



**National Student
Engagement Programme**

Clár Rannpháirtíochta Náisiúnta
na Mac Léinn

Report on the National Student Training Programme 2016-2020

Summary of Student Feedback, Sectoral Consultation and Next Steps

Foreword from the NStEP Partners

When the national Working Group on Student Engagement in Irish Higher Education published its report in April 2016 capacity building and training was highlighted as a core aspect of enhancing student engagement. On the same day of the report's publication, the National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP) was officially launched by the Higher Education Authority, Quality and Qualifications Ireland, and the Union of Students in Ireland. A key pillar of the mission of this new partnership was a student training programme that would be developed in consultation with sparqs (Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland).

Throughout the pilot of the training programme – led by NCI, CIT, NUIG, WIT, and LyIT, as well as the respective students' unions in each of those institutions – the real value of working to build the capacity of student representatives to better navigate their roles and to build partnerships with staff emerged. Building and nurturing that sense of partnership would not happen through training alone, but it was clear that initiatives that provided class reps with the tools to more fully understand the teaching and learning environment, as well governance and quality arrangements, was vital to any national or institutional strategies for student engagement.

The NStEP Introductory Class Rep Training provides an important focal point for students beginning in a voluntary role that can have many facets and competing pressures. It provides students with strategies to gather and understand student feedback, to communicate the views of their peers more confidently, and to begin to build a more collaborative relationship with staff across roles and responsibilities.

This national report summarises the key findings from across four academic years of training delivery from 2016-2020, during which time over 2700 class representatives were trained. Analysis of the feedback and experiences of over 2300 student representatives who completed training feedback forms demonstrates that the training has been highly regarded and well received since its initial launch. Students felt that they were well prepared for their role as class rep, with participants' average rating of their understanding of the class rep role after training standing at 4.8 out of 5 consistently across all 4 years of delivery.

The NStEP Strategy 2019-2021 set out ambitious plans to expand the Student Training Programme and to ensure that student leadership was supported effectively. After a significant sectoral consultation on the future of the training, this report sets out in more detail how this can and will be achieved. The ongoing challenges that the Covid-19 pandemic has created for higher education also precipitated key changes to the ways in which NStEP supports and facilitates capacity building for student representatives. As NStEP enters its fifth year of training delivery, staff and students across the sector will be able to engage in some innovative changes designed to meet that challenge.

Meaningful student engagement underpins the success of higher education, ensuring that students can reach their full potential and play a valued part in a collaborative learning community. We hope that the NStEP Student Training Programme will continue to provide a source of support to students, students' unions, staff, and institutions in achieving that vision in the years ahead.

The NStEP partners would like to thank everyone who has played a part in making the Student Training Programme such a success, with special thanks to the dedicated Student Trainers who embodied and demonstrated the need for peer-led student engagement through their diligent work to inspire over 2700 class representatives since 2016.

About NStEP

The National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP) was launched in April 2016 by the Higher Education Authority (HEA), Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) and the Union of Students in Ireland (USI).

NStEP aims to strengthen student engagement in decision-making across Irish higher education, supported by a framework of 10 Principles and 4 Domains (HEA, 2016). The Programme seeks to champion a strong culture of partnership between students and staff through practice-based projects, training and capacity building, as well as informing policy developments.

Student engagement is underpinned by the idea that students are partners and co-creators within a learning community, and NStEP aims to actively embed these principles within higher education. Involvement in NStEP requires a partnership between HEI staff and student representatives, with HEI leadership and Students' Union leadership signing partnership agreements to participate.

Our Vision

To inform, guide and support an Irish higher education landscape that fosters student engagement and the building of meaningful staff-student partnerships within and beyond institutions.

Our Mission

To ensure value is placed on student engagement in Irish higher education through the development of the leadership capabilities of students and by supporting institutions and their staff to foster a culture of partnership with students.

In 2019 NStEP launched a new Strategy that reflected on the achievements of the programme since it was launched in 2016, as well as setting out an ambitious plan to embed and enhance student engagement practices across the higher education sector.

To achieve the aspirations of both students and staff, the strategy sets out three strategic priorities for 2019 – 2021, which are:

- Strengthening the value of student engagement nationally
- Developing the leadership capabilities of students in Irish higher education
- Supporting staff and students across the sector to foster a culture of partnership

Background to the Student Training Programme

Developing the leadership capabilities of students in Irish higher education through training and capacity building has been central to NStEP's work since the programme's pilot in 2016. Commencing in May 2016, the NStEP Pilot Working Group engaged Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland (sparqs) as consultants to develop a training programme and as a result five Student Trainers attended sparqs residential training in Dundee. The outcome of this was an Introductory Class Rep Training module that was delivered across the five participating pilot institutions in 2016. This training module formed the basis for training delivered across the country from 2017 to the spring of 2020, with over 2,700 students participating over that period.

At the core of the Student Training Programme are the teams of Student Trainers who were trained to deliver high quality training to groups of their peers across the country. The programme ethos is that 'students are experts in their own learning', therefore peer-led training was important when evidencing this principle.

In 2018 NStEP added two variations of its introductory training to the programme. Online Student Rep Training was developed in partnership with Hibernia College for reps based in online or blended educational environments, and a Postgraduate Taught Student Rep module was piloted across a number of participating institutions. After the consultancy with sparqs ended in 2019, NStEP set out to run its first national Train the Trainer event that summer. A core principle of this national event was that it was led and facilitated by an experienced Student Trainer, maintaining the ethos of peer-led student engagement at all levels of NStEP's work.

Student Trainers 2016 - present

**2016/
2017**

Danielle Curtis (UCD), Molly Kenny (TCD), Laura O'Connor (UCC), Catherine Ryan (NUIG), Joanna Siewierska (UCD)

**2017/
2018**

Logan Arnold (TCD), Aimee Connolly (TCD), Danielle Curtis (UCD), Robert Kiely (CIT), Darren Malone (WIT), Patricia O'Brien (UL), Laura O'Connor (UCC), Emi Ryan (Maynooth), Joanna Siewierska (UCD), Emma Tunnicliffe (DCU)

**2018/
2019**

Logan Arnold (TCD), Alex Coughlan (NUIG), Liz Gabbett (UL), Anna Heverin (UCC), Robert Kiely (CIT), Sally Anne McCarthy (TCD), James Ryan (NUIG), Joanna Siewierska (UCD)

**2019/
2020**

Alex Coughlan (NUIG), Stephen Foley (CIT), Scott Green (NUIG), Anna Heverin (UCC), Cat Kane (DCU), Robert Kiely (CIT), Sally Anne McCarthy (TCD), Karolyn McDonnell (ITC), Yvana Mpressa (Maynooth), Sean Whelan (TUD – Tallaght)

**2020/
2021**

Stephen Foley (CIT), Yvana Mpressa (MU), Sean Wheelan (DCU), Scott Green (NUIG), Zoe Cummins (TCD), Tadhg Jenkins (DCU), Clara McDonald (Hibernia), Sarah Kelly (CCAD - CIT), Chloe O'Neill (Hibernia), Edward Grant (LYIT), Rory Codd (TCD), Dylan Scanlon (UL), Ryan Lynch (MU), Cameron Keighron (NUIG)

Core Content of NStEP Student Training

Introduction to NStEP and the Role of the Class Rep

Participants are introduced to the aims of NStEP, emphasising the programme's work to strengthen the value placed on student engagement at a national level, develop the leadership capabilities of students, and support institutions and staff across the sector to foster a culture of partnership. A further discussion of student engagement and its importance within the context of Irish higher education may follow depending upon the context, and the length of time available for delivery of the training session. After a short introduction to the programme, focus shifts to the role of class reps. Students introduce themselves to their peers, and collaborate on group activities to explore the purpose, tasks, and benefits of the class rep role. Emphasis is placed on the skills used by class reps in their roles, which were further examined through a group project to draw a class rep and identify critical attributes.

The Student Learning Experience

The Student Learning Experience (SLE) is a tool developed by sparqs that breaks the broader learning experience into seven key areas: curriculum, learning resources, learning and teaching process, assessment and feedback, guidance and support, progression and achievement, and quality and enhancement. Working independently first, and then in groups, participants reflect on their own programmes and identify examples of positive feedback and one area for improvement. Class Reps then share and discuss these examples with their peers while categorising them using the SLE headings.

Gathering Opinion and Communicating Feedback

The final section explores the feedback cycle of the class rep role. This begins by drawing from students' exploration of the Student Learning Experience to assess various mediums for collecting feedback. The second stage of the cycle is reporting feedback to staff and working to develop solutions. As part of this process students are introduced to the ABCD method for communicating effective feedback. Practical advice for preparing and participating in student-staff meetings is also discussed. The third and final component of this section examines the importance of closing the feedback loop by reporting outcomes back to the class.



The Student training programme has given many class reps throughout the country the knowledge they need to be effective in their role, creating new skills and providing them with resources to prepare them for any obstacle they may face in their role. This is of the utmost importance, as it is these students who are on the ground, regularly dealing with student issues and working to resolve them. It is through these students that we can create real engagement between students and staff in third-level institutions. The training also promotes a culture of engagement and partnership ensuring the student's voice is heard, understood and respected.

I have had a fantastic time as a Student Trainer getting to meet many incredible reps, many of whom reporting that they continued to use the tools they had been introduced to, such as the ABCD of Effective Feedback or the importance of gathering student opinion and feeding back.



Stephen Foley, CIT student

Key Statistics 2016 - 2020

Feedback forms received (%): 86.3%

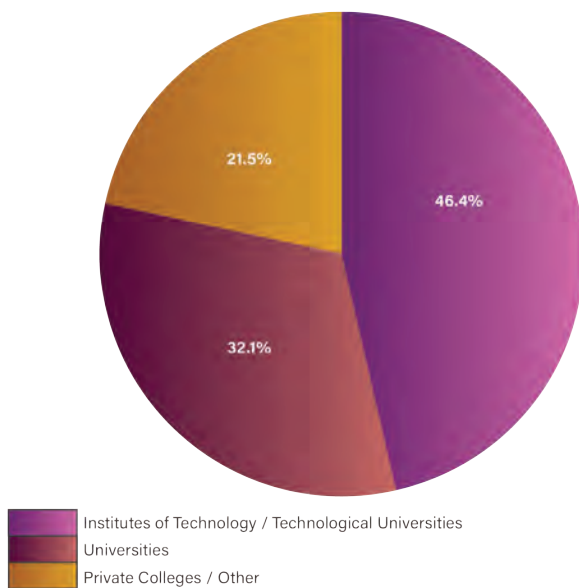
97% would recommend NStEP training to other class reps

2,742

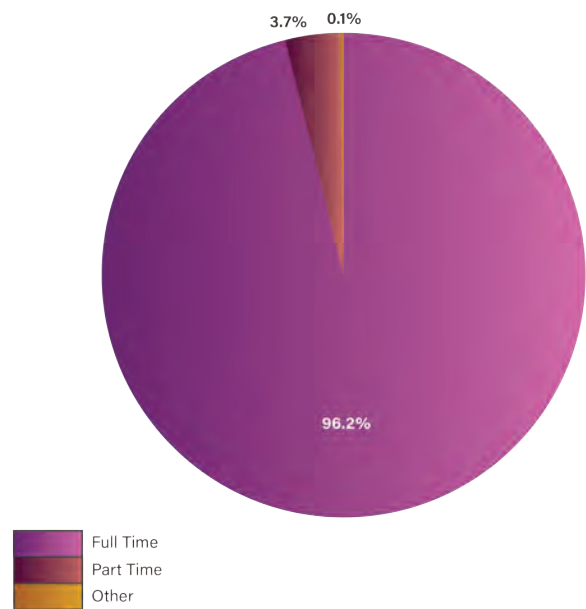
Number of class reps trained

Demographic Information

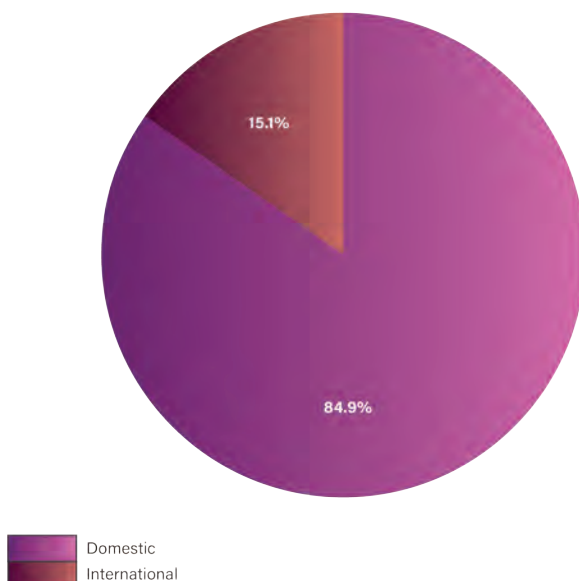
All Class Reps trained 2016-2020 by institution type:



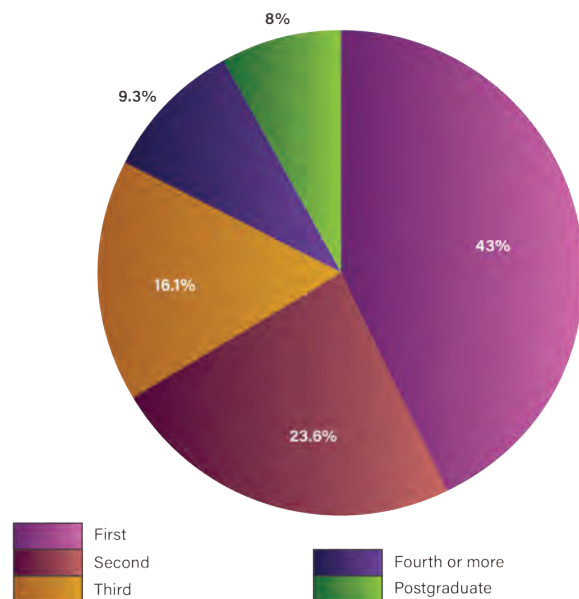
All Class Reps trained 2016-2020 in full-time and part-time study:



All Class Reps trained 2016-2020 - domestic and international students:

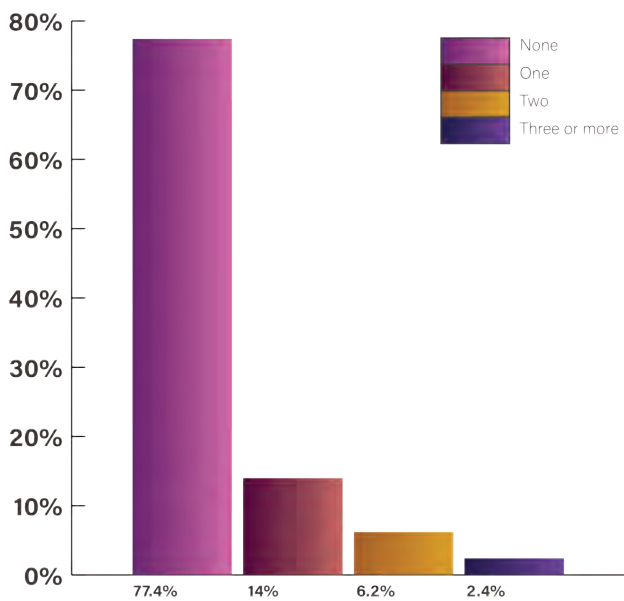


All Class Reps trained 2016-2020 by year/stage of study:

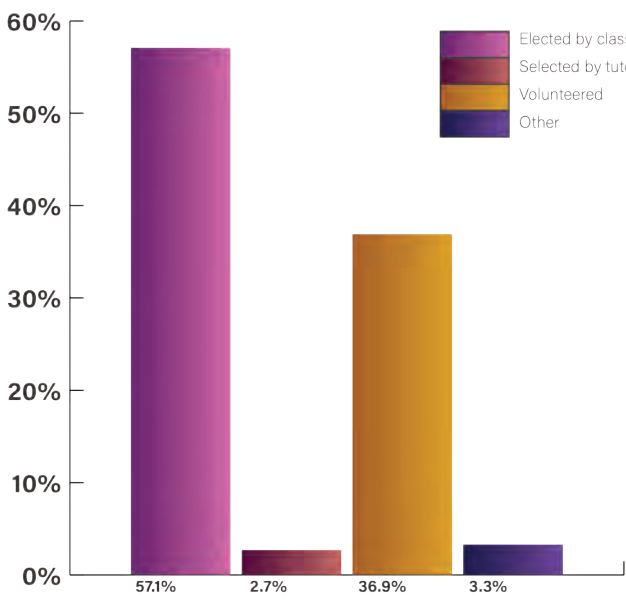


Class Rep Experience

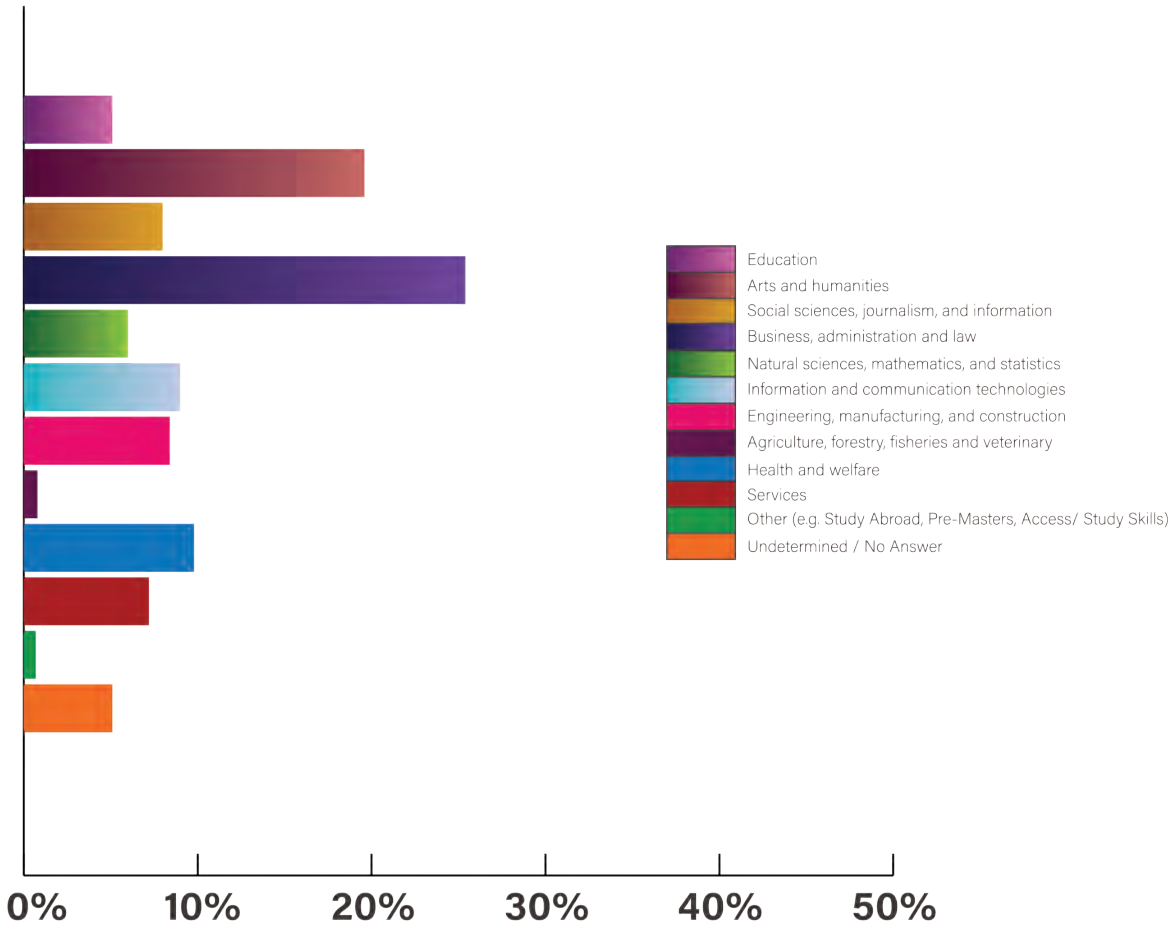
All Class Reps trained 2016-2020 - years of experience as a rep:



All Class Reps trained 2016-2020 - Pathway to Class Rep role:

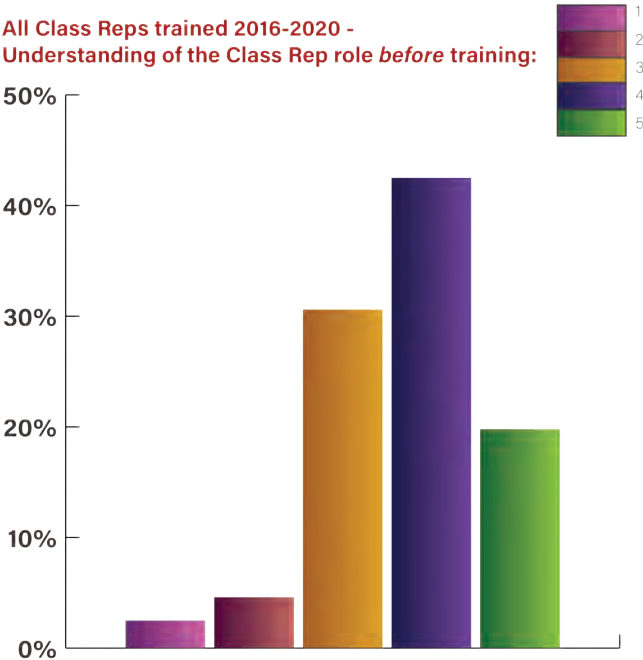


All Class Reps trained 2016-2020 - Field of study:

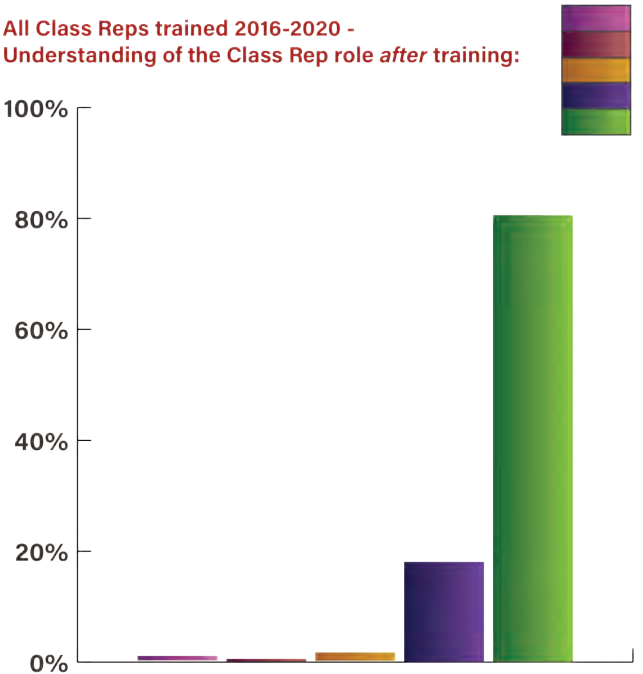


Class Rep Feedback on Understanding

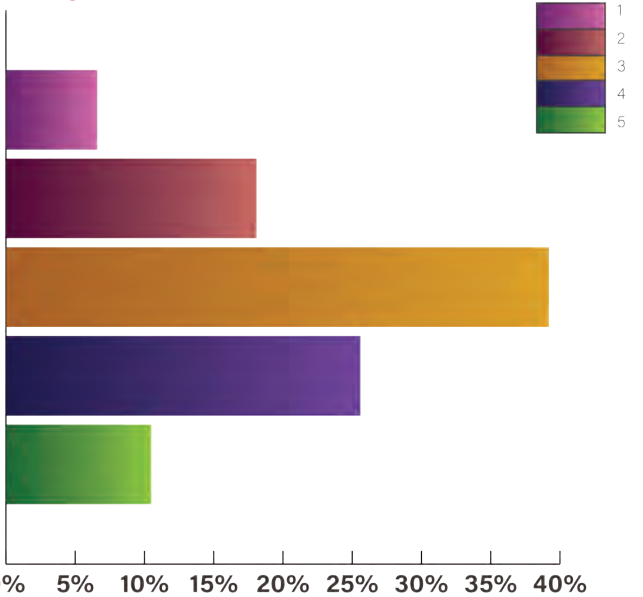
All Class Reps trained 2016-2020 -
Understanding of the Class Rep role *before* training:



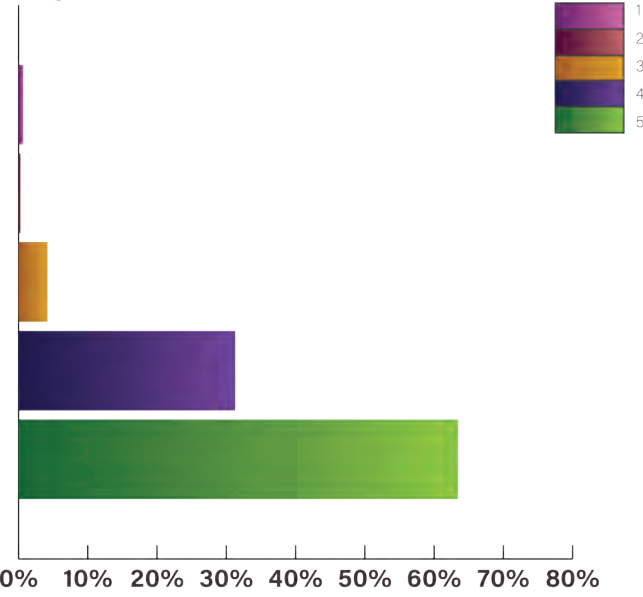
All Class Reps trained 2016-2020 -
Understanding of the Class Rep role *after* training:



All Class Reps trained 2016-2020 -
Understanding of mechanisms for student engagement *before* training



All Class Reps trained 2016-2020 -
Understanding of mechanisms for student engagement *after* training:



Key Findings from Class Rep Feedback

Of all participants who completed the feedback form across all four years, 97% indicated that they would recommend the training to other class reps, and 94% reported that they felt both comfortable and able to participate in the session. The length of training and scheduling conflicts was the most common obstacle to participation identified in feedback forms, which necessitated that some students either joined the training late or left early.

Qualitative feedback from class reps who have completed NStEP training has been generally consistent from the pilot in 2016 up to the end of the 2019-2020 academic year. When asked what participants liked about the training session, the most common response was the interactive group work and ability to discuss issues with their peers in a casual and relaxed atmosphere. Others cited the practical approach to problem-solving and 'informative' content as the strengths of the introductory class rep training model. The role of student trainers in cultivating a positive environment also stands out from the feedback collected, with 95% of respondents rating their trainer as either 'very good' or 'outstanding'.

When class reps were asked what they would do differently as a consequence of what had they learned, the most common responses were orientated around adopting the ABCD method of Effective Feedback, engaging more proactively in gathering student opinion, or improving communication with their class. These three broad areas are primarily developed within the final third of the training session. With few exceptions, the initial exercises covering the skills required by class reps or the Student Learning Experience (SLE) are noticeably absent from qualitative feedback. Similarly, although the data from tables 7 and 8 (see the final section of this report for full tables) highlights that class reps have an improved understanding of the class rep role by the end of the session, there is little direct reference in the qualitative data to learning outcomes from that section of the training. This suggests that the SLE and early sections of the training would benefit from revision in order to achieve greater impact, especially taking into consideration the amount of training time devoted to these sections.

When participants were asked what they would change about NStEP's class rep training, the most common response was 'nothing', further underscoring the value of the training overall. The most common improvement suggested was that the length of training should be reduced. Although less frequently raised, modifications to content and delivery were also highlighted as an area necessary for consistency. Although group work and the interactive discussions were widely recognised as a strength of the training format, longer periods of covering text-heavy PowerPoint slides were less well received.



As a senior trainer, I have had the unique opportunity of delivering the NStEP programme to dozens of groups of students all over Ireland. While every learner and group is different, the sessions always sparked a lot of interest and engaged entire rooms in lively discussions and reflections. As a facilitator, I took part in the learning process in different institutions and gained insight into a wide variety of student issues, as well as creative approaches and solutions.

It was a privilege to be part of the student engagement process and training in so many institutions, witnessing class representatives gain confidence and tools for fulfilling their roles. Seeing a buzz for meaningful participation unravel in front of you during a session is always incredibly satisfying and exciting!

For me personally, NStEP has been a brilliant journey. I have met many talented trainers, colleagues, and friends. I had the chance to constantly improve my communication and training delivery skills and developed a lot of confidence to pursue other goals and challenges. Additionally, the programme provided me with a learning path, from facilitating training to class representatives, all the way to designing tailored sessions for new trainers in the programme. These experiences and competences have stood to me in every other aspect of my personal and professional life.



Joanna Siewierska, UCD student

Sectoral Consultation

As part of the review of the student training programme, NStEP collected feedback from student trainers during a development day, at the National Student Engagement Network held at IT Carlow on 9 March 2020, and by inviting staff and students' union officers from participating institutions to share their experiences through a series of interview-style meetings. Major themes that emerged from this consultation can be broken into key five areas:

- Making the training more accessible to all student representatives
- Enhancing training content, materials, and delivery
- Supporting and engaging reps throughout the academic year
- Recognition for reps who complete training
- The need for additional training beyond the introductory level

MAKING TRAINING MORE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

The most widespread recommendation to emerge from the consultation process was the need to significantly reduce the length of training. Class reps often balance busy academic and extra-curricular schedules, with the added pressures of work and family commitments. It was highlighted that evening sessions often ran late, and day sessions often resulted in missed classes, both of which were a deterrent to participation. Consequently, institutions and students' unions found it increasingly difficult to encourage class reps to sign-up for NStEP training, and student trainers sometimes arrived to find few participants in sessions. Sectoral feedback overwhelmingly indicated that the ideal length of training should be no more than 90 minutes. Additionally, it was suggested that online training options and opportunities for class reps to attend additional sessions run directly by NStEP across institutions would provide practical alternatives for class reps. It was further recommended that NStEP provide additional support to institutions and students' unions in the registration process and help to communicate the value of training to reps, who sometimes consider the training supplementary to institution specific induction.

NEXT STEPS:

- Training will be revised so that sessions can be delivered in a 90-minute timeframe.
- More opportunities for online training will be provided by NStEP so that training is more accessible, and in recognition of changing global circumstances due to the pandemic.
- The logistics of organising sessions will be streamlined, with more central support from NStEP, including online registration for reps and the production of promotional packs for institutions and students' unions.
- NStEP will work with institutions and students' unions to encourage the use of NStEP training as a core part of class rep development, rather than as an additional option.
- NStEP will provide online training sessions towards the end of the core student training period to allow reps from across institutions to participate if they have missed their institutionally organised sessions.

ENHANCING TRAINING CONTENT, MATERIALS, AND DELIVERY

Sectoral feedback on content and delivery largely reflected trends from participant feedback between 2016 and 2020. It underscored the value of content relating to the feedback process, the ABCD model of effective feedback, and the emphasis on problem-solving through constructive dialogue. Sector feedback also indicated that the opportunity for reps to meet one another, discuss the role, and share challenges and solutions was invaluable.

The first two sections of the training related to the role of the class rep and the Student Learning Experience were broadly identified as two areas that would benefit from revision. It was highlighted that in many training sessions a disproportionate amount of time was spent on ice breakers. Although this fostered group interaction, it in turn increased the length of training while adding little overall value to learning. Similarly, feedback on the 'role of a rep section' suggested it was unnecessarily repetitive and discursive, and therefore would benefit from redesign.

Student Trainers reported that the SLE section was jargon and information heavy, and that this section relied too heavily on trainer-led presentation and dense PowerPoint slides. It was recommended that alternative materials be developed to reduce the burden of initial understanding and to present the information in a more digestible method for class reps. Although participants found it easy to identify examples relating to areas of the SLE such as 'curriculum', 'teaching and learning', and 'learning resources', in general trainers reported that reps found it more difficult to engage with areas such as 'quality assurance and enhancement', 'guidance and support', and 'progression and achievement'. Trainers felt that the most important aspect of this section of the training is when students identify, discuss, and evaluate examples of issues within the context of the SLE. However, they reported that the group activity using the SLE was often problematic to manage and, in conjunction with the length of time it takes to introduce the content, became 'the hurdle before the break'.

A significant recommendation to emerge from sectoral consultation was that introductory class rep training should provide greater opportunity for reps to explore what student engagement and partnership means. The existing training model does not directly address what student engagement looks like for student representatives. The importance of facilitating this discussion was underpinned by the changing context of Irish higher education from a transmission model to one of a community of learners. Although training has a focus on practical skills for addressing student concerns and feedback in a reactive context, it was highlighted that the development of aspirational goals for developing student partnership could prepare reps to actively participate in this changing landscape. Some stakeholders reported that they found it difficult to communicate NStEP's relevance to the work of class reps was, and how it fits within higher education structures more broadly. It was, therefore suggested, that this could be addressed in training in a more accessible manner.

In addition to content, feedback highlighted the need for revision to training materials and modes of delivery. It was widely recommended that printed workbooks be discontinued and replaced with shorter, more focused, online resources. Feedback also suggested that dense PowerPoint slides be streamlined and rewritten in more accessible language. Finally, it was recommended that new multimedia content be developed to break-up heavier sections of trainer-led content and illustrate key concepts.

NEXT STEPS:

- All content to be reviewed, revised, and streamlined where appropriate, ensuring that training materials and concepts are more easily understood during a shorter session.
- A full revision of the Student Learning Experience tool to ensure that each category is relevant and applicable during and after training.
- The inclusion of a new section on student engagement and partnership in training to encourage the use of this terminology throughout student-staff dialogue and to improve wider understanding of the role of NStEP.
- Workbooks to be replaced by online resources and access to additional content.

SUPPORTING AND ENGAGING REPS THROUGHOUT THE ACADEMIC YEAR

Although NStEP engages directly with significant numbers of reps across the country through its introductory training programme each year, there are fewer opportunities to directly engage with or support reps after they have completed training. Anonymous feedback from a staff participant in the National Student Engagement Network, held at IT Carlow on 9 March 2020, underscored this problem. They highlighting that training provided ‘a good introduction to the basics for first-time reps,’ but that as reps grew into their roles they were ‘unsure of how to implement what had been covered’ leaving them with ‘a “what now?” feeling.’ A variety of solutions to this problem were suggested from across the sector, including mid-point refresher training, training options during the summer, drop-in sessions from NStEP Trainers, and digital platforms for reps to share experiences and access advice.



The NStEP Student Training Programme is pivotal to the success and enhancement of student engagement. I learned this firsthand as a recipient of the training programme and I was subsequently privileged to become a trainer myself. Not only does it empower students, but it equips them with the skills and language necessary to navigate their leadership roles and enhance their learning experience. From understanding the feedback cycle to learning how to communicate appropriately with the ABCD model, I have witnessed students being enriched by what the programme has to offer.



Yvana Mpressa, Maynooth University

In addition to training opportunities, feedback emphasised the need for more formal content, more resources, and more examples of implemented changes to support class reps in their development. Suggestions for online resources included e-learning options, a glossary of abbreviations/acronyms and a FAQ section for class reps on the NStEP website. Topics that stakeholders wished to see covered and supported with resources included staff-student empathy, structures for staff-student meetings, management/course board accountability, representing the views of others, and recruitment guidelines for student reps. The value of building a collection of case studies for student reps was also raised, which would help them to learn more about student rep projects and issues being tackled elsewhere, as well as broader examples of student engagement happening across Irish higher education. It was further suggested that co-creation projects could be integrated into the training programme with students and staff working together, which would help to move institutional cultures forward and increase the readiness of students and staff for collaboration.

NEXT STEPS:

- NStEP will create and launch an online portal for class reps from participating institutions to access continually throughout the academic year.
- Online resource banks will be developed in collaboration with students and staff across the sector, to include FAQs, case studies, and examples of rep impact.
- Online e-learning modules and 'short courses' will be developed to expand opportunities for class reps to learn more about policy issues in higher education.
- Additional training sessions will be developed and delivered nationally, allowing reps to participate in dialogue and discussion with other reps from across the sector, while contributing to new NStEP projects and pilots.

RECOGNITION FOR REPS WHO COMPLETE TRAINING

Although NStEP engages directly with significant numbers of reps across the country through its Currently students who complete NStEP's Introductory Class Rep Training are provided with a paper certificate at the end of their session. The findings of this consultation highlight the need to provide greater reward and recognition structures for participants that would, ultimately, incentivise participation. Digital badges were the most recommended form of recognition throughout sectoral feedback. Several institutions already have structures to recognise participation in student representation, volunteering, and extra-curricular training, and it was suggested that NStEP could work with institutions to ensure that participants can use this award toward similar recognition structures in their own college.

NEXT STEPS:

- NStEP will develop and roll-out a recognition scheme with digital badges to reward participation in training and class rep achievements across the year.
- NStEP will work with institutions and students' unions to integrate existing recognition and reward schemes into the national scheme.
- NStEP will gather reflective submissions from reps as part of the national recognition scheme that will help to inform future opportunities and revisions to training.
- NStEP will work with our national partners, institutions, and students' unions to inform them about the experiences of class representatives across the sector based on findings from the recognition scheme.

The need for additional training beyond the introductory level

The current Introductory Class Rep Training module is best suited to undergraduate and postgraduate taught students who are new to their roles or who have not undergone training previously. Feedback from sectoral consultation highlighted the need to develop further training options that meet the needs of reps that are not being met by the current student training programme. Most notably this includes opportunities for returning class reps to further develop their skills and reflect more critically on the role, including learning from previous experiences. It was highlighted that, while the presence of returning reps in an introductory training session is undoubtedly of value to new reps, they generally report taking very little learning away from their own participation. It was suggested that training sessions for returning class reps could be held across institutions to cultivate opportunities for networking, collaboration, and the cross-fertilisation of ideas. Similarly, the need to develop resources and training opportunities that address the distinct challenges and issues specific to postgraduate research students was also raised as a priority.

NEXT STEPS:

- NStEP will develop and pilot a specific training module for reps who are returning to their role, which will build upon their experiences to date and deepen their understanding.
- NStEP will work with postgraduate research students to collaborate on new tools and opportunities to enhance engagement at that particular level of education. This may or may not involve training, based on the findings of the collaborative process.
- NStEP will seek to produce particular resources and opportunities through it's other work to inform training and case studies for more experienced reps, including examples of student-staff partnership, co-creation, and meaningful impact in engagement.



Conclusion

After four years of training delivery and the resulting cumulation of experiences for NStEP, students, student trainers, students' unions, institutional management, and staff across a diversity and variety of roles and remits, 2020 proved to be a pertinent and timely moment to reflect upon and strengthen the national student training effort.

The NStEP Strategy for 2019-2021 set out some ambitious goals for the Student Training Programme, not least that it was crucially important to ensure that training was viewed as part of a wider effort to enhance student engagement across all levels of higher education – nationally, institutionally, and locally within departments and programmes. Student training for class representatives is only one part of the capacity building that is required to recognise and achieve true partnership between students and staff, however it remains central to that aim.

This report provides a snapshot of what has been learned, not just by class reps during training, but what has been learned from class reps about their needs, their experiences, and the challenges they face. NStEP will work proactively to achieve the goals that have been set by all those who have helped to shape the programme since 2016, producing a more collaborative and inspiring range of resources and opportunities for all class reps and for all those who support them.

A key achievement for NStEP has been the overwhelmingly positive feedback that class reps have provided on the Student Training Programme, but now, the key challenge for NStEP is to provide a greater source of ongoing support and development for them in their work to represent their peers. Building a greater connection, dialogue and learning community with class reps will be core to achieving the vision and mission of enhancing student engagement in Irish higher education.



Appendix 1 –

Institutions that have participated in the Student Training Programme 2016-2020



Athlone Institute of Technology



Carlow College



CCT College Dublin



Cork Institute of Technology



Dublin Business School



Dublin City University



*Dublin Institute of Technology



Galway – Mayo Institute of Technology



Griffith College Dublin



Hibernia College



Independent College Dublin



Institute of Art, Design and Technology



*Institute of Technology Blanchardstown



Institute of Technology Carlow



Institute of Technology Sligo



*Institute of Technology Tallaght



Institute of Technology Tralee



Limerick Institute of Technology



Letterkenny Institute of Technology



Maynooth University



National College of Ireland



National University of Ireland Galway



*Technological University Dublin



University College Cork



University of Limerick



Waterford Institute of Technology

***Note:**

Each of the constituent Institutes of Technology that merged to form the Technological University Dublin previously participated in the programme.

Appendix 2 – Changes to the Structure of Introductory Class Rep Training

Student Training Programme 2016-2020	Student Training Programme 2020+
<p>Peer-led by a team of Student Trainers, demonstrating the importance and value of peer representation, student leadership, and students taking up roles and responsibilities to shape change in higher education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen peer-led nature of training and develop opportunities for Student Trainers to take up larger role in NStEP • Ensure clearer pathways for class reps to take up further opportunities through recognition of their role, including digital awards scheme.
<p>Booking was facilitated between NStEP and key contacts in each institution and/or students' unions. Training sessions were designed for a maximum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Booking to be more centrally supported by NStEP, with sessions agreed in advance and promotional packs produced for circulation to reps. • Online sessions designed for max 25 participants.
<p>Training typically lasted between 2.5 to 3 hours and was almost always delivered on campus. Most sessions were held as standalone trainings, while some were</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training to last for approximately 90 minutes, reflecting need for accessibility for all students and to ensure active participation online. • NStEP will encourage institutions and students' unions to timetable NStEP training as part of wider training initiatives and will work to support this.
<p>Training content delivered through use of PowerPoint, led by the Student Trainer, with use of groupwork.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training content will remain trainer-led, with more emphasis on facilitated conversation to suit online environment. • Content will involve use of multimedia content and revision of graphics for more visualisation.
<p>Student participants were provided with a short workbook to record notes and to demonstrate that they had completed training.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workbooks will be replaced with an online portal containing further resources, linked clearly to learning outcomes and to future training initiatives. • NStEP to develop and plan a year-round engagement with class reps.

Appendix 3 – Full Statistical Analysis of Feedback by Year

Table 1: Number of Participants by Institution Type per Academic Year

Institution	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Institutes of Technology / Technological Universities	180	552	328	212
Universities	169	378	201	133
Private Colleges / Other	17	158	178	236
TOTAL PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS	5	20	16	20
TOTAL PARTICIPANTS	366	1088	707	581
PARTICIPANTS RETURNING FEEDBACK	95% (348)	74% (809)	94% (664)	94% (546)

Profile of Class Reps Trained

Table 2: Full-time vs Part-time Students

	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Full Time	98.2% (342)	96.9% (784)	95.6% (635)	94.7% (517)
Part Time	1.7% (6)	3% (24)	4.4% (29)	5.1% (28)
Other	0% (0)	0.1% (1)	0% (0)	0.2% (1)

Table 3: Domestic vs International Students

	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Domestic	97.4% (339)	75.2% (608)	85.4% (567)	75.8% (414)
International	2.3% (8)	13.2% (107)	14.5% (96)	24.2% (132)
No Response	0.3% (1)	11.6% (204)	0.1% (1)	0% (0)

Table 4: Year of Study

	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
First	40.8% (339)	43.5% (352)	43.5% (289)	42.7% (233)
Second	25.6% (89)	25.2% (204)	22.7% (151)	20.9% (114)
Third	21% (73)	14.5% (117)	17.8% (118)	13.2% (72)
Fourth or more	9.5% (33)	11% (89)	7.5% (50)	8.8% (48)
Postgraduate	2.5% (9)	5.4% (44)	8.4% (56)	14.4% (79)
No Response	0.6% (2)	0.4% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)

Table 5: Years of Experience as a Class Rep

	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
None	76.2% (265)	76.2% (616)	81% (538)	73.8% (403)
One	13.2% (46)	14.3% (116)	11.9% (79)	16.3% (89)
Two	9.2% (32)	6.2% (50)	5.3% (35)	5.3% (29)
Three or more	1.4% (5)	2.3% (19)	1.8% (12)	3.6% (20)
No Response	0% (0)	2.3% (19)	1.8% (12)	3.6% (20)

Table 6: Pathway to Becoming a Class Rep

	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Elected by Class	56.6% (197)	60.1% (486)	55.4% (368)	55% (300)
Selected by Tutor	3.7% (13)	2.5% (20)	1.7% (11)	3.8% (21)
Volunteered	38% (132)	32.1% (260)	40.2% (267)	39.4% (215)
Other	1.7% (6)	5.3% (43)	2.7% (18)	1.8% (10)

Table 7: Class Reps Trained by Field of Study

	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Education	2% (7)	6.8% (55)	4.5% (30)	4.2% (23)
Arts and Humanities	10.9% (38)	20% (162)	23.8% (158)	15.8% (86)
Social sciences, journalism, and information	6% (21)	9.1% (74)	8.1% (54)	5.8% (32)
Business administration and law	23.6 % (82)	24.7% (200)	22% (146)	27.1% (148)
Natural sciences, mathematics, and statistics	12.1% (42)	3.8% (31)	5.1% (34)	5.5% (30)
Information and communication technologies	8.9% (31)	7.8% (63)	6.3% (42)	12.5% (68)
Engineering, manufacturing, and construction	11.2% (39)	7.5% (61)	8.4% (56)	6.4% (35)
Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary	0.6% (2)	0.7% (6)	0.9% (6)	0.5% (3)
Health and welfare	8.3% (29)	9.9% (66)	9.2% (61)	9.5% (52)
Services	9.8% (34)	8.2% (66)	4.7% (31)	5.8% (32)
Other (e.g. Study Abroad, Pre-Masters, Access / Study Skills)	0% (0)	0.5% (4)	0.9% (6)	0.9% (5)
Undetermined / No Answer	0.9% (23)	0.9% (7)	6% (40)	5.8% (32)

Participant Feedback on Training

Table 8: Participant's Understanding of the Role of a Class Rep *Before* Training

	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
1	2.6% (9)	3.4% (28)	2.1% (14)	1.3% (7)
2	5.2% (18)	4.6% (37)	5% (33)	2.8% (21)
3	29.3% (102)	30.8% (249)	33.7% (224)	27.3% (149)
4	43.4% (151)	42.8% (346)	38.3% (254)	46.5% (254)
5	19.5% (68)	18.2% (147)	20.6% (137)	21.1% (115)
No Response	0% (0)	0.2% (2)	0.3% (2)	0% (0)
Average Score	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.8

Table 9: Participant's Understanding of the Role of a Class Rep After Training

	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
1	0% (0)	0.5% (4)	0.2% (1)	0% (0)
2	0.5% (2)	0% (0)	0.2% (1)	0% (0)
3	0.9% (3)	1% (8)	0.8% (5)	1.1% (6)
4	18.1% (63)	17.4% (141)	18.2% (121)	15.8% (86)
5	77.6% (270)	77% (623)	74.5% (495)	80% (437)
No Response	2.9% (10)	4.1% (33)	6.2% (41)	3.1% (17)
Average Score	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.8

Table 10: Participant's Understanding of Mechanisms for Student Engagement Before Training

	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
1	5.2% (18)	7.5% (61)	6.5% (43)	6% (33)
2	18.1% (63)	20.5% (166)	16.9% (112)	15.6% (85)
3	35.9% (125)	40.8% (330)	41.7% (277)	34.4% (188)
4	27.3% (95)	22.6% (183)	24.7% (164)	29.3% (160)
5	11.5% (40)	8% (65)	9.3% (62)	14.7% (80)
No Response	2% (7)	0.5% (4)	0.9% (6)	0% (0)
Average Score	3.2	3	3.1	3.2

Table 11: Participant's Understanding of Mechanisms for Student Engagement After Training

	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
1	0% (0)	0.9% (7)	1.2% (8)	0% (0)
2	0.6% (2)	0.2% (2)	0.3% (2)	0.2% (1)
3	4.9% (17)	3.8% (31)	3.7% (25)	4% (22)
4	31.3% (109)	31.4% (254)	30.3% (201)	26.2% (143)
5	60% (209)	59.2% (479)	57.7% (383)	66.5% (363)
No Response	3.2% (11)	4.5% (36)	6.8% (45)	3.1% (17)
Average Score	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.6

Appendix 4 - Introductory Class Rep Training Feedback Form

PLEASE COMPLETE QUESTIONS 1-4 AT THE BEGINNING OF THE TRAINING SESSION

1. Your college:

2. Details of your course

a) Title of your course:

b) Is your course: Full time, Part time, Other.

c) Is your course: Undergraduate, Postgraduate

d) What year of study are you in?

e) Are you an international student? Yes, No.

3. Being a class rep

a) How many times have you been a class rep before this year?

b) How did you become a rep this year? Elected by my class, Selected by my tutor, Volunteered, Don't know, Other (please specify).

4. Please rate the following, by circling the number that most closely reflects your current level of understanding. (1 = do not understand and 5 = fully understand)

The role of a class rep – 1,2,3,4,5

The mechanisms for student engagement and representation within your institution- 1,2,3,4,5

5. Did you feel able to participate fully in today's training? Yes, No.

If no, please tell us why:

6. Now that you have completed the training, please rate the following, by circling the number that most closely reflects your level of understanding (1 = do not understand and 5 = fully understand)

The role of a class rep – 1,2,3,4,5

The mechanisms for student engagement and representation within your institution – 1,2,3,4,5

7. What did you like about today's training session?

8. What will you do differently as a consequence of the training today?

9. In terms of content and delivery, what would you change?

10. How would you rate your trainer? Please circle.

Poor, Fair, Good, Very Good, Outstanding.

11. Overall, how valuable do you consider today's NStEP training? Please indicate by circling the appropriate number. (1 = not at all valuable and 5 = very valuable)

NStEP training – 1,2,3,4,5

12. Would you recommend NStEP training to other class reps? Yes, No.



National Student Engagement Programme

Clár Rannpháirtíochta Náisiúnta na Mac Léinn

References

Course Rep Training (2020). Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland. Available at: <https://www.sparqs.ac.uk/students.php?page=207>

Enhancing Student Engagement in Decision Making, Report of the Working Group on Student Engagement in Irish Higher Education (2016). Higher Education Authority, Dublin. Available at: https://nstepsite.files.wordpress.com/2018/07/enhancing_student_engagement_in_decision_making_report.pdf

National Student Engagement Programme Strategy 2019-2021 (2019). National Student Engagement Programme, Dublin. Available at: <https://nstepsite.files.wordpress.com/2019/11/nstep-strategy-2019-2021-online.pdf>

Student Training Programme (2020). National Student Engagement Programme, Dublin. Accessible at: <https://studentengagement.ie/student-training-program/student-training-programme/>

Resources

NStEP Resource Webpages, accessible at: <https://studentengagement.ie/resources/>
Sparqs Resource Library, accessible at: <https://www.sparqs.ac.uk/resources.php>