



# National Student Engagement Programme

Clár Rannpháirtíochta Náisiúnta na Mac Léinn

## Introductory Class Rep Training



In consultation with



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## The National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP)

- ▶ Founded in 2016 – a partnership of QQI, the HEA, and USI.
- ▶ Promotes and strengthens student engagement at a national level by:
  - ▶ Working with students, students' unions, higher education institutions (HEIs), staff, and organisations/government bodies.
  - ▶ Providing training and professional development
  - ▶ Creating resources
  - ▶ Running workshops, seminars, network events, and conferences

**NStEP is here to support you!**



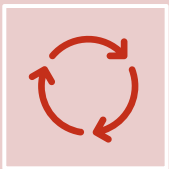
# Learning Objectives



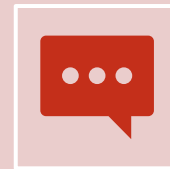
Identify and describe student engagement within the context of the class rep role.



Describe and discuss the 'Student Learning Experience' and its use as a tool for collecting and evaluating feedback.



Explain the feedback cycle and discuss methods for gathering, acting upon, and reporting feedback.



Outline and apply the ABCD method for communicating effective feedback.



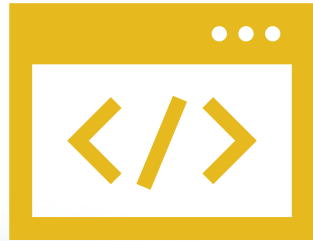
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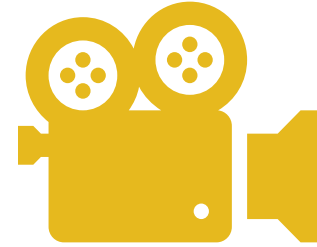
## **Section 1:**

### **Student Engagement and the Class Rep Role**

# What is Student Engagement?



Go to the training resources webpage at:  
<https://studentengagement.ie/introductory-class-rep-training-materials/>



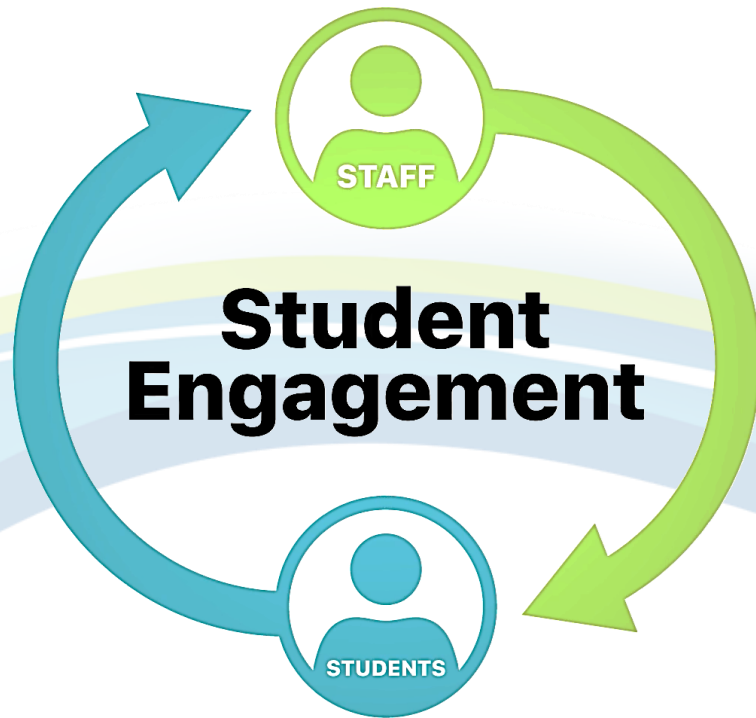
Watch the short video on Student Engagement (Resource 1)

# Group Discussion

Provide an example of student engagement or partnership in your department / faculty / school?

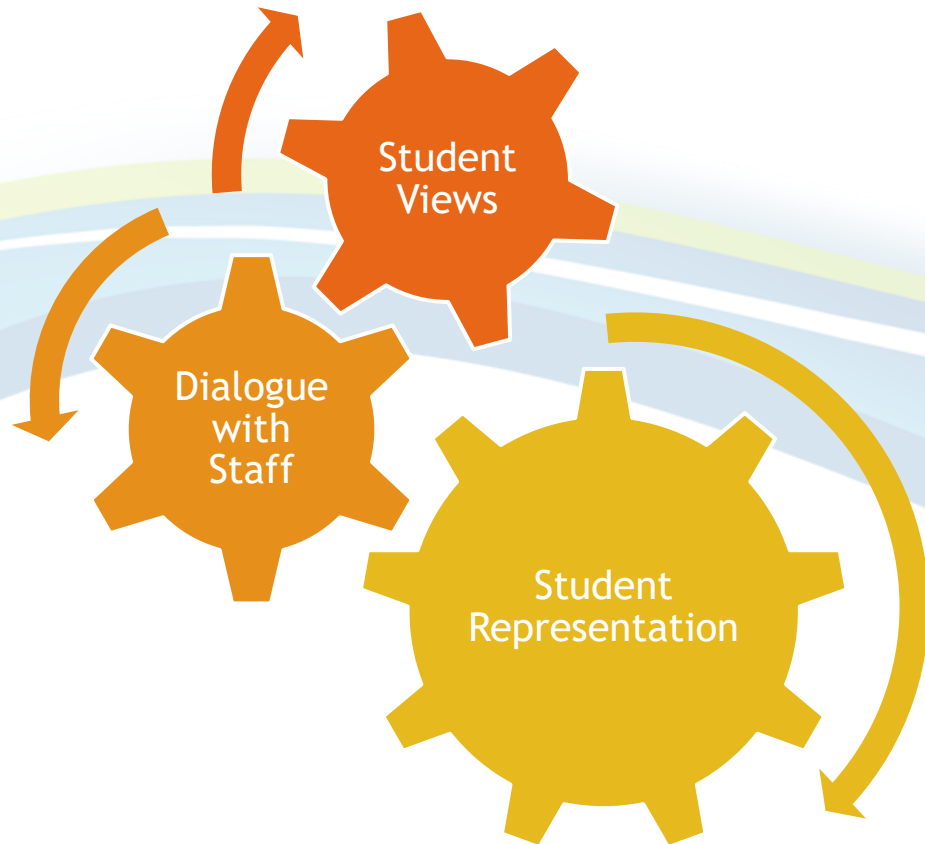
OR

Describe an area where you wish there was greater student engagement or partnership in your institution?



**Student representation is a critical part of student engagement!**

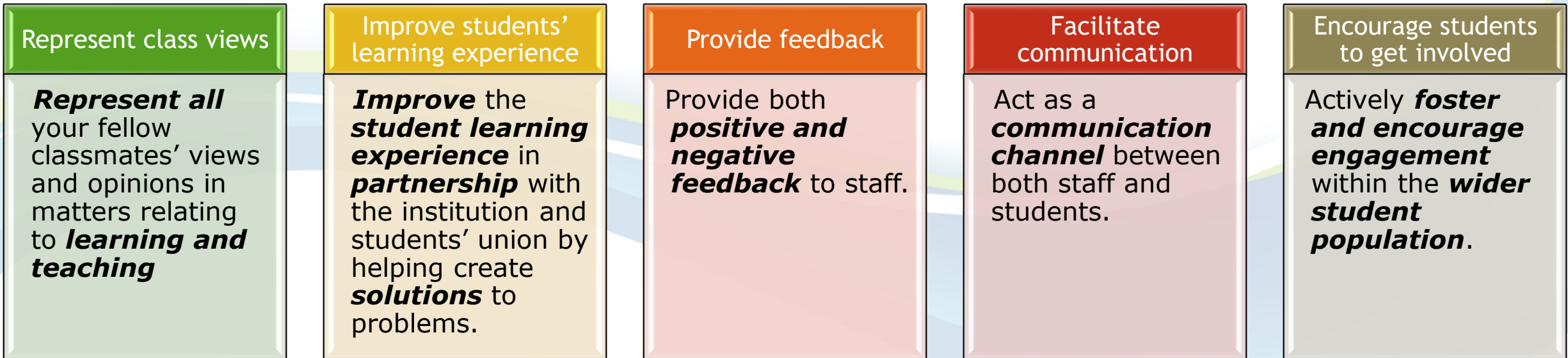
**You are an expert on your learning experience!**



# The Role of the Class Representative

Class representatives work on the frontline of student engagement.

The main responsibilities of a class rep are to:





# Managing the Class Rep Role

- ▶ Remember... as a student you wear many hats, and the class rep role is only one of these!
  - ▶ Balance between the rep role, your studies, and your personal/work life is critical.
  - ▶ Set clear boundaries about when you can be contacted by your class.
  - ▶ Look after yourself to avoid 'burnout'.
  - ▶ You cannot achieve everything on your own, but you can achieve more when you work with others –
    - ▶ Signpost where appropriate.
    - ▶ Collaborate with other reps
    - ▶ Work with your SU / Staff to tackle larger issues

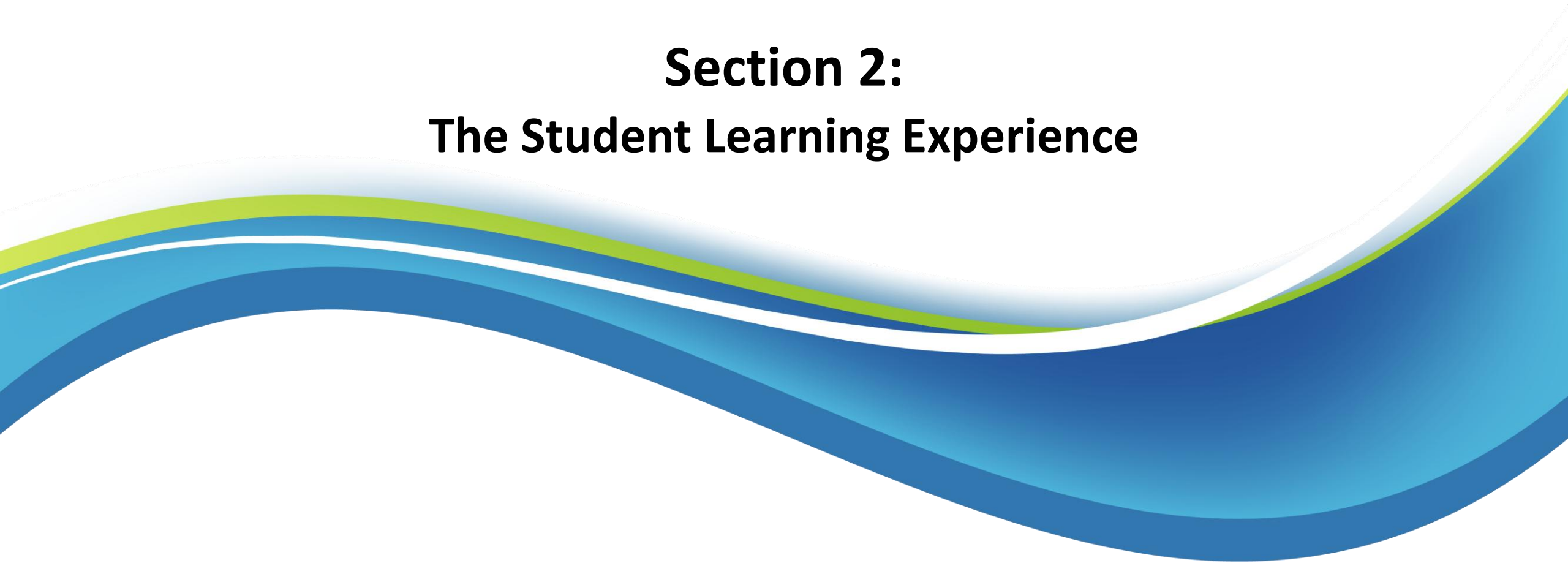




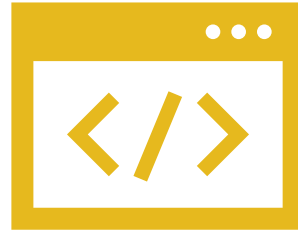
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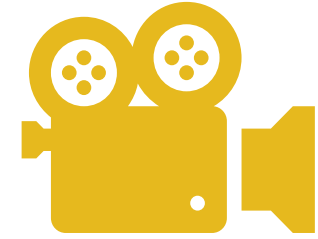
## **Section 2: The Student Learning Experience**



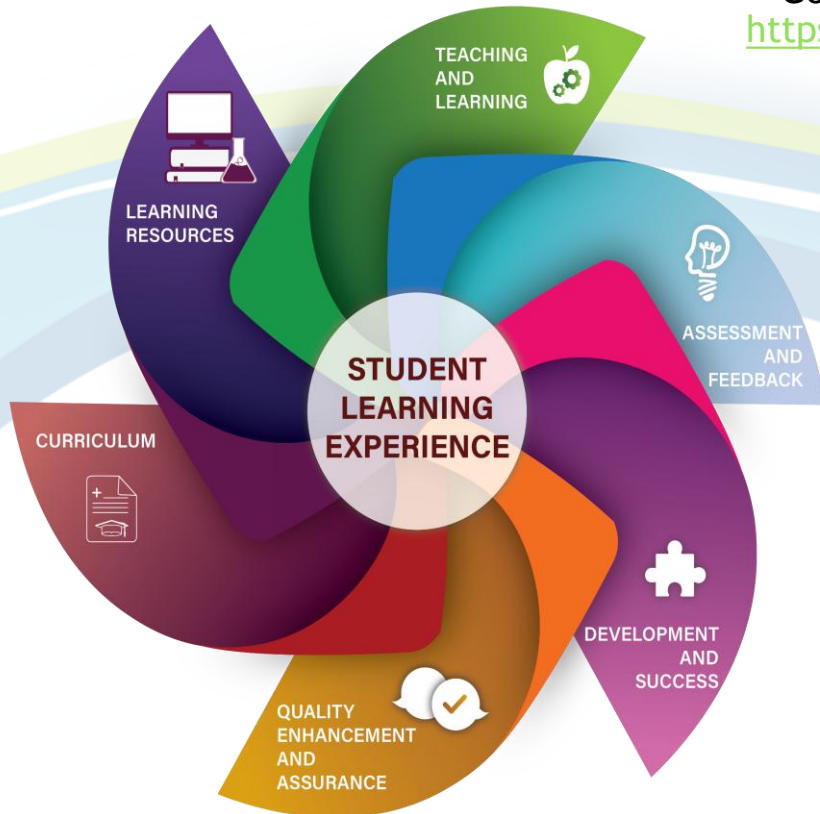
# The Student Learning Experience



Go to the training resources webpage at:  
<https://studentengagement.ie/introductory-class-rep-training-materials/>

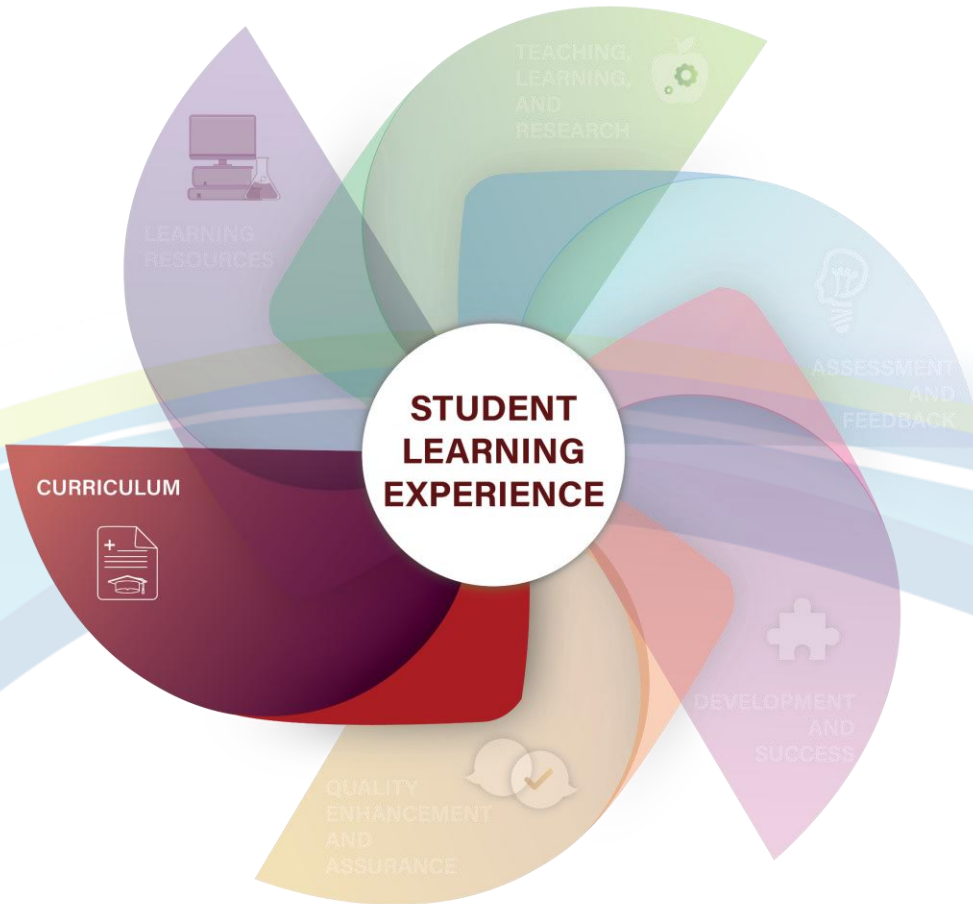


Watch the short video on The Student Learning Experience (Resource 2)



# Curriculum

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



- ▶ How well are students supported in their transition to study at postgraduate level?
- ▶ Is there an appropriate balance between theory and practice (including work placements), or between learning and research?
- ▶ 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

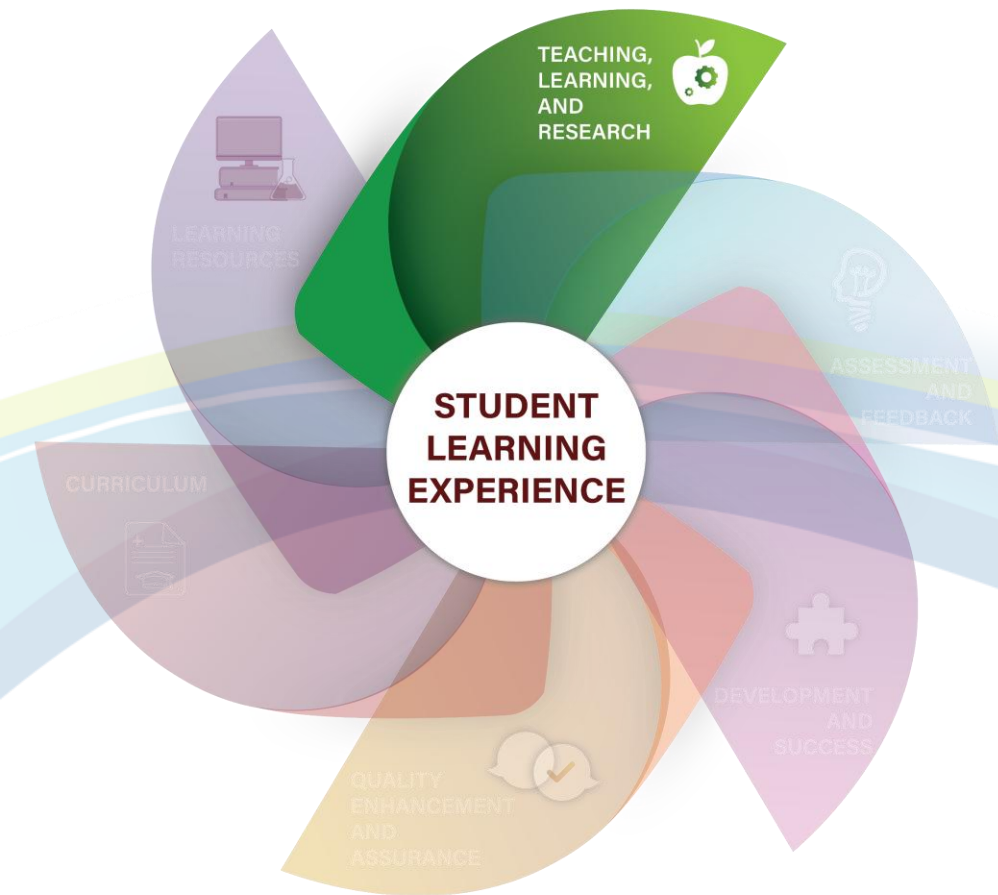
*Everything needed to learn and conduct research effectively and independently*



- ▶ Are there adequate learning resources available (e.g. textbooks, up-to-date materials, digital repositories and eLearning materials, access to research infrastructure?)
- ▶ Is there sufficient access to necessary materials (e.g. lab equipment, art materials, computer software, health and safety equipment)?
- ▶ 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

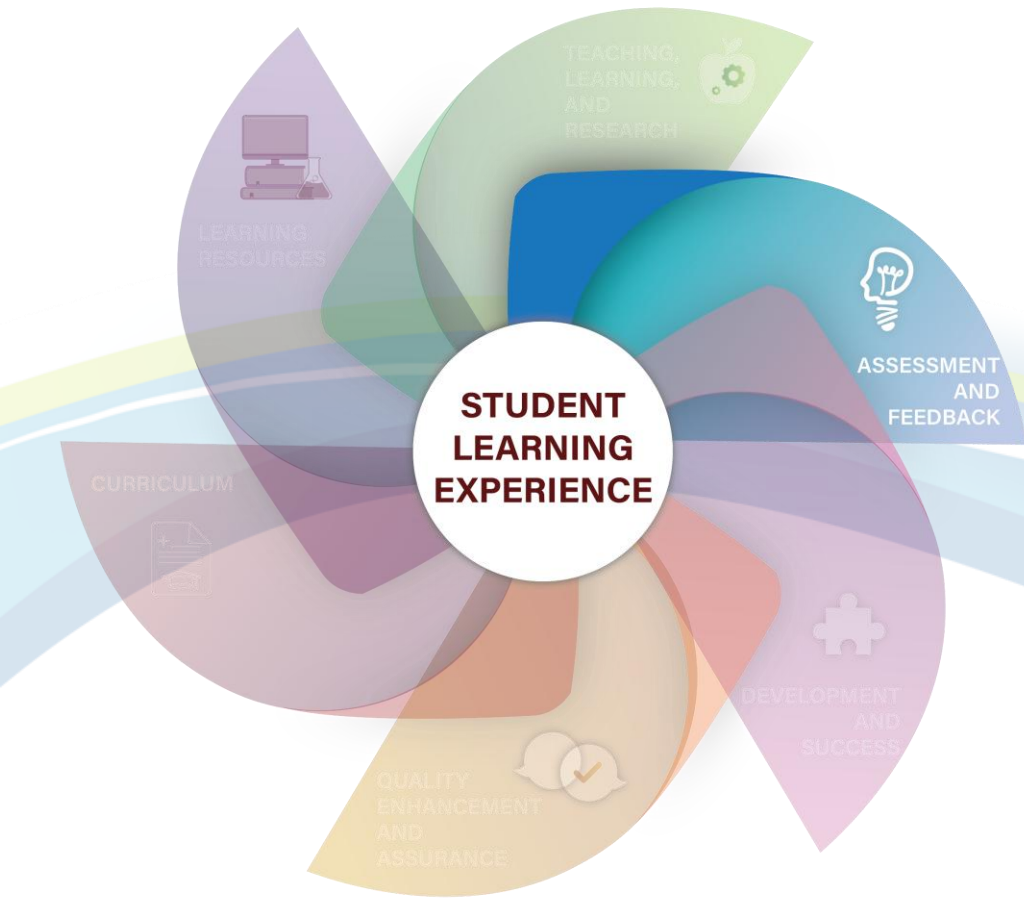
*The way content and skills are taught, as well as how students learn and grow as researchers*



- ▶ Are students guided in the development of technical, digital, academic, and transferable skills?
- ▶ Are students supported in their transition to more independent learning and research?
- ▶ Are expectations and timelines for work placements or research projects clearly outlined?
- ▶ Is teaching material up-to-date and represent current academic, industry, or professional trends or standards?

# Assessment and Feedback

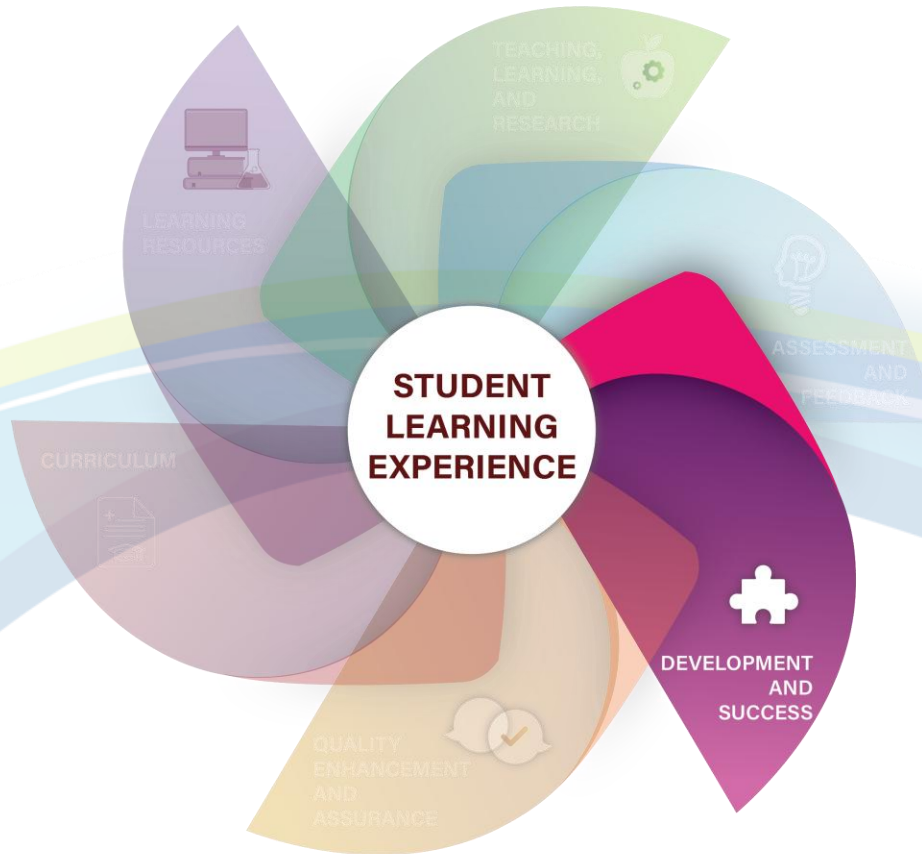
*How learning is measured, and results are communicated back to students*



- ▶ Are assignments staggered across different modules to prevent overload?
- ▶ Are assessments marked fairly and do lecturers / tutors all mark to the same standard?
- ▶ Is feedback provided promptly, and with enough time for students to identify areas for future improvement?
- ▶ 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*

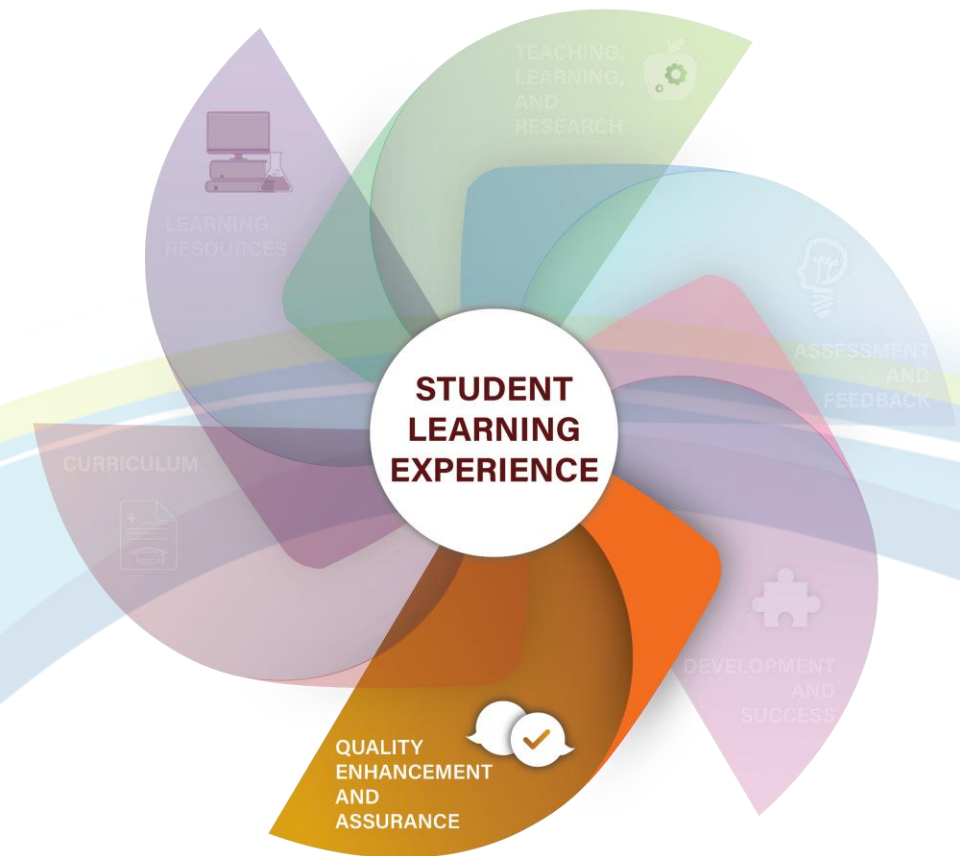


- ▶ Are students aware what career or further study options are available after completing the course?
- ▶ Are there networking opportunities for students to meet peers, academics, and industry leaders from within their institution and beyond?
- ▶ Does the college actively work to remove obstacles to student achievement and participation?
- ▶ Is student diversity recognised through curriculum and learning supports, and are students encouraged to engage in discussions whereby diverse perspectives can be accommodated?
- ▶ 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*



- ▶ Are students actively involved throughout the decision-making process, or merely consulted?
- ▶ Are students told what changes have been made to their course as a result of feedback?
- ▶ Are students invited to sit on committees or get involved on working /focus groups?
- ▶ Are students invited to co-create surveys and feedback forms?

# Using the Student Learning Experience Tool



The SLE is a great starting point for conversations with your classmates and can also be used as a template to design surveys! It also provides vocabulary to facilitate communicating issues with staff.



If feedback from your class mostly concerns one or two areas of the SLE, consider taking steps to gather feedback on the other areas. This ensures that student views and opinions on all the core areas of learning is heard!

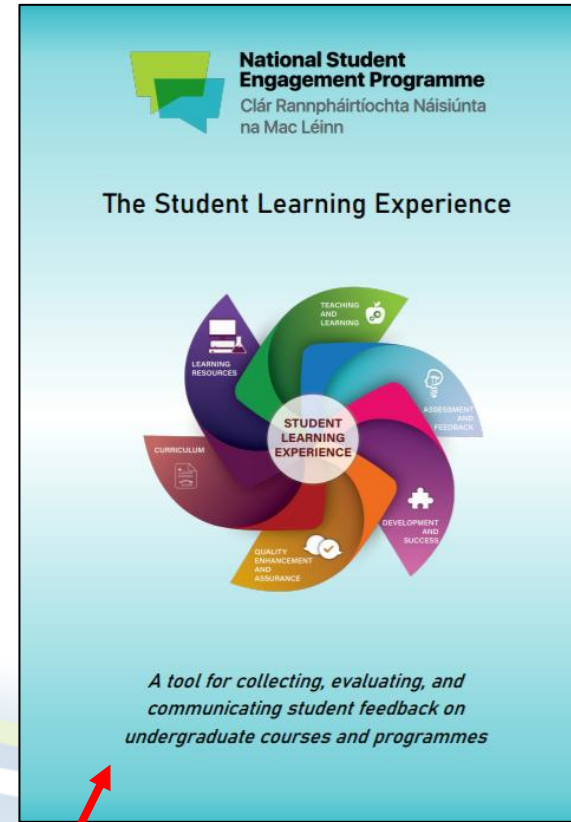


As a class rep your role is centred upon the SLE. If a student comes to you with a concern that is not about the learning experience, then **signpost them to the appropriate service, SU officer, or staff member.**

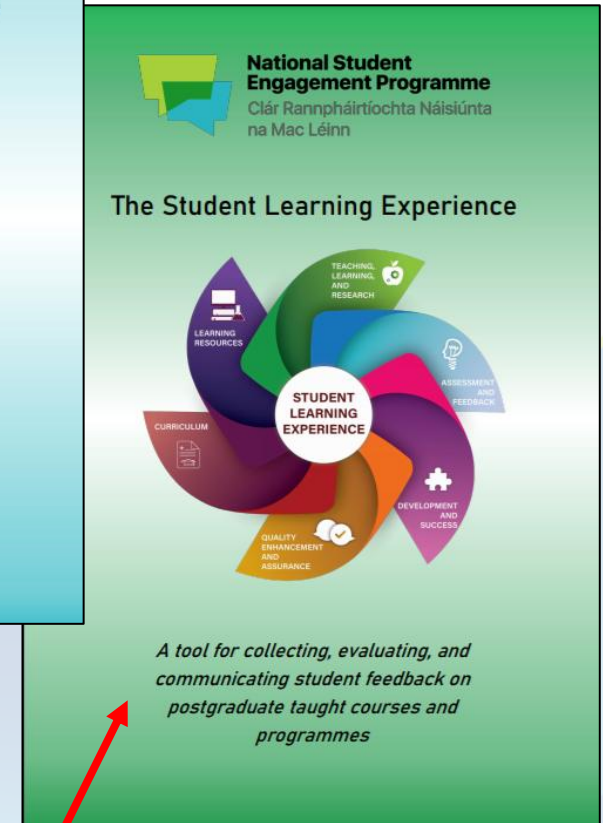
# Check out the full SLE Toolkits

Resource 3 contains links to downloadable / printable SLE toolkits.

- Contains suggestions on how to use the SLE
- Fuller sets of questions to help explore the SLE
- Why not share these with staff members and use it together to discuss modules / your course?



For Undergraduate Courses



For Postgraduate Taught Courses



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## **Section 3: The Class Rep Feedback Cycle**

# The Class Rep Feedback Cycle



Report  
outcomes  
to class



Collect student  
opinions/views



Communicate  
feedback to  
staff

# Step 1 – Collecting Student Opinions/Views

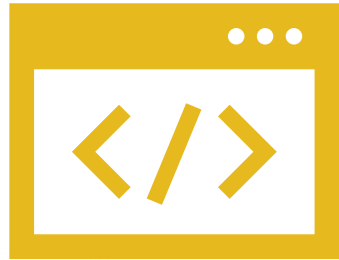
Before you set out to collect feedback from your class – consider the following:

- ▶ What is the best approach based on the issues you need to explore?
- ▶ What kind of feedback do you require?
- ▶ What is the most efficient way to collect the information?
- ▶ What tools will make the information easily presentable? (for you, your classmates, and staff)

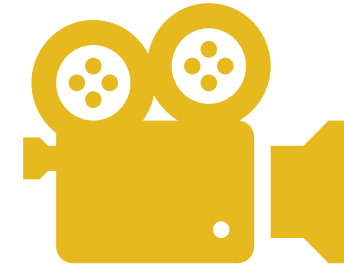
*Always make sure you remove information that identifies individuals*

Method	Pros	Cons
Discussion in Class	Easy to ask people to stay behind after class, or work with the lecturer to integrate the discussion into class time and to help you facilitate the discussion	Not everyone will feel confident speaking up
Class Meeting or ‘Social Meet-ups’ (In person or virtually)	Great way to start conversations and bounce ideas off your class	Not everyone may be able to attend at a particular time, which will limit how much feedback you can collect
Emails	Reach all the students in your class - but avoid making them too long or too frequent, if possible	Not all students will check or respond to their to emails
Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)	Great way to share news, opportunities, or upcoming events and draw attention to meetings or surveys	Not ideal for gathering information or views
WhatsApp or messenger groups	Convenient way to alert the class to other forms of communication, such as an email, meeting, or survey. Also great for small group conversations and quick info	Not ideal for big tasks - information can easily get lost and it can be hard to collate feedback
Virtual Learning Environment (such as Blackboard, Moodle)	Possibilities for class page, discussion board, or group functions	It can be difficult to get people to engage with the VLE, so working with lecturers is key to encourage participation
Surveys (Google Forms, Survey Planet, or Survey Monkey)	Convenient for collecting feedback on specific questions and the data can be easily compiled into a report/statistics	Too many surveys, or surveys that take too long to complete, lead to survey fatigue - and your class may not complete them

## Step 2: Provide Feedback to Staff



Go to the training resources webpage at:  
<https://studentengagement.ie/introductory-class-rep-training-materials/>



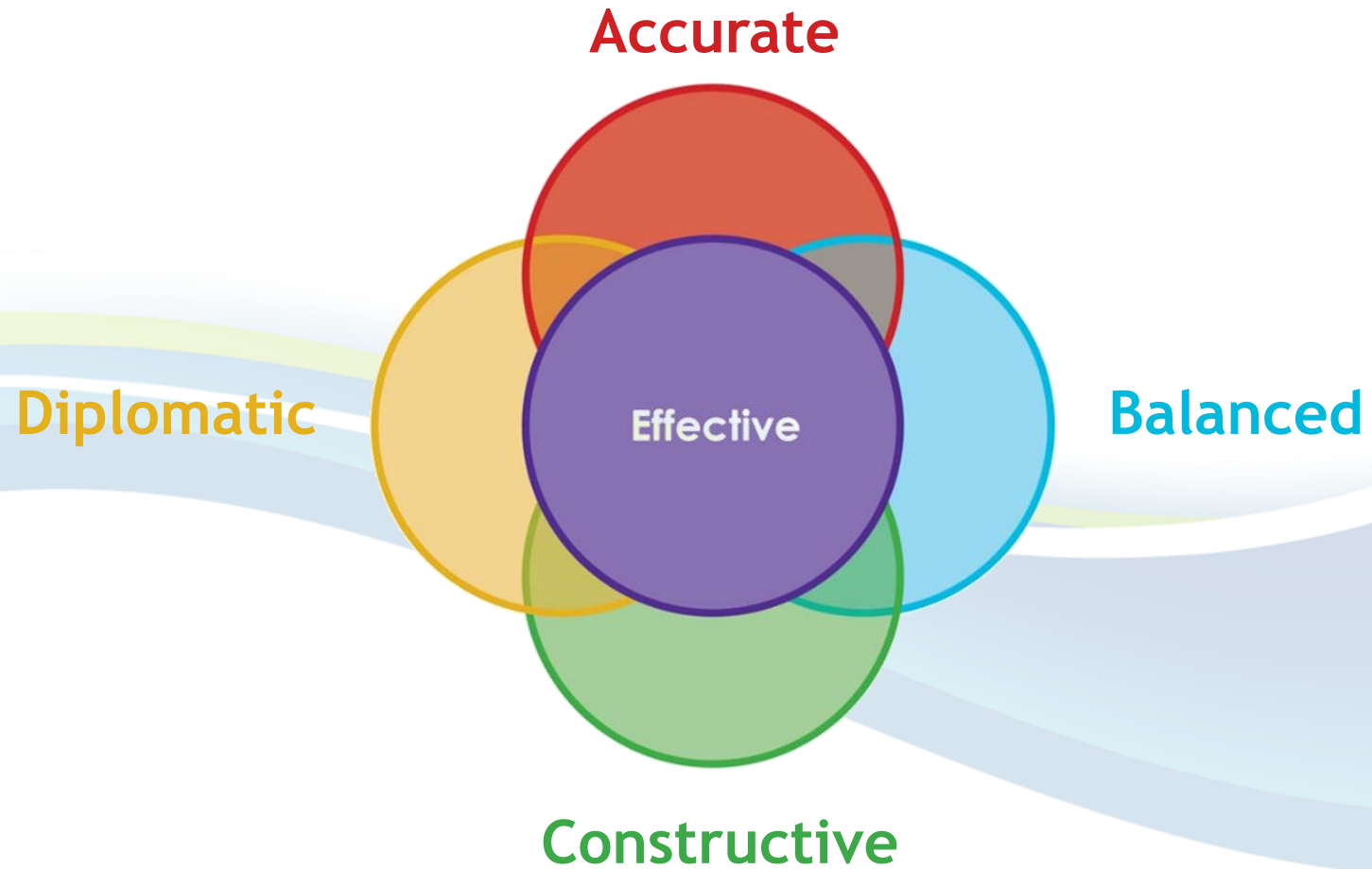
Watch the short video Presenting Feedback - Scenario 1 (Resource 4)

As you watch the video **consider** the following:

- ▶ What do you think went well in this meeting?
- ▶ What might have been done differently?



# The **ABCD** of Effective Feedback



# A is for Accurate

- ▶ **Be specific and provide evidence to back what you say.**
- ▶ **Avoid sweeping generalisations or emotional language.**
- ▶ Where possible **include information about the scale of the issue** (e.g. percentage or number of students affected) to add weight to your argument.
  - ▶ This shows you have accurately researched the issue to find out how it's affecting students.



# B is for Balanced

- ▶ Pass on **both positive and negative feedback** to staff.
  - ▶ Acknowledge where staff or the institution have attempted to address an issue, even if it was not completely successful.
  - ▶ Build in opportunities for your class to provide positive feedback when gathering views and opinions.
- ▶ Avoid being one-sided or biased in any particular direction. **Show that you can appreciate problems from multiple perspectives (empathy).**
- ▶ Being **balanced and fair** will strengthen your argument and help build good working relationships.



# C is for Constructive

- ▶ **Don't just identify the problems, help find a solution too!**
  - ▶ When raising an issue, try to make a suggestion or ask for help in putting one together.
  - ▶ If an issue emerges from class feedback, ask students for suggestions for solving this before approaching staff.
- ▶ Build opportunities to create ongoing partnerships with staff to **work together going forward.**



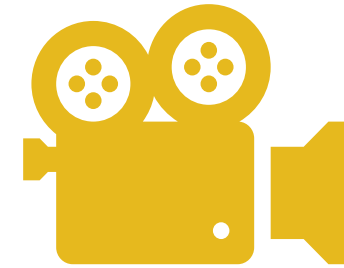
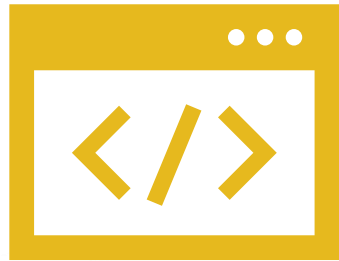
## D is for Diplomatic

- ▶ **Be sensitive to how others may react to negative feedback.** Even if feedback mostly negative, try to present it in a way that does not come across as negative toward a particular person or their work.
- ▶ **Be considerate, calm, and a good listener.** Openness to exploring issues and hearing alternative viewpoints will encourage others to work with you.
- ▶ **Make it about the issue, not people!** Where possible, focus on the impact on students' learning experience in your class.



# Discussion:

## Applying the ABCDs of Effective Feedback



Go to the training resources webpage at:  
<https://studentengagement.ie/introductory-class-rep-training-materials/>

Watch the short video Presenting Feedback - Scenario 2 (resource 5)

- ▶ As you watch this video, consider the following:
  - ▶ In what ways does the class rep use the ABCDs of Effective Feedback?  
**Accurate   Balanced   Constructive   Diplomatic**
  - ▶ Compare the outcomes of this meeting to the first video. What went well?

# Attending a Meeting

## Before

- Make sure you know when and where the meeting is, and read any documents in advance.
- Gather feedback from your class on any agenda items.
- If you need to add an item to the agenda contact the meeting chair.
- Check-in with any other students or class reps that will be attending.

## During

- Be on time and be prepared to take notes. Let the meeting chair know in advance if you'll be late.
- Remember to use the ABCDs of Effective Feedback. Ask questions if you do not understand anything.
- Support fellow students or other class reps in the meeting.

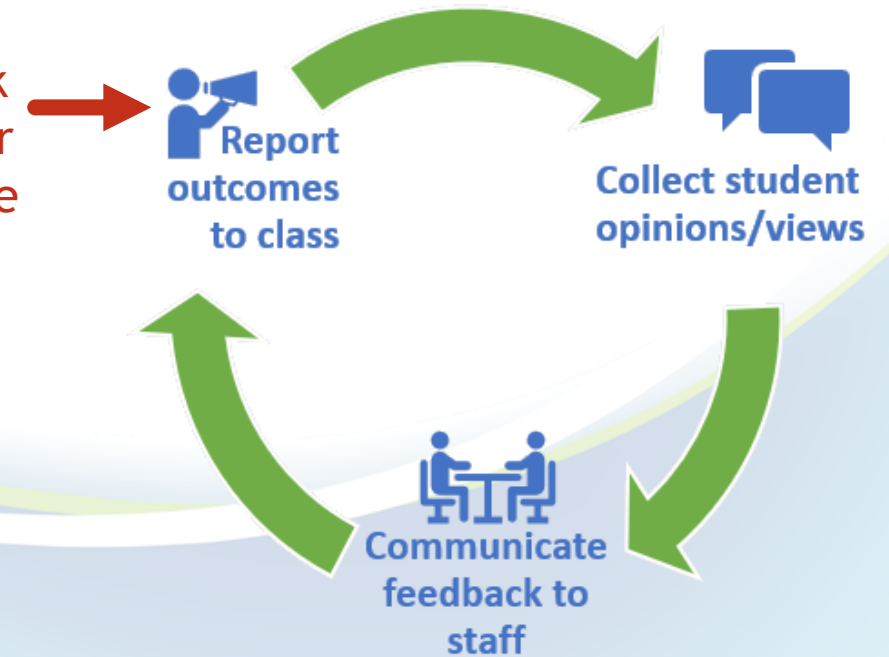
## After

- Check the minutes after they have been circulated, and do anything you have been asked to do.
- Are there any areas of concern? Did you achieve what you hoped to? Plan what to do next.
- Report back to your classmates.

# Step 3: Report outcomes back to your class

- ▶ When your class sees that their feedback is acted upon and produces results, they will be more likely to engage in the future!
  - ▶ Communicate what feedback emerged from step 1, and what potential solutions were developed in stage 2.
  - ▶ This opens the door to gather feedback on the solutions that have been made to assess if they are working.

Don't forget to close the feedback loop by telling your class what you have achieved!!







## Join our Mailing List

Training updates

Paid opportunities to work with NStEP  
News on NStEP's work across higher education



## Student Engagement Recognition Awards

Use your Introductory Training digital badge to work towards a national Student Engagement Recognition Award for Academic Representation.



## Check out NStEP's Student Portal

Resources

Book a space on one of NStEP's other training modules

Online self-study modules

# Keep Connected!

A copy of this presentation can be downloaded under **Resource 6**.

It also contains links to more information and our mailing list sign up form.

The student portal can be accessed at [studentengagement.ie/student-training](http://studentengagement.ie/student-training)

# Questions?



**Please remember to fill out the  
Feedback Form!**



Your milestone award for completing NStEP's Introductory Class Rep Training will be issued to the email address you registered with on Eventbrite within the next three weeks.

If you do not receive your award after this time, please email [nstepdevelopment@usi.ie](mailto:nstepdevelopment@usi.ie)