



**National Student  
Engagement Programme**  
Clár Rannpháirtíochta Náisiúnta  
na Mac Léinn



**Maynooth  
University**  
National University  
of Ireland Maynooth

# National Student Engagement Network Event

Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2025  
Maynooth University

**“From Participation to Partnership:  
Enhancing Student Engagement in Higher  
Education”**



# Welcome, welcome, welcome!

Thank **you** for taking the time out of your busy schedules to join us today!

A huge thank you to Maynooth University and MSU for hosting today's event. And a special thank you to Gemma Middleton for all her assistance in booking and preparing for today.

# Niamh Kennedy

## Programme Manager

### Qualifications & Experience

- LLB, LLM, PhD
- Undergraduate and postgrad student rep
- Student Associate (National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning)
- NStEP Student Trainer
- Quality Assurance Student Reviewer
- Postgraduate Student Associate Intern (NStEP, 2021 - 2022)
- Teacher of Criminology



# Rachael Sarsfield Ryan

## Development Co-Ordinator



### Qualifications & Experience

- BSc. in Applied Psychology
- Deputy President & Education Officer in IADT Students' Union (IADTSU) 2020/21 and 2021/22
- Advisory Board Member for Irish Open Access Publishers (IOAP)

[nstepdevelopment@usi.ie](mailto:nstepdevelopment@usi.ie)



# Train our student trainers

Arrange networking events and conferences

## Organise training sessions

Liaise with students and staff in Higher Education



### Organise QA Student Reviewer Pool

Drivers of student engagement at a national level

## Develop resources for staff and students

Facilitate institutional development workshops

## Develop NStEP strategies

# And more....





## National Student Engagement Programme

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National Student Engagement Network

7<sup>th</sup> May 2025

Maynooth University



# Maynooth University

National University  
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Time	Session
10.00 am – 10.30 am	<b>Registration, Refreshments and Networking</b>
10.30 am – 10.50 am	Welcome, NStEP Update and Census Project
10.50 am – 11.10 am	From Agenda Item to Impact: Embedding Staff-Student and Student-Student Engagement Across a Faculty Alex Candon, DCU
11.10 am – 11.30 am	ReFridge: From Food Relief to Co-Creation – A Student-Led Social Enterprise Driving Partnership and Change Bohdan Yeriemienko, TU Dublin
11.30 am – 11.50 am	UpSkill Initiatives at MU: Student Success Micro Internship Programme & The SPUR Supporter Programme Máire Buckley, Rebecca Boyle and Seamus O'Neill, Maynooth University
11.50 am – 12.00 pm	Keeping Student Engagement Opportunities Relevant and Scalable Zuzana O'Sullivan, MTU
12.00 pm – 12.30 pm	Panel Discussion with Students with Disabilities AHEAD/ USI Students with Disabilities Advisory Group 2025
12.30 pm – 1.30pm	<b>Lunch and Networking</b>
1.30 pm – 1.50 pm	Student Volunteer Student Advisory Panel Faith Holmes, Tommy Burke and Uliana Vasiliuk, StudentVolunteer.ie
1.50 pm – 2.00 pm	Engaging Postgraduate Students Sarah Fitzpatrick, USI
2.00 pm – 2.15 pm	Voices at the Table: A Partnership Approach to Institutional Project Planning Eddie Corr, Maynooth University
2.15 pm – 2.35pm	Autism Summer Programme Katie Quinn, AsIAm and Fiona Earley, DCU
2.35 pm – 3.00 pm	NStEP Strategy Discussion and Review
3.00 pm	<b>Closing Remarks and Photographs</b>



# 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!**

## Our Vision

To inform, guide and support an Irish higher education landscape that **fosters student-staff partnership**, at both the national and institutional level, by **enhancing student engagement**.

## 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 create and sustain meaningful partnership with students**.

## Strategic Priorities

- A) Strengthening the value of student engagement at the national level**
- B) Developing the leadership capabilities of students in Irish higher education**
- C) Supporting staff to create and sustain meaningful partnership with students**



# What is Student Engagement, Student Partnership, Student Voice?

1

**Student voice** is the act of students sharing their individual and collective lived experiences, expressed through views and perspectives, demonstrated by formal and informal conversation, debate, feedback, and ultimately, active listening and being heard.

2

**Student engagement** is a process by which students and staff seek to work together to shape decision-making in higher education, building individual and collective capacity and knowledge to navigate institutional structures and cultures.

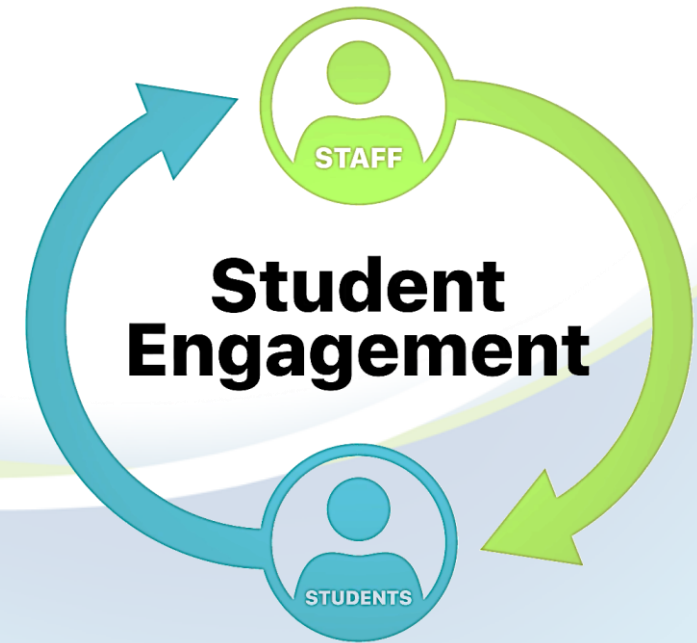
3

**Student partnership** is the practice that both drives forward and emerges from meaningful student engagement, which recognises the need to re-balance power dynamics in higher education and seeks to enable a culture of change through collaboration, reciprocity and shared responsibility between staff and students.

\*NStEP Strategy 2022-2025

# Student Engagement

- ▶ Student engagement is more than just hearing the student voice and acting on it:
  - Students are able to participate in decision making...
  - Students are able to take up roles and responsibilities in shaping change and new ideas that improve education for all....
  - And students are a valued and diverse part of the higher education community.
- ▶ Successful student engagement can lead to **student partnership** – which might be described as a culture of partnership and regular collaboration or co-creation.



# 4

## DRIVERS OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

A CULTURE OF STUDENTS AS PARTNERS

THE INSTITUTION AS A SITE OF DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP

THE INSTITUTION AS AN INCLUSIVE LEARNING COMMUNITY

A CULTURE OF INSTITUTIONAL REFLECTION AND ENHANCEMENT

# 4

## DOMAINS OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT



# 5

## PRINCIPLES OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

- Dialogue
- Building Trust
- Equity and Inclusivity
- Empowerment
- Students as co-creators

# 5

## ENABLERS OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

- Capacity Building
- Institutional Approaches
- Supportive Policies and Practices
- Communities of Practice
- Sustainability

DEVELOPING A SHARED UNDERSTANDING AND APPROACH TO STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN DECISION-MAKING

STUDENT VOICE

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

STUDENT PARTNERSHIP

# “From Participation to Partnership: Enhancing Student Engagement in Higher Education”

Student engagement



Student partnership

- The importance of engaging students as co-creators and decision-makers in academic and institutional planning
- Developing engagement strategies that are sustainable and adaptable over time
- Bridging the gap between students and staff through collaborative projects and mutual learning
- Ensuring that all students, especially those from marginalised groups, have opportunities to influence their educational experience.





# **National Student Engagement Programme**

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# **Student Training Programme**

Rachael Sarsfield Ryan  
Development Coordinator

# Student Training Programme (STP)

- ▶ **28** participating higher education institutions
- ▶ **7700+** students trained across Ireland since 2016
- ▶ **17** Student Trainers
- ▶ **72** Student Quality Assurance Reviewers



# Student Training Programme (STP)

## ► 4 student trainer-led modules (90 mins):

- Introductory Class Rep Training (ICRT)
- Advanced Class Rep Training (ACRT)
- Representing Diversity Training (RDT)
- Institutional Review Student Briefing sessions

## ► Total training sessions: 65

## ► Total trained this semester: 691

► ICRT – 535 students

► ACRT – 115 students

► RDT – 41 students

► Student Briefing Session – October 2024 for South East Technological University student reps

# Class Rep Census Project

- ▶ A snapshot of the diversity of student representation in Irish higher education.
- ▶ Included at the start of the ICRT survey:
  - Their responses will be anonymous
  - Their responses will not be shared with your higher education institution
  - Not all questions may apply to you, and you may not know the answer to every question
  - You don't have to answer these questions if you don't want to
- ▶ In 2024/25, the survey had 254 respondents across 17 higher education institutions partnered with NStEP.
- ▶ **Q.** Please describe your gender identity.
- ▶ **Q.** Is your gender identity the same as the gender you were assigned at birth?
- ▶ **Q.** What is your ethnicity?
- ▶ **Q.** Are you a member of the LGBTQ+ community?
- ▶ **Q.** Do you have a disability or condition that impacts on your learning, working, or learning activities?
- ▶ **Q.** Do any of these other conditions which may impact your learning, working or learning activities apply to you?
- ▶ **Q.** If you commute to college, please specify here (e.g., bike, bus, car, etc).
- ▶ **Q.** How has the cost of living/housing crisis affected you, if at all?

(with 2 further questions expanding on commuting)



# Highlights: Of those surveyed...

- ▶ **35%** of student representatives surveyed **commute to college** by various means.
- ▶ **38%** of students **must work to support themselves** (full and/or part-time),
- ▶ **13%** are **financially dependent on a grant** (e.g., SUSI).
- ▶ **7%** were the **first in their family** to go to Higher Education.
- ▶ **23%** experience a mental health condition (e.g. anxiety, depression, etc.) that impacts their learning and working activities.
- ▶ **5** student reps indicated that **they do not have a permanent residence**. As these students did not indicate that they are Roma or part of the Irish Traveller community, we can assume that these students are unfortunately homeless.



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## Census Project Report 2024 – 2025



nstep@usi.ie



studentengagement.ie



@NStEPie



@NStEPie

# Q. How has the cost of living crisis and/or the housing crisis affected you, if at all?



“Sourcing accommodation has been a struggle over the past 3 years, if it weren't for my friends having connections, I wouldn't have any place to stay this year.”



“It makes me stressed as I have to work more, and balancing work and college is really hard. I can't go out and socialise much because things are so expensive as well.”



“Having to travel for up to 6 hours just to attend college can be exhausting and make keeping up with the content challenging.”



“It has a big impact because to pay the high rent we have to work more to get the money necessary, and it means less time to study.”



“Difficult to manage rent in proportion to the wages, i.e. more working hours whilst studying and less social life.”



“It makes me anxious about my future.”