

Memorandum of Understanding between the Higher Education Authority, Quality and Qualifications Ireland and the Union of Students in Ireland for the management and governance arrangements of the National Student Engagement Programme

1. Introduction and Context

1.1. Purpose and Scope of the Agreement

This MoU sets out the management and governance arrangements of the national student engagement programme between the Higher Education Authority (referred to in this document as “the HEA”), Quality and Qualifications Ireland (referred to in this document as “QQI”) and the Union of Students in Ireland (referred to in this document as “USI”). It is not a legally binding agreement or contract. This Agreement is being devised as a commitment of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Higher Education Authority and Quality and Qualifications Ireland 2015-2017. The purpose of this Agreement is to:

1. Set out the respective roles and responsibilities of all parties specifically in relation to the development and oversight of the national student engagement programme in Ireland;
2. Provide clarity on the governance and operational aspects of the programme;
3. Establish structured arrangements for communications, reporting and liaison with respect to this programme.

This MoU is not intended to be exhaustive in its identification of responsibilities. It does not in any way limit any additional actions or policies being implemented by or between the organisations for the purposes of this programme.

1.2. Scope of the Programme

The programme sets out to achieve the following aims:

- Develop student capabilities to engage in quality enhancement and assurance activities at all levels of the higher education system.
- Support institutions in developing processes and activities which support/facilitate the meaningful engagement of students.
- Strengthen the value placed on student engagement across Ireland and develop tools and resources to support a common understanding and build effective practice and profile.

- Lay foundations to develop work beyond the pilot phase to inform the implementation of a national student training programme and increase capacity to take work further.

There are two key strands of work:

1. **A National Student Training Programme**
Working with pilot institutions to develop the materials, processes and support to deliver a common course/class 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 best practice.

1.3. Duration of the Agreement

This agreement is valid from 1st January to 31st December 2016. This agreement is subject to renewal in 2017 following assessment of the pilot project.

Content of this Agreement may be amended or modified as required provided mutual agreement is obtained from all parties. The Agreement may be terminated if it is deemed that one party is not adhering to their responsibilities under the terms of this agreement.

2. Respective Roles and Functions

2.1. The HEA and QQI

The roles and responsibilities of the HEA and QQI are set out on pages 14 and 15 in the existing Memorandum of Understanding between the HEA and QQI 2015-2017. The HEA and QQI are committed to working in partnership with higher education institutions and other parties, and to aligning the enhancement activities of the organisations with identified national requirements. The enhancement of the quality of teaching and of the student learning experience in higher education in partnership with higher education institutions is a central objective of both the HEA and QQI.

2.2. *Union of Students in Ireland*

Founded in 1959, the Union of Students in Ireland is the sole national representative body for third-level students in Ireland. Its membership incorporates students in higher and further education, both in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Its officer board is composed of eight full-time annually elected representatives and one part-time:

- President
- Vice President for Academic Affairs & Quality Assurance
- Vice President for Welfare
- Vice President for Equality & Citizenship
- Vice President for Campaigns
- Vice President for the Southern Region
- Vice President for the Border Midlands and Western Region
- Vice President for Irish Language & Culture
- Northern Area Officer (NUS-USI President)

USI's mission is to represent the third-level student population to national stakeholders. These include government, state agencies and authorities, and other groups active in the fields of education, equality, citizenship, welfare and well-being, and Irish language promotion and activism. USI is represented at board level with both HEA and the QQI.

3. National Student Engagement Programme: Core Activities and Delivery Targets for 2016

No.	Action	Delivery Target	Co-ordinator
1. To put in place structures for the development and oversight of the national student engagement programme			
1.1	QQI, HEA and USI SLA - agree structures	Q1 2016	HEA
1.2	Appoint national student engagement co-ordinator	Q1 2016	USI
1.3	Establish Terms of Reference for Steering Committee (HEA-QQI Forum)	Q1 2016	
1.4	Establish Working Committee	Q1 2016	
2. To develop student engagement programme			
2.1	Questionnaire on existing training in HEIs	Q1 2016	USI with Working Committee
2.2	Agree criteria for selection and confirm pilot institutions	Q1 2016	Working Committee

2.3	Begin development of training programme content	Q2 2016	Working Committee with sparqs
2.4	Recruit student trainers	Q2 2016	USI with sparqs
2.5	Class rep training delivered in pilot HEIs	Q3-Q4 2016	
2.6	Conduct strategic analysis of institutional student engagement practice	Q4 2016	sparqs – with Working Committee
3. Establish structures for communications and liaison			
3.1	Launch of pilot project	Q2 2016	HEA
3.2	Working Committee meetings	Quarterly	

QQI, the HEA and USI will require the assistance of sparqs, a publicly funded agency for Scotland's university and college sectors which aims to support the enhancement of student partnership and engagement practices.

4. Specific Operational Arrangements

While it is not the intention to specify or anticipate every aspect of these interactions, further details in respect of the funding, staffing, governance and reporting arrangements are set out below.

4.1. Funding

QQI and the HEA will be responsible for jointly agreeing the allocation of funding to the student engagement project. [The cost of implementation of the pilot in 2016 is estimated at €100,000 with 50% to be provided by QQI and 50% by the HEA]. The HEA and QQI will communicate the annual budget for the project in writing to USI, along with any relevant conditions. A profile for expenditure will be agreed between USI, QQI and the HEA, and this will not exceed the annual budget. The HEA and QQI will notify USI immediately following any decisions on changes in the allocation of funding to the project.

USI will ensure that appropriate financial oversight measures are in place for the expenditure, disbursement and management of public funds in accordance with public financial procedures. USI will provide all relevant information to QQI and the HEA in relation to this.

QQI will allocate funding directly to USI. Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) will be the technical account holder of the student project in respect of funding allocated by the HEA.

HEA and QQI will liaise and agree on funding transfer arrangements to USI. Continued funding is subject to satisfactory progress by the HEA and QQI.

4.2. Staffing

A national student coordinator will be recruited and will be responsible for the preparation and establishment of project parameters. The co-ordinator will be located at USI and USI will provide office accommodation and human resources requirements in this regard. The national coordinator will be an employee of USI and report to management of USI and to the National Steering Committee overseeing the student engagement project.

4.3. Governance and Reporting Arrangements

Under the implementation of the HEA-QQI MOU, a Forum has been established which brings together the HEA and QQI with the Department of Education and Skills, IOTI, IUA and USI. The primary objective of the Forum is to assist and advise the HEA and QQI on the implementation of the MoU. It is envisaged that the Forum will act as the Steering Committee for this project. The Forum will be responsible for assessing progress of the project and ensuring that the project delivers on agreed objectives.

A Working Group comprising institutional representatives, student representatives, the HEA, QQI and USI will act as an advisory vehicle for this project. The national student engagement coordinator will report to this group. sparqs will also attend meetings of the Working Group. It is envisaged that there will be monthly meetings of the Working Group with monthly progress reports.

The Working Group will submit to the Steering Committee, in a timely manner, annual work-plans, annual reports and detailed financial reports. Annual work-plans and budgets will be subject to a mid-year review. The continuation of funding post 2016 will be contingent upon the demonstration of satisfactory progress in achieving agreed objectives.

5. Sign- off and Review Process

This MoU is jointly signed by the Chief Executive of the HEA, Chief Executive of QQI and the President of USI and it takes effect from 1st January 2016.

The MoU may be modified or extended by mutual written agreement.

For HEA

Signed:



Position:

CEO

Date:

20/6/16

For QQI

Signed:



Position:

CEO

Date:

22/06/16

For USI

Signed:



Position:

President

Date:

22/06/16.

Appendix 1: Drawdown Schedule

June 2016: €18,000 (HEA)

Deliverables:

- National Co-ordinator in place
- Pilot HEIs selected
- Working Group convened
- Student Trainers recruited
- Training development initiated
- Online platform developed for Working Group

June 2016: €42,000 approx (QQI)

Deliverables:

- Contract signed and payment schedule agreed
- Timelines for training programme development agreed

September 2016: €12,000 (HEA)

Deliverables:

- Interim Report presented to HE Forum and HEA (September Board meeting)
- Training programme designed and delivered
- Student Trainers training complete and support protocols put in place
- Paper submitted to EQAR conference
- Website and dissemination channels in place

December 2016: €12,000 (HEA)

Deliverables:

- Student engagement strategy analysis sessions in each pilot HEI
- National Event for student officers held
- Student Training programme reviewed
- Student Training impact analysis report presented to the HE Forum and HEA
- Work streams agreed from HEI pilot analysis sessions outputs