

**Composite Report of Focus Groups  
StELA Project  
University of Limerick**

**Submitted by**

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## Introduction

The University of Limerick (UL) currently provides a number of channels to allow students evaluate and provide feedback on their learning experience. The most common student evaluation channels take the form of surveys, which range from institutionally sponsored surveys to local level initiatives. Existing, known challenges with this approach include a lack of oversight and governance of the volume, frequency and timing of survey activity and the resulting impact on student response rates. This in turn, affects the perception of the reliability and validity of that feedback.

In many cases, the formal survey reporting mechanisms at institutional, faculty, unit and programme level are said to rely predominantly on manual processes. This resource-intensive approach elongates the period between an issue arising and the opportunity for action and closure of the feedback loop. As the resulting datasets and reports are typically viewed in isolation and not correlated, it is argued that institutional capacity to respond effectively to the student voice at programme and discipline level is reduced.

The University successfully bid for funding from the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education to take a first principles approach to evaluating why and how student feedback is requested across a range of disciplines and learning contexts in UL from the perspective of teaching staff, students and faculty management.

As part of the data gathering for this initiative an external facilitator, Dr Maeve Lankford, Kaleidoscope Coaching & Facilitation was contracted to support the initiative as follows:

- Support the planning of the focus group sessions
- Facilitate the focus groups and structured interviews virtually
- Provide a written report comprising a composite report of outputs from each category of stakeholders (students, teaching staff and faculty management respectively) and a detailed thematic analysis of issues identified across all categories of stakeholders and options for change / solutions to perceived challenges

The intention is to analyse existing approaches and potential improvements to Student Feedback across a range of disciplines and learning contexts from all stakeholder perspectives, specifically: students, teaching staff and faculty management. Ultimately, it is intended that the outputs will inform the development of the intended institution wide Student Evaluation Policy, a Learning Analytics Policy and enhanced procedures to close the feedback loop at UL.

The development of student and staff focus group questions was informed by existing focus group themes used in the SHEILA project. The latter mainly focussed on the use of data as a feedback tool to students and referred to attitudes about how that data may be/can be/should be used. The staff questions in the SHEILA project touched on how that data can be used to enhance teaching & learning. Questions for Student Focus groups were developed by Sinead O'Sullivan, Sarah Gibbons and Maeve Lankford. Questions for the Staff Focus groups were developed by Sinead O'Sullivan, Angelica Riskey and Maeve Lankford.

Both staff and student focus groups respectively were conducted online, using zoom. Focus groups were recorded onto Maeve Lankford's Zoom account and automatically transcribed via the Zoom facility for same. The recordings and transcripts and any inputs into the Chat function were available to Maeve Lankford only and were deleted after submission of the final report of outputs from the staff and student focus groups respectively.

In all, a total of 7 Student Focus groups were conducted between 18 and 23 November 2020, with 47 students participating overall. Participants were drawn from all undergraduate years and from amongst taught and research post-graduate programmes. There was one focus group per year of undergraduate study, one postgraduate focus group and two focus groups with participants from mixed undergraduate or postgraduate years.

In total 31 staff participated in 6 focus groups between 1 and 10 December 2020. There were 5 mixed groups comprised of a mix of academic and professional services staff from multiple disciplines and across different service areas within the University. There was one Management Focus Group consisting of Managers in Central Services and Faculty Management.

In general, there was good participation and engagement from all attendees in both staff and student focus groups. In all instances, participants were advised that their attendance was being noted and confirmed to Sinead O'Sullivan, Director of Quality at UL. For the students involved, this enabled payment of the voucher they got for participation.

In both staff and student focus groups questions related to broad themes previously identified in the SHEILA project. These themes were:

- **Transparency**
- **Purpose**
- **Use of Data**
- **Feedback To Students**
- **Feedback From Students**
- **Ethical Concerns, including Consent and Ownership of Data**
- **Autonomy, Intervention and Obligation to Act**

The following provides analysis of similarities and differences between staff and student responses under these broad themes.

## **TRANSPARENCY**

There is an overall consensus in both staff and student focus groups that there is a lack of transparency around the collection of data currently, the purposes for which data is collected and whether or not adequate consent has been sought and given for same.

Students were asked directly whether they were aware that their University has the ability to collect and analyse data about their actions in various learning environments (e.g. virtual learning environments, lecture attendance, library accesses) and data collection points.

The data collection points were identified to students via a slide showing the progression of an individual student's engagement with the University from attendance at Open Days and CAO application through to graduation and first job destinations:

- Open Day
- CAO Application
- Registration
- Virtual Learning Environment
- Library and Student Services

- Survey Responses
- (Academic) Performance & Progression
- Final Award and First Job

Responses from students indicated surprise at the volume and variety of data being collected on them, not just in the virtual learning environment but across all data collection points. Early year participants expressed least surprise or concern and from third year onwards students expressed concern about access to the data being captured and whether their consent is being sought. Students in the latter years expressed the sentiment that the more sophisticated the University gets with capturing data on an individual student's journey, the more progressive and frequent there need to be opportunities to give informed consent for the capture and use of that data.

Overall, the student focus groups indicated a lack of transparency around each of the following:

- whether consent and informed consent was sought and given
- the nature and volume of data captured and the uses to which it is put
- who had access to individual/personal student data

In the focus groups for staff, participants were *not* asked a specific question about transparency, rather a definition of learning analytics was shared and data collection points were identified to participants. The definition provided was not broadly agreed and there was considerable debate as to what is meant by data analytics and learning analytics at UL, suggesting that the approach and purpose is less than transparent to all involved.

In the staff focus groups also, there was a lack of clarity as to what the university is trying to do with the data it is collecting, i.e., there was lack of clarity as to what issues the University is seeking to address? This suggests an ongoing need to clarify what the University is seeking to address and what data it requires to inform the approach taken to addressing the issues identified as being of concern.

It was suggested in the staff focus groups also that improved clarity around what the University is seeking to address would help ensure that the correct data is being sought and captured by the most relevant or appropriate medium. The use of surveys and learning analytics data were both questioned as to whether the right information is being sought and captured.

Some discussion in the staff focus groups centered around whether data currently collected is being driven by what the infrastructure provides rather than starting from first principles to identify what's needed.

And finally, even in the senior management group, the concern was expressed that there is data that is being collected and that could be collected but no one has yet determined whether it should be and even whether ethically it was a good thing to collect it.

Overall therefore, the transparency issue needs to be addressed for both staff and students in any resulting policies and guidelines arising from this initiative.

## **PURPOSE**

Participants in the student focus groups perceived legitimate purpose for the use of data in each of the following broad and anticipated areas:

- to improve the University's service quality;
- to improve the educational experience in a module/course/programme and
- to improve individual students' educational experience

In each of the above areas students were able to give suggestions/examples of same unprompted.

In discussions arising from the poll regarding legitimate purposes for use of learning analytics and education data, staff participants also indicated that they perceived legitimate use of learning analytics in relation to each of the above three areas, and in the ensuing discussions, provided evidence of using data in all anticipated areas.

The staff poll included the possible purposes 'To inform one's teaching practice' and 'to inform one's research practice' respectively and staff indicated the perception of these also having legitimate purpose and examples of using data in these contexts were provided although there were qualifying comments made about both.

Unprompted, staff participants also identified potential for the use of data analytics in terms of supporting students in the context of retention and progression; predicting student success factors; identifying students at risk, especially in large groups; and to enhance decision making generally.

Amongst students there was clear evidence of increased concern about the uses of data, the purposes to which it could appropriately be put and whether and how one could interpret the data available as students progress through their academic studies. In general, students expressed the need for clarity around uses to which the data is put and/or inferences taken from such data, e.g., in terms of how engagement data is interpreted and whether they are graded based in all or in part on such data.

By third year, students were beginning to say that the data analytics should be used more to support them **collectively i.e., to enhance the student experience**. There was also a frustration expressed at the perception that the University doesn't join up the dots on the data it holds and instead keeps asking students for information that it already holds on them. It would appear therefore, that students expect a more sophisticated quid pro quo that with widespread data capture, such data will be analysed and used to enhance their experiences as students at UL.

Broadly speaking, there is support amongst students for using the analytics as aggregate data, e.g., to enhance services, plan opening hours etc. However, if there's going to be any kind of individual/personal application or associations made from the data there was an overall consensus that formal consent is required for that.

Among staff the issue of using data to enhance the student experience was not identified other than as a means of enhancing service delivery broadly and to enhance decision making.

While staff were clear in terms of being able to identify legitimate purposes for the use of data in principle, they raised a number of practical and ethical concerns around use of the data in practice, including:

- difficulties with accessing data already captured
- frustration with surveys and their perceived inadequacies

- concerns around the reliability and appropriateness of the data being captured
- concerns around whether consent is being sought and given
- validity of engagement data was questioned
- concerns regarding the gender impact of student feedback via surveys
- ethical concerns regarding the use of the data captured

With regard to the purposes to which learning analytics and data analytics can legitimately be put therefore, both staff and student focus groups indicated a clear need for policy around the collection and use of data, the controls on access, assurances around confidentiality and anonymity and the limitations on use inside and outside the organisation.

The discussion here also suggested the need for training for academic staff to best enable their engagement with and interpretation of data. And finally, a concern was raised in both staff and student focus groups regarding staff workloads in the context of analysing the burgeoning amount of data now available and to which staff don't necessarily feel competent to respond. If taking a more concerted approach to the use of learning analytics and data analytics generally, the University will need to consider how that data is going to be analysed and by whom.

### **USE OF DATA**

In general, students identified two main ways in which data could be used to support their educational needs:

- to improve your overall learning experience and wellbeing
- to alert teaching staff early if you are at risk of failing a module or if you could improve your learning.

Students did talk about the impact of data on the relationship with teaching staff or tutors but in general perceived that access to personal data could actually damage relationships because it could lead to bias.

In a similar vein, Staff participants were typically comfortable with having data available to them in relation to academic data, engagement data and progression. The main type of data around which staff flagged some concerns was in relation to personal data, including data regarding accessing of pastoral services.

No students identified the following two potential uses of data that had been identified as possible areas of note:

- Identify the most successful pathway through your studies;
- present you with a complete profile of your learning in each and every module

In the discussion about use of data, Students again indicated that the use of data analytics was not just about academic attainment and progression but also about enhancing the broader student experience. Staff also indicated that there is a much wider potential application of data e.g., in relation to understanding student motivation and success and suggested that there are wider sources of data required and validity needs to be tested in order to progress same.

Overall, concern was expressed here again in relation to issues around consent for use/access to data, and whether the purpose and use of the data was clearly known and understood by all.

The validity of engagement data in particular was questioned by both staff and students.

Staff were asked specifically about data currently being used and the kinds of data that might support them in their professional development. They identified a wide range of sources of data that they routinely use in the virtual learning environment, including:

- Sulis
- Panopto
- Microsoft Teams
- Google Surveys
- You Tube
- Publisher
- SI, the student record system

Some of the above sources of data were seen as essential to plug gaps within the main platforms supported by the University. In this regard, it could be argued, that the findings in the focus groups identify some limitations with the main platforms currently in use to deliver online content currently.

When asked what would be useful to staff to enable them to use data more, participants made multiple suggestions including, e.g.

- enhancing ease of access to centrally held data
- substantively improving the reliability of the data that is stored centrally
- centralised approach and professional support for data analysis
- taking a programme level approach to analysis of the data in terms of student progress
- return to basics in terms of clearly defining the purposes for which the data is to be used

In terms of enhancing engagement with and use of data analytics, staff participants in focus groups highlighted the need for training and support for interpreting the data, including professional support from dedicated staff in central services.

With regard to enhancing confidence in data generally and learning analytics data in particular, both staff and students have concerns about the reliability of the data available (e.g., multiple examples were shared in staff focus groups of problems with gender data and student records when analysed for Athena Swan or programme reviews) and the validity of some (e.g., engagement data). This suggests that there is quite a body of work that needs to be completed to clean existing data and make it servicable for end users. There is also room for clarifying what data needs to be recorded and why (e.g., access to pastoral services) and whether it is used in aggregate- only or not. And the validity of engagement data needs to be tested.

Staff participants also suggested the need for support and clarity around accessing and analysing data that is held and is either currently or potentially available to them. Consideration of how to make data more readily accessible and providing support for analysis will be a key element in ensuring engagement by teaching staff with learning analytics and educational data in the longer



term. This is also important for professional services staff to support service enhancements generally and also to enhance the personal supports they can potentially provide to individual students.

The need for clarity and policy around the use of data was emphasised with a recommendation from a participant in one staff focus group that the University could base its approach on the JISC code of practice for learning analytics.

And there was a request that staff in central services, who support students, would be enabled to have access to individual student engagement data in order to best address and support individual student needs.

### **FEEDBACK TO STUDENTS**

Options for receiving feedback that were discussed in student focus groups included in-person feedback, written feedback and visuals/dashboards as prompted by a poll that identified same.

Amongst student participants all approaches were seen as having pros and cons and in-person feedback in particular was seen as having significant resource implications for the University and the question was raised as to whether it was likely to be implemented in any large-scale way as a result.

Written feedback was seen by students as having the advantage of being documented and that one could track progress over time. The disadvantage was that it can be hard to understand sometimes or is too generalised to be meaningful.

First years, perhaps because they were launched intensively into the virtual learning environment, were more aware of the types of analytics available in Sulis or Moodle, higher undergraduate years seemed less aware and post graduates almost not at all. Amongst those students who were familiar with them, dashboards were generally viewed as highly suspect and open to gamification. Their suitability as a tool for providing feedback had mixed response.

Student focus group participants generally saw potential for using platforms like Sulis to give and receive feedback in a timely fashion, especially at module level. The availability of this mode of feedback seems to limit any benefit to the Module Satisfaction Survey. Students also expressed frustration at repeatedly answering the same questions for module level surveys.

In terms of receiving feedback from the University on issues they had reported or commented upon, students indicated that they always want some kind of response, even if nothing is going to be done in response to feedback generated. In general, they were open to responses being communicated via any or all routes: in person, email, newsletter, social media. Students saw a positive role for social media as a means of communicating outcomes generally.

Where feedback was personal to them in the context of their academic journey, students expressed concern that feedback via email can get lost in their inbox and were typically not keen to receive contact via phone (text ok but not a call). Suggestions were made that feedback could be made via notifications being flagged on the likes of Sulis or an App with signposting to supports available.

## **FEEDBACK FROM STUDENTS TO THE UNIVERSITY**

For first year students, the focus group came too early in the semester for them to have had much experience of giving feedback to the University, all other groups engaged fully in the discussion.

In terms of enabling feedback, there was broad support amongst students for the requirement for it to be anonymous and an explicit requirement that it be responded to *in some capacity*. In this context, a number of students reported giving feedback to teaching staff either directly or as part of a survey or initiative taken by class reps to which they got no response. This was invariably found to be frustrating and in circumstances where examples were given where feedback had been given or issues raised and no response received, participants suggested the need for clear pathways for escalating issues of concern.

### **Surveys as a source of feedback**

There were multiple references amongst both staff and student participants in the respective focus groups to surveys being one of the main sources of student feedback. Amongst staff participants, a broad range of surveys were identified as being routinely used, including ISSE, Module Surveys, Student Evaluation of Teaching and In-platform polling tools respectively. Students on the other hand were more familiar with MSS, not typically identified by name but simply referenced as the survey for individual modules.

Both staff and student participants in focus groups were critical of the MSS. For students, it was typically regarded as too generalised to be useful and significantly they perceived that it was not customised to capture the online experience. Staff were generally frustrated with the MSS, leading to examples of individual staff generating their own surveys to endeavour to get the feedback they actually need. This latter activity, must at least in some degree contribute to the survey fatigue dilemma which also was expressed as a concern by staff participants. The level of dissatisfaction with the MSS by all parties, begs the question whether the MSS is defunct, with multiple staff saying they only use it because it is required for promotions and only one participant in all staff focus groups saying they liked it.

Amongst staff participants in the focus groups the current approach to data capture via surveys generally was criticised. The following were all flagged as concerns:

- role and purpose of surveys is perceived to be unclear
- there is a perceived unmet requirement for more personal and qualitative feedback
- concerns regarding the reliability of the survey data collected
- the use of survey data in academic promotions
- survey fatigue, leading to poor response levels

The anticipated Student Evaluation Policy would need to address the above issues in order to make the overall approach to student feedback more effective. Here too, greater clarity as to the purpose for which the data is being collected would enable a more fit-for-purpose approach to be identified and adopted.

The findings in the staff focus groups suggest that the current centralised surveys negatively impact the feedback loop as a result of e.g.,

- the inadequacy of the questions answered

- poor timeliness of the surveys being conducted
- the delay in reporting the results
- lack or limitation on qualitative feedback to explain the feedback
- lack of local level detail on surveys

For students also, frustration was expressed that feedback requests come too late in the semester for changes to be made for the cohort involved and at the overall perceived lack of responsiveness to feedback given.

From participants in the staff focus groups several options for enhancing the approach to surveys and overcoming survey fatigue were identified. These included the need for policy and clarity of purpose regarding the use of surveys, enhanced coordination of surveys, and exploiting existing platforms to capture student feedback.

There were also some perceived opportunities identified by staff participants in terms of centralising much of the data contained in surveys to enable comparison across data sets and recommendation of a schedule of surveys including those collecting data for external purposes so that everyone is aware of the timings and can work with them to avoid over-surveying at peak times.

Both staff and student participants identified multiple additional means of enabling feedback (other than surveys) many of which were perceived by all parties as having a positive impact on shortening the feedback loop. Examples of such additional/alternative methods identified by students included:

- the forum and lecture reports (on Sulis)
- contacting the lecturer directly
- class reps and
- office hours

In a student focus group it was also suggested that additional means of enabling feedback exist but are not being used, e.g. world café.

Staff participants identified multiple ways in which academic staff in particular currently seek and action feedback from students in more formative and timely ways than surveys offer, including

- engaging with student directly in classes
- taking anonymised feedback via post-its at the end of specific classes and responding to issues in the next class
- designing more qualitative surveys at module level, and/or using e.g. polling options in Sulis or Moodle

Such approaches were seen as more effective largely due to the qualitative nature of the feedback achieved, their timeliness, being formative in nature and with more likelihood of quickly closing the feedback loop.

In terms of receiving responses to their feedback, students identified the following as options, all of which were perceived as being welcome and there was no particular preference overall:

- face-to-face interaction

- written communication, including email and notifications on e.g. Sulis
- social media and
- responding in kind, i.e., if feedback was written, the response could be written etc

Overall, student participants in the focus groups stressed that the most important thing was that they would get some response to feedback given.

Both staff and student focus groups were asked about whether they perceived the need for a student opt-out option from surveys. This resulted in quite a lot of discussion in both sets of focus groups and even some confusion amongst staff as to whether such an opt-out already exists. If it does exist, it is not widely known and understood by staff or students. While there was unanimous consensus among first year students for the option to opt out from unofficial surveys, almost all other groups felt that it needs to be a bit more nuanced. Overall, there was no definitive support for opt out from surveys although it was suggested from a staff focus group that there is a need for an overall communications strategy which would cover the role and purpose of surveys and clarify issues like opt out.

In summary, there was an express need identified for the kind of Student Evaluation Policy intended from this initiative. It is suggested that such a new policy represents an opportunity for evaluation to be approached in a more holistic and comprehensive way, combining multiple approaches to student evaluation to ensure effectiveness overall. It would also provide an opportunity to address existing concerns with the MSS in particular, including the possibility of getting rid of it altogether as it does not seem to be meeting its intended purpose and online tools within teaching and learning platforms are already being exploited to extract the feedback from students that academic staff deem to be more important and useful. It is suggested that the Student Evaluation Policy could also benefit from highlighting and normalising the multiple approaches to student evaluation currently ongoing within UL.

Whether or not there is a need for a separate Communications Policy/strategy is also worth considering as a means of more clearly outlining how the University communicates with students, within which the approach to surveys could be incorporated and highlighting the process for addressing and responding to the issues raised. Either in a strategy of this nature or within a Student Evaluation Policy there is also a need to clearly outline for students the means by which they can escalate issues that they have raised and for which they have not received a response. This was particularly pertinent to concerns raised at module or programme level.

### **ETHICAL CONCERNS, INCLUDING CONSENT & OWNERSHIP OF DATA**

Amongst staff participants, when specifically asked about ethical issues arising from incorporating learning analytics into their teaching practice, concerns were raised across the following:

- gender issues associated with student feedback
- concerns around the purpose of the data collected and transparency around who has access to such data
- need for policy and guidelines governing the collection, use and interpretation of data.

In general, the longer a student was at the University the more concern they expressed in the focus groups about the issue of consent and ownership of data. This was particularly the case amongst

postgraduate students who also raised questions around whether the University has data controllers in place and, if so, whether they are bound by an ethical code of conduct?

Broadly speaking, student participants in the focus groups were more relaxed about use of data in aggregate form. As may be anticipated, they expressed particular concern about who had access to any data that was personal in nature and /or could identify the individual. It is worth noting, that identifying students by their student number was not seen as a secure way of protecting their identity or guaranteeing confidentiality.

Both staff and student participants in focus groups flagged concern about the possible use of predictive analytics. First year students especially, felt that predictive data shouldn't be taken too seriously and other student groups also pointed to the likely exceptions to any predictions based on background or previous academic achievement. Amongst some staff, there was a sense that University is a place for a clean slate such that too much awareness of past/prior (second level etc) performance was not necessarily welcome. While one or two participants in staff focus groups expressed confidence in being able to use data to predict performance, there were equal numbers who expressed concern that substantial work is required to establish reliable baseline data to enable any such predictions.

There is a critical need to address issues of consent and ownership of data in the anticipated Learning Analytics Policy and/or Student Evaluation Policy. Academic staff participants in focus groups are also seeking clarification as to what data they can appropriately use in their research and the circumstances that require ethical approval for research and publications purposes. The issue of gender within student evaluations and the potential impact of same for female staff in the promotions process all need to be acknowledged and addressed. Given the gender implications, the use of MSS data in academic promotions seems to require revisiting.

### **AUTONOMY, INTERVENTION AND OBLIGATION TO ACT**

While there were differences of opinion amongst staff participants as to whether there is an actual obligation to act in support of students identified as being 'at risk' there was a broad consensus that it is the right thing to do and is actually something that UL does well.

Typically student participants also favoured intervention on the part of the University. However, there was a sense expressed by students that you can't make assumptions about individual needs or the most appropriate support, so such intervention is probably best being tentative and suggestive rather than directive in most cases.

There was also a range of responses among staff participants in terms of **who** is best placed to take action, ranging from module coordinators, to personal advisors to team (programme-level) interventions at the local level or involving the First Year Student Coordinator, in particular for very large cohorts. Amongst students, the discussion was more around **when** is the best point to initiate an intervention, e.g., based on engagement data, or within specific timeframes, or on the basis of grade (performance)?

Opt-out from supports offered was favoured by First years but was more nuanced amongst more senior years. Participants who favoured the option to opt-out did request that opt-out would be periodically revisited in the event that students changed their minds about same. This suggests that

if there is an opt-out option included in policy guidelines, students would need the opportunity to regularly revisit same.

There was a broad endorsement among student participants of the need for training to be given to teaching staff to support them in analysis of the educational data available and communicating the results into personalised feedback for students. There was also support for staff to receive training on the interpersonal communication skills required for giving feedback effectively.

There was a general perception amongst staff participants that in-person responses (i.e. interventions) are probably best, particularly if students are identified as being 'at risk' but there was also a perception that system-based flags are improving all the time and have potential in the longer term. Student participants also indicated some support for having automated flags within platforms like Sulis to flag issues and signpost the resources available, inviting students to make contact as desired. Students indicated generally that they do not tend to welcome contact via phone, certainly not face-to-face phone calls and gave an indication that they'd want the opportunity to opt-out of same (phone contact). The use of automated flagging systems may become more important if anticipated concerns around staff capacity to respond to all the data and potential needs identified are realised.

#### **ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK**

Where there was the opportunity for additional feedback at the end of the Focus groups, student participants took the opportunity to raise the following:

- Whether and how student data is used by the University after a student has graduated
- Concern as to how the University protects access to and anonymises student data
- Suggestions for enhancing online teaching
- Request for more reading resources to be made available online as ebooks or PDFs
- Complimenting the level of support for students during Covid
- Harnessing the insights provided through unsolicited feedback on Social Media

#### **Facilitator Observations**

Many of the concerns expressed around capture and use of data and purposes to which data can be put can be addressed by an appropriate Learning Analytics Policy and a Student Evaluation Policy. The pressing need for both was essentially highlighted and endorsed.

Challenges around storage of data and comparability of data sets, the accuracy of the data and reports produced all need to be addressed as a matter of urgency, to reassure staff of the reliability of the data and to actually enable staff to do their work more easily.

There are opportunities to build support for positive and effective engagement with learning analytics and educational data by:

- Highlighting the current use of data to support at risk students. A number of examples were given of effective approaches to supporting at risk students using learning analytics data from the 2020-21 first semester. These were positively discussed and shared and evidenced how data was being used to enhance existing practices and making the process more automated, streamlined and effective.

- Creating communities of practice to share good practice in terms of the application of learning analytics and empowering teaching staff in relation to exploring same. Sharing examples of effective exploitation of existing platforms to obtain and respond to student feedback quickly and effectively could also be shared in this way.

Staff participants acknowledged the need for training and requested centralised support for interpreting data, both of which are suggested as important requirements to empower staff to use such data more comprehensively.

Participants provided multiple examples of alternative feedback approaches that are perceived as better than surveys and enhance closure of the feedback loop in more effective and timely ways. A more holistic Student Evaluation Policy would articulate and legitimise such approaches to student feedback, including incorporating these alternative feedback models and their application as evidence for academic promotions purposes.