THE DEVELOPMENT OF FORMAL FEEDBACK PROCESSES IN THE NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN, DUBLIN

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1. Background

- National College of Art and Design, Dublin, Ireland

- @ 1000 full-time students

- BA, BDes, PG Dip, MA, MFA, M.Ed, M. Litt, PhD

- Awarding body – National University of Ireland (NUI)

- Internal QA processes but external reporting line to Higher Education Authority (funding body) and through the NUI to the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB)

- QA procedures now established in Europe involve self-assessment by units followed by peer review

- Self-assessment must include feedback from key stakeholders – the students

Student Exit Survey

- The idea for an annual Exit Survey originated through a survey I circulated to Heads of Department and Heads of Faculty in January 2006 looking for feedback on existing survey methodologies and usefulness. I asked the question:

  "What suggestions, if any, do you have for ways in which student feedback provision could be improved in the future?"

- This was answered by one suggestion to:

  "Normalise it as a standard process recurring annually."

- From this suggestion I proposed an annual exit survey to be piloted in May 2006. By asking only final year students to complete it I hoped to avoid "questionnaire fatigue" that would occur if I asked all the students to complete this survey each year.

2. Why do we do it?

- **Assessment of current practices**
- **Provides internal guidance and direction for forward planning**
- **Keeping in touch with key players**
- **On-going review to tie in with QA process**
- **In keeping with HEA requirements**
- **In keeping with other colleges/universities**
- **Potential historical archive of information " a snapshot in time"**

- **Should be of benefit to future students**

Why do we do it?

"The purpose of the exit survey each year is to establish the overall college experience of outgoing students and to thereby provide direction for forward planning within the college so that NCAD continues to deliver a quality learning experience for its students."

QA Report to HEA 2009

The survey is:

- An objective evaluation tool
- Scientifically reliable
- Measurable
- Benchmark-able
- Designed to be convenient, economical and within a set timeframe.

3. How do we do it?
Survey provides both:

Quantitative	Qualitative
Information of scientific significance	Information of depth
Based on number of responses	Based on quality rather than quantity of answers
To measure issues	To explore issues

How do we do it?

Questionnaire Methodology - Fieldwork
Final year sample drawn to represent total population

First three years 2006 - 2008:

- Paper-based

- Self-completion

- Postal – pack included SAE to QA Office

- Required participation of Heads

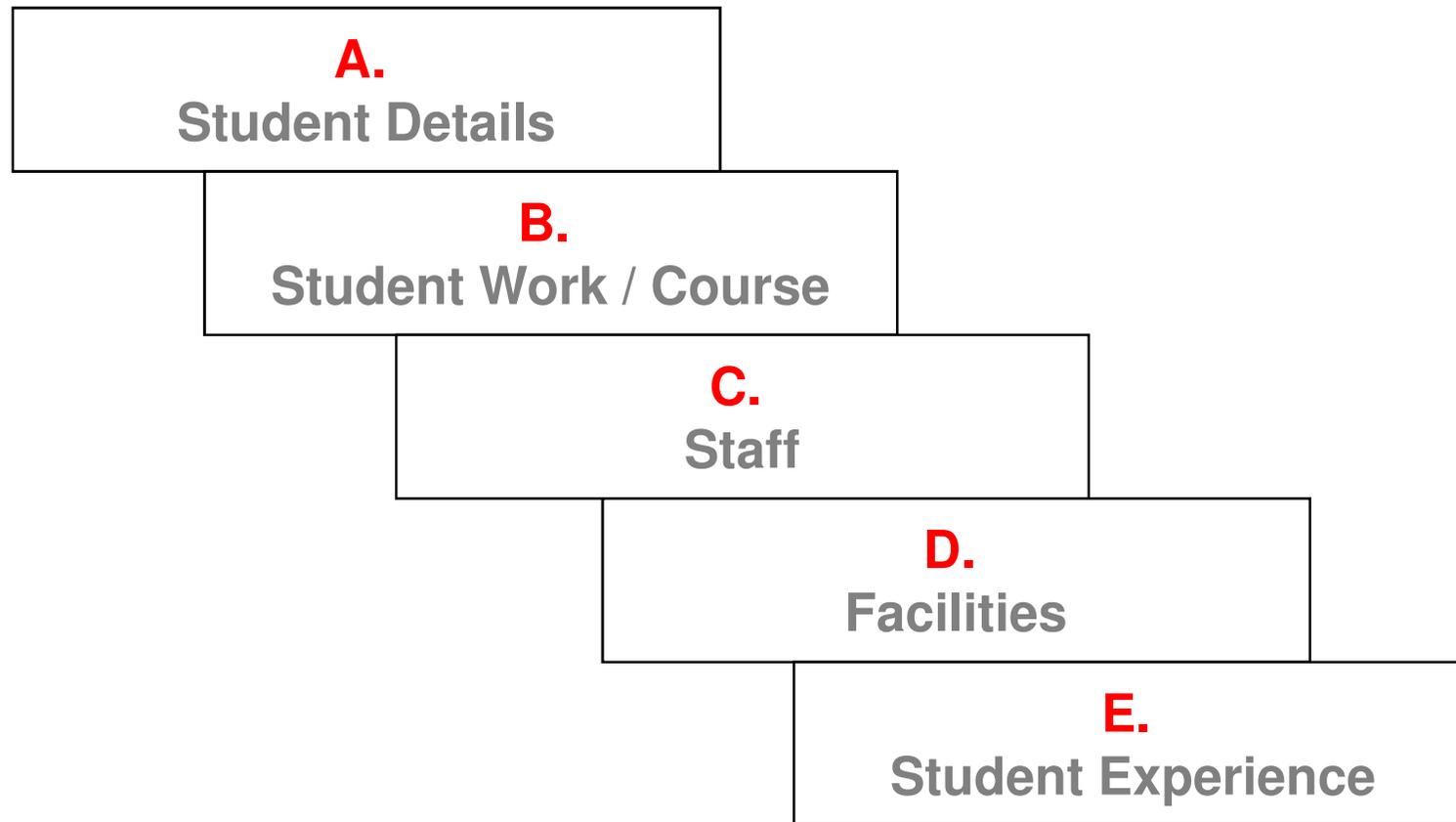- Response rates:

    2006 24%

    2007 49%

    2008 61%

2009:

- Trial of web-based survey

- Link and explanatory letter circulated through email

- Reminders sent twice through email

- It takes @ 20 minutes to complete

- Response rate: 57%

Questionnaire Format

Laid out into clearly defined sections

A.
Student Details

B.
Student Work / Course

C.
Staff

D.
Facilities

E.
Student Experience

Questionnaire Format - Topics

A. Student Details	• Faculty/Department of Study, course of study, previous study
B. Student work / Course	• Initial source of awareness • Course content • Balance and demands of course • Assessment procedures & marking • Timetabling • Erasmus & work placements • Field trips

Questionnaire Format - Topics

C. Staff	• Lecturers/tutors & technicians
	• Expertise on subject, encouragement to learn, encouragement to participate, facilitation of student learning, clarity of communication, adherence to course, advice, technical support….
	• Briefing sessions, demonstrations & slide lectures, recommended references, visiting lecturers.

Questionnaire Format - Topics

D. Facilities	Facilities in the department:
	• Work space, security of work, quality of workshops & studios, access to same, standard & maintenance of equipment, maintenance of buildings, general house-keeping, day-to-day administration
	Student support facilities:
	• Student Services, reception, library, language centre, canteen, doctor, counselor, careers advisory, security, health & safety
	Other:
	• Likely use of college & use of library on sat.,
	• Use of NCAD email address

Questionnaire Format - Topics

E. Student Experience	• Personally rewarding • Personally challenging • Peer learning • Critical thinking • Conceptual ability • Technical skills • Research skills • Enjoyment • Good understanding of subject • Relevance to industry • Prospects after leaving college • Any additional comments

Questionnaire Format – Styles

Three basic styles

Pre-coded directed questions
Circle numbers: categories & Likert scaling

Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Very poor	Don't know	N/A
5	4	3	2	1	0	9

Open-ended directed questions
Write on lines provided

What initially attracted you to this course/department?

_____

_____

Spontaneous additional comments
Write in the space provided

If you have any additional comments to make, please do so here:

Questionnaire Format – Example

Student Exit Survey 2009

10. Student Experience

100%

28. To what extent do you agree with each of the following:

	Disagree a lot	Disagree a little	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree a little	Agree a lot	N/A
The course is personally rewarding	○	○	○	○	○	○
The course is personally challenging	○	○	○	○	○	○
The course has enhanced my conceptual ability	○	○	○	○	○	○
The course has enhanced my technical skills	○	○	○	○	○	○
The course has improved my research skills	○	○	○	○	○	○
The course has given me a good understanding of the subject	○	○	○	○	○	○
I have learnt what the course description stated I would learn	○	○	○	○	○	○

29. And finally, if you have any additional comments to make on your overall NCAD experience, please do so here:
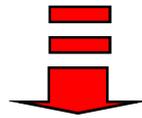
Prev   Submit

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Analysis

All quantitative information statistically analyzed

Using SPSS software

Total numbers & percentages

mean scores

Crosstabs

Tables & charts

Reporting

Reporting formats:

1. Management Summary

For ease of access to key findings

2. Detailed written report

Complete write-up of all findings

3. Complete tabular report

Mean scores across years – to build up a long-term picture of changes/good and bad

4. WHO DOES IT GO TO?
Distribution of Findings

Full findings distributed to Senior Management

Pertinent findings distributed to Heads of Faculty

Filtered to Heads of Department

Summary report forwarded to Student Union and posted on NCAD intranet

5. Evaluation

Review & Planning

Reviewing both complex issues and more simple ones that have arisen – some examples:

- Integration of theory with practice
- Use of technology within the College
- Timetabling issues

Strategic consideration of outcomes
Decisions on intentions

Development & Implementation

Management of current best practices e.g. student services
Pursuit of adjustments & developments where appropriate

6. Next Steps

- **Evaluation is inherent to the growth and development of NCAD and all academic institutions. The full potential of this process is not being exploited. Actions in response to student feedback are not be captured or documented.**

- **Acknowledging concerns of students is critical so we must enhance and systemise our feedback to students on actions taken as a result of their participation.**

- **What structures could be put in place to enable transparency?**

- **How can we explicitly capture not only the issues, *but also* the actions and the outcomes?**