanding

Below is a suggested draft for a letter of understanding to be signed by participating institutions.

To whom it may concern

We, the undersigned, have agreed to share data collected in our institution in Cross Institutional VLE Usage Survey with other participating institutions, subject to the principles outlined in the attached Points of Understanding document.

Signed:

On Behalf of (Institution)

Date