WP2 – Student Success Strategy: Overview of Higher Education Policy for Student Success

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Introduction

This resource maps the policy context for student success at national and European levels. It aims to capture the high-level themes, to sketch a "picture" of the policy landscape, rather than provide an in-depth analysis. The link to each policy document is provided so readers can access in full any document of interest. The key messages derived from this work will inform the Action Plan development phase of the Student Success Initiative.

Methodology and Outcome - Irish Policy Documents

Irish policy documents were defined as publications by the Oireachtas and relevant national agencies. The meaning of "policy document" was viewed broadly to include documents written by or for policy makers. The intention was to be inclusive and to give scope for the inclusion of any document that would help action planning.

The following websites were searched to locate sources: the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research Innovation and Science (DFHERIS), the Department of Education (DE) formerly the Department of Education and Skills (DES), the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) formerly the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI), the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDY), the Department of the Taoiseach, the Higher Education Authority (HEA), Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (National Forum), the National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP), the Union of Students in Ireland (USI), the Royal Irish Academy (2021), and the Irish Universities Association (IUA).

Websites were searched using the keywords "student success" and "higher education" or a combination of the keywords derived from the pillars, for example, "student engagement" and "higher education" or "employability" and "higher education". The focus was on identifying the most relevant (to the project goals) and most recent policy documents.

The Irish policy documents that met the inclusion criteria described above are listed and linked in **Table 1** below. Enabling policies are categorised under the five pillars that emerged from an analysis of Maynooth University Student Success initiative data including, scoping data, data arising from the consultation process with staff and students, and a review of the literature on student success. Enabling policies are defined as policies that provide a foundation for or support success but do not refer to student success *per se*. Policies specific to student success or that refer explicitly to student success are also listed. These overarching policies appear at the top of **Table 1**.

Table 1: Irish policy documents categorised under student success and its component pillars

STUDENT SUCCESS
Draft Higher Education Authority Bill 2022 Strategy 2019-2021 Leading Enhancement and Innovation in Teaching and Learning (National Forum, 2019)

Understanding and Enabling Student Success in Irish Higher Education (O'Farrell for the National Forum, 2019)

Embedding Student Success: A Guiding Framework (National Forum, 2021)

Seven Cs for Embedding Student Success: A Toolkit for Higher Education Institutions (National Forum, 2021)

Higher Education System Performance Framework 2018-2020 (DES, 2018)

PARTNERSHIP, ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNITY	TEACHING, LEARNING & ASSESSMENT	SKILLS, CAREERS & EMPLOYABILITY	SUPPORT, WELLBEING & PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACHES
Statement of Strategy 2021-2023 (DFHERIS, 2021)	Next Steps for Teaching & Learning: Moving Forward Together (National Forum, 2021)	Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025 (DES, 2016)	USI National Report on Student Mental Health in Third Level Education (Price et al. for USI, 2019)	Learning Analytics Benefits for Institutions (National Forum, 2017) Resources to Support the Development of Data-Enabled Student Success Strategies (National Forum, 2019) Data Enabled Student Success Initiative 2017-2019 (DESSI) (National Forum, 2019) Online Resource for Learning Analytics2017-2019 (National Forum, 2019)
Enhancing Student Engagement in Decision Making (HEA, 2016)	ESD to 2030: Second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (DFHERIS, DE, DCEDIY, 2022) ESD to 2030 Implementation Plan 2022-2026 (DFHERIS, DE, DCEDY, 2022)	Higher Education on the Island of Ireland in 2035: A Values-based Vision of Institutions Advancing Society, Culture and the Economy Discussion Paper(RIA Higher Education Futures Taskforce, 2021)	Embedding Wellbeing Across the Curriculum (Byrne & Surdey for USI and National Forum, 2021)	
Steps to Partnership: A Framework for Authentic Student Engagement in Decision-Making (NStEP, 2021)	Making a difference' A Student View of Excellent Teaching (National Forum, 2019)	Enterprise 2025 Renewed (DBEI, 2018)	How Counselling and Peer Led Services Can Optimise Student Success: An Integrated Approach to Student Mental Health and Wellbeing in Higher Education (Armstrong-Astley et al., 3Set Project for HEA, 2020)	
National Access Plan: A Strategic Action Plan for Equity of Access, Participation and Success in Higher Education 2022-2028 (DFHERIS/HEA) Progress Review of the National Access Plan			National Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Framework (Fox et al. for HEA, 2020)	

and Priorities to 2021 (HEA, 2018)				
Equality, diversity and inclusion in higher education in Ireland and Northern Ireland (RIA Higher Education Futures Taskforce, 2021)			Higher Education Healthy Campus and Charter Ireland – Supporting Health and Wellbeing (DE/HSE/HEIs, 2021)	

Methodology and Outcome - European Policy Documents

The same methodology for locating key policy documents was employed. In this case the following websites were searched: European Higher Education Area (European Commission), Bologna Follow Up Group (BFUG) Advisory Group on Learning and Teaching, the European University Association (EUA), the Network of Experts working on the Social Dimension of Education and Training (NESET), the European University Foundation (EUF), and the European Students Union (ESU). The European policy documents that met the inclusion criteria are listed and linked in **Table 2** below.

Table 2 European policy documents categorised under student success and its component pillars

STUDENT SUCCESS				
Learning and Teaching in Europe's Universities: An EUA Position Paper (EUA, 2018)				
PARTNERSHIP, ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNITY	TEACHING, LEARNING & ASSESSMENT	SKILLS, CAREERS & EMPLOYABILITY	SUPPORT, WELLBEING & PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACHES
European Strategy for Universities (European Commission, 2022)	Universities without Walls: A Vision for 2030 (EUA, 2021)	A Renewal EU Agenda for Higher Education (European Commission, 2017)	WISE (Well-being Innovations for Students in Europe EUF funded project commenced in 2021. Has not yet published.	SHEILA Supporting Higher Education to Integrate Learning Analytics Research Report (Tsai et al. 2018, supported by the Erasamus+ programme of the European Union)
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in European Higher Education Institutions (Claeys-Kulik et al., for EUCEN and EUA, 2018)	Promoting a European dimension to teaching enhancement A feasibility study from the European Forum for Enhanced Collaboration in Teaching (EFFECT) project (EUA, 2017)	European Skills Agenda for Sustainable Competitiveness, Social Fairness and Resilience (European Commission, 2020)		
Community engagement in higher education: trends, practices and policies (Farrell for NESET, 2020)	Mapping and analysis of student-centred learning and teaching practices: usable knowledge to support more inclusive, high-quality higher education (Klemenčič et al., for NESET, 2020)			
	Recommendations for National/Governmental Support/Action for the Enhancement of			

	European Higher Education Learning and Teaching (BFUG Advisory Group 2 on Learning and Teaching, 2020)			

Analytical Approach – Content Analysis of Policy Documents

Qualitative content analysis using a directed approach (Hsieh & Shannon, 2015) was used to analyse the policy documents. Directed content analysis involves analysing existing theory or previous research to identify concepts or variables to use as initial categories to code data. To aid clarity the identified categories are also defined operationally. The codes and definitions evolve as analysis proceeds.

An analysis of the National Understanding of Student Success was used to generate the initial categories. The "understanding" (below) is based on extensive consultation and a review of the literature and was adopted by the Maynooth University Student Success Initiative.

"Student success **optimises the learning and development opportunities** for **each student** to recognise and fulfil their **potential to contribute to, and flourish in, society**.

To be achieved, this requires a **culture in Irish higher education that values inclusivity, equity and meaningful engagement between students, staff, their institutions,** and the **wider community**."

(O'Farrell, 2019 p.28, emphasis added)

The concepts highlighted in bold text were identified as the key elements or characteristics (and therefore categories) of student success. Built around these categories are common sense definitions that represent the structures and/or processes necessary to achieve that outcome (see **Table 3**). The definitions are also expressed as "actions" to better reflect the focus of policy documents. For comprehensiveness the categories are linked to the pillars (described above).

Table 3: Categories with operational definitions categorised by pillar.

CATEGORY	OPERATIONAL DEFINITION	ASSOCIATED PILLAR
(Optimal) Learning opportunities	Quality teaching and assessment in combination with student active engagement in their learning. *Associated action(s)* Enhancing teaching and assessment practice, continuous professional development opportunities for staff, pedagogical innovation, curricular design and reform, pedagogical research, leveraging digital technology to enhance learning, active engagement of students in their learning, creating 'space' for students to engage in their learning (extends beyond direct content e.g. assigned readings, peer group learning etc.).	Pillar 2
(Optimal) Development opportunities (Potential to … flourish …)	Extracurricular learning opportunities, well-being, belonging, resilience. *Associated action(s)* Quality support at key transitions, empowering students to recognise and achieve their own potential, a lived experience of belonging, building students confidence (including tackling impostor syndrome), fostering academic self-efficacy skills	Pillars 1 and 4
Learner centredness (each student)	Learner centred learning and teaching *Associated action(s)* learner centred teaching and learning approaches, flexible learning (hybrid university), technology enhanced personalised learning, a lifelong and	Pillars 1 and 5

	life-wide learning ethos, recognition of prior learning, facilitating student mobility or other "broadening" initiatives.	
Contribution (potential to contribute to …, society)	Skills development, preparedness for employment, future-proof skills, *Associated action(s)* development of disciplinary and transversal knowledge, skills and attributes, opportunities to gain employability skills (placement or work-based projects), citizenship skills, green skills, and digital skills	Pillar 3
Engagement (meaningful engagement between students, staff, their institution and the wider community)	Staff-student partnerships at all levels *Associated action(s)* authentic student-staff partnerships in these domains or areas, teaching and learning, curriculum design, research and engagement activities, governance, quality assurance and quality enhancement	Pillar 1
Inclusivity i.e. at institutional, community, other levels	Diversity, inclusiveness, and gender equality *Associated action(s)* characteristically a whole institutional approach, equity of access, flexible pathways, multiple entry and exit points, universal design for learning, effective use of learning analytics, establishment of credit accumulation systems that span traditional boundaries	Pillar 1

These categories were used to analyse the policy documents identified in **Tables 1 and 2.** In tune with this analytical approach, the categories were clarified and updated as analysis progressed. These evolved and expanded definitions therefore reflect the main themes and trends across the policy documents. The operational definitions because grounded in the thinking of the policy documents may therefore be a useful starting point for action planning.

In addition, **Tables 4 and 5** presents a grid analysis of the categories identified across policy documents. The grid represents the *major* focus (or foci) of the policy. The grid, therefore, shows the interlinkage of concepts across policy documents and helps identify the most dominant policy trends.

Table 4: Grid showing categories across Irish policy documents

Irish Policy Documents	Learning opportunities	Development opportunities	Learner centredness	Contribution	Engagement	Inclusivity
Draft Higher Education Authority Bill 2022	●	●	●	●	●	●
Strategy 2019-2021 Leading Enhancement and Innovation in Teaching and Learning (National Forum, 2019) Understanding and Enabling Student Success in Irish Higher Education (O'Farrell for the National Forum, 2019) Embedding Student Success: A Guiding Framework (National Forum, 2021) Seven Cs for Embedding Student Success: A Toolkit for Higher Education Institutions (National Forum, 2021)	●	●	●	●	●	●
Higher Education System Performance Framework 2018-2020 (DES, 2018)	●	●	●	●	●	●
Statement of Strategy 2021-2023 (DFHERIS, 2021)		●		●		●

Document	Learning opportunities	Development opportunities	Learner centredness	Contribution	Engagement	Inclusivity
Enhancing Student Engagement in Decision Making (HEA, 2016)	●	●			●	●
Steps to Partnership: A Framework for Authentic Student Engagement in Decision-Making (NStEP, 2021)					●	
National Access Plan: A Strategic Action Plan for Equity of Access, Participation and Success in Higher Education 2022-2028 (DFHERIS/HEA)	●		●			●
Equality, diversity and inclusion in higher education in Ireland and Northern Ireland (RIA Higher Education Futures Taskforce, 2021)			●			●
Next Steps for Teaching & Learning: Moving Forward Together (National Forum, 2021)	●	●	●	●	●	●
ESD to 2030: Second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (DFHERIS, DE, DCEDIY, 2022) ESD to 2030 Implementation Plan 2022-2026 (DFHERIS, DE, DCEDY, 2022)	●	●	●	●	●	
Making a difference' A Student View of Excellent Teaching (National Forum, 2019)	●		●			●
Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025 (DES, 2016)	●	●		●		●
Higher Education on the Island of Ireland in 2035: A Values-based Vision of Institutions Advancing Society, Culture and the Economy Discussion Paper(RIA Higher Education Futures Taskforce, 2021)	●	●	●	●	●	●
Enterprise 2025 Renewed (DBEI, 2018)				●		
USI National Report on Student Mental Health in Third Level Education (Price et al. for USI, 2019)	●	●		●	●	
Embedding Wellbeing Across the Curriculum (Byrne & Surdey for USI and National Forum, 2021)	●	●		●	●	
How Counselling and Peer Led Services Can Optimise Student Success: An Integrated Approach to Student Mental Health and Wellbeing in Higher Education (Armstrong-Astley et al., 3Set Project for HEA, 2020)	●	●		●	●	●
National Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Framework (Fox et al. for HEA, 2020)		●			●	
Higher Education Healthy Campus and Charter Ireland – Supporting Health and Wellbeing (Healthy Ireland in partnership with HEIs and the HSE for the DE/DFHERIS, 2021)	●	●		●	●	●
Learning Analytics Benefits for Institutions (National Forum, 2017) Resources to Support the Development of Data-Enabled Student Success Strategies (National Forum, 2019)		●			●	

Table 5: Grid showing categories across European policy documents

European Policy Documents	Learning opportunities	Development opportunities	Learner centredness	Contribution	Engagement	Inclusivity
Learning and Teaching in Europe's Universities: An EUA Position Paper (EUA, 2018)	●	●	●	●	●	●
European Strategy for Universities (European Commission, 2022)	●	●	●	●	●	●
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in European Higher Education Institutions (Claeys-Kulik et al., for EUCEN/EUA, 2018)						●
Community engagement in higher education: trends, practices and policies (Farrell for NESET, 2020)					●	
Universities without Walls: A Vision for 2030 (EUA, 2021)		●	●	●	●	●
Promoting a European dimension to teaching enhancement A feasibility study from the European Forum for Enhanced Collaboration in Teaching (EFFECT) project (EUA, 2017)	●					

Document	1	2	3	4	5	6
Mapping and analysis of student-centred learning and teaching practices: usable knowledge to support more inclusive, high-quality higher education (Klemenčič et al., for NESET, 2020)			●			●
Recommendations for National/Governmental Support/Action for the Enhancement of European Higher Education Learning and Teaching (BFUG Advisory Group 2 on Learning and Teaching, 2020)	●		●			
A Renewal EU Agenda for Higher Education (European Commission, 2017)	●	●		●		●
European Skills Agenda for Sustainable Competitiveness, Social Fairness and Resilience (European Commission, 2020)	●			●		●
SHEILA Supporting Higher Education to Integrate Learning Analytics Research Report (Tsai et al. 2018, supported by the Erasamus+ programme of the European Union)	●		●			

Overview of policy documents

Tables 6 and 7 below provide a brief overview of the policy documents. These are complex documents and most address multiple themes on the role and functions of higher education, for example, leadership, research, innovation, contribution to society, and resource allocation. Some of these themes are not necessarily the focus of this analysis. Documents were reviewed using the lens, "what is relevant to student success or its elements?", so the summary reflect this perspective only. Verbatim quotations have been integrated into the summaries to give a sense of the spirit and tone of the document.

Table 6: Brief overview of key Irish policy documents

Irish Policy Documents	Brief summary
Draft Higher Education Authority Bill 2022 (HEA, 2022)	The inclusion of 'student success' as a HEA function in the 2022 HEA Bill, currently before Seanad Eireann, indicates its perceived importance. Function 1(b) under *Section 9 Functions of An tÚdarás* reads "(to) promote and support student engagement and student success in higher education (HE) and the attainment by students of a high quality educational experience in higher education." Other functions of specific relevance to this project are: Function 1(f) which states "(to) support the provision of a range of programmes of higher education and training aimed at meeting the educational and skills needs of individuals, business, enterprise, the professions, the community, local interests and other stakeholders locally, regionally and nationally and, without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, including the educational and skills needs of persons in Gaeltacht Language Planning Areas, Gaeltacht Service Towns and Irish Language Networks, and outside of such Areas, Towns and Networks, with regard to the promotion and use of the Irish language." Function 1(n) which states "(to) support equality, diversity and inclusion in higher education, including the participation and success of students in priority groups, or persons in such groups seeking to be students, in higher education." Moreover, the objectives set out under *Section 8 Objects of An tÚdarás* refer to promoting excellence in teaching learning and research (Objective 1(a)) and "contributing to social, economic, cultural and environmental development and sustainability through leadership, innovation and agility …" (Objective 1(b)).
Strategy 2019-2021 Leading Enhancement and Innovation in Teaching and Learning (National Forum, 2019)	In 2019, the National Forum designated "student success" a strategic priority with the aim of "…providing all students with the opportunity to fulfil their potential and become creators of new knowledge who are community engaged, ethically conscious, professionally competent and equipped to flourish in a global world" (p.4). O'Farrell (2019) explored the concept of "student success" to generate an understanding of its meaning. Four perspectives informed the exploration:

[Understanding and Enabling Student Success in Irish Higher Education](#) (O'Farrell for the National Forum, 2019)	national policy, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) strategic plans and published graduate attributes, student perspectives, and the international literature. Six "themes" were identified as critical to understanding and supporting student success: engagement and student partnership, enabling policies and practices, professional development and the centrality of staff who teach, evidence-based decision-making (referring to learning analytics), supporting transitions and cultivating belonging, and assessment and feedback. Suggested actions that higher education institutions (HEIs) can take to enhance and support student success are listed under each theme. This work, in combination with wider consultation, culminated in a statement of a shared understanding of student success (adopted for this project) that is grounded in six core tenets (p.28) • Success can only be facilitated through meaningful partnership and engagement between students and staff and between all levels of the HE sector • Success means empowering students to recognise and achieve their own potential • It is the responsibility of those working across the HE sector to identify and remove any obstacles that may hinder students from achieving their own benchmark of success • Success is not binary and cannot be fully encapsulated in metrics such as retention and progression rates. It reframes the perspective from product to process, from an approach driven by output metrics to one that is enabled by ongoing quality enhancement • Success is too highly nuanced and individualised to be concisely defined. It can, nonetheless, be understood and facilitated • Success requires whole-of-institution approaches.
[Embedding Student Success: A Guiding Framework](#) (National Forum, 2021) [Seven Cs for Embedding Student Success: A Toolkit for Higher Education Institutions](#) (National Forum, 2021)	"Embedding Student Success A Guiding Framework" and the 'Seven Cs for Embedding Student Success Toolkit" were launched in 2021. The Framework sets out the enablers for student success under: Enabling Institutional Capabilities, Enabling Institutional Culture, and Enabling Institutional Practices. The Toolkit offers a process for embedding student success grounded in the Seven Cs: Commit, Collaborate, Community, Consensus, Communicate, Connect, and Continuing. The enablers of student success crosshatching this body of work include, a whole-institutional approach, the centrality of student learning, inclusivity, evidence-based decision-making, student-centred teaching, assessment and feedback approaches, and authentic student-staff partnerships. These mirror the pillars and issues raised in this initiative.
[Higher Education System Performance Framework 2018-2020](#) (DES, 2018)	Sets national priorities and key objectives for HE. Calls for Student Success Strategies that embed "whole-of-HEI" approaches (p.15). The system objectives address several constituent components of student success including, employability, teaching and learning, and inclusion. Objective 1: Supporting talent development through combining "knowledge, skills & employability which responds effectively to the needs of our enterprise, public service and community sectors … " (p.9) Calls on HEIs to develop learning and teaching approaches that prepare students for future work practices built on "… a lifelong learning perspective and a student-centred approach that includes collaborative and inquiry-based learning, inclusive learning environments, and digital technologies" (p.10). Objective 2: Generating opportunities for "national and international engagement which enhances the learning environment and delivers a strong bridge to enterprise and the wider community" (p.11). Stresses the importance of engagement with civic and community organisation, noting "Government policy

	not only seeks engagement with the goal of economic innovation, but also broader community engagement" (p.12).
	Objective 4: Significantly improving "the equality of opportunity (reflected in) a student body that reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland's population" (p.15). A high-level objective is that "all HEIs will have a Student Success Strategy in place by 2020 which will embed whole-of-HEI approaches to institutional access strategies" (p.15). This objective is incorporated into Maynooth University's Mission Based Performance Compact 2018-2021 with the HEA.
	Objective 5 Demonstrating "consistent improvement in the quality of the learning environment with a close eye to international best practice through a strong focus on quality & academic excellence" (p.17). Notes the shift in focus from quality assurance to quality enhancement. Makes clear that it is "… critical that the purpose of quality assurance and quality enhancement are targeted at supporting a quality learning experience for students" (p.17).
Statement of Strategy 2021-2023 (DFHERIS, 2021)	The striking parallelism between the DFHERIS mission statement and definitions of student success suggests a similar mindset.
	"Develop Ireland's further and higher education and research systems to support people in reaching their full potential and to create value, prosperity, resilience and a cohesive, sustainable and vibrant society" (p.7)
	In tune with the mission statement, two of the six strategic goals relate to the "understanding of student success" i.e., nurturing talent and inclusion.
	With respect to the former, emphasis is placed on nurturing individual talent and providing opportunity through increased access and growing potential:
	"Ensure support and provide education and training to open up diverse and progressive pathways for everyone, enabling personal growth, developing our learners' talent, promoting lifelong learning and empowering learners to become active members of society, engaging in employment, contributing to prosperity and driving vibrant and diverse communities "(p.11).
	With respect to the latter, emphasis is placed on championing equality and inclusive learning through facilitating "access, progression and success for a wider and more diverse learner population at all levels" (p.13). A "diverse learner population" is defined as "… vulnerable learners, under-represented groups and the most marginalised …" (p.13). It is made clear that diversity should be welcomed "Since diversity lies at the core of vibrant communities and strong economies, (it is important to) ensure that our institutions are beacons of inclusion welcoming all, with a focus on groupings that are under-represented at present." (p.13). The need to "consistently" meet a wide range of needs, including mental health and well-being, is highlighted.
Enhancing Student Engagement in Decision Making (HEA, 2016)	Argues while students self-determine their engagement levels, this is shaped by institutional "conditions, policies, and culture" (p. vii). Identifies three drives of student engagement (1) the HEI as a site of democratic citizenship; (2) the HEI as a learning community; and (3) the HEI as a critical institution (pp. vii-viii). Places the onus on HEIs to model and nurture democratic practices in all aspects of their work including decision-making.
	"Active citizenship is best learned if imbued in the culture and processes of the institution. It acquires life and meaning in practice. In this way Irish HEIs can become the seedbed of democratic culture and practices for future generations who have been socialised into it through their encounter with higher education" (p.1)
	Identifies ten principles to support HEIs in developing a culture of engagement to "embed the student in institutional decision-making" (p.x). These include student as partner, inclusivity and diversity, collegiality and parity of esteem, and feedback and feedback loops. Identifies three "domains" that provide optimal opportunities for student engagement: quality assurance, teaching and learning, governance and management, plus a cross-cutting theme of capacity building and training.

[Steps to Partnership: A Framework for Authentic Student Engagement in Decision-Making](#) (NStEP, 2021) NStEP is a partnership between the HEA, QQI and USI.	Sets out a framework to support students and staff to "… map cohesive ways to improve student engagement in decision-making across the life of their higher education institution" (p.10). Clarifies student engagement is about "… an active process of student-staff dialogue through which the student voice is heard, understood, and amplified, while student partnership builds a sense of collaboration through that engagement process, which can ultimately redefine traditional hierarchies in higher education for the benefit of the entire learning community" (p.9). The framework is built around four elements: • Four drivers of student engagement – Factors that create an ethos for authentic student engagement based on values such as democracy, citizenship, and communities of learning • Four domains of student engagement – Contexts for effective student-staff partnerships i.e., governance and management, teaching and learning, quality assurance and enhancement, and student representation and organisation • Five principles of student engagement: Approaches that nurture authentic student engagement i.e., dialogue, building trust, equity and inclusivity, empowerment, students as co-creators • Five enablers of student engagement – Capacity building, Institutional approaches, supportive policies and processes, communities of practice, and sustainability The intention is not to prescribe but to provide a starting point where "students and staff … work together to build a shared approach … actively crafting the ways in which they can put (the framework) to use for their own contextual setting." (p.10)
[National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019](#) (HEA, 2015) [Progress Review of the National Access Plan and Priorities to 2021](#) (HEA, 2018) [National Access Plan: A Strategic Action Plan for Equity of Access, Participation and Success in Higher Education 2022-2028](#) (DFHERIS/HEA)	The 'National Access Plan' 2015-2019 set out goals and targeted actions for equity of access to HE. Originally planned to run to 2019, the policy was extended to 2021. The Progress Review (2018) showed participation rates for many of the targeted groups had increased. However, participation for certain targeted group, for example mature students and Irish Travellers, was not on target. The National Access Plan 2022-2028, published in September, reiterates that the current HE student population does not represent Irish society. Sets out two ambitions: 1) that the HE student body "at all levels and across all programmes" will mirror Ireland's population" and 2) that HEIs are "inclusive, universally designed environments which support student success and outcomes, equity and diversity" (p.22). Identifies three main target groups. Students who 1) are socioeconomically disadvantaged; 2) are members of Irish Traveller and Roma communities and 3) have disabilities including intellectual disabilities (pp.22-23). Clarifies that the first grouping includes those who have experienced life situations that contribute to disadvantage i.e. being from a low income background or socioeconomically disadvantaged area; being a first-time or second-chance mature student; having experienced the care system, the criminal justice system or homelessness; being a lone or teen parent; being a carer; being a migrant or refugee or being from an ethnic minority; having experienced the international protection process; or being a survivor of domestic violence. Sets out five student-centred goals (pp.23-24): • Inclusivity: Centres on creating an inclusive education experience and a sense of belonging through embedding a whole-of-institutional approach to student success and universal design. Actions singled out include ensuring diversity across all programmes and levels, engaging priority group students in decision-making, universal and targeted funding, and improving opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities. • Flexibility: Recognises the individuality of students and the need to support every student to participate in higher education in a way that meets their individual needs and circumstances. Mechanisms listed include part-time and blended learning; promoting flexible modes of teaching and learning; providing infrastructure that enables all students to fully participate in remote learning; exploring new routes for priority groups to access programmes; and improving the use of Recognition of Prior Learning.

	• Clarity: Focuses on clarity of message, information, and communication to prospective students. Mechanisms include greater coordination of pre-entry and mentoring work across HEIs; developing student-friendly processes; and aligning existing access structures. • Coherence: Centres on providing coherent and joined-up supports and approaches to inclusion across the education system and government. • Sustainability: Centres on ensuring the capacity of higher education to deliver the vision of the Plan mainly through addressing cost as a barrier to higher education for priority groups, including improving funding for student support. Underpinning these five goals is a sixth core goal using an evidence-driven approach through developing and strengthening the evidence base and measuring performance. It is proposed to measure performance in three ways, through key performance indicators, national targets, and qualitative indicators. These measures are defined in the document (pp.24-25). Noteworthy is that HEIs student access and success strategies will serve as one qualitative measure.
Equality, diversity and inclusion in higher education in Ireland and Northern Ireland (RIA Higher Education Futures Taskforce, 2021)	Calls for an overarching equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) framework for the island of Ireland to "…empower HEIs to move away from reactive initiatives and … allow planning for the short, medium and long term. A harmonised approach would also enable a holistic approach to EDI, which considers the entire educational journey of the individual, rather than merely the segmented phases" (p.5). Recommendations that focus on EDI for students (EDI for staff is also addressed) include: • The establishment of a centralised, standardised, and robust data collection system to facilitate a longitudinal and responsive approach to EDI. • Creation (or consolidation) of access pathways and supports that "move with the student through the system" (p.5), facilitated by a Credit Recognition and Accumulation System that spans systems. The goal is to enable progression across and between different providers and institutions, so learners have multiple access and exit points. For example, pathways through apprenticeships and employment with lifelong opportunities for updating and reskilling. • Flexible provision - online or mixed mode - that will give a "much wider range of students" (p.6) access to HE, particularly when combined with mutual recognition of credits. This assumes, however, "that infrastructures in society such as broadband, IT literacy etc. are in place or even more multiple deprivations will occur" (p.6). • A student-centred approach to curriculum planning and delivery • A whole institutional approach to access • More flexible funding models for HEIs and students including equal recognition for full-time and part-time undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Also, suggests bursaries and resources might be expanded to target programmes where there is under-representation. • Training and development in EDI should be obligatory for staff and students at entry level and as part of continuing professional development (CPD).
Next Steps for Teaching & Learning: Moving Forward Together (National Forum, 2021)	Explored the question "in the context of Covid-19, what have we learnt and what does it mean for the future of teaching and learning in Irish higher education?" (p.3). This question was addressed in collaboration with 15 partners across the HE sector. The following seven "key messages" (p.10) for teaching and learning practice, ongoing development, research and future policy were identified: 1. Positive change in teaching and learning can only occur within an enabling culture – sectoral and institutional. 2. A deliberate emphasis on Equity/Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) must be preserved and further developed within teaching and learning so that all staff and students can succeed and thrive. 3. Community and well-being are essential for students and staff. 4. Decision-making and leadership can be effectively shared across the whole institutional community.

5. The ethos of student engagement and partnership are highly valued in Irish higher education. An explicit strategic focus will enable further embedding into policies, processes, and practice.
6. Teaching and learning experiences for students and staff are diversifying and evolving. Learning environments are transforming to effectively enable mixed modes of learning and participation.
7. The world of work, for staff and students, is digitally infused and requires a commitment to lifelong learning.

Recommendations are grouped under: "strategic alignment and direction", "review, support and develop" and "collaboration, research and shared good practice" with an overarching theme of "equity/equality, diversity and inclusion and commitment to community and belonging" (pp.15-17). Briefly, the recommendations refer to the importance of, a sustained focus on EDI, community, and belonging, fully embedding UDL, valuing teaching (offers draft principles as a starting point for articulating a principled approach to strengthening how teaching and learning is valued at all levels), promoting and supporting authentic student-staff engagement and partnership, meeting the CPD needs of staff (including digital capacity), nurturing pedagogical and curricular innovation "which foster lifelong learning, transversal skills, well-being, sustainability, employability and global citizenship …" (p.17).

It is also stressed that adequately resourcing and providing an appropriate infrastructure for teaching and learning (including IT infrastructure) is critical for success. The opportunities to "identify and resource appropriate strategies to continue addressing the further development of pedagogy, work-integrated learning, and digital and open practice and policy in order to enable students to effectively engage in a rapidly evolving, increasingly digitally-mediated workplace and society" is highlighted. This would be strengthened by a critical "… review (of) current support for curricular innovations and flexible pathways which foster lifelong learning, transversal skills, well-being, sustainability, employability and global citizenship in order to develop sectoral funding models and staff workload models that will support their future development" (p.17).

ESD to 2030: Second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (DFHERIS, DE, DCEDIY, 2022) ESD to 2030 Implementation Plan 2022-2026 (DFHERIS, DE, DCEDY, 2022)	Argues Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) must be a "major guiding feature of what we do in education" (p.5). Recognises the potential of the higher education sector to provide the skills, knowledge and research that will underpin further development of the green agenda in Ireland. The strategy addresses five priority areas, advancing policy, transforming learning environments, building capacities of educators, empowering and mobilising young people, and accelerating local level actions. Noteworthy in the context of this project is the focus on promoting what are termed "ESD pedagogies", for example, project-based learning, place-based learning (including outdoor learning), inquiry or problem-based learning, creative and design thinking, and reflective learning. All fit with an active learning and student-centred learning and teaching approach already endorsed by MU. Calls for curricular reform and endorses interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches. Capacity building through training and CPD opportunities for educators is prioritised, supported by initiatives to recognise and reward excellence and commitment to ESD. Engaging and working in partnership with students on ESD related activities and opportunities is embedded in the strategy (more evidently in Priority 4- Empowering and Mobilising Young People).
Making a difference' A Student View of Excellent Teaching (National Forum, 2019)	Presents students' descriptions of the characteristics, behaviours and skills of exceptional teachers. The dataset comprised of student testimonials (n = 3940), written in support of their nomination of their "teaching hero" for a National Forum Teaching Hero Award. When describing their "teaching hero" students made clear that exceptional teachers made learning active and engaging, enhanced their self-belief and persistence, and increased their likelihood of success. Students valued skills such as, a good delivery style, the ability to communicate clearly, to explain difficult concepts simply, and relate learning to real life or work. However, the attributes described most frequently are best termed as 'being human', for example, being interesting and enthusiastic, kind, caring and supportive, inspirational, encouraging, and generous with time. Exceptional

| | teachers were able to create engaging, active, and inclusive learning environments. They "… go 'above and beyond'. They help students to learn, to develop, to progress, to be successful. They make a difference to students' learning and their lives." (p.19)

Teaching Hero awardees (n = 47) were asked to complete an online survey and 27 awardees subsequently participated in one-to-one in-depth interviews. There was strong agreement between students and teachers on what constituted "exceptional teaching". Teachers described 'exceptional teaching' as about student centredness, building relationships with students, caring about students, good delivery, knowledge and enthusiasm, using interactive and active learning strategies to engage students, including all students in the learning experience, and consideration of what the learning experiences mean for student within and beyond HE. The importance of valuing and nurturing good teaching is emphasised.

"Feedback from students tells us that positive human qualities are essential in our higher education learning communities, and that asserting the importance of these qualities, recognising them in our communities, valuing them and nurturing them, is crucial to the creation and maintenance of positive learning environments, and student and staff well-being" (p.21). |
|---|---|
| Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025 (DES, 2016) | Envisages Ireland as a place where the "talent of our people thrives through … the quality and relevance of our education and training base, which is responsive to the changing and diverse needs of our people, society and the economy" (p.10). Sets six objectives (p.11):

- Education and training providers will place a stronger focus on providing skills development opportunities that are relevant to the needs of learners, society and the economy.
- Employers will participate actively in the development of skills and make effective use of skills in their organisations to improve productivity and competitiveness.
- The quality of teaching and learning at all stages of education will be continually enhanced and evaluated.
- People across Ireland will engage more in lifelong learning.
- There will be a specific focus on active inclusion to support participation in education and training and the labour market.
- We will support an increase in the supply of skills to the labour market.

Explains the actions critical for attaining these objectives require: a focus on developing a mix of transversal and discipline specific skills with an emphasis on STEM and STEAM, employer participation in skills development through contribution to curriculum design, guest lecturing, providing work placements/internships, shaping work based projects/case studies, and supporting careers information, providing high quality learning experiences informed by student and graduate feedback (i.e. ISSE and the graduate survey), promotion of lifelong learning through flexible modes of provision and recognition of prior learning schemes, and inclusion of under-represented groups. |
| Higher Education on the Island of Ireland in 2035: A Values-based Vision of Institutions Advancing Society, Culture and the Economy Discussion Paper(RIA Higher Education Futures Taskforce, 2021) | Contends HE has three missions – teaching and learning, research and innovation, and service to society. Argues the primary focus should be on "fostering the development of rounded and adaptable individuals with a broad range of attributes that will enable them to contribute strongly to society as engaged and informed citizens and to their chosen workplace as creative and analytical thinkers" (p.7). Outlines a vision for HE on the island of Ireland in 2035 (p.12):

- Higher education on the island of Ireland will be renowned for its development of talent, the excellence of its research across the full spectrum of inquiry, the fostering of creativity and innovative mindsets, the active engagement of HEIs with society and industry, its culture of inclusivity and global outlook.
- Appropriate levels of resourcing, north and south, will enable HEIs to deliver on their full potential as centres of learning, knowledge creation and |

	creativity, and as locations where the development of individual talent is a priority.
	• Higher education on the island of Ireland will provide excellent development and learning experience for all students with a focus on personalisation of learning that adapts to the needs and potential of each individual student. HEIs will develop lifelong learning relationships with their student community and their local and regional communities to extend widely the benefits of higher education.
	• Higher education will develop a citizenry with the knowledge, skills and attributes to ensure a vibrant, prosperous and peaceful society and to enable a living and working environment that encourages and rewards innovation and creativity. It will integrate sustainable development issues into all aspects of teaching, learning and research.
	• Higher education will build on the lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic and develop an effective hybrid campus model that accommodates the needs of a diverse student and staff community, and which recognises the role played by the physical campus in delivering a positive student experience.
	• Leveraging the affordances of digital technology, HEIs will develop and offer flexible and personalised learning pathways, including an unbundling of conventional academic qualifications to accommodate learners at all phases of their working life and beyond.
Enterprise 2025 Renewed (DBEI, 2018)	Envisions an Ireland that delivers "sustainable employment and higher standards of living for all" (p. v). Explains the changing world of work requires preparation and continuous adaptation "… if we are to take advantage of emerging opportunities and to increase the productive capacity of our workforce" (p. vii). Emphasises the importance of aligning future skills needs of the workplace and the education system, so that individuals are enabled to adapt to the work environment of the future.
USI National Report on Student Mental Health in Third Level Education (Price et al. for USI, 2019)	Provides a snapshot of students' mental health in 2018. Students across the island of Ireland were surveyed, a total of 3340 students responded giving a response rate of 0.89%. Two validated scales – the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS-21) and the Anxiety Help Seeking Questionnaire (GHSQ) – were included in the survey. Data were collected from January – April 2018. It was found (p.2): • Students reported experiencing extremely severe levels of anxiety (38.4%), depression (29.9%), and stress (17.3%) • Approximately a third (32.2%) of students had a formal diagnosis of mental health difficulties at some point in their lives • A fifth (20.9%) of students did not have someone to talk to about their personal and emotional difficulties • Approximately a third (35.%) of students were made aware of support services through their Student Union • Students use(d) both campus and off campus services to support their mental health • A free on campus counselling service was important for students • Working impacted on student's ability to socialise with classmates • Those who were involved in activities outside their coursework had better mental health Recommendations include: HEA and HEIs prioritisation of student mental health, the development of a national frameworks for mental health at third level, greater coordination and cooperation between HEI and external services to support integrated care delivery, exploration and support of peer support programmes, training for academic staff in dealing with and referring students with mental health difficulties to appropriate services, consideration to developing (and integrating into programmes) accredited wellbeing modules to promote resilience and wellbeing, continuous review of the balance of coursework and assessment.
Embedding Wellbeing Across the Curriculum (Byrne & Surdey for USI and National Forum, 2021)	Cites international research showing that "… where institutions do provide students with mental wellbeing knowledge and skills through academic courses, the positive effect on students are evident … (helping to) prevent depression and anxiety, as well as increase optimism" (p.7). Explores current practice in embedding wellbeing in curricula to inform decision making and planning to

	achieve this goal. The report was informed by a scoping review of the literature, a review of institutional websites and grey literature to explore existing practice nationally and internationally, group discussions with 36 student representatives from across the sector, a survey of HE students, and individual semi-structured interviews with nine staff across six HEIs.

Identifies two common arguments for embedding well-being across curricula. Firstly, "although student wellbeing is traditionally thought of as supported by student services, student counselling and through the activities of students' unions … these exist outside the learning environments in which students spend the majority of their time and where teaching staff can also play a significant role in pastoral care" (p.13). Secondly, "embedding wellbeing is important because we know that wellbeing is necessary to our capacity to learn and is essential in helping students to succeed" (p.13).

Three main approaches to embedding wellbeing in curricula were found: embedding wellbeing through mandatory content, embedding wellbeing through elective content, and curricular infusion (the infusion of ideas, values, or practices into existing courses). Most student participants felt some form of curricular infusion would be the best way to embed wellbeing content. Three key enablers were identified, making content relevant to students and their personal and professional development, leadership, and intra-institutional collaboration.

Concludes more work is needed to "… understand what constitutes good practice in embedding wellbeing in the curriculum and to develop an evidence base that supports our understanding of what works and why" (p.32). The requirements identified as necessary for achieving this objective are: CPD for staff, a whole-of-institution approach, adequate resourcing, and student-staff partnership. Recommends an "… evidence informed, nationally led, collaborative approach to identifying and sharing the features of good practice" (p.8). The establishment of a national collaborative network to share experience and expertise across the sector was identified as beneficial. |
| How Counselling and Peer Led Services Can Optimise Student Success: An Integrated Approach to Student Mental Health and Wellbeing in Higher Education (Armstrong-Astley et al., 3Set Project for HEA, 2020) | The 3Set project was a joint initiative between research, counselling, and peer mentoring staff in UCD, TCD and TUS Midlands (formerly AIT). Argues "student mental health and wellbeing, students' sense of belonging and student success are intrinsically linked and mutually dependent…" (p.2). Focuses on how student counselling and peer led services can work to optimise positive outcomes and enhance student success.

Proposes the 3Set Model for Innovation in Student Mental Health and Wellbeing as a "… template on which future student mental health and wellbeing interventions (of all scales) should be constructed to optimise their impact on student success" (p.3). The model outlines six "influences" (articulated as questions) to guide the design of and decision-making about student mental health and wellbeing interventions (p.3):

1.   How will this intervention improve student mental health and wellbeing?
2.   How can collaboration be increased during the design and/or implementation process?
3.   Is the intervention targeted, and evidence-based?
4.   How can we meet student needs more effectively in the design/roll-out of this intervention?
5.   Can this intervention improve the quality of the services we are offering?
6.   How does the interventions' design and/or implementation increase student belonging?

The six questions are considered in conjunction with ten interrelated "mechanisms" (below) to inform decision-making and ensure optimal impact on student success (p.3), for example, will the intervention also increase collaboration, meet student needs more effectively, improve quality of services, or encourage student belonging. The ten mechanisms are:

1.   Mitigate the increasing demand on services |

	2. Address the concerns raised by and about students 3. Enhance student and staff capabilities 4. Increase student knowledge of and access to services 5. Build confidence in students' capabilities 6. Collect and share data collaboratively, institutionally and nationally 7. Ensure internal and external collaborations and partnerships 8. Identify and implement current best practice 9. Design and implement valid and robust data gathering tools 10. Inform resource allocation. Argues for a whole-of-institution approach and student-staff partnership in operationalising the strategy. Makes multiple recommendations with regard to improving student mental health and wellbeing, increased collaboration, targeted evidence-based interventions, meeting student needs more effectively, improved quality of service, and student belonging. Recommendations (outlined pp.58-59 but discussed through the document) include: • Mandatory induction training in student support and referral, with CPD credits for "top-up" training in student mental health and wellbeing for all HEI staff • Protect timetabled time for student wellbeing and mental health promotion activities, Initiate and support credit-bearing wellbeing promotion modules (e.g., suicide intervention skills) • Commitment to and engagement with student partnership models of consultation, co-creation, and evaluation to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population • Embed peer-led transition and peer support in outreach and intervention strategies • Consider peer-to-peer models for students experiencing specific barriers, including mental health diagnoses • Include students as partners in the design, implementation and evaluation of student mental health and wellbeing interventions • Expand peer-led transition support to include pre-arrival and outduction, and consider similar support for placement transition, exchange transition etc. Maps the recommendations on to the National Forum's Guiding Framework (National Forum, 2021) to demonstrate their relationship to and potential for enabling student success.
National Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Framework (Fox et al. for HEA, 2020)	The Framework, another output of the 3Set project, delivers on a commitment to develop national guidelines for HEIs in relation to suicide risk and critical incident response. Provides a comprehensive overview of Irish HE students mental health. Provides statistical evidence that demonstrates clearly that a significant number of students with mental health difficulties are enrolled in HEIs. Sets out a student mental health and suicide prevention framework that calls for a whole-of-institution approach in partnership with students. The framework is built around nine themes (pp.24-25). These themes are explored in-depth in the document. • Lead : Build and support national and institutional strategies for student mental health • Collaborate: Develop partnerships on campus and in the community with health services to support student mental health • Educate: Build campus knowledge and skills on student mental health and suicide prevention • Engage: Create campus communities that are connected, safe, nurturing, inclusive and compassionate • Identify: Prioritise awareness training for all staff and students to enhance recognition and referral • Support: Provide students with safe, accessible and well-resourced mental health support • Respond: Ensure that institutions have the critical incident protocols required for varying levels of student mental health crisis • Transition Establish student supports throughout the higher education journey

	• Improve Collect and analyse data to inform measures to improve student mental health
Higher Education Healthy Campus and Charter Ireland – Supporting Health and Wellbeing (Health Ireland in partnership with HEIs and the HSE for the DE/DFHERIS, 2021)	Argues health and wellbeing is "… influenced by the organisations and systems where people live, learn and work" (p.2). Contends HEIs are "… uniquely placed to influence and transform society through research, teaching and learning, developing new knowledge and understanding about promoting health and wellbeing, leading by example, advocating to decision makers for the benefit of society and influencing the future decision-makers in society" (p.2). Explains a "healthy campus adopts a holistic understanding of health, takes a whole campus approach, and aspires to create a learning environment and organisational culture that enhances the health and wellbeing of its community and enables people to achieve their full potential" (p.3). Sets out a framework, based on the Okanagan International Charter for Health Promoting Universities, to support HEIs in building "an inclusive, co-ordinated approach to improving campus health and wellbeing" (p.4). The framework is built around Five C's - commit, coordinate, consult, create, celebrate and continue - and is grounded in the following principles (p.3) • Participation: Where student, staff and the wider campus community are actively engaged in deciding on and implementing health and wellbeing promotion actions. • Partnership: Where trans-disciplinary collaborations and cross-sector partnerships are fostered to create connections between health, learning and the campus structure. • Evidence based: Where formulation of policies and practices are guided by evidence, and where knowledge is created through action and research. • Sustainability: Where health and wellbeing of the campus community is infused in the everyday policies, teaching and learning, and research and innovation. Sets out an eight-point charter to which HEI commit (p.8) when taking on this task. Some of these points have explicit implications for teaching and learning as follows: • Act to create empowered, thriving, connected campus communities that foster an ethic of care, compassion, equality and inclusion (Point 2) • Identify and act on opportunities to support the health and wellbeing of students, staff and the wider community through the built, natural, social, economic, cultural, academic, organisational and learning environments in a sustainable way (Point 3) • Identify and act on opportunities to integrate health and wellbeing into the teaching and learning, research and services of all Departments, thus ensuring the development of citizens with the capacity to improve health and wellbeing of the wider community in their future life and work (Point 4) • Consider how our planning and decision making for teaching, learning and assessment, research and knowledge exchange impact on health and wellbeing (Point 5)
Learning Analytics Benefits for Institutions (National Forum, 2017)	Defines learning analytics (LA) as "an evidence-based approach to decision-making in higher education … modelled on the principles of big data, data analytics and business intelligence … analytics empowers HEIs to capitalise on a rich, valuable and often under-utilised resource, namely their institutional data" (p.1). Explains LA may be used to describe (What is happening now and how does this compare with what happened in the past?), predict (What is likely to happen based on what happened in the past?), or prescribe (Which action(s) is most likely to lead to the desired outcome?). Outlines the main benefits of LA for HEIs: LA can inform strategic decision-making and resource allocation, LA can effectively support retention strategies, reduce student attrition, increase funding, and LA can assist KPI monitoring. In addition, LA have the potential to enrich students' learning experience, for example, it can enable "personalised learning, by systematically identifying areas in a student's academic progress which require further

	engagement and automatically directing students to suitable resources" (p.1). Furthermore, LA can enhance students' wellbeing, sense of belonging, and success: "Analytics can alert pastoral staff to students exhibiting sudden changes in engagement which may indicate behavioural, personal or medical concerns. This enables the institution to reach out to students and wrap their support services around those who need them most. Crucially, LA can enable timely, preventative interventions for students whose wellbeing may be at risk. Further, LA can even be used to determine how well new students are integrating into and participating in the institutional community" (p.1).
Resources to Support the Development of Data-Enabled Student Success Strategies (National Forum, 2019)	To support HEIs to implement an effective LA strategy the National Forum shared Online Resource for Learning Analytics (ORLA) ORLA provides links to multiple resources, including resources for those who teach. In 2019, the National Forum shared advice on the use of institutional data to support student success strategies. Notes HEIs can "gain valuable information from any interaction between students and the institution that leaves a digital footprint" (p.1). Data sources include activity on the virtual learning environment, library usage data, attendance data, and marks or grades from formative and summative assessment. The main way in which LA can enhance student success is its capacity to provide real time data allowing institutional decision makers to take proactive and effective action(s). "Learner data can be used to identify aspects of an institution's practices or policies that have the potential to be enhanced to enable student success. By taking effective action to address any impeding factors, institutions can reasonably expect to see not only improved retention and progression rates, but also improvements in students' engagement, performance, welfare, graduate employability and overall satisfaction" (p.1). Outlines the stages involved in the strategic use of data to support student success and shares resources to support each stage. Stresses LA "is a tool for supporting student success, not an objective in itself" (p.3), adding "(its) value … lies in its ability to answer questions" (p.3), so asking the "right questions" is crucial. Notes staff-student partnership is a vital component for getting it right. The Data-Enabled Student Success Initiative (DESSI) initiative was established to support HEIs in maximising the value of their data for student success. Note Work Package 3 has explored this topic in depth, please refer to the document "Learning Analytics Literature Review" for more detailed information.

Table 7: Brief overview of key European policy documents

European Policy Documents	Brief summary
Learning and Teaching in Europe's Universities: An EUA Position Paper (EUA, 2018)	Articulates "key messages "reflecting the current development trends in European universities for the purpose of, informing the work of the EUA as the "voice of universities in policy debates" (p.1), and to facilitate member collaboration. Six key messages (pp.1-3) were identified as follows: • Universities should ensure that their learning activities are geared towards student learning and success. • Universities should ensure that their learning and teaching activities respond to the changing needs of our societies as well as contribute to the advancement of academic and professional knowledge and skills. • Enhancing learning and teaching requires promoting staff development and better recognising of teaching as central to the academic profession. • A clear institutional strategy and a holistic approach are needed to ensure high quality, consistent and effective learning and teaching. • European and international cooperation should be explored as a means to further enhance learning and teaching.

	• Institutional autonomy and sustainable funding are essential for the development of learning and teaching activities.
[European Strategy for Universities](#) (European Commission, 2022)	Purpose to set out a European vision for the future of universities and how the Union can support them across Europe. Places HEIs at the "at the crossroads of education, research, innovation, serving society and economy" (p.1), arguing the HE sector has "has an essential role to play in Europe's post-pandemic recovery and in shaping sustainable and resilient societies and economies" (p.1). Sets out four objectives to "unlock the full potential of the higher education sector as the promoter of skills and knowledge and the engine for innovation and solving societal challenges" (p.3): strengthen the European dimension in higher education and research, support universities as lighthouses of our European way of life, empower universities as actors of change in the twin green and digital transitions, and reinforce universities as drivers of the EU's global role and leadership (p.4). Notable in context of this project is
	• The emphasis on equipping students with future proof skills, such as creativity, problem-solving, and entrepreneurship. The requirement to develop all students' climate and environmental literacy is highlighted.
	"The green and digital transitions require future-proof education, research and innovation, in close cooperation with the related industries and stakeholders … Students and staff across the EU need to be equipped with the green and digital skills for the future and the innovation and technological potential of universities needs to be put at work to tackle related societal challenges" (p.2).
	• The value placed on pedagogical innovation and innovative curricular design characterised by learner centredness, interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity (for example European degrees or curricula designed with industry partners).
	"To achieve excellent and relevant higher education, support is also needed to stimulate pedagogical innovation, focused on the learners, with a variety of learning spaces and flexible, interdisciplinary paths. The creation of 'living labs' should be promoted as a good example of how students can be trained to work on challenges in a holistic way, across disciplines, and how to support students' critical thinking, problem-solving, creative and entrepreneurial skills" (p.8).
	Another innovation is support for the development of "incubators" within HEIs in collaboration with the entrepreneurial sector to "help student entrepreneurs to develop their ideas into businesses" (p.9).
	• The importance attached to a continued focus on diversity, inclusiveness and gender equality in the HE sector because "students, academics, administrative staff and researchers from disadvantaged backgrounds are still underrepresented in higher education" (p.2).
	• The necessity of equipping students with lifelong learning and employability skills, in combination with providing opportunities for reskilling and upskilling. Micro credentials are singled out as one approach to achieving the latter.
	• The identification of the "fundamental" role of HEIs in equipping students, staff, and researchers with the digital skills and competences needed "… in the new reality (post-Covid) and in the promotion of innovation and new technologies" (p.12).
	"The future should be based on hybrid solutions representing a good balance between physical presence and digital tools. (Later) … Universities have a key role to play in fostering a labour force equipped to take on the challenges of the digital transition in the future. Specialised education offer(ed) in digital areas, such as AI, cybersecurity or cloud computing, as well as microelectronics, are crucial … Skill shortages in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) are one of the main obstacles. As digital technologies penetrate all sectors of the economy, it is also necessary that all

students, for example those studying medicine, business administration and agriculture learn to use them at an advanced level in their professions." (pp.12-13).

- The endorsement and support for academic values and academic freedom as a right but also as a responsibility in relation to modelling and teaching students to be active and responsible citizens.

"Universities are key to promote active citizenship, tolerance, equality and diversity, openness and critical thinking for more social cohesion and social trust, and thus protect European democracies. Universities have an active role to play in preparing graduates to be well-informed European citizens. By teaching and awareness raising actions, they support anchoring European values in society, and by upholding scientific rigour they help to strengthen trust in science (p.10).

Makes clear the Commission's commitment to "… mobilise all the instruments at its disposal – be it governance, funding, cooperation, or legislation – to implement this strategy" (p.16). Concludes:

"Coordination of efforts between the EU, Member States, regions, civil society and the higher education sector is key to make this strategy a reality. The Commission invites the [European] Council, Member States and universities to engage in a joint discussion on this policy agenda and work jointly towards future-proof universities, for the benefit of Europe's young generation and to nurture lifelong learning for the benefit of people of all ages" (p.16).

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in European Higher Education Institutions (Claeys-Kulik et al., for EUCEN/EUA, 2018	This study focuses on inclusion in European higher education institutions. The three main barriers found to impede equity, diversity, and inclusion at institutional level were: lack of funding and resources, lack of awareness and consensus of the University community about diversity and inclusiveness issues, and difficulty identifying target groups. The three main enablers in addressing inclusion were: the commitment and support (including financial support) of institutional leaders, direct involvement of target groups in developing and implementing strategies and activities, and involvement of the entire university community.

It was noted that "While university leadership prioritises equity, diversity and inclusion, this is far from always being echoed at the level of faculties and departments" (p.38) underscoring the need for training for all staff (teaching, research, and administrative) to raises their awareness and promote dialogue. Also, to provides them with concrete tools and methods to support inclusion. "Ultimately this will foster inclusive learning, teaching and research environments" (p.48).

Noted at the outset of this report is that Ireland is one of the few European countries that have a developed national action plan to follow up on their commitment to foster social inclusion in higher education. |
| Community engagement in higher education: trends, practices and policies (Farrell for NESET, 2020) | Argues universities have a "crucial" role to play in societal development through community engagement. The envisioned future is: "universities are open, inclusive and responsive institutions that systematically engage with external communities to address pressing societal needs, resulting in societal impact" (p.60). Offers a definition of "community development", noting it is not simply "good neighbourliness' between a university and its immediate local community" (p. 7), but a key mission and valuable activity.

Contends community engagement should be integrated into all university core activities - teaching and learning, research, service and knowledge exchange, student initiatives, and university level engagement. Describes four policy approaches for institutionalising community engagement. These represent different phases of embeddedness. Recommends targeting Approach 2 (high-level policy priority) and Approach 3 (programme level policy priority) in the first instance. Notes the importance of "joined-up governance" across existing policies. Concludes community engagement is context-specific, multifaceted, and complex, |

	so requires a "gradual, developmental and qualitative" approach (p.68). Makes policy recommendations (below) for stakeholders at different levels, including universities (p.67) • Include community engagement as an important principle and priority in future university mission statements or strategic plans. • Consider how to reflect such a policy priority in university-level regulations relating to the criteria for university staff recruitment, promotion and tenure, as well as internal quality assurance assessments. • Consider how to use national university associations/rectors' conferences to launch initiatives or resources to support HEIs in community engagement (e.g. Campus Engage in Ireland). • Make use of resources such as the TEFCE Toolbox for community engagement in higher education to reflect on the university's current level of community engagement and potential for improvement. • Support the launch of university-based thematic networks, communities of practice and peer-learning activities related to community engagement.
Universities without Walls: A Vision for 2030 (EUA, 2021)	Sets out a vision for universities in 2030. Envisions universities "without walls" and explains "…these are universities that are open and engaged in society while retaining their core values. … (they) will build on their capacity to evolve and will become engines of societal change. They will provide an open, transformative space for common knowledge production through research, education, innovation and culture. Together with other societal stakeholders, they will shape the future of a knowledge-driven society" (p.5). In tune with this vision, the value of making Universities "open to all" is emphasised and highlights the need to design learning and research environments to "… accommodate the needs of a diverse student and staff body. Students and staff (must) be equipped to work in diverse environments" (p.6). Focusing on the commentary on learning and teaching specifically, an ethos of learning for life and lifelong learning best characterises the vision as set out. "The higher education learning experience will nurture and enable the development of learners as creative and critical thinkers, problem solvers and active and responsible citizens equipped for lifelong learning. It will kindle curiosity and creativity and support personal development through familiarity with the scientific method and the traditions of human knowledge and commitment to evidence-based discourse. Through higher education, learners will also attain high-level skills and expertise, including entrepreneurial skills, for their professional development. They will be able to apply knowledge in a reflective manner and critically produce new knowledge. Studying will be better connected with training and learners will have more opportunities to participate in traineeship programmes during their studies. Learners will graduate with both knowledge in their disciplines and exposure to challenges and problem-solving, including in other disciplines. They will also have experience in working with non-university partners towards positively impacting the society around them" (pp.7-8). Concludes learning and teaching should be learner centred, collegial, and collaborative, involving "the entire university community, as well as external partners" (p.8). Lifelong learning should be promoted and accommodated with the understanding that: "Learners' goals and needs will be diversified; some will seek personal development and a degree after finishing secondary education, while others will enter at different stages in their lives and for different purposes. They will have access to a variety of learning spaces and flexible, multi- and interdisciplinary paths that ensure that their learning is at the centre of the process" (p.8).
Promoting a European dimension to teaching enhancement A feasibility study from the European Forum for Enhanced	Argues for a systematic approach to enhancing teaching and learning that is embedded in strategy and linked to wider (including European) higher education goals. Reports that in most HE systems "the organisation of teaching enhancement is left to institutions" (p.8). Contends "(formalised) intra-institutional

Collaboration in Teaching (EFFECT) project (EUA, 2017)	communication and collaboration on learning and teaching is crucial for the success of teaching and teaching enhancement" (p8). Developed a set of European Principles for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching to facilitate the development and implementation of teaching and learning strategies at institutional level, and to offer a starting point for conversations on "the systematic enhancement of learning and teaching across different academic fields and institutions, both within national systems and across European networks" (p.12). This work is reflected in these documents Ten European Principles for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (EUA, 2017) and The Institutional Strategies Support Package – Principles and Guiding Questions
Mapping and analysis of student-centred learning and teaching practices: usable knowledge to support more inclusive, high-quality higher education (Klemenčič et al., for NESET, 2020)	Argues student centred learning and teaching (SCLT) is founded on the concept of student agency and is concerned with the "capabilities of students to participate in, influence and take responsibility for their learning pathways and environments, in order to have a transformative learning experience and thus achieve deeper learning outcomes" (p.8). Maps real-world SCLT practices with "proven" potential to contribute to the quality and inclusiveness of higher education. These examples are contextualised in the pedagogical literature to explain how and why these practices work. Also shares a self-assessment tool to enable HEIs to assess the extent and effectiveness of SCLT within their own institution. Concludes SCLT is founded on 10 interlinked core principles (p.10) as follows: - Policies, rules and regulations enabling student-centred learning and teaching. - Student-centred curriculum and pedagogy. - Student-centred assessment. - Flexible learning pathways. - Learner support - Teaching support. - Active learning spaces and academic libraries. - Learning technologies infrastructure. - Community learning connections and partnerships. - Quality assurance supporting student-centred learning and teaching. Argues SCTL supports inclusive and supportive higher education in the sense of "removing barriers for all students to access, actively participate in, and achieve transformative learning experiences in higher education" (p.8). SCLT can support inclusive higher education through attention to diversity in the classroom, and improved access to (and within) higher education through the application of inclusive curriculum and pedagogy; flexible learning pathways; technology-enhanced learning; learning and teaching support; inclusive learning spaces and libraries, and community engagement and partnerships. Noted several Irish examples are cited.
Recommendations for National/Governmental Support/Action for the Enhancement of European Higher Education Learning and Teaching (BFUG Advisory Group 2 on Learning and Teaching, 2020)	Aimed to develop, in collaboration with key stakeholders, principles for innovative and inclusive approaches in learning and teaching, and to collect best-practice examples of how governments can support institutions to develop, enhance and implement strategies for learning and teaching. This work culminated in three recommendations to governments: - Make student centred learning a reality - Foster future teaching - Strengthen higher education institutions 'and systems' capacity to support learning and teaching The recommendations are underpinned by specific guidelines see Annex III to the Rome Ministerial Communiqué
A Renewal EU Agenda for Higher Education (European Commission, 2017)	Views higher education as critical to building a better future for European citizens. The renewal agenda aims to "..ensure the EU's initiatives to support higher education modernisation are focused on issues that matter …" (Item 1) and align with the priorities of current and future EU funding programmes. Four priorities for action (Section 2) are identified: Tackling future skills mismatches and promoting excellence in skills development

	• Building inclusive and connected higher education systems • Ensuring higher education institutions contribute to innovation • Supporting effective and efficient higher education systems The EC commits to a series of actions to support Member States efforts in meeting the renewal agenda.
European Skills Agenda for Sustainable Competitiveness, Social Fairness and Resilience (European Commission, 2020)	One building block of the European Skills Agenda is to "help people build their skills through life in an environment where lifelong learning is the norm". The Commission is aiming towards: "… building comprehensive, quality and inclusive adult learning systems, which reach out to all, including seniors and in particular those most in need of access to learning, including through distance and online learning. It will prioritise non-formal, life-wide learning, intergenerational, intercultural and community learning. Local learning centres, libraries and the wider community and civil society will be supported to work together to motivate and enable adults to learn, thus supporting crisis resilience" (Action 8). Views higher education as "… an essential vehicle to provide students with the skills they need in the future. Universities generate the advanced knowledge and skills that help society innovate to address its big challenges. They are empowering people with high-level skills that allow them to boost their professional, social and personal development" (Section 2.4) but warns "The fast-changing labour market and societal transitions require a transformation of tertiary education institutions and to improve their alignment with the economic environment to ensure that graduates have the education and skills required by the labour market and especially those that are needed for the twin (green and digital) transitions (Section 2.4). Stresses the importance of increasing STEM graduates to drive the twin transitions and a focus on green, digital, entrepreneurial (including social entrepreneurial) and transverse skills (for example teamworking, critical thinking, and creative problem-solving, media literacy and 'human' skills like empathy, resilience and adaptation to change). The importance of innovative teaching and learning strategies and curricula is highlighted. The value and potential of quality micro-credentials for upskilling and reskilling is singled out. "(Micro-credentials) can make learning more adapted to individual needs, thus fostering more innovative and inclusive approaches and facilitating access to the labour market and job transitions. They can also facilitate further learning, as they may be cumulated to obtain a larger credential, allowing individuals to accumulate learning outcomes over time and across institutions, sectors and borders and also online through e-learning schemes" (Section 3.2). Recommends exploration of the inclusion of micro-credentials in qualifications frameworks.
SHEILA Supporting Higher Education to Integrate Learning Analytics Research Report (Tsai et al. 2018, supported by the Erasamus+ programme of the European Union)	Argues (learning analytics) LA "promises to enhance learning and teaching by providing insights into learning engagement and progression, thereby informing teaching and learning decisions" (p.4). Aimed to build and validate a policy development framework to support "systematic, sustainable, and responsible" HEI adoption of LA (p.4). Development of the framework was informed by the literature, institutional leaders, teaching staff, students, and experts in LA. Data were collected using a combination of surveys, focus groups, and concept mapping. The framework is built around six interlinked "dimensions": map the political context, identify key stakeholders, identify desired behaviour changes, develop an engagement strategy, analyse internal capacity to effect change, and establish monitoring and learning frameworks. When using the framework users are guided to consider, key actions to take, key challenges, and how to address these. A web version of the SHEILA framework has been developed to enable users to formulate their own policy and implementation strategy – linked here. A MOOC on Learning Analytics in Higher Education has also been made available – linked here. The

| | MOOC provides an overview of LA in HE, introduces the SHEILA framework, and uses case studies to show it in action.

One finding of the study was potential users were interested in LA for different reasons.

"(Institutional leaders) were most interested in using LA to improve institutional performance, whereas teaching staff (were keen to use it) to reform curriculum and improve student support, and students (wanted) to receive more personalised education tailored to meet their needs" (p.17).

Teachers and students agreed that LA should enhance "student agency and self-regulated learning skills" (p.5) as opposed to "hampering them through a spoon-feeding or datafication approach" (p.5).

Consequently, a dialogical approach is critical to ensuring a shared vision for LA. Three key challenges that must always be addressed to enhance the impact of LA at institutional level are ethics and privacy, institutional capacity, and closing the feedback loop effectively. |
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