



QQI
Dearbhú Cáilochta agus Cáilochtaí Éireann
Quality and Qualifications Ireland



Call for Expressions of Interest from Higher Education Institutions to Participate in the National Student Engagement Programme Pilot for 2016/2017

USI/QQI/HEA

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1 Background

The ***National Student Engagement Programme*** is a collaborative initiative under development by the Union of Students in Ireland (USI), the Higher Education Authority (HEA), and Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). The programme is a national programme and all higher education providers associated with QQI and HEA are eligible for consideration for the pilot phase, which will commence as soon as possible. A national working group will be established to develop the programme. Members of the institutions and their student representatives that are part of the pilot phase will be members of the working group. There are two key strands of work involved in the national programme as follows:

1. A National Student Training Programme

Working with pilot institutions to develop the materials, processes and support requirements to deliver a common student representative training programme that will inform the implementation of a comprehensive student training programme at a national level.

2. Developing Institutional Capacity

Working with pilot institutions to help them assess their current student engagement activities and to identify areas for enhancement towards improved practice.

QQI and HEA have engaged the Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland agency, referred to as sparqs, to act as consultants to the project. In particular, its role is to advise the working group and to facilitate and assist in the development of the pilot programme. Sparqs will also conduct the institutional strategic analysis sessions for each pilot which will look at how they currently manage student engagement activities, and identify areas for improvement.

2 Main Aims of the Programme

Working under the guidance of the National Student Engagement Principles (soon to be finalised by a working group on student engagement established by the HEA and to be launched on 14 April 2016)

the National Student Engagement Programme will develop student capabilities to engage at all levels across the higher education system. The programme sets out to achieve the following aims:

- To develop student capabilities to engage in quality enhancement, quality assurance and other related activities at all levels of the higher education system.
- To support institutions in developing processes and activities which support/facilitate the meaningful engagement of students.
- To strengthen the value placed on student engagement across Ireland and develop tools and resources to support a common understanding and build effective practice.
- To lay the foundations to develop work beyond the pilot phase, to inform the implementation of a National Student Training Programme and increase capacity to progress this student engagement initiative.

The programme will also provide support to the pilot institutions in developing processes and activities, in parallel with student training, which will support the continued engagement of students and extend the benefits of the student training to the wider student population and learning community.

3 Eligible Institutions

As this is a national programme, all higher education providers associated with QQI and the HEA are eligible for consideration for the pilot phase which will commence as soon as possible. The pilot phase can support a maximum of up to **five** higher education institutions. A mix of institutions is desirable for the pilot phase in order to ensure that it captures a mix of institutional capacities, a regional distribution and a broad range of challenges and benefits/opportunities.

It is intended to extend the student engagement programme that is developed as part of the pilot programme to all HEIs as soon as is feasible.

4 Information to Assist Higher Education Institutions in Expressing an Interest

Institutions on the pilot programme will be expected to contribute to the planning and delivery of key outputs of the project, both as members of the working group and as individual pilot institutions as follows:

1. Participate in the Membership of a National Working Group. Institutions will be expected to ensure that a minimum of one staff member and one student union officer for each pilot institution will be members of the working group. Participation will involve contributing to the planning and delivery of :

- a national student training programme
- an institutional student representative training programme
- institutional strategic analysis sessions facilitated by sparqs
- development of additional work streams for pilot institutions
- supporting national events required to support the overall project

2. Participate as an institution by:

- Establishing an Internal Working group.
- Facilitating student representative training programmes in each institution.
- Providing a workshop to accommodate the strategic analysis sessions to be facilitated by sparqs.
- Developing student engagement action plans and self-evaluation analysis.
- Participating in dissemination activities, including attending a dissemination event and contributing to written resources.
- Participating in other events, as determined by the working group.

5 Students Unions within each Institution will need to:

- Identify a lead Student Union Officer (President or Vice President for Education/Education Officer) to work with the project and actively contribute to working group activities.

- Work with sparqs to organise events, including up to five workshops with class representatives. The workshop should be attended by key student representatives, including class representatives, school, and faculty/unit representatives, and sabbatical officers.
- Attend external events, including the sparqs student engagement conference, 2017, national dissemination events and where requested and reasonable, conferences and meetings to share outcomes of the project.

(further details are provided in appendix 1 attached)

6 Funding to be provided for the programme duration

QQI and the HEA are co-funding the development of the National Student Engagement Programme including the engagement of a National Student Co-ordinator to be located at USI. The project also includes the engagement of sparqs as consultants to the project (including the institutional one-to-one engagement with sparqs). All institutions will be responsible for facilitating the in-house meetings, events and activities and any resources required in this regard, for example, appropriate hospitality arrangements.

7 Institutional Capacity

As part of an application to participate in this pilot, proposers will be required to provide a statement on their institution's capacity and willingness (human capacity and infrastructure, academic, organisation and support staff, etc.) to support this project. The institution's student union should similarly express its willingness (in the same application) to support the project and it should countersign any submission.

8 Start Date of Activities for Pilot Institutions

Higher education providers who wish to participate in this initiative must indicate an expression of interest no later than **Wednesday 6 April 2016** in order to ensure that the development of the national programme can commence as soon as is practicable.

9 Assessment of Proposals

Submitted proposals will be assessed by QQI and the HEA with the assistance of USI. The overall mix of institutions, size and capacity, as well as geographical spread will be taken into consideration. In addition, the state of readiness of an institution to participate in the pilot will be taken into account; QQI and HEA would like to commence this pilot without delay.

Submission of expressions of interest

- (i) Expressions of interest should be submitted to Wendy Mathews at wmathews@qqi.ie accompanied by a brief statement (no more than 1000 words) that confirms the institution's capacity to participate in the pilot as outlined above. The submission must be countersigned by an officer of the Student Union. Please insert National Student Engagement Programme in the subject of the email.
- (ii) The closing date for submission of an expression of interest is **5pm on Wednesday 6 April 2016**.
- (iii) All institutions will be notified of the selected pilot institutions by Tuesday 12 April 2016. Further arrangements will be agreed at that point between the pilot institutions and QQI.
- (iv) The first meeting/induction day of the Working Group is scheduled to take place on 16 or 17 May.

APPENDIX 1

Details on Expectations of Participating Pilot Institutions

All pilot institutions will be members of the working group for the National Student Engagement Programme. The project will include the appointment of a National Student Engagement Co-ordinator who will facilitate this group as part of their role.

Guidance on the main expectations and responsibilities for participating institutions and their respective student unions is set out below.

1. Internal Working group to be established at each Institution on the pilot programme

Each institution should establish its own internal Working Group to co-ordinate its own activities related to the project and feed into the national working group. Ideally, membership of the group should include:

- *Senior decision maker in the field of teaching and learning and/or quality e.g. Registrar or Vice-Principal Teaching and Learning*
- *Senior elected student officer e.g. Vice-President Education*
- *Staff support from the institution's Student Union*
- *Senior member of institution staff with resource to support implementation e.g. Head of Quality, Student Retention and Success or equivalent*
- *Senior academic staff – Head of School/Dean*
- *Involved student representatives e.g. experienced course representatives*

2. Course Representative Training

Each institution will be required to organise approximately five training sessions of two to three hours duration for student course representatives. The participating institution will need to organise a suitable venue and refreshments. Publicity and communication will need to be co-ordinated between the local Student Union and the institution. Institutions will need to liaise with The National Student Engagement Co-ordinator /USI to confirm availability of one of the centrally recruited student trainers to run their training session(s). Sparqs will advise the institutions on

methodology to organise the training sessions to ensure they are a success. While the institutions organise the training event it will be delivered by one of the student trainers that will be recruited by USI and trained by sparqs. Sparqs will work with USI to recruit and train these trainers and the National Student Engagement Co-ordinator will organise these student trainers to deliver the training in the pilot institutions.

3. *Strategic Analysis Sessions*

Each institution should organise a day-long workshop to accommodate the strategic analysis sessions to be facilitated by sparqs. They should ensure a good attendance from the internal working group and other senior decision makers, academic staff, student officers and students. The institution will be responsible for supplying the venue and refreshments. The National Student Engagement Co-ordinator will liaise with the institution and the sparqs consultant on the workshop.

4. *Development Projects*

Following strategic analysis sessions each institution will develop a student engagement action plan and agree at least one development project with the assistance of sparqs.

5. *Dissemination and Consolidation*

Member institutions will participate in dissemination activities including attending a dissemination event and contributing to written resources, for example newsletter articles, writing up case studies and contributing to final reports.

6. *sparqs Student Engagement Conference*

Member institutions will support at least one student officer and one staff member to attend the sparqs conference in Scotland, March 2017.