

Nexus ICA Student Engagement Policy

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1. Introduction

1.1 The term 'student engagement' has a number of differing meanings. In its broadest sense it covers two main areas:

- i. Improving the motivation of students to engage in learning and to learn independently.
- ii. The participation of students in quality enhancement and quality assurance processes, resulting in the improvement of their educational experience.

1.2 This policy deals with the second of these definitions, the first being covered within Nexus ICA's Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy. It relates to the participation of students in quality enhancement and quality assurance processes, including the representation of the student perspective through formal representation mechanisms.

1.3 Nexus ICA believes that partnering with its students through a variety of quality assurance, feedback and development mechanisms together with a strong culture of creative engagement can help foster a high-quality student learning experience. The policy herein details the processes and mechanisms by which this is achieved.

1.4 Nexus ICA will:

- i. Encourage students to become involved in the life of the school (including its Quality Procedures) through individual, focus group and collective feedback as well as various 'teams'.
- ii. Ensure that processes are clearly communicated and that the student representation team is democratically appointed.
- iii. Provide sufficient support for staff and students in order to carry out their various roles.
- iv. Regularly monitor, review and enhance the procedures and policies for student engagement.

2. Student Engagement

2.1 The nature of the courses offered, the educational experience and the wider faith context within which Nexus ICA is situated are unique to the institution and, as such, any student representation mechanisms will reflect the culture and ethos of Nexus ICA.

2.2 Nexus ICA will work in partnership with the elected representatives to establish the remit and philosophy behind the representation process as well as a concise definition of the term 'student engagement'. This will be in the form of a student charter.

3. Environment

3.1 Nexus ICA employ a range of opportunities for students to engage with and contribute to the life of the school. In particular, the deliberate implementation of a high staff-to-student ratio and strong culture of regular informal dialogue between staff and students helps to foster an environment of strong pastoral care and a working partnership.

3.2 The following details key areas whereby students can contribute to the life of the school.

i. Student teams

There are a variety of teams that students can operate within that offer training and extra curricular activities as well as helping develop important graduate skills. Importantly, they also offer a dynamic opportunity to have positive influence in a variety of areas that affect the student experience.

a. *Hospitality*

- Front-of-house presentation; how the institution is received by external visitors.

b. *Media*

- Developing content that seeks to resource as well as capture school life.

c. *Promotions*

- Promotion of events within the institution as well as helping develop creative content

d. *RAG Week*

- Involvement with development, planning and co-ordination of annual school-wide community activities.

e. *Schools*

- The opportunity to represent the institution, its values and its ethos within an outreach context in local secondary schools within the city.

f. *Tracking*

- Capturing the student experience within the faith context of the institution to inform future teaching strategy and reflective practice.

g. *Virtual Office*

- The opportunity for students to have input into some of the administrative functions within the institution.

ii. Events

Events, although not part of any assessed element of the course, provide an excellent opportunity for personal and professional development within the students as well as the chance to link theory and practice. They provide the opportunity for students to gain valuable new experiences and have involvement in areas of professional development outside their usual sphere of operation.

Currently the main events are:

- a. Christmas production
- b. RAG week
- c. End-of-year production

Events such as these allow students to influence and contribute to the external view and reputation of the institution, being, as they are, a significant part of the outward-facing profile.

iii. Feedback questionnaires

There are two main opportunities for students to feed back anonymously to the institution:

- a. End-of-year student satisfaction survey
- b. Module evaluation survey

Results from these surveys are used as part of the ongoing quality assurance procedures to improve the student experience.

iv. Focus groups

As part of the quality assurance procedures, focus groups, formed of a stratified selection of students, will be asked to contribute to a focus group meeting with appropriate representatives of the institution. Focus groups are a part of an inductive process whereby the institution can capture the student voice on a variety of issues, such as implementation of technology in the programme (e.g. use of iPads) and course development.

v. Research activities

From time to time, students on the Virtual Office team will undertake research activities on behalf of other departments or individuals in support of developmental work.

vi. Student representation meetings

As part of quality assurance procedures the student representative team will be granted access to student feedback surveys and will be involved in regular meetings with the course leader and student liaison administrator. The team will also be involved in regular course team meetings. The frequency of these meetings will generally be twice each semester.

vii. Feedback loop

There is a cyclical feedback loop whereby Nexus ICA receive feedback from students via questionnaires, focus groups, etc., which the student representative team have the opportunity to analyse and comment upon. Any actions in response to the feedback are drafted by the course team, in consultation with the student representative team, and those action points are finalised by the management team before being reported back to the general student body. If no action is to be taken on a particular issue, students will be made aware of this together with appropriate reasons ('Closing the feedback loop').

4. Representational Structures

4.1 The student representation group is constructed of two members from each year's cohort. This is a relatively small group but appropriate to the size of institution – being considered a small alternative provider of higher education.

4.2 Students are given the opportunity to put themselves forward for election to the team and, if more than two students from any one year put themselves forward, the general student body is given the opportunity to anonymously vote the respective nominees onto the team.

4.3 In the unlikely scenario where not enough students put themselves forward for nomination then the request for nominees will be repeated a second time. If still not enough students put themselves forward the student liaison administrator will consider approaching individual students to consider volunteering for inclusion onto the team.

4.4 The student representative team will be involved in the following areas:

- i. Student team meetings with the student liaison administrator and course leader to analyse student feedback.
- ii. Course team meetings to decide action points from student feedback (if any).
- iii. Course team meetings to represent students with respect to programme improvement and development.

Timings

4.5 Students will be invited to put themselves forward within week 6 of Semester 1 with voting taking place the following week.

Tenure

4.6 The normal period of tenure will be one academic year from the point of appointment.

5. Training and Ongoing Support

5.1 The student representative team, once voted in, will undergo a brief induction session with the student liaison administrator. The purpose of this induction will be to inform the student representative team of the brief and remit of the team, its responsibilities and its context within the wider student engagement and quality assurance procedures.

5.2 The student liaison administrator will support the team throughout their tenure.

6. Informed Conversations

6.1 It is important that discussions between the institution, its students and the representative team are based on sound evidence and that there is a free and transparent sharing of information from all stakeholders.

6.2 Such information will likely fall into the following areas:

- i. The results of student feedback surveys
- ii. The summaries of any focus groups
- iii. Analyses of student performance at module and programme level
- iv. Reports of actions taken by the provider to enhance the student educational experience
- v. Reports from external examiners

Note: In the sharing of information confidentiality of individual students will be maintained.

7. Valuing the Student Contribution

7.1 The holistic engagement of each student forms a significant emphasis within the culture and educational approach at Nexus ICA.

7.2 Students should feel valued, challenged and developed through their involvements in the various student engagement opportunities provided to them (as outlined in Section 3.2).

7.3 The various events that are run provide significant personal and professional development opportunities and these qualities are highlighted to the students both before, running up to and after the events. Often these will be disseminated in small group discussions and thus are brought within the context of the core studies.

7.4 The different teams provide training, experience and personal and professional development for the students involved. Additionally, they are also used as forums for discussion and dissemination of professional practice, experience and personal development.

8. Monitoring, Review and Continuous Improvement

8.1 The effectiveness of student engagement procedures will be monitored on an annual basis by the student liaison administrator, in consultation with the course leader, and will report into the institution's management structures for inclusion in any annual programme monitoring and review.

8.2 At the start of the academic year the student liaison administrator will identify the key performance indicators by which the effectiveness of student engagement will be evaluated. These key indicators will be discussed with the student representative team during their induction process so that they are clear as to the nature and purpose of evaluating student engagement.