

Forum Insights

SOME KEY EUROPEAN AND NATIONAL TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY AND PRACTICE DOCUMENTS

(June 2016)

The Purpose of this *Forum Insight*

The current array of European and national higher education policy, strategy and good practice documents can be overwhelming. Some of these documents have statutory requirements; however, there are also additional expectations placed on individuals, academic/administrative departments and institutions from strategies, guidelines, resources and research findings. This *Forum Insight* presents a summary of some of the key European and national teaching and learning documents (see summary table overleaf) which can be used to encourage on-going dialogue and to inform teaching and learning enhancement within the context of wider drivers and issues.

Updating and Contributing to this *Forum Insight*

The National Forum has selected some of the current (June 2016) European and national documents that can inform and assist the planning of teaching and learning enhancement activities in Irish higher education. In addition, for some of them, we have drawn out key teaching and learning related elements. We will update this summary as other documents emerge, or if there are current European and/or nationally significant documents that should be noted. To make suggestions for the next version, please contact admin@teachingandlearning.ie noting the document and selecting some key aspects under the five categories in the matrix. We value your contribution to this resource.

How is the Table Organised?

The table sets out five broad categories to assist in the comparison of the different policy and practice documents. Under each category, we have drawn out key teaching and learning related elements. The five categories are:

1. *Strategy and Capacity Building*

This category includes leadership, policy and strategy development, and facilitating the professional development of staff.

2. *Design of Learning*

This takes into consideration the organisational decisions, structures, processes and practices that are required in the design of learning. It emphasises the importance of making connections and collaboration in curriculum design and situates this in the changing learning environment.

3. *Practice*

This category includes engagement of students in their learning, and supporting them in this process, in particular, through times of transition. It also includes the development of blended and/or online approaches to learning.

4. *Assessment FOR/OF/AS Learning*

This category focuses on assessment purposes, principles and their rationale. Assessment is a key driver of student learning and has been given particular recognition in many current teaching and learning policies and practices.

5. *Evidence-based Informed Approach*

Evidence should inform teaching and learning enhancement and the steps required for planning enhancement activities. This category includes evaluation, scholarship of teaching, and research-informed teaching

Summary Table

CATEGORIES	ESG European QA standards ¹	European High Level group: Improving the quality of teaching and learning in Europe's higher education institutions ² (recommendations)	European High Level Group: New Modes of Learning ³ ; European Commission The Changing Pedagogical Landscape ²⁰	National Skills Strategy 2025 ⁴	National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (Hunt Report) ⁵ (recommendations)
1. Strategy and Capacity Building including Leadership; Policy Development; Professional Development of Staff	Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. (p13)	Development of an institutional strategy for teaching. (p27) Academic staff are employed to teach well to a high professional standard. (principle, p15) Academic staff are well trained. (p15) New staff have a teaching qualification. (p15) Opportunities for CPD. (p15) Up to date over their career [p15, see also Rec. 4, p5]. Teaching entrance and promotion should take account of teaching performance. (Rec. 5)	Strategic vision and leadership is needed to address these perceptions and to more fully engage staff in the potential offered by new modes of learning and teaching. ³ (p27) All staff teaching in higher education institutions should receive training in relevant digital technologies and pedagogies as part of initial training and continuous professional development. ³ (p. 54)	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. (p11) People in Ireland will engage more in lifelong learning. (p11)	All higher education institutions must ensure that all teaching staff are both qualified and competent in teaching and learning and should support on-going development and improvement of their skills. (Rec. 8)
2. Design of Learning including Designing Curriculum; Connections and Collaboration; Learning Environment	Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. (p11)	Curriculum should be developed through dialogue and partnerships with students, graduates and other stakeholders. (p41) Institutions should introduce and promote cross, trans and interdisciplinary approaches to T&L to develop breadth of understanding and entrepreneurial and innovative mindsets (p47) Institutions should develop international dimensions of their curricula.	The integration of new technologies and pedagogies needs to be placed at the heart of institutions' teaching and learning strategies, and they should become an integral component of everyday institutional business. ³ (p. 27) Countries should put in place measures to support universities in their innovation in pedagogies (including learning design and assessment). ²⁰ (p12)	We will support an increase in the supply of skills in the labour market. (p11)	Higher education students of the future should have an excellent teaching and learning experience, informed by up-to-date research and facilitated by a high-quality learning environment, with state-of-the-art learning resources, such as libraries, laboratories, and e-learning facilities. (Rec. 1) Students should develop the generic skills needed for effective engagement in society and in the workplace. (Rec. 6) Engagement with the wider community must become more firmly embedded in the mission of higher education institutions. (Rec. 14)
3. Practice including Engaging Teaching/Learning Approaches; Supporting Students in Transition; and Blended/Online Approaches	Institutions should ensure that programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students in an active role. Students have a role in quality review. (p12)	Active student learning is essential in governance, curriculum design etc. (principle 15) Curriculum should be developed through dialogue and partnerships with students, graduates and other stakeholders. (p41) Institutions should establish, guidance, mentoring and tracking systems to support students. (p45) HE institutions... should support their teachers to develop the skills for online and other forms of teaching, and should explore technology to improve the quality of T&L. (p49)		There will be a specific focus on active inclusion to support participation in education and training and the labour market. (p11) Teaching and learning at all stages of education will be continually enhanced and evaluated. (p11) Providers will place a stronger focus on providing skills-development opportunities that are relevant to the needs of learners, society and the economy. (p11)	The Irish higher education system must continue to develop clear routes of progression and transfer, as well as non-traditional entry routes. (Rec. 4) Higher education institutions should prepare first-year students better for their learning experience, so that they can engage with it more successfully. (Rec. 5)
4. Assessment FOR/OF/AS including Assessment Purposes; Principles; and their Rationale	Assessments are consistent, fair.. Students are given feedback...Criteria for and method of assessment are published in advance... Staff receive support. (p12)	Student performance in learning activities should be assessed against clear and agreed outcomes, developed in partnership with all faculty members involved in their delivery. (p43)	Countries should put in place measures to support universities in their innovation in pedagogies (including learning design and assessment). ²⁰ (p12)		
5. Evidence-based Informed Teaching including Evaluation; Scholarship of Teaching; Research-informed teaching	On-going monitoring and review (p15) . Institutions should ensure they collect analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes, including student satisfaction. (p14)	Take account of student feedback to lead to improvements. (p29) Heads of Institutions and institutional leaders should recognise and reward higher-education teachers who make significant contribution to improving the quality of teaching and learning, whether through their practice or through their research into T&L. (rec 6, p37)	Certification can be used to support research into teaching and learning, which itself is an important part of raising the profile of university teaching. ²⁰ (p12)	The quality of teaching and learning at all stages of education will be continually enhanced and evaluated. (p11)	Higher education institutions should put in place systems to capture feedback from students, and use this feedback to inform institutional and programme management. (Rec. 2) Every student should learn in an environment that is informed by research, scholarship and up-to-date practice and knowledge, in a high-quality learning environment. (Rec. 3)



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QQI (2016) Core Statutory QA Guidelines⁶	HEA (2013) Institutional Mission-based compacts;⁷ HEA (2016a) Strategic Dialogue Cycle 2 outcomes⁸	National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education⁷	National Student Engagement reports: ISSE (2015);¹⁸ HEA working group report (2016b)¹⁹	National Forum's Key Policies and Reports^{10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17}
<p>Related policy states the provider's commitment to self-monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and learning on its education and training programmes, research and related services. (p13)</p> <p>The provider environment is enhancement-focused and utilises the available resources to offer opportunities for and promote the professional development of teaching staff. (p13) Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. (p13)</p>	<p>Benchmarked by training staff professionally.⁷ (p11) HE institutions have demonstrated progress and ability to move beyond a simple process-driven approach to their strategic intentions; institutions have a focused and strategic approach to institutional direction and management. Institutions should review their objectives and incorporate benchmarking and departments should sharpen their indicators.⁸</p>	<p>Equity of access policies should be mainstreamed into the everyday life of higher education institutions to enhance the quality of the learning experience and progression outcomes for all students. (p.16)</p>	<p>Students as partners is key in moving beyond legal compliance to embed a culture of engagement throughout the institution. Students should be involved in decision making processes. (HEA, 2016b)</p>	<p>National Forum's Digital Roadmap.¹⁰ (Rec. 1-4)</p> <p>National Forum's Professional Development Guidelines.¹¹</p> <p>National Forums' Digital Roadmap.¹⁰ (Rec 3)</p>
<p>The learning environment: Respects and attends to the diversity of learners and their needs, enabling flexible learning pathways. (p13.) The provider ensures that both the programme level and each programme's learning environment are appropriate by addressing the many contexts in which learning opportunities emerge; different learning environments. (p14)</p>	<p>Benchmarked by clearly linking programmes to defined learning outcomes. Benchmarking by engaging with industry and stakeholders.⁷ (p11) Institutions should have regard for evolving policy priorities and the need for flexible, innovative and interdisciplinary skills provision, to meet the needs of enterprise and the community. Align with the National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship.⁸</p>	<p>It is acknowledged that students from the target groups may require additional academic or other supports in order to complete, but this must be done in accordance with the principles of universal design for learning and should not label them in any negative way. (p.21)</p>	<p>Design of general outcomes, general development outcomes, career readiness, higher order thinking, academic changes, student-staff interactions (ISSE, 2015, p4) . HEIs will embrace innovative learning techniques which incorporate the student as creator of their own learning. (HEA, 2016b)</p>	<p>National Forums' Digital Roadmap.¹⁰ (Rec. 1-4)</p>
<p>The provider environment is enhancement-focused and utilises the available resources to encourage innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies. (p13)</p> <p>The learning environment encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while encouraging adequate guidance and support for the learner. (p14)</p>	<p>Institutions should have regard for evolving policy priorities and the need for flexible, innovative and interdisciplinary skills provision. Institutions should have regard for evolving national policy priorities, including the Transitions agenda.⁸</p>		<p>Students gain most when they invest time and energy in their learning. Institutions and staff have key roles to play in providing an environment that both encourages and facilitates that engagement (ISSE, 2015,p6)</p> <p>Development of supportive learning environment and student-staff interactions. (ISSE, 2015, p4)</p>	<p>National Forum's Engagement Enhancement Projects.¹³</p> <p>National Forum's Retention Report.¹⁴</p> <p>National Forum's Digital Roadmap.¹⁰ (Rec. 3)</p> <p>National Forum's Enhancement Theme (Transitions).¹⁵</p> <p>National Forum's Digital Roadmap.¹⁰</p>
<p>Assessment is fair and consistent. (p15) Policies and procedures address learner responsibility for demonstrating learning achievement; how assessment supports standards based on learning outcomes; the assessment of learners at appropriate points in the programme and ensure that feedback on the outcomes of assessment is provided to students in a timely and appropriate manner. (p15)</p>	<p>Benchmarked by appropriate assessment of teaching and learning.⁷ (p11)</p>			<p>National Forum's Enhancement Theme (Assessment).¹⁵</p>
<p>The provider environment is enhancement-focused and utilises the available resources to encourage scholarly activity, as appropriate, to strengthen the link between education, teaching and research; encourage activity to strengthen the links between education, teaching, research and other developments within fields. (p13)</p>	<p>Benchmarked themselves against relevant peers in other countries. Benchmarking by using student feedback to inform programme content and delivery.⁷ (p11) HE institutions should become more outcomes focused.⁸</p>		<p>Institutions will welcome and encourage open and prompt feedback from students. Suitable measures will be put in place across the institution to ensure that students are facilitated in providing feedback. (HEA, 2016b)</p>	<p>National Forum's Scholarship database.¹⁶</p> <p>National Forums Learning Analytics Project.¹⁷</p> <p>National Forum's Professional Development Guidelines.¹¹</p> <p>National Forums' Digital Roadmap.¹⁰ (Rec. 4)</p>

Sources that have been referenced in the summary table. Please click on the titles 1-20 below to hyperlink to these electronic documents.

1. ESG European QA standards (2015) Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), Brussels.
2. European Commission (2013) High Level group on the modernisation of Higher education: Improving the quality of teaching and learning in Europe's higher education institutions.
3. European Commission (2014) High Level Group on the Modernisation of Higher Education: New Modes of Learning.
4. Department of Education and Skills (2015) Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025. Department of Education and Skills.
5. Department of Education and Skills (2011) National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 Department of Education and Skills.
6. QQI (2016) Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines. April 2016, QQI.
7. HEA (2013) Guidelines for completion of mission-based performance compacts , Higher Education Authority.
8. HEA (2016a) Strategic Dialogue Cycle 2 outcomes Higher Education Authority.
9. HEA (2015) National plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education (2015-2019) Higher Education Authority.
10. National Forum (2015a) Teaching and Learning in Irish Higher Education: A Roadmap for Enhancement in a Digital World 2015-2017.
11. National Forum (2016a) National Forum's Professional Development Guidelines webpage.
12. National Forum (2016b) A Current Overview of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in Irish Higher Education.
13. National Forum (2016c) National Forum's Focused Research Projects.
14. National Forum (2015b) Why Students Leave: Findings from Qualitative Research into Student non-completion in Higher Education in Ireland.
15. National Forum (2016d) National Forum's Enhancement Themes (Transitions) and (Assessment).
16. National Forum (2016f) National Forum's Scholarship database.
17. National Forum (2016g) National Forum's Learning Analytics Project.
18. ISSE (2015). Irish Survey of Student Engagement. ISSE.
19. HEA (2016b) working group report Enhancing Student Engagement in Decision Making Working, Higher Education Authority.
20. European Union (2015) Changing Pedagogical Landscape: New ways of teaching and learning and their implications, European Commission.