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HEA Teaching and Learning Conference

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Leading Change Together: Building the Future of
Teaching and Learning in Higher Education



Online student transition programmes at Maynooth University: My Maynooth on Moodle and 'Second Year



Institution(s) and Partner Organisations Involved
Maynooth University, Student Skills & Success.
Contributor(s)
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What level(s) of your institution does this work affect?
• Across multiple units/schools/faculties • Institutional level
Date and Timeframe
Ongoing
Alignment and Focus
Focus
• Digital Transformation in the Tertiary Sector
Frameworks, Policies, or Strategies Aligned
• Maynooth University Student Success Strategy (Maynooth University) • Maynooth University Strategic Plan 2023-2028 (Maynooth University) • A Strategic Action Plan for Equity of Access, Participation and Success in Higher Education 2022-2028 (HEA) Next Steps for Teaching and Learning: Moving Forward Together (National Forum) • Embedding Student Success: A Guiding Framework (National Forum) • Guide to Developing Enabling Policies for Digital and Open Teaching and Learning (National Forum) • Steps to Partnership (National Student Engagement Programme) • National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (Department of Education)
Discipline
• Health and Welfare • Information and Communication Technologies • Services • Teaching and Learning

Impact, Lessons Learned and Future Directions

The 2025 release of 'My Maynooth on Moodle' was accessed by over 2,600 students by the end of September. An in-built evaluation mechanism reported; 98% of students agreed the topics were relevant to them; 97% were now more aware of services and supports to help them succeed; and 91% felt better prepared for starting university after taking the course.

Our programmes have already demonstrated tangible benefits:

- **Student Impact:** Over 8,000 students have engaged with the programmes so far, gaining confidence in their transition into and through university life.
- **Staff Impact:** The collaborative model encouraged cross-departmental learning and engagement, fostering a culture of innovation and shared ownership in student success.

Future Plans and Sustainability

Given the success of positive student feedback and stakeholder engagement to date, it is anticipated that the online transitions programme will become mainstreamed once current funding concludes. The value of this work has already been recognised, as the Student Success Officer position, which was due to expire at the end of the external funding cycle, has secured commitment for mainstreaming by the university.

There is a need to consider how this approach to providing students with online access to key information could be extended for postgraduate students. This would go some way to achieving an online transitions programme that covers students across the majority of their journey in Maynooth, whatever their mode or level of study.

Top Tips

1. **Co-creation & Partnership.** Working in partnership with students on this project has called for us to reexamine beliefs that we as staff had about particular transitions and what students think and feel. Co-creating with students in this manner allows us to sense-check our activity and respond to the current student experience.
2. **Cross-institutional Engagement.** A project such as this relies on stakeholder engagement and meticulous coordination as it brings together a lot of information from across the university community. Make use of project teams and targeted content documents to make it easy for colleagues to review content to ensure everything is up to date.
3. **Peer Validation.** Feedback has shown that students valued the peer-led elements most as it provided them with a relatable view of the student experience, providing reassurance that they were not alone in experiencing challenges.

Initiative Description

Aims and Objectives

- Asynchronous, self-paced and modular content on Moodle, MU's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)
- Holistic support for students' academic, personal, and professional development across multiple student transition points
- Co-created, peer-led digital storytelling and activities
- Regular content releases tailored to students' evolving needs

Outline or Description

Context and Needs Addressed

A comprehensive online transitions programme is a key recommendation of Maynooth University's Student Success Strategy. Consultation identified the need to recognise that our students' personal development goals, and supports they will require vary throughout individual learning journeys and our transition opportunities need to be flexible and approachable to cater for this.

Our online programmes create a dynamic, student-centred digital experience that evolves with students over time. By combining interactive learning, peer-led storytelling, and continuous feedback, they foster engagement, confidence, and belonging. Co-creation between students and staff ensures that content remains relevant, responsive, and supportive of students' academic, personal, and professional success.

Programme Development and Implementation

Launched in September 2023, 'My Maynooth on Moodle' has developed into a year-long online orientation programme for undergraduate students. Two modules are available to students when they first register with the university. Content includes a welcome to the university campus; information on timetables, subject choices and what to expect in your first lecture; what the first 4 weeks on campus will look like; and providing information on areas such as the library, learning supports and extra-curricular activity. This information is complemented with interactive activities, reflections, and student experience videos.

Each month a new module is released to meet students where they are on their first-year journey. For example, our colleagues in Student Services have seen increases in students presenting with issues such as

loneliness after the first few weeks have passed. We address this online during November, when university colleagues collaborate on content around loneliness, overwhelm, and developing study/life balance.

Building on this model, *Second Year & Beyond!* launched in September 2025 for students returning for second year. Research through Maynooth's *Thrive Initiative* highlighted that this transition can be a challenging one for students. Developing purpose, establishing identity, building resilience, and defining life direction become more important to students in their second year- all while adapting to an increased academic workload. This can lead to students encountering difficulties at a time when there is a perception that they should 'get' university. In response, this innovative programme was designed to help students prepare effectively for the new academic year, with the intention of equipping them for success throughout the remaining years of studies. The content covered in the 3 modules includes; options for studying electives, studying abroad and placement; advanced learning techniques; and more in-depth information on areas such as the library, learning supports and the careers service. This is again complemented by student experience videos, created entirely by students from concept development through to final editing.

Co-creation and Stakeholder Involvement

Initial technical set-up for both programmes involved collaboration with services including: IT Services, Registry, Timetabling and the Centre for Teaching & Learning. Content was then co-created with colleagues across the university community, including Student Services, Library, EDI, Access, Fees & Grants, Programme Advisory, Oifig na Gaeilge, Maynooth Students' Union, and academic colleagues.

Across both projects, the focus remains on user-centred design, with end-user feedback ensuring resources meet staff and student needs. Students were key stakeholders throughout its development and were involved across the programme in roles as advisors, developers and creators. Oversight was provided by the Student Success Officer and an 'Orientation Taskforce' of staff and students reporting to the Orientation Leadership Group, ensuring alignment with institutional priorities.

Funding & Acknowledgements Details

The programme was funded through the National Forum for Teaching & Learning in partnership with the Higher Education Authority as a core component of our Strategic Alignment of Teaching & Learning Enhancement (SATLE) 2022 submission. This provided funding for the recruitment of a Student Success Officer, remuneration for student micro interns and for the video production required for the student videos. A project such as this is also reliant on the successful engagement of stakeholders across the university, giving their time to develop content.

