



**National Student
Engagement Programme**

Clár Rannpháirtíochta Náisiúnta
na Mac Léinn

CÉIM Shared Learning

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Find out more
WWW.SU.NUIGALWAY.IE/CEIM



CÉIM is a partnership

Students + Academic staff + Students' Union

Introduction and Context

A 2019 CINNTE QQI quality review commended CÉIM and recommended that a system be developed to mainstream it at NUI Galway. It now features heavily in the academic strategy.

CÉIM* is a peer learning programme, which is based on the well-evidenced Supplemental Instruction/Peer Assisted Learning model and is offered to around 2,000 1st year students.

Initiated by NUI Galway Students' Union (NUIGSU) in 2013, CÉIM is run as a partnership between students, academic staff, NUI Galway Students' Union and NUI Galway management.

CÉIM supports transition to higher education, academic success, health and wellbeing and progression. The programme has approx. 140 2nd, 3rd and 4th year volunteer student leaders who deliver weekly peer learning sessions for small groups of 1st year students throughout the entire academic year, creating peer-led learning communities. www.su.nuigalway.ie/ceim

*CÉIM means 'step' or 'degree' in the Irish language.



Weekly Peer
Learning Sessions



Cairde Groups



Group Chat



Coursework
Support



Digital Badge

CÉIM supports the 1st year experience

Smooth transition to higher education

- Navigating the system at NUI Galway
- Developing independent learning skills

Academic success

- Building learning communities
- Developing discipline identity
- Practising academic skills
- Using the language of the discipline and discussing threshold concepts

Supporting progression to 2nd year

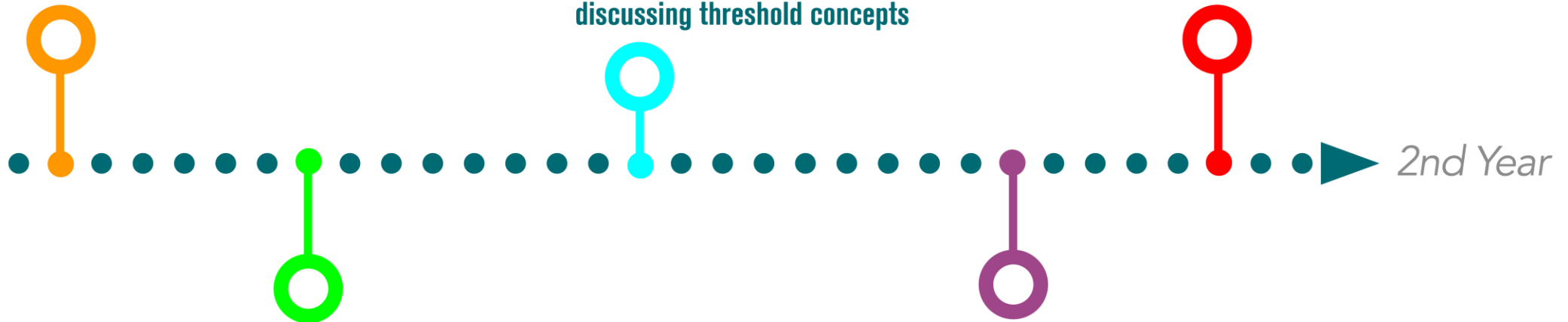
Building social networks

- Developing a sense of belonging
- Supporting student health and wellbeing

Development of transferable skills

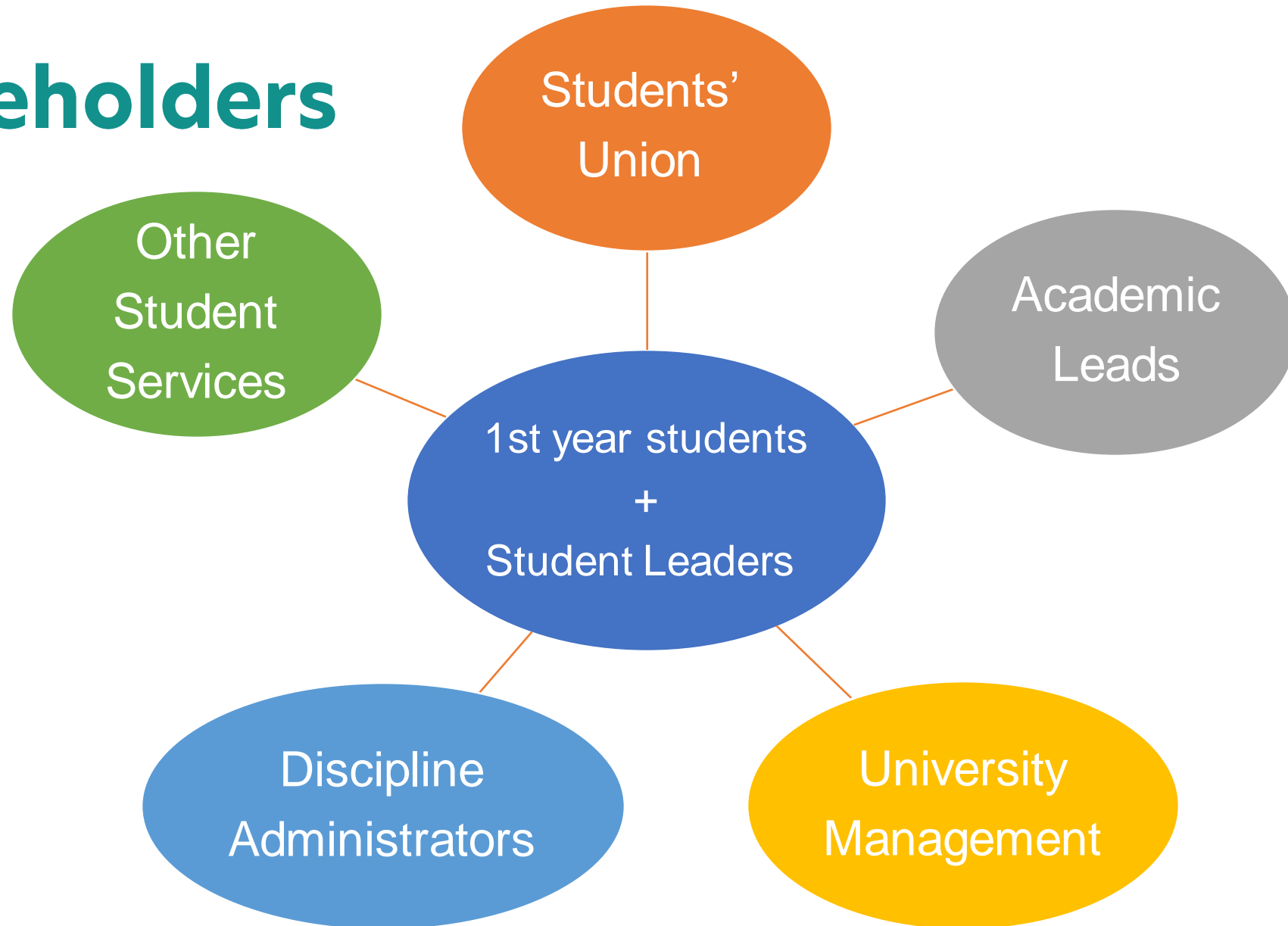
- Supporting graduate attributes

Start of
1st year



CÉIM

Stakeholders



How CÉIM works

- Co-curricular activity complementing lectures and tutorials
- Part of the academic and pastoral supports ecosystem
- Supports engaged, independent learning
- Discipline specific

1st year students in a specific discipline are assigned to or self-enrol in CÉIM groups



CÉIM Group 1



CÉIM Group 2

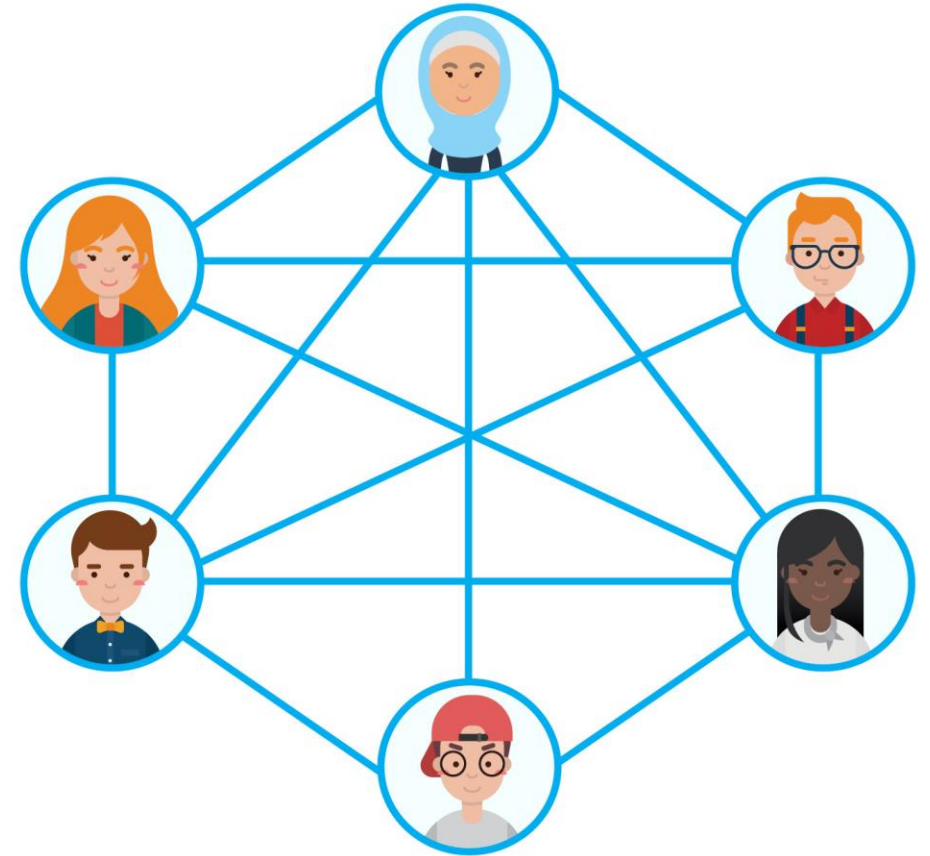


CÉIM Group 3



Weekly debrief sessions for leaders with staff - idea sharing and problem solving

CÉIM Leaders facilitate small group learning



Why CÉIM?/Issues to be addressed

In 2012, NUI Galway and NUIGSU were concerned about progression rates, particularly from 1st to 2nd year. Based on student and staff feedback, NUIGSU identified some key challenges students were facing when transitioning to university. These included developing a sense of belonging, managing workload, familiarisation with academic practices and language, and becoming independent learners. There was also a desire to create a stronger partnership and collaborative culture between students and staff.

After conducting an in-depth literature review, it was decided to pilot Supplemental Instruction/Peer Assisted Learning.

Initiating peer learning is not an activity that is traditionally associated with Students' Unions, particularly in Ireland. NUIGSU believed peer learning addressed the challenges faced and was particularly attractive because it takes a holistic approach to student engagement, partnership and the student experience.

What worked in the project initiation phase?



Resourcing – a project lead was identified and assigned one day a week to research the project and work on gaining buy-in from academic staff and university management



Student input – seeking student input very early on in the project design process was crucial



Clear project proposal – having a concise project proposal with emphasis on the benefits for students and staff, along with evidence of impact from other institutions, was very helpful in obtaining buy-in



Being strategic about staff partnerships – academic staff were approached who were known to have an interest in student engagement



Training – staff participated in relevant training, which helped give additional credibility when seeking buy-in

Research and Development

NUIGSU was influenced by international literature on the transition to university, the 1st year experience, success and retention, as well as national policy (HEA, January 2011) and NUI Galway strategies. The project was particularly influenced by the 'What Works?' research (Thomas, 2012) and the evidence base that exists to support the Supplemental Instruction/Peer Assisted Learning model (Malm et al., 2010; Ginty and Harding, 2014; PASS Program Results at University of Wollongong Australia).

Thomas (2012, p. 6). states that *'the academic sphere is the most important site for nurturing participation of the type which engenders a sense of belonging'*. The academic focus of CÉIM is seen as the hook or a strong reason for 1st year students to attend sessions and provides a social outlet and a vehicle for providing pastoral support.

In more recent years, Universal Design for Learning has influenced the development of CÉIM.

Involvement of students and staff

NUIGSU staff worked on initial project development. Approximately 240 students were surveyed anonymously regarding the 1st year experience, student engagement, and peer learning. Two focus groups were run with 1st year students and these proved invaluable in designing the programme. In these focus groups, the 1st year students chose the name 'CÉIM' for the programme.



Actions taken during the project

Action	Brief Description
CÉIM peer learning sessions are entirely student-driven	Student leaders facilitate the weekly CÉIM sessions. No academic staff are ever present, even to observe sessions. 1st year students in collaboration with student leaders determine what topics to cover in the sessions, while staff provide academic input as needed.
Debrief meetings	Weekly meetings take place between student leaders, the CÉIM NUIGSU team and discipline academic leads to share ideas from the previous week's peer learning session and collaborate on problem solving. All participants are viewed as equal partners at these meetings and leaders chair and take minutes.
Experienced leaders coaching other leaders	Student Leader Coaches are former experienced CÉIM leaders who coach incoming leaders for the first six weeks of the academic year. They conduct session observations throughout the year and give constructive feedback to the leaders. They also supported the programme by making short recruitment videos on the benefits of becoming a CÉIM Leader. (See videos on next slide).
Students as experts	NUIGS partnered with a group of 2nd year students (external to the CÉIM programme) in 2022 to review CÉIM marketing and research materials. Weekly meetings took place to give each other continuous feedback and the students then developed a marketing plan and materials for 2022/23, and helped shape the design of future student surveys. This was a very successful project and the team will look to do more of this in the future.
Student and staff collaboration on conferences and workshops	Students and staff have collaborated to present at numerous teaching and learning workshops and conferences. The most recent collaboration was when a CÉIM Student Leader Coach, a member of the CÉIM NUIGSU team, and a CÉIM Academic Lead presented at a conference in Belgium in late 2021.
Hiring former leaders to join CÉIM team	Two former CÉIM leaders have been hired as part of the CÉIM team. Both joined the team in a Graduate Intern role, and one stayed on to become the CÉIM Engagement Coordinator.

Recruitment of new leaders - collaborative project with SLCs



CÉIM
SHARED LEARNING

BECOME A CÉIM LEADER - BÍ I DO CHEANNAIRE CÉIM



CLOSING DATE: MONDAY, 7 FEBRUARY • DÁTA DEIRIDH: DÉ LUAIN, 7 FEABHRA



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Reflections on engagement

CÉIM will enter its tenth year of operations in 2022/23. It is now offered to 2,000+ students (many are offered CÉIM in multiple subjects).

The programme is often seen as a benchmark of student engagement at NUI Galway.

What has worked well?

- **Partnership** – Feedback indicates that leaders really value how collaborative CÉIM is and how responsive staff are. Staff partnership has proven to be essential for the continued success of the programme.
- **Clear processes and robust IT systems** – making it easy for all partners to engage has been key. Particular emphasis has been placed on developing clear processes and materials in partnership with students. Automating as much as possible using IT has freed up time to focus on engagement.
- **Opportunities for anonymous feedback** – even when working in partnership, it is important for students to be able to give input on programme delivery anonymously, for example, in quick surveys, using post-it notes, via Padlet, Jamboard and Mentimeter etc.
- **Focus on diversity and inclusion** – training for all leaders on UDL practices has resulted in positive, unprompted feedback from 1st year students regarding how welcoming and inclusive CÉIM is.
- **Opt-out system** – providing CÉIM for all students in a discipline makes things easy for them (no sign up) and increases attendance.

Observations and things to change

- **Student Leader Coaching (SLC) role** – create a more solid structure for SLCs as some have found it hard to engage with their group. Need to discuss the specifics of the SLC role in more detail with leaders so that they fully understand the benefits for them.
- **Collaborate more with students on development of leader resources** – engagement with online leader resources was good, but there are pockets of leaders who never use them. More work to be done to collaborate with leaders (potentially hiring a summer intern) to update existing resources and create new resources, and demonstrate the benefits of using them.
- **Leader dynamics** – more work needed on developing good relationships between leaders and developing a system for conflict resolution.
- **Funding** – securing long-term funding for peer learning and research is necessary to support continuity and expansion.

Supporting evidence and references

Ginty, C. and Harding, N. (2014). The first year experience of a peer assisted learning program in two institutes of technology in Ireland. *Journal of Peer Learning*, 7, 2014, 36-56.

HEA. (January 2011). National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030. Dublin, Higher Education Authority Ireland.

Malm, J., Bryngfor, L. Morner, L. (2010). [Supplemental Instruction \(SI\) at the Faculty of Engineering \(LTH\), Lund University, Sweden. An evaluation of the SI-program at five LTH engineering programs autumn 2008.](#) *Journal of Peer Learning*, 3, 1, 38-50

Student Survey www.studentsurvey.ie

The International Centre for Supplemental Instruction at the University of Missouri-Kansas City [The International Center for Supplemental Instruction \(umkc.edu\)](http://TheInternationalCenterforSupplementalInstruction.umkc.edu)

Thomas, L. (2012). Building student engagement and belonging in Higher Education at a time of change: a summary of findings and recommendations from the What Works? Student Retention and Success programme. UK, PHF, HEFCE, HEA, Action on Access.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Guidelines [UDL: The UDL Guidelines \(cast.org\)](http://UDL:TheUDLGuidelines.cast.org)

University of Wollongong Australia Peer Assisted Learning [Peer Assisted Learning \(PAL\) - University of Wollongong – UOW](#)