National Student Engagement Programme
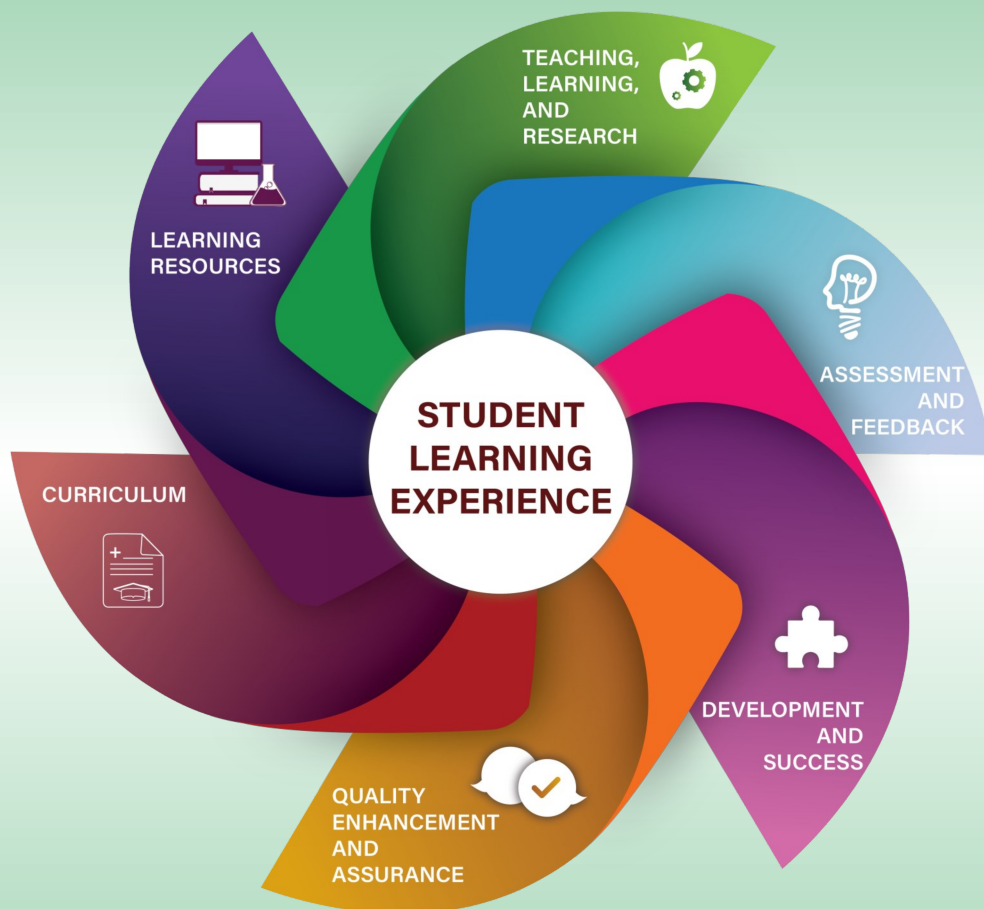
Clár Rannpháirtíochta Náisiúnta na Mac Léinn

The Student Learning Experience

TEACHING, LEARNING, AND RESEARCH

LEARNING RESOURCES

ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE

CURRICULUM

DEVELOPMENT AND SUCCESS

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT AND ASSURANCE

A tool for collecting, evaluating, and communicating student feedback on postgraduate taught courses and programmes

The Student Learning Experience

Collecting, responding to, and acting upon student feedback is an important part of student engagement. But with so many factors that contribute to a student's whole learning experience, it can be difficult to gather wide-ranging or detailed information. The Student Learning Experience, or SLE, is a tool that breaks down the broad concept of learning into a set of meaningful, bitesize categories.
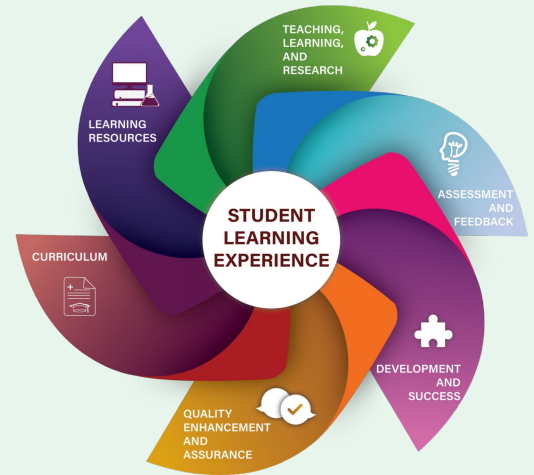
The SLE will help you to collect relevant ideas and suggestions based on students' views, and enable you to:

Ask specific questions about students' learning

While generalised or open ended questions such as 'how are you finding the course?' can elicit insightful responses, a more systematic and detailed approach to collecting student feedback is critical to making improvements and ensuring the quality of the learning experience. The questions under each section of the SLE can be used as a starting point for conversations, survey questions, or developing partnerships. By targeting these specific areas the SLE can help to establish clearly defined and actionable areas to improve the learning experience on a course or programme.

Collect broad-ranging feedback

The SLE helps staff and students to reflect on six core areas relating to their learning experience. This ensures that the student voice is heard across the different areas that impact learning, building student and staff capacity to engage with one another across areas of policy and practice.

Assess where additional feedback may be required

The SLE can be used to monitor the feedback received from students. Does feedback mostly lie within one or two areas of the SLE? Are there areas of the SLE where student views have not been collected? By using the SLE to assess feedback trends, additional steps can be taken to prioritise underrepresented areas as a part of ongoing efforts to gather student feedback.

Provide a common vocabulary and structure

The SLE is a valuable tool for preparing and supporting students to engage in the feedback process. In addition to providing six lenses through which to consider and decipher their learning experience, it also introduces students to vocabulary that can be used to articulate opinions and communicate feedback with staff. The SLE can also serve as a foundation for staff and students to work together as partners in evaluating and enhancing the learning experience, and can be used to structure meetings, projects or reviews.

Curriculum
The way content, projects, and learning is organised on your course and modules

- Is your course well-structured and match the description from the prospectus/handbook?
- How well are students supported in their transition to study at postgraduate level?
- Is there a balance between core and optional modules, and are these delivered in a meaningful order?
- Is there an appropriate balance between theory and practice (including work placements), or between learning and research?
- Does the course/programme allow for specialisation, while also maintaining enough breadth to give meaningful choice and realistic options for future study or employment?
- Is sufficient time and support built into the curriculum for research or work placement?
- Is it clear what is required to progress through, and ultimately complete, the course/programme?

Learning Resources
Everything needed to learn and conduct research effectively and independently

- Are there adequate learning resources available (e.g. up-to-date library materials, access to digital repositories and resources, and access to external research facilities or cooperative schemes such as ALCID?)
- Is there sufficient access to necessary materials (e.g. lab equipment, art materials, computer software, health and safety equipment)?
- Are learning materials available on your college's virtual learning environment (e.g. Moodle or Blackboard)?
- Are facilities such as study spaces, labs, and classrooms well-equipped and open at convenient times?
- Are there adequate IT resources and reliable WiFi?
- Do students know what resources are available and how to use them?
- Are there adequate supports and services for postgraduates struggling with a particular subject or skill?

Teaching, Learning, and Research
The way content and skills are taught, as well as how students learn and grow as researchers

- Are students guided in the development of technical, digital, academic, and transferable skills?
- Do academic staff provide support on module content, assignments, assessments, and research outside of the classroom?
- Are students supported in their transition to more independent learning and research?
- Are there clear processes and structures dedicated to research supervision and support?
- Do academic advisors/research supervisors have relevant experience appropriate to students' subject areas?
- Are students adequately guided and supported in the dissemination of research outcomes?
- Are expectations and timelines for work placements or research projects clearly outlined?
- Is there sufficient time spent in class preparing students for assessments?
- Is teaching material up-to-date and represent current academic, industry, or professional trends or standards?

Assessment and Feedback
How learning is measured, and results are communicated back to students

- Is coursework clearly linked to the purpose and outcomes of the course?

- Are students given a choice of appropriate assessments?

- Are assessments marked fairly and to the same standard by all academic staff?

- Is assessment/marking criteria communicated to students?

- Are assignment deadlines staggered to prevent overload?

- Are assessment types varied, or could other formats be used effectively?

- Is feedback provided promptly, and with enough time for students to identify areas for improvement on future assessments?

- Is feedback given in a variety of ways (e.g. one-to-ones, peer review, written comments)?

- Are assessment, project, work-placement, or dissertation procedures clearly communicated?

Development and Success
A learning experience that embraces diversity and wellness, and encourages students to develop new perspectives and future goals

- Does this course improve student employability and work-readiness, and are adequate careers advice and services available?

- Are students aware what further study options are available after completion?

- Are there networking opportunities for students to meet peers, academics, and industry leaders from within their institution and beyond?

- Are there opportunities for students to attend or present research at conferences, or participate in extracurricular research projects led by staff?

- Does the college actively work to remove obstacles to student achievement and participation? (e.g. adequate parking/transport links, childcare facilities)

- Is student diversity recognised through curriculum and learning supports, and are students encouraged to engage in discussions whereby diverse perspectives can be accommodated?

- Do policies and procedures take student wellness and wellbeing into consideration?

- Are students encouraged to become active members of the academic community and develop an academic identity and expertise within their subject area?

Quality Enhancement and Assurance
Institutional processes to monitor, evaluate, and improve the course/programme

- How do you feel your programme, course, or institution compares with others?

- Are student opinions listened to and taken seriously, and are improvements made to your course as a result of student feedback?

- Are students invited to sit on committees or get involved on working /focus groups?

- Are there student reps for this course/programme, and have they received adequate training and support?

- Are students actively involved throughout the decision-making process, or merely consulted?

- Are students invited to co-create surveys and feedback forms?

- Is student feedback communicated to all stakeholders, including teaching assistants and tutors?

Enhancing the Student Learning Experience (SLE)

The National Student Engagement Programme seeks to strengthen a culture of partnership between students and staff, underpinned by meaningful student engagement practices. Core to this work is to build the capacity of both students and staff to engage and partner with one another. Ultimately, the SLE is a tool that improves student capacity to navigate their institutions and the way in which education is typically structured. This can also have a benefit for the way in which staff perceive the experiences and views of their students, contributing toward a level-playing field for dialogue and discussion that creates actionable, informed and collaborative solutions.

The SLE can be used by staff and student representatives to support engagement and partnership with whole class cohorts:

- Utilise the SLE to inform how feedback is sought from the whole cohort

- Work with class representatives to identify aspects of the SLE that require particular focus

- Structure dialogue, surveys, and class content around the elements of the SLE

- Build students' confidence and literacy on issues of their own learning experience using the SLE

- Inform the structure of peer activities, improving understanding of peer experiences through the SLE

- Support staff to have more effective conversations on expectations, using more universally understood language

- Use the SLE as a framework around which to structure conversations on students' choices

The SLE can be used to support partnership activities and projects for enhancement:

- Inform the nature and structure of focus groups, using the SLE to provide greater agency to students

- Develop questionnaires and workshops for both staff and students to consider key issues, providing an opportunity to compare and contrast expectations and challenges

- Inform more structured induction to institutional committees for both students and staff

- Use the SLE to develop shared language and common understandings

- Develop student capacity to understand and engage in the development of new projects, using the SLE to map how particular projects can have a positive impact on the SLE itself

National Student Engagement Programme

Clár Rannpháirtíochta Náisiúnta na Mac Léinn

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The National Student Engagement Programme is a partnership of

USI
Union of Students in Ireland
Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn

QQI
Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

HEA | HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY
AN tÚDARÁS um ARD-OIDEACHAS

The Student Learning Experience was developed in partnership with

sparqs
student partnerships in quality scotland