Online student transition programmes at Maynooth University (Maynooth University)

Key Features

1. Was the initiative established specifically to promote progression and retention and/or to address non-progression rates?

   Yes

2. Please state the institutional commitments or national priorities with which this initiative is aligned — for example, an institutional policy or strategic plan, an indicator in the institution's Performance Agreement under the System Performance Framework, and/or the National Access Plan?

   Aligned with Maynooth University's Student Success Strategy (2020), SATLE priorities (Digital Transformation), NStEP partnership framework, and HEA System Performance Framework priorities relating to student progression, retention, and success.

3. Title of lead or section responsible for the initiative/measure

Student Skills & Success

4. Focus

- First-year students
- New entrants
- Early intervention initiative
- Transition focus
- Institution-wide initiative
- Second-year students

5. Theme

- First-year experience

Overview of Initiative

6. Briefly describe the initiative, with reference to

- Why, and when introduced
- Overview of activities/intervention
- Success to date & next steps.

My Maynooth on Moodle and Second Year & Beyond! are institution-wide digital transition programmes designed to support student progression, retention, and success at key stages of the student lifecycle. Introduced following recommendations from the University's Student Success Strategy (2020), the initiatives respond to the need for flexible, accessible, and continuous transition supports.

Delivered via the institutional Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), the programmes provide modular, asynchronous content co-created with students and staff. Content evolves throughout the academic year, addressing academic, personal, and social challenges at critical transition points.

The programmes extend orientation beyond a one-off event into a sustained, data-informed intervention. They enhance preparedness, increase awareness of support services, and build digital confidence. Engagement data and student feedback demonstrate high levels of relevance, preparedness, and re-engagement.

The initiative is now embedded within institutional practice, with ongoing iteration and planned expansion to additional student cohorts. It represents a scalable, inclusive model for supporting student progression and retention through digital transformation.

The programmes were introduced in response to a key recommendation in Maynooth University's 2020 Student Success Strategy identifying the need for a comprehensive, flexible, and student-centred transitions framework.

Traditional orientation models were limited in duration and reach. Consultation with students and staff highlighted that transition is an ongoing process, with evolving academic, social, and personal support needs.

In response, Maynooth developed two connected digital programmes:

- *My Maynooth on Moodle* (first-year transition)
- *Second Year & Beyond!* (continuing student progression)

Delivered through Moodle, the programmes provide:

- Modular, self-paced learning content
- Monthly content releases aligned to the student journey
- Embedded reflective and interactive learning activities
- Student-led digital storytelling
- Continuous feedback and evaluation mechanisms.

Together, they reposition transition support as a continuous, structured intervention contributing directly to improved preparedness, engagement, and progression.

Aims and Objectives

7. Aim of the initiative

To enhance student progression, retention, and success through a continuous, student-centred digital transition programme.

8. Objective 1

Improve first-year student preparedness and early-stage retention.

Actions

- Deliver modular, asynchronous orientation via Moodle
- Release content monthly aligned to key transition periods
- Integrate student-led videos and peer narratives
- Embed reflective activities and engagement tracking

Expected Outcome

Increased preparedness, improved early engagement, reduced transition-related anxiety, and improved first-year retention indicators.

9. Objective 2

Support progression beyond first year through sustained engagement and targeted supports.

Actions

- Develop and deliver Second Year & Beyond! programme
- Provide content addressing identity, purpose, resilience, and academic development
- Signpost academic and pastoral supports at key pressure points

Expected Outcome

Improved continuation rates, increased awareness and use of supports, and enhanced student confidence and academic progression.

10. Objective 3

Enhance inclusion and equitable access to transition supports.

Actions

- Apply Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles
- Use accessibility tools (e.g. Brickfield Toolkit)

- Provide content in multiple formats

Expected Outcome

Improved accessibility, increased engagement across diverse student cohorts, and more equitable progression outcomes.

Resourcing

11. How is the initiative resourced?

The initiative is resourced through a combination of Strategic Alignment of Teaching & Learning (SATLE) funding, institutional staffing, and cross-functional collaboration across academic and professional service units. Delivery is enabled through the institutional VLE (Moodle). Student partnership is supported through paid roles, including micro-interns contributing to content creation and development.

Monitoring & Oversight

12. How is the initiative monitored — is there a reporting structure in place or a committee where there is a monitoring of and reporting on progress and the achievement of objectives (e.g. academic council, university executive team)?

Oversight is provided by the Student Success Officer, Orientation Working Group, and an Orientation Leadership Group comprising academic staff, professional services, and students. The Working Group reports to the Orientation Leadership Group, ensuring alignment with institutional priorities. Monitoring includes regular review of engagement data, student feedback, and stakeholder input, enabling continuous refinement of content and delivery. This governance structure ensures accountability, responsiveness, and alignment with institutional progression and retention objectives.

Monitoring is supported through:

- Structured governance and reporting lines
- Cross-departmental collaboration

- Survey instruments and feedback loops
- Regular content review cycles.

Data & Evidence of Impact

13. How do you know that the initiative is working as planned, i.e.
    - Are data gathered (ongoing monitoring and evaluation of achievement of objectives)?
    - Have the objectives been achieved? What data and evidence are there to support this?

An embedded evaluation mechanism within Moodle gathers ongoing quantitative and qualitative data. Results indicate strong achievement of objectives: 98% of students report content relevance, 97% increased awareness of supports, and 91% improved preparedness. Engagement levels exceed 65% of eligible cohorts annually, demonstrating sustained participation and effectiveness.

14. Has impact been established, and how? If not at present, how do you plan to gather data and evidence to establish impact?

The initiative has demonstrated clear impact through improved student confidence, reduced anxiety, and increased awareness of supports—key predictors of student retention and progression. Year-on-year increases in engagement, alongside positive qualitative feedback, indicate the effectiveness of continuous digital transition supports. Further longitudinal analysis will strengthen evidence linking participation to progression outcomes.

Data gathered includes:

- Engagement analytics (VLE usage)
- Evaluation surveys
- Student participation rates
- Qualitative feedback

Key findings:

- 98%: of students find content relevant
- 97%: report increased awareness of supports
- 91%: report being better prepared for university
- Engagement rates rising annually (63% → 74%)

Established impact:

- Increased preparedness and confidence
- Reduced transition-related anxiety
- Stronger sense of belonging
- Improved engagement with institutional supports

Future Plans

15. How do you intend to further develop or expand the initiative?

The initiative will continue to evolve through iterative, data-informed improvements. Planned developments include:

- Expansion to postgraduate student transitions
- Deeper integration of learning analytics to assess progression outcomes
- Enhanced personalisation of content
- Continued co-creation with students
- Sectoral dissemination and collaboration

Additional Information

16. Additional information including relevant URLs

The programmes have engaged over 8,000 students and are now embedded within Maynooth University's student success infrastructure. The model is scalable and transferable, offering a framework for other institutions seeking to enhance progression and retention through digital transition supports.

More info: THRIVE Initiative | Maynooth University

