

# Enhancing effectiveness and impact: Using StudentSurvey.ie data

The StudentSurvey.ie Report  
Templates and Guide for How  
to Use Them

**For more information contact:**

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# Introduction

The ability to capture and analyse data on the student experience is a key component of our commitment to quality. What students have to say is gathered and analysed throughout each academic year and informs ongoing, annual, and cyclical changes at a programme, school, and institutional level.

The results of StudentSurvey.ie are used as a core quantitative and qualitative data set on the student experience, for use in internal and external quality assurance and improvement processes.

The StudentSurvey.ie Report Templates and Guide for How to Use Them is designed for use by Programme Directors and Programme Coordinators to enhance your ability to access, analyse, report, and respond to the student voice in a timely and effective way.

While this guide refers to, primarily, Programme Directors, it should also be used by any other postholders (including Heads of School) that are responsible for managing and monitoring programme quality.

# What is StudentSurvey.ie?

StudentSurvey.ie (the Irish Survey of Student Engagement) asks students directly about their experiences of higher education, including their academic, personal, and social development. First year and final year undergraduate and taught postgraduate students are invited to participate.

PGR StudentSurvey.ie (the Irish Survey of Student Engagement for Postgraduate Research Students) is a separate survey for students pursuing a Masters by Research or PhD. This survey runs every second year.

For the purposes of StudentSurvey.ie, student engagement reflects two key elements. The first is the amount of time and effort that students put into their studies and other educationally beneficial activities. The second is how institutions deploy resources and organise curriculum and learning opportunities to encourage students to participate in meaningful activities linked to learning.

Responses are analysed at a national level and national results are published annually to inform national policy making. Responses for our students are made available to the institution in early summer following fieldwork in the spring. These data are then analysed at an institutional level and the results circulated internally. Please contact me at the contact details on the front cover of this Guide for more information about this process.

The results can also be accessed by Programme Directors and Coordinators to support timely and impactful programme-level trend analysis, inform decision-making in Programme and School Committees, and for use in annual programme monitoring and programme review. Published StudentSurvey.ie National Reports can be accessed on [www.studentsurvey.ie](http://www.studentsurvey.ie).

## How and when can I access programme data?

Data are available directly through the i-graduate **In Touch** platform. Survey responses collected during the survey fieldwork in February – March are available in May and can be downloaded, analysed, and presented for consideration in a variety of formats.

To set up a profile on In Touch and access the platform, click [here](#).

Confidentiality is guaranteed to students responding to the survey. This is regarded as a vital commitment to encourage participation. Data files returned to institutions have been cleaned to remove any identifier information from the quantitative and qualitative data. Published reports include analysis of national and sector data but do not include data that could be used to identify individual institutions. Similarly, institutional reports must never include results which could lead to the identification of individual students.

## The Templates

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Click [here](#) for a sample report containing all three templates. The following pages explain why and how you use them.

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## Why would I use it?

Programme Directors are responsible for ensuring the ongoing accuracy, currency, relevance, and quality of validated programmes. Programme Team meetings (and their minutes) are key mechanisms for documenting ongoing discussions, reviews, and decisions. Programme Directors (supported by Programme Coordinators) are also required to lead preparations for and actions arising from annual and cyclical monitoring and revalidation processes internally, by QQI and by other external accreditors. StudentSurvey.ie results therefore provide a robust, reliable, and consistent evidence base for use in these formal and informal processes.

## Programme Review and Revalidation

Data from StudentSurvey.ie enable Programme Directors and Coordinators to download and present programme data for the last academic year for the purposes of annual programme monitoring and document the actions proposed in response. Programme Teams are encouraged to consider whether changes are required and, if so, what are the timeline/ responsibilities for action and monitoring impact. StudentSurvey.ie data that require a School or institution-level resource or solution should be identified and escalated appropriately. This gives Programme Teams the ability to impact change across the institution.

Validated programmes are required to be formally reviewed and revalidated periodically. Within this process, Programme Teams are usually required to undertake a formal documented review of qualitative and quantitative evidence to demonstrate continued demand, health, relevance, and quality of the programme. This includes a requirement to present evidence of student feedback (over the programme lifecycle) and how the changes proposed (or not) in the new version of the programme align with/ responds to the needs and experiences of students.

Studentsurvey.ie data are perfect for use in this process as they allow you to analyse, capture and comment on the student experience across the lifecycle of the programme. They also allow you to compare the student experience year on year against school, institutional and sector averages. This will give confidence to you, your team, the institution and any relevant revalidation panel that the student experience is at the heart of everything you do and the programmes you deliver.

## **Why should I encourage students to participate?**

The value and impact of StudentSurvey.ie data is constrained by the number of respondents per programme. To maximise the use of this data (and to avoid you having to collect similar student feedback separately yourself) make sure you:

1. Promote the survey.
2. Give students time in class to complete as this has been shown to increase responses.
3. Talk to students and class reps about the changes made to the programme and across the institution in response to previous student feedback.

## Key dates and timelines

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<b>November – December</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Start of the promotion campaign to make students aware that they will be asked to take the survey in the spring.</li></ul>
<b>Fieldwork: Feb – March</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Concentrated use of social media, physical promotional materials, lecture addresses, posters and signs around and campus and the Virtual Learning Environment, incentives/competitions, and any other strategies to encourage students to take the survey.</li><li>• Invite students to complete the survey in class where possible.</li></ul>
<b>April – May</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Thank students for their participation.</li><li>• Results are compiled by the survey company i-graduate.</li></ul>
<b>June – September</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Programme Data accessed and analysed at a programme and institutional level.</li><li>• Institutional level outcomes considered by Academic Council.</li></ul>
<b>October – December</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Data used in annual reviews and as many other fora as possible.</li><li>• Programme and School Committee consideration and approval of actions.</li></ul>

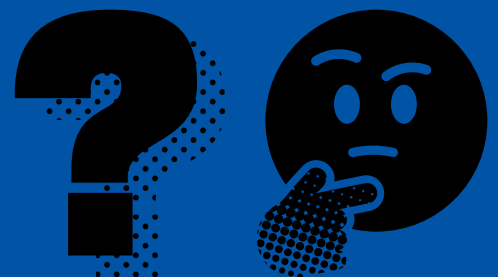


# Report Template Part 1: Indicator Scores

## What are indicator scores?

StudentSurvey.ie consists of 67 questions, grouped by the engagement 'indicator' to which they relate. There is an additional body of questions that do not directly relate to a specific indicator, but that are included in the survey because of their contribution to a broad understanding of student engagement. Each indicator score is calculated from responses to the multiple questions that relate to that indicator. The indicators are:

- ➔ Higher-Order Learning
- ➔ Reflective and Integrative Learning
- ➔ Quantitative Reasoning
- ➔ Learning Strategies
- ➔ Collaborative Learning
- ➔ Student-Faculty Interaction
- ➔ Effective Teaching Practices
- ➔ Quality of Interactions
- ➔ Supportive Environment



Indicator scores are NOT percentages but rather represent relative performance. They are calculated scores to enable interpretation of the data at a higher level than individual questions, i.e. to act as signposts to help you to navigate and interpret results from the large data set. Responses to questions are converted to a 60-point scale, with the lowest response placed at 0 and the highest response placed at 60.

Indicator scores are calculated for a respondent when they answer all or almost all related questions. Consequently, and crucially, indicator scores cannot be combined across indicators to calculate an average overall indicator score.

It is entirely appropriate to compare an indicator score across a number of years to detect trends. You can also compare an indicator score to the average score for that indicator for your institution. However, be aware that the institutional indicator scores are an average across all students, and there may be valid reasons by the profile of students on your course would differ from this.

## The In Touch data storage and data analytics dashboard

Using the In Touch dashboard designed by i-graduate, the company which runs the survey data collection platform, you can analyse student responses for your course for every fieldwork period since 2017. This allows you to track changes across the years.

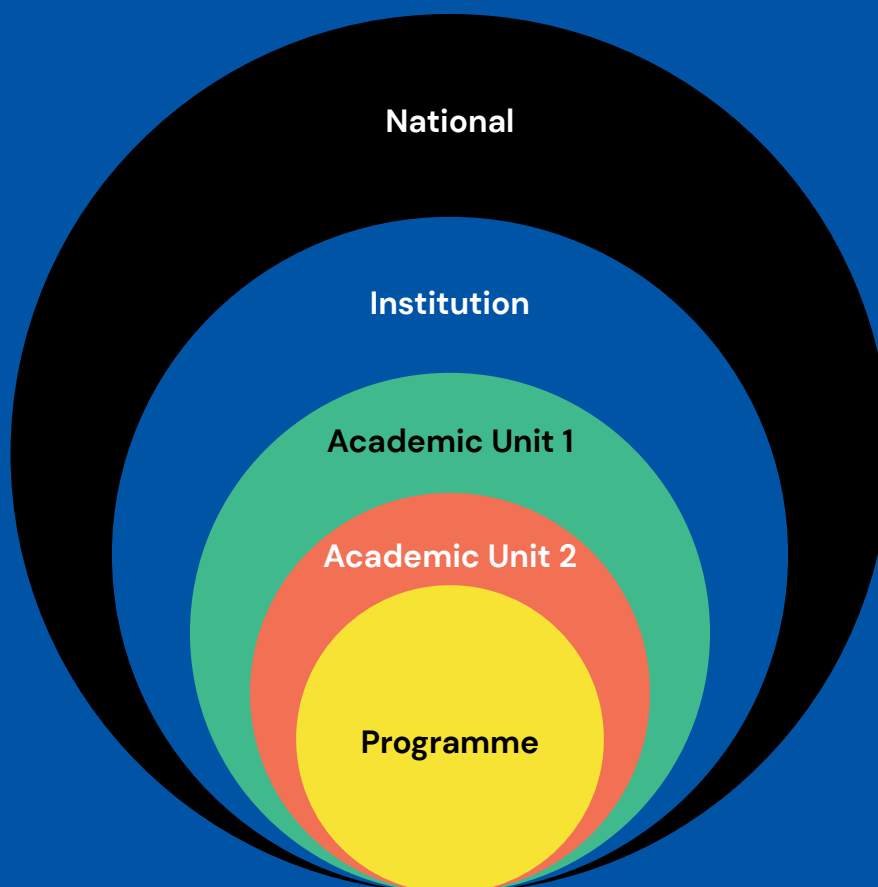
Results are available to you which will allow you to compare the indicator score for each indicator for respondents in your programme with relevant comparators within the institution and nationally. When you combine these results with your knowledge of your course and the students enrolled, you will maximize the value of the data.

### Respondent confidentiality

Students' anonymity is assured when students take the survey. The data should never be used to identify an individual student, nor should results be published which could allow for the identification of an individual student. If the number of respondents on your programme is too low to report, encourage students on your programme to participate in the survey, thereby increasing the response rate for your programme. Furthermore, making policy decisions based on response data when there is a low response rate is not advisable as the validity and consistency of the results over a number of years may vary greatly when based on only a small number of students.

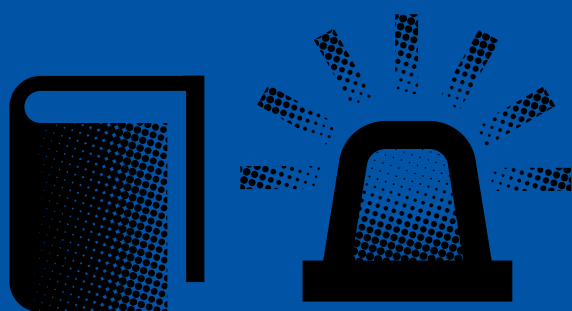
Template 1a displays the indicator score for each indicator, which allows you to compare scores for respondents on your programme with respondents in Academic Unit 1, Academic Unit 2, the institution as a whole, and all respondents across all participating institutions. Comparing within indicators is encouraged (e.g. comparing the indicator score for *Higher-Order Learning* for respondents on your programme with all respondents in the institution) but remember that comparison across indicators is not possible (e.g. comparing the indicator score for *Higher-Order Learning* and *Reflective and Integrative Learning*).

The terms Academic Unit 1 and Academic Unit 2 are used to capture the organisational structure of your institution. Depending on the organisational structure, they may translate loosely to Faculty/ College and Department/ School. This information is provided by the institution in advance of fieldwork and therefore reflects the organisational structure of the institution. If it is not provided in advance of fieldwork, it will not be available for analysis.



## Template 1a: Programme indicator scores compared to larger unit, institution, and nationally

	Programme Mean 2020	Academic Unit 2 Mean 2020	Academic Unit 1 Mean 2020	Institution Mean 2020	National Mean 2020
<i>Higher-Order Learning</i>	38.8	42.1	41.2	38.9	36.4
<i>Reflective and Integrative Learning</i>	32.2	36.4	33.7	33.8	31.5
<i>Quantitative Reasoning</i>	29.1	29.6	12.8	23.1	21.1
<i>Learning Strategies</i>	30.5	35.4	29.0	33.4	31.7
<i>Collaborative Learning</i>	37.1	37.0	24.5	31.4	31.3
<i>Student-Faculty Interactions</i>	13.9	16.4	18.8	13.3	13.9
<i>Effective Teaching Practices</i>	32.9	36.6	42.3	35.3	34.9
<i>Quality of Interactions</i>	37.2	41.1	40.4	38.9	38.5
<i>Supportive Environment</i>	27.1	31.3	28.6	28.9	28.0



## Sample Interpretation

The programme indicator scores for *Reflective and Integrative Learning*, *Quantitative Reasoning*, and *Collaborative Learning* are higher than for the rest of the institution. The programme indicator scores for *Learning Strategies*, *Effective Teaching Practices*, *Quality of Interactions* and *Supportive Environment* are lower than for the rest of the institution. The programme indicator score for *Higher-Order Learning* and *Student-Faculty Interaction* are close to or the same as the institutional score in 2020.

Questions to ask yourself as Programme Director include:

- What does this mean for my Programme?
- What are the possible reasons for these differences?
- Are these differences important to address? How?
- How does my Programme compare to the national responses?

## Template 1b: Programme indicator scores over time

Using the data available on In Touch, you can plot the indicator scores for respondents on your programme over a number of years. The following table illustrates the mean scores for a programme for the years 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020, which are currently available on In Touch. Data for 2021 will be available in May 2021.

	2017	2018	2019	2020
<i>Higher-Order Learning</i>	36.8	36.7	34.7	38.8
<i>Reflective and Integrative Learning</i>	33.1	32.2	30.0	29.2
<i>Quantitative Reasoning</i>	18.8	17.8	25.5	29.1
<i>Learning Strategies</i>	30.2	30.5	29.7	30.5
<i>Collaborative Learning</i>	23.0	23.7	24.5	37.1
<i>Student-Faculty Interactions</i>	9.4	9.1	11.8	13.9
<i>Effective Teaching Practices</i>	32.9	34.6	28.1	32.9
<i>Quality of Interactions</i>	35.6	38.2	33.3	37.2
<i>Supportive Environment</i>	31.1	33.9	28.8	27.1

## Sample Interpretation

Indicator scores for *Higher-Order Learning, Quantitative Reasoning, Student-Faculty Interaction* and *Quality of Interactions* have shown a steady increase from 2017–2020. Again, some discussion points include:

- What the reasons for this increase?
- What can you/ your team do to maintain this rise?

The programme indicator scores for *Learning Strategies* and *Effective Teaching Practices* have remained steady over the same period.

The programme indicator scores for *Reflective and Integrative Learning* and *Supportive Environment* has seen a decrease from 2017 –2020. Discussion points include:

- What are the reasons for this decline?
- What actions can you/ your team take to tackle this decrease?

The indicator score for *Collaborative Learning* was notably higher in 2020 compared to previous years. To understand the reason for this higher score for *Collaborative Learning* in 2020, the individual questions relating to this indicator can be further examined, the process for which is explained in next the section of this Guide.

## Instructions for how to produce the templates

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Click [here](#) for a step-by-step guide document (with screenshots) for accessing data to complete these templates.

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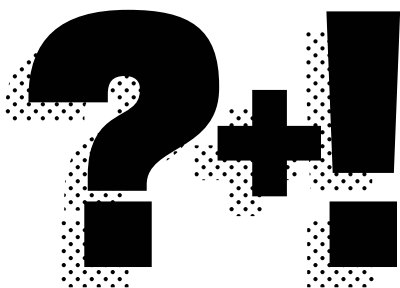


# Report Template Part 2: Individual Questions

## What are the individual questions?

As previously stated, StudentSurvey.ie is comprised of 67 questions, most of which relate to a particular engagement indicator. In addition to the calculated indicator scores described in the previous section, you are also provided with a breakdown of the results for each question related to each indicator, as well as the questions that do not relate to any engagement indicator (referred to as non-indicator items). This allows for more granular analysis and for deeper exploration of the responses driving the increase or decrease in an indicator score. Exploring the results at the level of individual question is interesting, illuminating, and provides rewarding insights which can lead to effective action.

To demonstrate, this section provides a deeper exploration of the *Higher-Order Learning* Indicator. The following are the individual questions which make up the indicator *Higher-Order Learning*, which relates to the extent to which students' work emphasises challenging cognitive tasks, such as application, analysis, judgement, and synthesis.



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**During the current academic year, how much has your coursework emphasised...**

---

**Response options**

Applying facts, theories, or methods to practical problems or new situations

---

Very little

---

Some

---

Quite a bit

---

Very much

---

Analysing an idea, experience, or line of reasoning in depth by examining its parts

---

Very little

---

Some

---

Quite a bit

---

Very much

---

Evaluating a point of view, decision, or information source

---

Very little

---

Some

---

Quite a bit

---

Very much

---

Forming an understanding or new idea from various pieces of information

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Very little

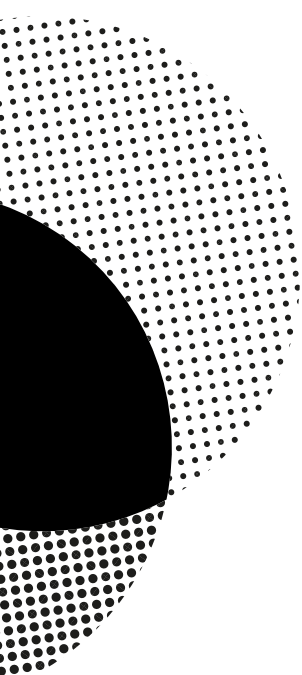
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Some

---

Quite a bit

---

Very much

## Template 2: Results for individual questions

By accessing the results for each individual question per indicator through the In Touch data analytics platform, you can easily see the percentage of students who responded to each response option for each question related to that indicator.

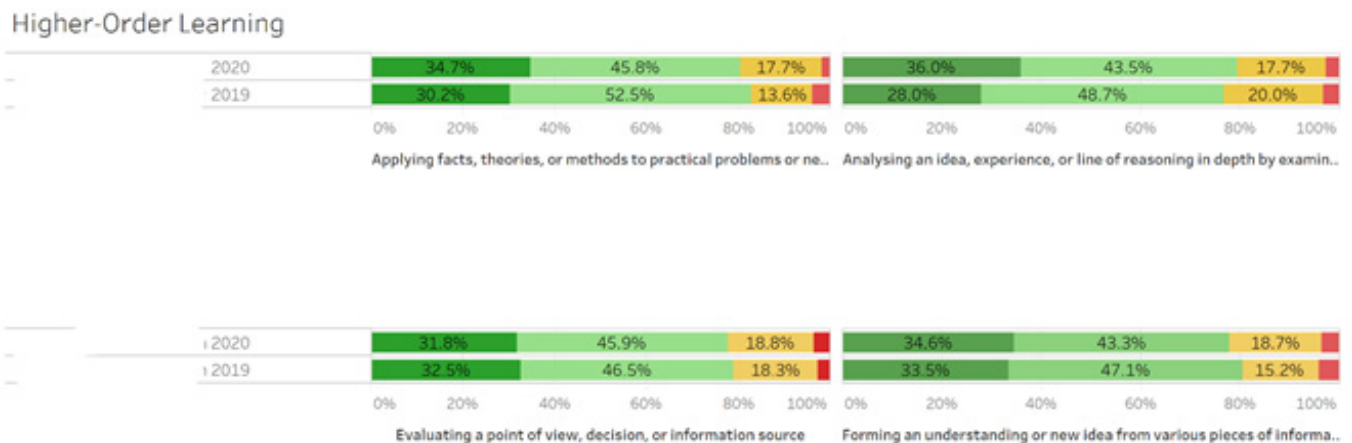


Fig. 1 Image of results for each question related to *Higher-Order Learning*

### Sample Interpretation

The percentage of students in 2020 responding “Very much” has noticeably increased for “Applying facts, theories, or methods to practical problems or new situations”, from 30.2% in 2019 to 34.7% in 2020, and for “Analysing an idea, experience, or line of reasoning in depth by examining its parts”, from 28% in 2019 to 36% in 2020. The percentage of students who responded “Very much” to the other two questions related to *Higher-Order Learning* have remained steady from 2019 to 2020.

## Response Rate Data

In the In Touch dashboard, you can hover your mouse over the relevant bar in the bar chart and the pop-up box will tell you what percentage and number of students who chose that response.

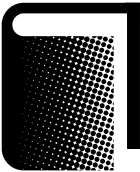
Work is underway to incorporate response rate data into the displays.



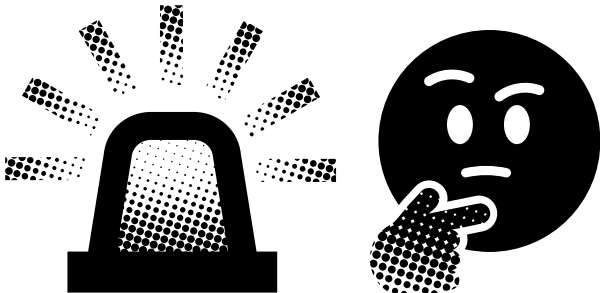
If you choose to download the results for individual questions as Images to present in a report (see page 16 for instructions), you will be able to produce images like Fig. 1. You can accompany these with the tables provided in Template 2, which provide the response options and the colour coding of the responses. Below is an example of one of these tables.

During the current academic year, how much has your coursework emphasised...	Response options, with colour coding	% of respondents
Applying facts, theories, or methods to practical problems or new situations	Very little	
	Some	
	Quite a bit	
	Very much	
Analysing an idea, experience, or line of reasoning in depth by examining its parts	Very little	
	Some	
	Quite a bit	
	Very much	
Evaluating a point of view, decision, or information source	Very little	
	Some	
	Quite a bit	
	Very much	
Forming an understanding or new idea from various pieces of information	Very little	
	Some	
	Quite a bit	
	Very much	

# Instructions for how to produce the template



Click [here](#) for a step-by-step guide document (with screenshots) for accessing data to complete this template.



# Where do I go from here?

## Exploring the data

Here are some questions to get you started on exploring the data:

- Are there differences between students in your class/ school/ department/ faculty/ institution, for example:
  - and students in similar institution-type nationally?
  - in that year compared to previous years?
  - and students in other schools/ departments?
  - depending on their gender, mode of study, country of domicile, etc.?
- If so, can you explain them? Are they important to address? How?
- Are there particular survey questions you think are interesting that you want to know how students responded?
- What are the three highest scoring indicators, i.e. the areas of highest levels of student engagement? What are the three lowest?
- The survey also contains a small number of open-ended questions, where students answer in their own words and do not have to choose from fixed response options. To access these results, you will need to contact me to access the qualitative results as they are not available on the In Touch dashboard. It is essential that the anonymity of respondents be protected in doing so. For programmes with small numbers of students, it is strongly recommended that Programme Directors access a file containing the free-text responses only, without any accompanying demographic variables, the inclusion of which could lead to the identification of an individual student(s).

## Action

Every participating institution will tackle how to achieve impact on foot of the results of StudentSurvey.ie in different ways. How you go about achieving impact on foot of the results of StudentSurvey.ie will depend on many factors, such as:

- What messages emerge from the results?
  - Did student feedback point to major changes needed?
  - Did student feedback highlight areas where changes could be made incrementally?
  - Did conflicting results emerge from the feedback?
- Who else do you need to involve in making the necessary enhancements?
  - Results should be used as locally as possible, so how can you work with heads of school/ other Programme Directors/ student support staff/ service managers?
  - There is also capacity to make changes at an institutional level, so how can the leaders within the institution make this change happen?
  - Staff and student partnerships are strongly encouraged to plan for and achieve meaningful and sustainable impact.
  - Would a “data use team” be beneficial to exploit the data by identifying a series of “data champions” in various units of the institution?
- What is the purpose of the action? In other words, where do you want this impact to be felt? This could include but is not limited to:
  - Supporting student learning and development
  - Facilitating student retention and engagement
  - Managing resources, programmes, and services
  - Quality assurance and/or enhancement



- Identifying areas of good practice
- Guiding staff development activities
- Improving internal communication
- Marketing to prospective students
  
- What resources do you have to available?
  - Do you need financial resources, and do you have them?
  - Do you need human resources, and do you have them?
  - Do you need managerial support, and do you have it?
  
- Time and timing
  - How much time will be needed to enact changes which could enhance the student experience?
  - When is the best time to share the results?
  - When is an appropriate time to undertake enhancements to the student experience or to begin this work?
  - Are there some enhancements that need to be looked at in the short/ medium/ long term?
  
- Institutional strategy
  - Does the action sought in the student feedback fit into the institutional strategy?
  - Does the action sought in the student feedback benefit one group of students/ several groups of students/ the institution as a whole?
  - Do the results help the institution to understand its student experience relative to other institutions, e.g. of a similar profile, size, geographical location?

# Planning

Create action plans for sharing the results and for achieving impact based on what students have said, what students think are the strengths and weaknesses of their student experience in your institution, and where students want to see change. Some ways you could progress these action plans include:

- Determine which data are relevant for particular staff/ student representatives/ students. Facilitate faculties/ schools/ departments, and learning support units, student support staff and other interested groups within the institution, to engage with small sets of relevant results, which is more manageable than trying to action on every single result.
- Connect results to issues in your institution which people care about and mobilise those most invested and/or interested in those issues.
- Look at your results relative to past performance and/ or similar institutions to identify areas for further work.
- Link StudentSurvey.ie results to other institutional sources of data to better understand the totality.
- Set manageable goals for the short, medium, and long-term, which are agreed by all stakeholders.
- Monitor progress on achieving the enhancements to the student experience planned and be prepared to modify actions and strategies as the plan progresses.
- Significant changes to the student experience will take time but the benefits could be transformative for your institution.

Data from StudentSurvey.ie should be considered alongside experiences captured through other student voice tools:

- Module/ Programme feedback
- Class Rep feedback
- Staff/ Student Meetings
- Complaints/ appeals – analysis of themes/ trends

Student forum or focus group meetings can also be helpful to explore in detail issues, trends or suggestions for improvement proposed by the programme in response to the student voice.

Evidence of a Programme Team analysing and amending the programme to respond to the needs, views and experience of students, peers (external examiners), industry/ sector experts and graduates provides a compelling case of the relevancy and currency of the programme.



## Sharing the results

Part of closing the feedback loop means making sure that the whole community of your institution, including those who participated in the survey and those who helped promote it, know what the results were.

You can do this across a wide range of platforms, including some of the ones you may have used already to promote responding to the survey, such as:

- Social media, e.g. bite-size results could be presented in Instagram stories (click [here](#) to see an example from Technological University Dublin).
- Virtual Learning Environment.
- Videos of selected results shown in prominent positions, e.g. before lectures/ on digital noticeboards in places such as the library.
- On-campus, e.g. hanging poster on poster boards, distributing interesting/ key results on postcards.
- Specially organised events to present the results, or at existing events like Academic Council meetings or Programme Board meetings.
- In a report shared internally by using the template presented in this document.
- Focus groups made up of students and/or staff to explore selected results further.
- Larger fora within the institution where multiple groups can come together to discuss the results, e.g. Staff-Student Committees, townhall meetings.

# Final comments

This document, the survey, the In Touch dashboard and all other associated StudentSurvey.ie outputs are living documents and supports. You can access information and tips on the website ([www.studentsurvey.ie](http://www.studentsurvey.ie)), such as for promoting the survey among your students (<http://studentsurvey.ie/good-ideas-promotion>) or how to use the results to achieve impact (<http://studentsurvey.ie/good-ideas-institutions>).

If you have any feedback for the StudentSurvey.ie Analysis and Impact Group on this document, the templates provided, or your experience using In Touch, please contact the StudentSurvey.ie Project Manager using the contact details listed below. Also, when you do create reports and share them with colleagues and students, we would be very interested to know how they are received and what impact they have. Good luck!

## Contact

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StudentSurvey.ie Project Manager Dr.  
**Siobhán Nic Fhlannchadha**

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# Appendix 1: StudentSurvey.ie Analysis and Impact Group

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<b>Nora Trench Bowles</b>	Irish Universities Association



