



# National Student Engagement Programme

Clár Rannpháirtíochta Náisiúnta  
na Mac Léinn

## Representing Diversity Training

Developed by NStEP Student Associate, Muireann Nic Corcráin

# Housekeeping

This is a safe space for learning and developing new skills

- ▶ This means that we share and learn in a tolerant and respectful way
- ▶ Share your experiences without identifying others
- ▶ Make space for others
- ▶ Challenge ideas, not the people voicing them
- ▶ No judgements!
- ▶ No one person is the same – every group is made up of individuals
- ▶ Acknowledge that everyone has different experiences and feelings
- ▶ Speak up and actively listen to others



## 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

By the end of this training session, you will be able to...



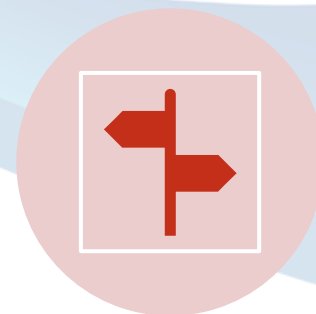
Explain unconscious bias and discrimination, and identify strategies for addressing these in higher education.



Identify strategies for addressing microaggressions and cultivating an inclusive learning environment.



Describe Universal Design for Learning, and how these principles can be applied in your role.



Explain the importance of signposting when addressing EDI related issues.



# Key terms to consider

- ▶ Equality- Equality of rights, opportunity and outcomes. It is not necessarily about uniformity.
- ▶ Diversity- Understanding that each individual is unique and celebrating their individual differences. These differences can be along the dimensions of race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation etc.
- ▶ Inclusion- Belonging, an essential part of the group. Uniqueness is valued.

**“Diversity is being invited to the party:  
Inclusion is being asked to dance”**

- Verna Myers





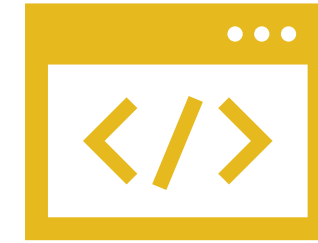
# **National Student Engagement Programme**

Clár Rannpháirtíochta Náisiúnta  
na Mac Léinn

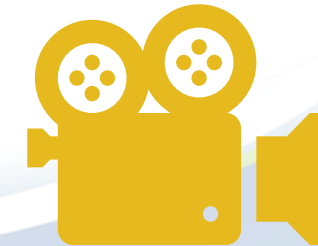
## **Section 1:**

### **Unconscious Bias and Discrimination**

# Unconscious Bias



Go to the training resources webpage at:  
<https://studentengagement.ie/representing-diversity-training-materials/>



Watch the short video introducing unconscious bias (resource 1)

# What is Unconscious Bias?

- ▶ Patterns, assumptions, attitudes and stereotypes that we make without necessarily being aware.
- ▶ We are ALL biased, this is a normal part of human brain function, but it can often reinforce stereotypes or influence our actions and decisions without us realising.
- ▶ Biases are easily triggered under cognitive or emotional load – when our conscious thoughts are overloaded it may mean we make more decisions unconsciously.



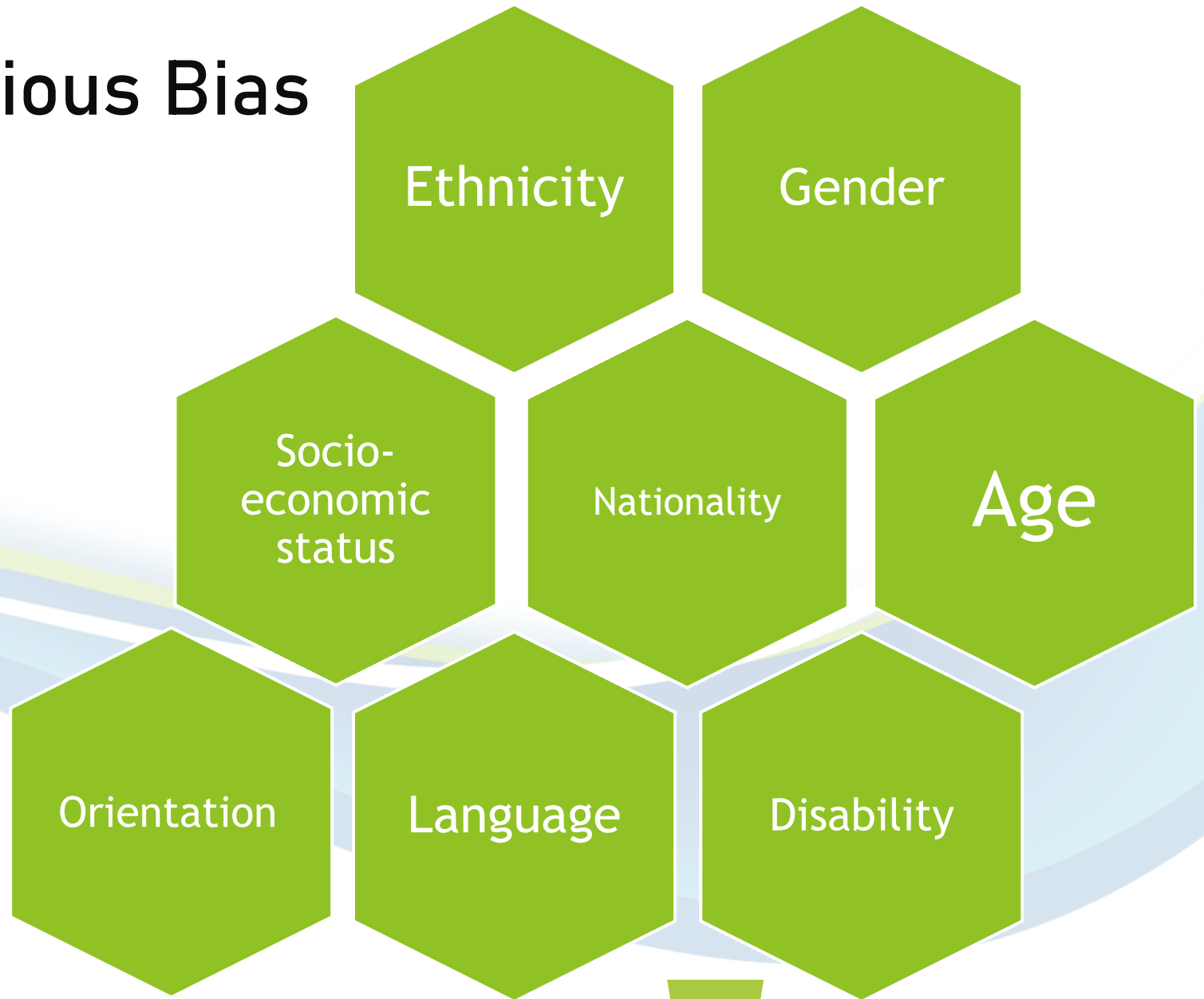
What do you see?





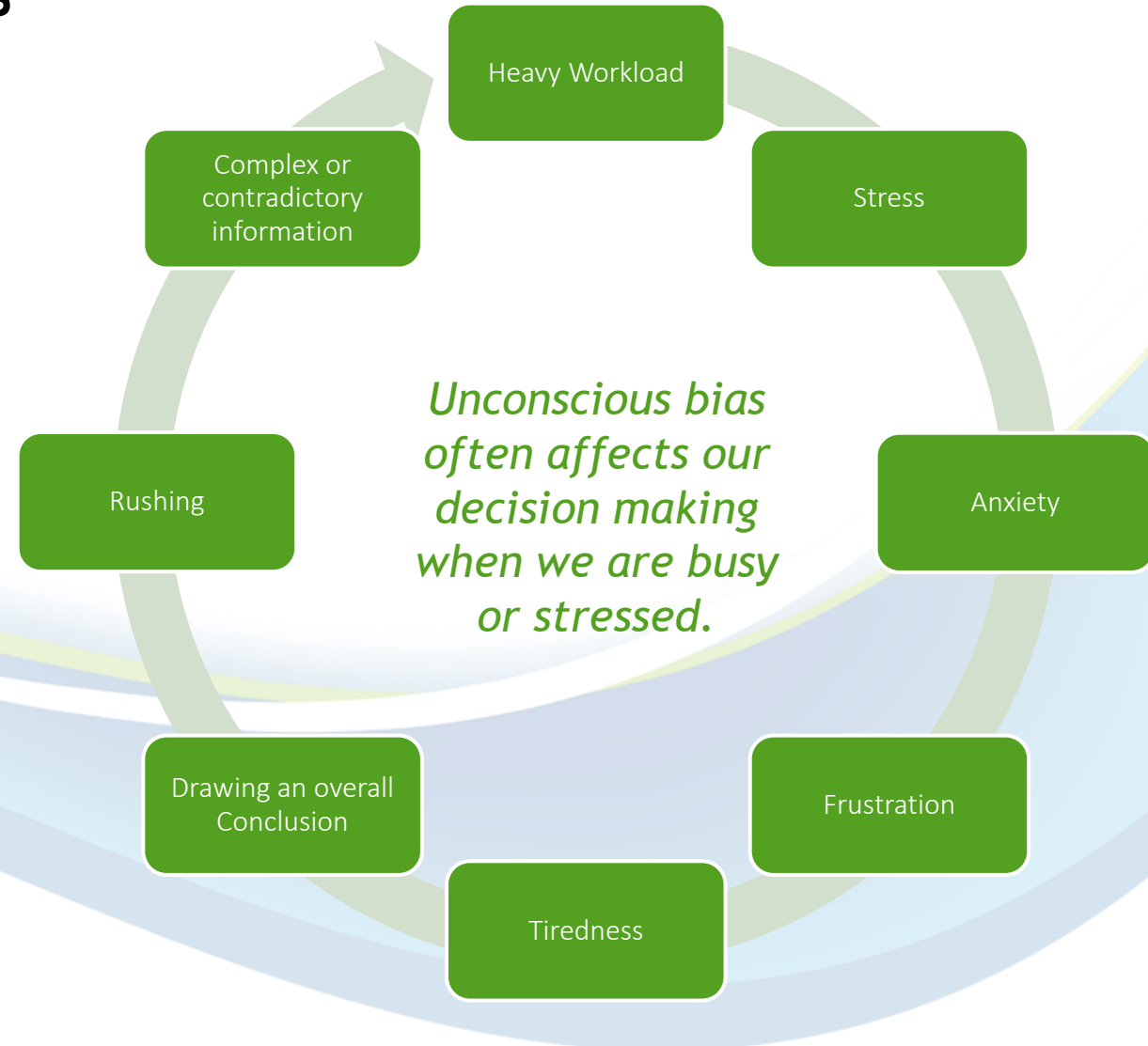
# Examples of Unconscious Bias

- ▶ How might unconscious bias manifest itself in the experiences of students and staff in your college?
- ▶ As a class rep, or student representing other students, how can you address unconscious bias?



# Tips for addressing Unconscious Bias

- ▶ Be aware of your own habits and biases.
- ▶ Check your language: your words, or even humour, may not mean the same to others. If this happens, acknowledge the mistake.
- ▶ Actively challenge stereotypes both in your own actions/assumptions, and to those around you.
- ▶ Get to know different perspectives by extending your network and learning from others from across the diversity spectrum
- ▶ Avoid triggers by making key decisions when you have the time and ability to think them through and make them consciously.



# Circle of Trust

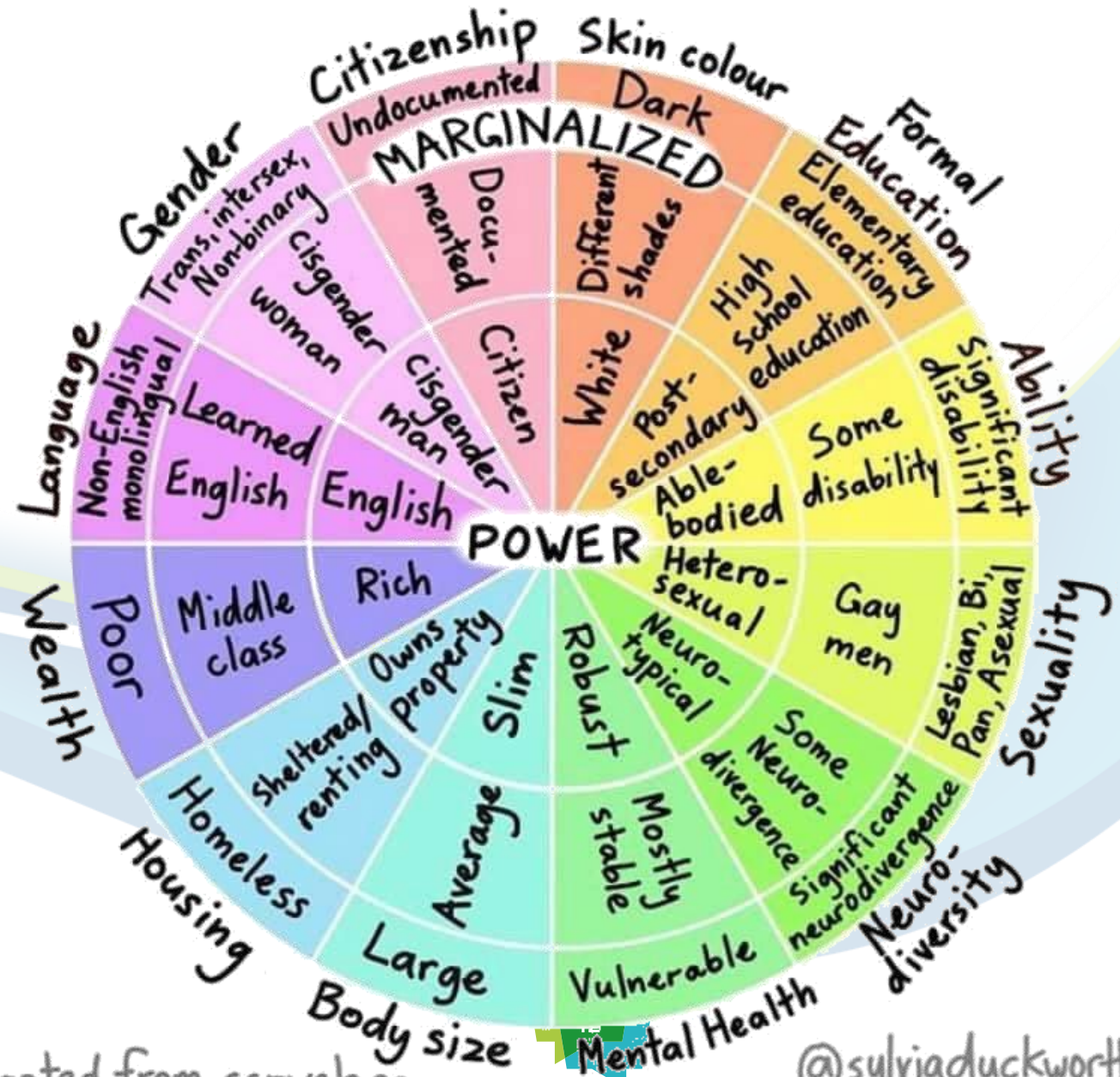
- ▶ Write down the names of friends in college.
- ▶ Describe people in these areas: gender/age/ethnicity/sexual orientation/disability/socio-economic background/other
- ▶ What have you learned about those you are close with
- ▶ How diverse is your Circle of Trust?



# WHEEL OF POWER/PRIVILEGE

## Discrimination

- ▶ In order to understand diversity, we need to understand discrimination.
- ▶ Discrimination is the act of making unjustified distinctions between people based on the groups, classes, or other categories to which they belong or are perceived to belong.
- ▶ Discriminatory behaviours take many forms, but they all involve some form of exclusion, marginalisation, or rejection



Adapted from ccrweb.ca

@sylviaduckworth

Historically, what groups might have been excluded from higher education? How might have this shaped structures in place?

Historical and Structural

How do institutions exclude groups of people – or favour some groups of people over others?

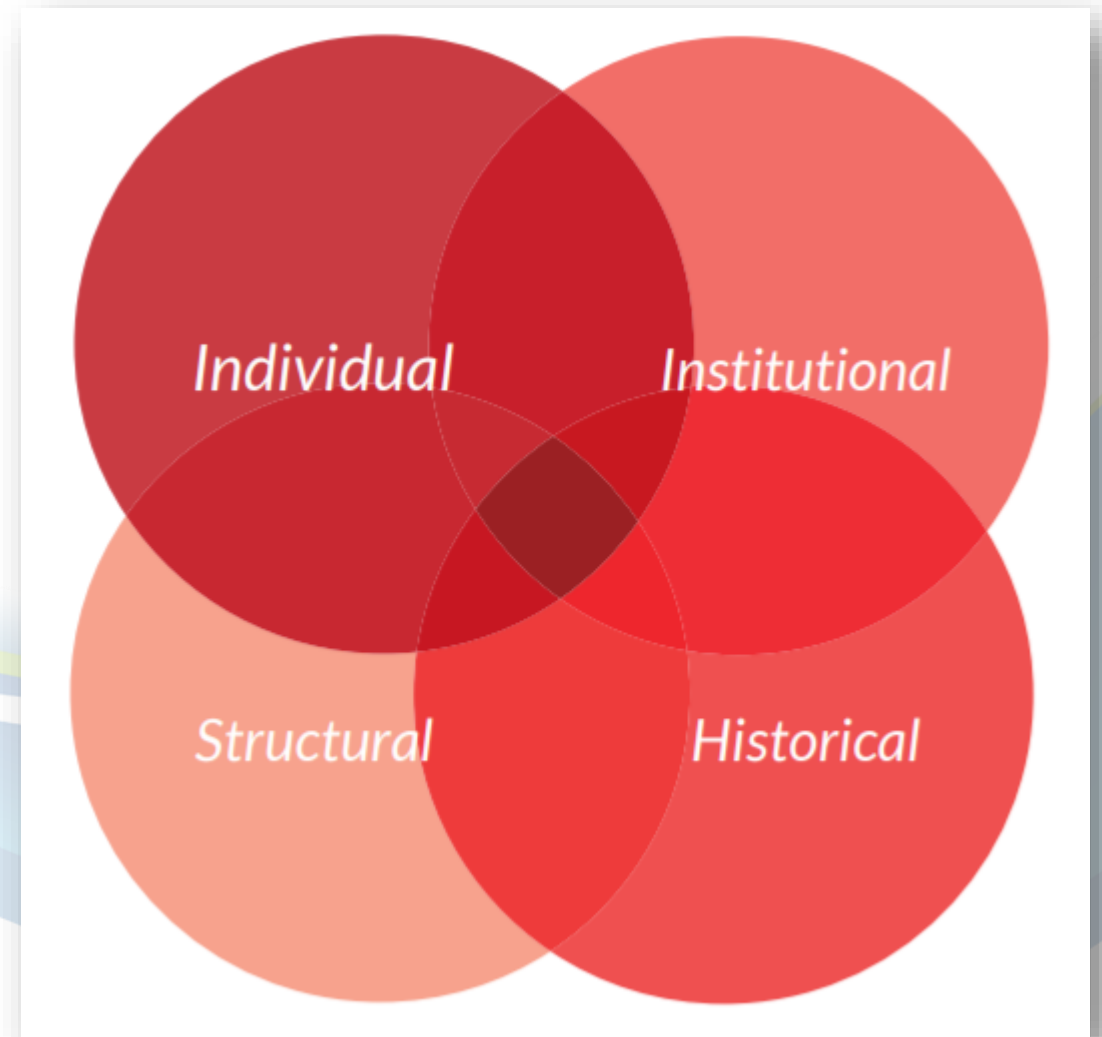
Institutional

In what ways might individual people contribute to discrimination in the learning community?

Individual

Often discrimination is intertwined across different areas within higher education – making it difficult to tackle.

*Your time as a student representative is short - so how can you tackle discrimination?*



# iReport Tool – Tackling Racism

- ▶ iReport is a reporting tool, run by the Irish Network Against Racism (INAR).
- ▶ 600 racist incidents were reported in 2022. This is just scratching the surface of racism in Ireland.
- ▶ Some higher education institutions in Ireland now recognised as iReport centres.
- ▶ The Union of Students in Ireland is an iReport Centre (equality@usi.ie)





# **National Student Engagement Programme**

Clár Rannpháirtíochta Náisiúnta  
na Mac Léinn

## **Section 2:**

### **The Individual: Addressing Microaggressions and Promoting Inclusivity**

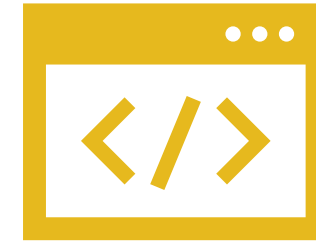


# Microaggressions

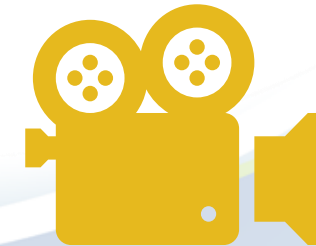
- ▶ Microaggressions are negative verbal or non-verbal behaviours that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative attitudes toward certain groups.
- ▶ They may be intentional or unintentional
- ▶ These may be presented as:
  - ▶ Compliments
  - ▶ Put-downs
  - ▶ Jokes
  - ▶ Non-verbal / body language

*Can you think of an example of a microaggression that you have heard at your college?*

# Responding to Microaggressions



Go to the training resources webpage at:  
<https://studentengagement.ie/representing-diversity-training-materials/>



Watch the short video on responding to microaggressions (resource 2)

# Building Inclusivity

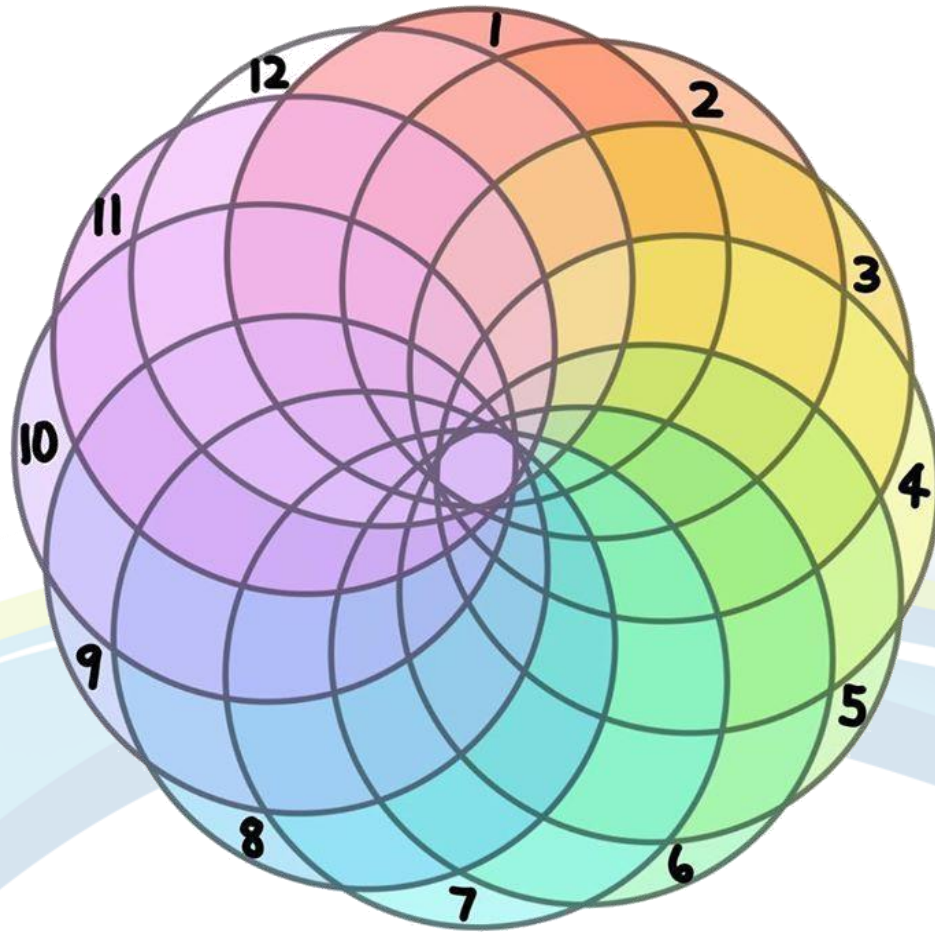
In addition to addressing microaggressions, the following will also help you to create a more inclusive learning community:

- ▶ Choose your words wisely! Use person-centred language (example: disabled person or person with a disability), be aware of pronoun use, and eliminate out-dated/offensive language from your vocabulary.
- ▶ Be open to discussing your attitudes and biases, and be prepared to learn more.
- ▶ If in doubt- ask! Everyone is different so it's always best to check.
- ▶ Don't be afraid of making mistakes. Acknowledge them, apologise, and reassure anyone affected that you are an ally.

# Examples of Inclusive Language

<b>INSTEAD OF USING:</b>	<b>TRY WRITING:</b>
GUYS (FOR A MIXED GROUP)	EVERYONE, FOLKS
GIRLS (FOR ADULTS), FEMALES	WOMEN
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, MEN AND WOMEN	EVERYONE, FRIENDS, COLLEAGUES
SHE/HE	THEY (UNLESS PRONOUN KNOWN)
MINORITIES	PEOPLE OF COLOR, MARGINALIZED, OR UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS
ELDERLY PEOPLE	OLDER ADULTS, ADULTS
CHAIRMAN (AND OTHER GENDER-BIASED TITLES)	CHAIRPERSON
POWWOW	MEETING, GET TOGETHER
NORMAL(WHEN REFERRING TO SEXUAL IDENTITY)	CISGENDER
TRANSGENDER (AS A NOUN)	TRANSGENDER PERSON

# INTERSECTIONALITY



- 1 Race
- 2 Ethnicity
- 3 Gender identity
- 4 Class
- 5 Language
- 6 Religion
- 7 Ability
- 8 Sexuality
- 9 Mental health
- 10 Age
- 11 Education
- 12 Attractiveness  
(...and many more...)

- ▶ Intersectionality describes how race, class, gender, and other individual characteristics “intersect” with one another and overlap.
  - ▶ Example: women experience discrimination, but a disabled woman may have a very different experience of discrimination.

*How might intersectionality shape the way in which students in your class experience higher education?*

Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it locks and intersects. It is the acknowledgement that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and privilege.

– Kimberlé Crenshaw –

# Let's Get Social!

It is easier to use inclusive language and practices when we meet people from across the intersections of society

- ▶ What are some ways that you can cultivate an inclusive environment that fosters a sense of belonging through social engagement?



Consider:

- The way you use language: *Is it accessible and easily understood by everyone?*
- Participation: *Do people from a variety of backgrounds interact in your class – both in academic and social contexts?*
- Barriers: *What barriers may prevent some people from being active members of a learning community?*

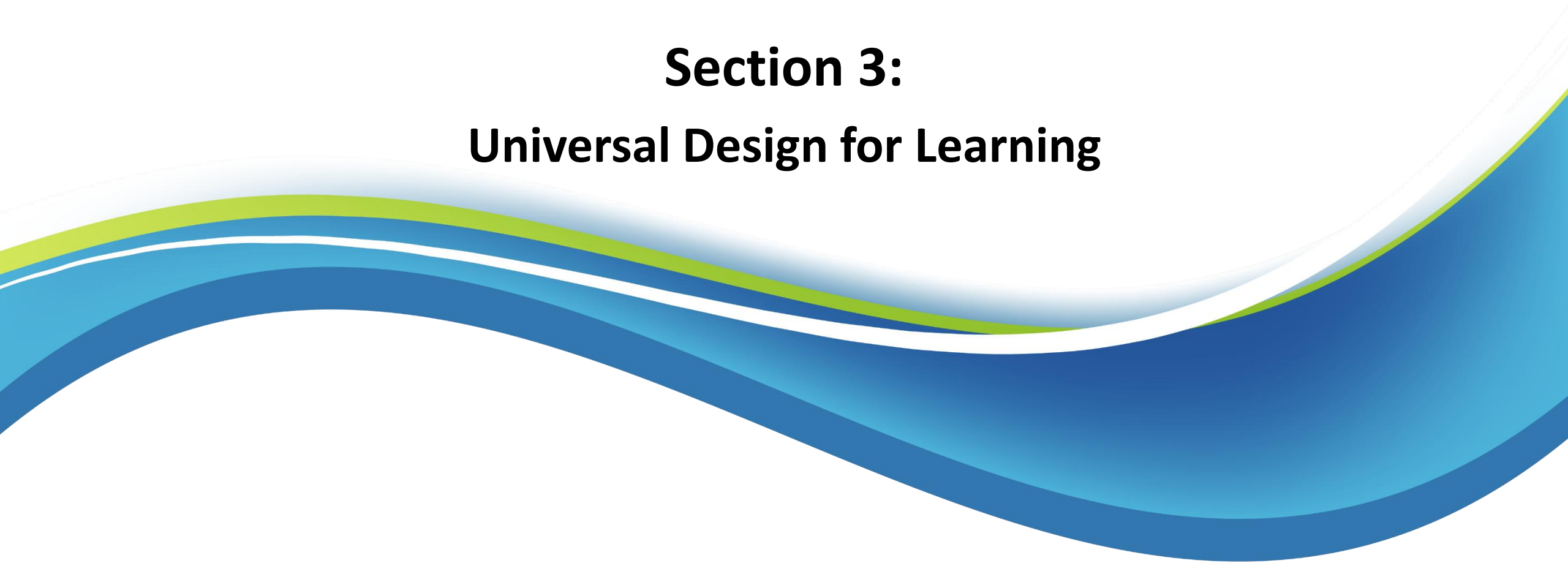




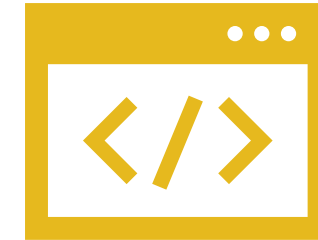
# **National Student Engagement Programme**

Clár Rannpháirtíochta Náisiúnta  
na Mac Léinn

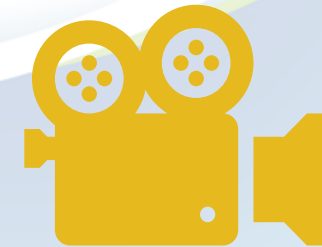
## **Section 3: Universal Design for Learning**



# What is Universal Design for Learning?



Go to the training resources webpage at:  
[<https://studentengagement.ie/representing-diversity-training-materials/>]



Watch the short video on What is UDL?  
(resource 3)



# The Three Principles of UDL:

*Can you identify ways in which these principles can be actioned?*

## Multiple Means of Engagement

Stimulate motivation and sustained enthusiasm for learning by promoting various ways of engaging with material.



## Multiple Means of Representation

Present information and content in a variety of ways to support understanding by students with different learning styles/abilities.



## Multiple Means of Action/Expression

Offer options for students to demonstrate their learning in various ways (e.g. allow choice of assessment type).



# Case Study



- ▶ A student in your class contacts you to say that they are struggling with online learning because they find the materials hard to access on the student VLE as they are visually impaired and find it difficult to follow live lecture slides.
- ▶ When the materials are examined, the PDF notes are in very small font and the lecture recordings are of a poor quality.
- ▶ *What steps can you take to address these issues?*



# Tips for Using UDL as a Student Representative



To ensure you are engaging as many people as possible, it is important that the content you are sharing with your peers is accessible to everyone.



Easy ways to incorporate UDL into your role as class rep: use an accessible font in your messages, plain and simple language that gets the message across.



Use descriptive text when using pictures and images. You can add 'alt text' on social media or add descriptions to your posts.



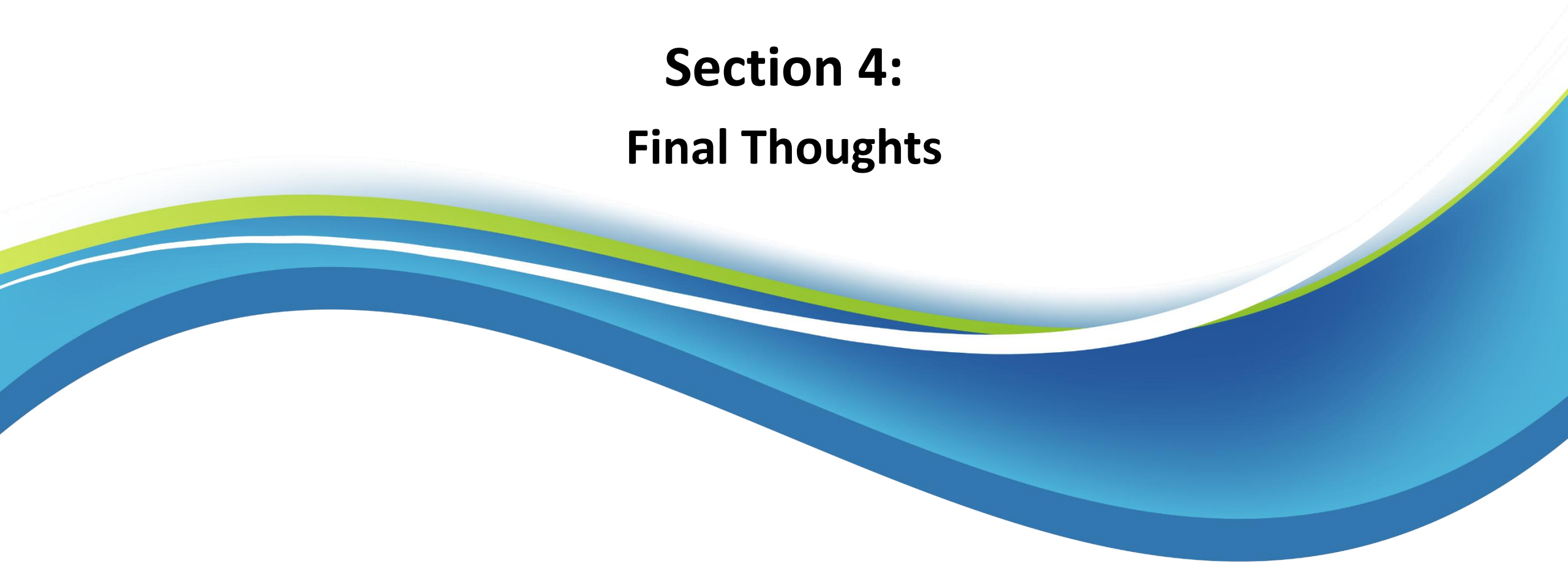
Everyone has a different way of processing information. Use clear design and simple language. Be open to answering questions for clarification.



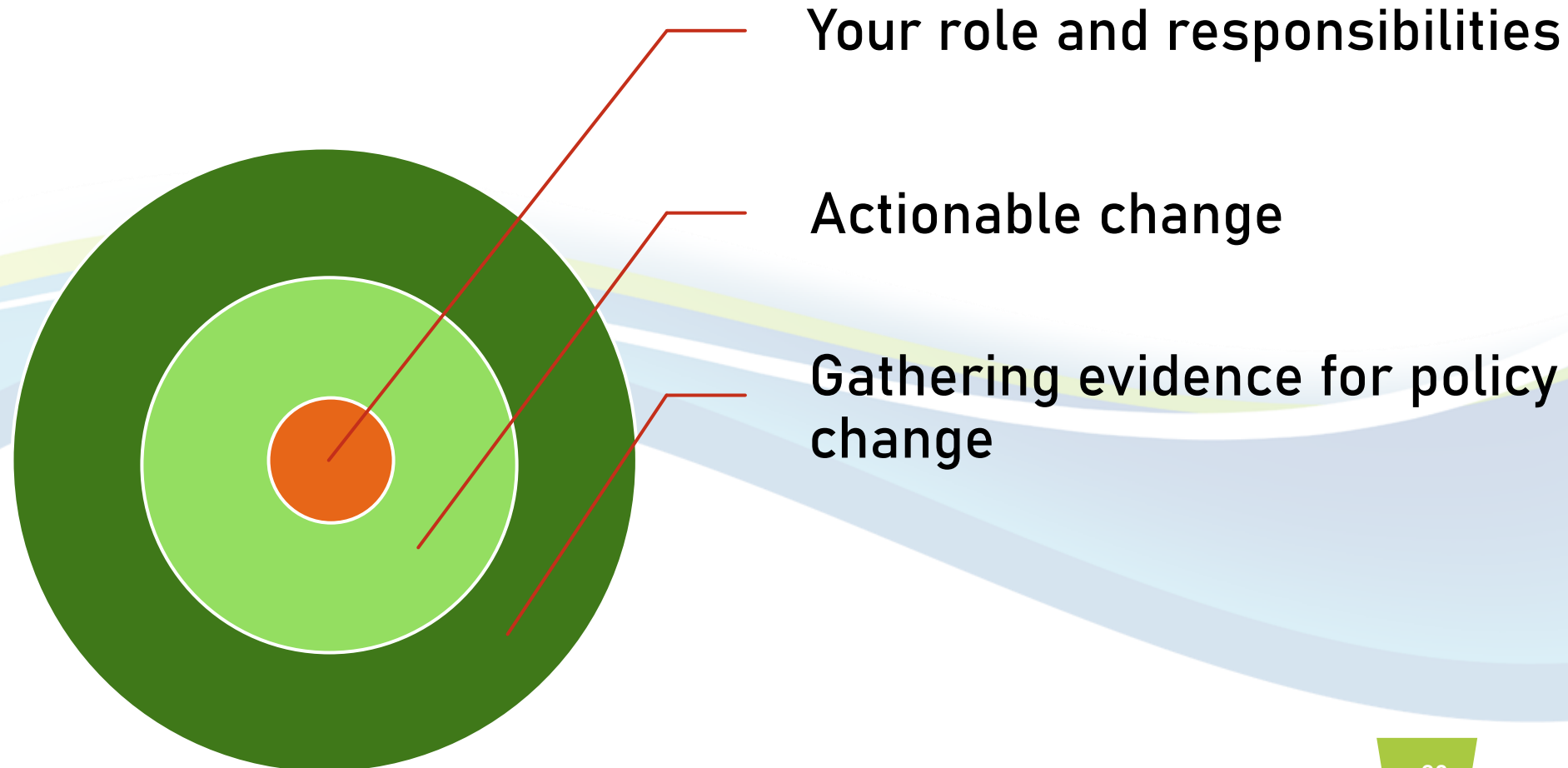
# **National Student Engagement Programme**

Clár Rannpháirtíochta Náisiúnta  
na Mac Léinn

## **Section 4: Final Thoughts**



# Student Representative Sphere of Influence



# Signposting- Key People in Institutions

It's important to remember that you shouldn't handle sensitive or difficult issues yourself. Start by reaching out to your Students' Union if you are unsure of where to turn to.

- ▶ Students' Union officers
- ▶ Personal Tutor/Senior Tutor
- ▶ Disability Officer
- ▶ Access Office
- ▶ Head of School
- ▶ Other institutional staff



Informal action

Formal action

# Remember!

- ▶ Nobody is perfect- you will make mistakes. (And that's ok!)
- ▶ The way you respond to challenging situations will help you grow and become more confident in addressing uncomfortable situations. Apologise, correct yourself, and make it a learning opportunity.
- ▶ Use these tools to begin conversations and to take part in opportunities to engage a wider group of people.
- ▶ Your role as a student representative can be a stepping stone to better understanding your peers and the wider student community.
- ▶ The most important thing to do is *listen, be inclusive, and empower others to be heard.*





## Join our Mailing List

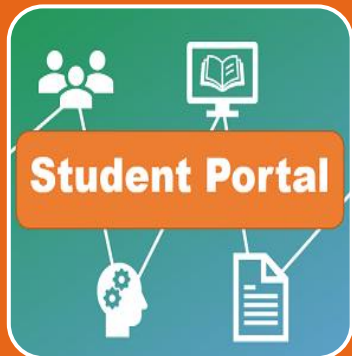
Training updates

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



## Student Engagement Recognition Awards

Use your Representing Diversity 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 4**.

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 *Representing Diversity* 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)