

## 5.5 Learner Feedback and the Role of the Student Voice and Communications at ICD

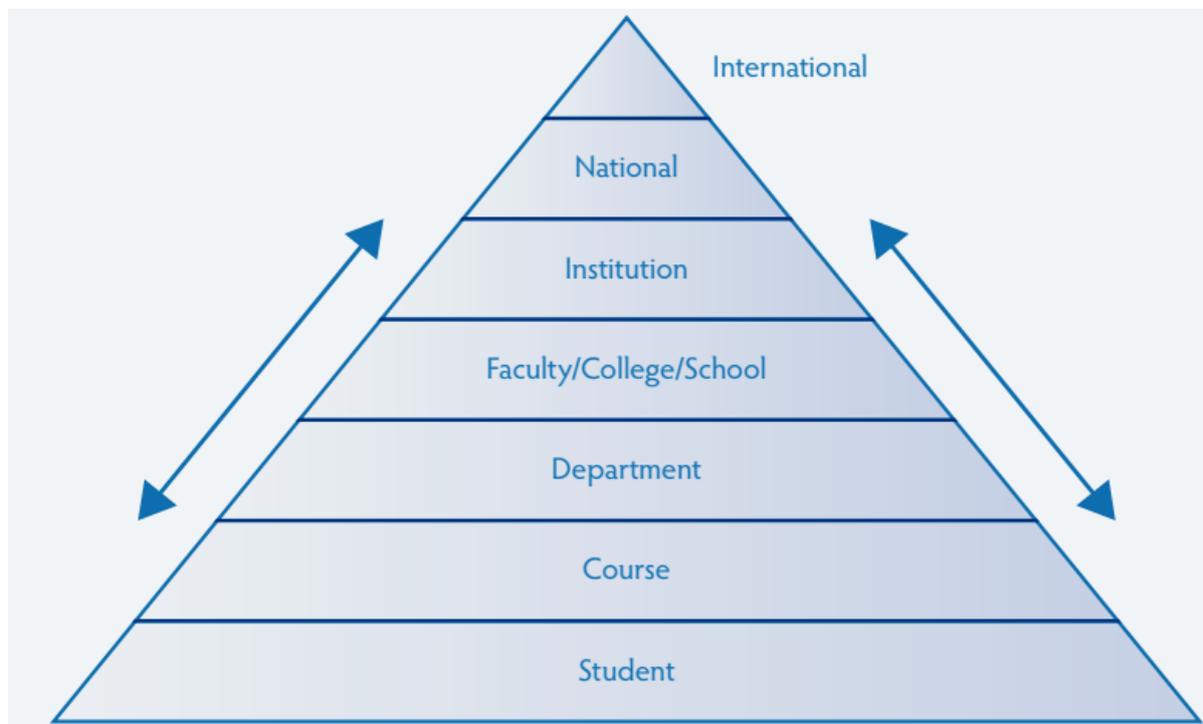
Following the recommendations made by the Council of Europe as part of the Bologna Process (see European Committee on Culture, Science and Education 2003), ICD defines the role of ICD's learner community, "students as competent, active and constructive partners, [who] must be seen as one of the driving forces for change" and continuous improvement within and beyond the institution through developing an increasingly cooperative relationship across the college. As a small college, it has been relatively easy for ICD to build and maintain a close partnership relationship with its students. It is an environment where, in general:

- all staff know each other (something not to be found at many large HEIs)
- staff know and have formal (e.g. teaching) involvement with the majority of the entire learner community (something not to be found at many large HEIs)
- each individual student will, over the course of their studies at ICD, have lectures, meetings, or interactions with all/most administration, management, and faculty
- with a small student community, students often know most/all other students across programmes, creating an environment both for friendships and also peer-learning / mentoring opportunities (whether formal [e.g. group assignments; in-class discussions] or informal [e.g. more senior [e.g. final year or masters] students advising newer students on how best to approach their education]).

Having a small community of staff and learners is highly beneficial from the perspective of maintaining deep understandings of students' (individually and as a community) experience during their time at ICD. This deep understanding is foundational to all quality assurance policy and procedure improvements, and teaching, learning, and assessment strategy and environment planning and improvement initiatives.

ICD also has formal structures to ensure continuous and enhanced student engagement in decision making at all levels of the college. ICD's strategy to continuously improve learner engagement is informed by research on higher education, including the national Irish Survey of Student Engagement (StudentSurvey.ie 2018), and the *Enhancing Student Engagement in Decision-Making* Report of the Working Group on Student Engagement in Irish Higher Education as published by the Higher Education Authority (HEA 2016).

Formally and informally, ICD promotes democratic student involvement in decision-making at all levels. Figure 5.5a presents the HEA (2016) pyramid of student engagement in governance levels.



**Figure 5.5a:** Seven governance and management levels offering opportunities for student engagement

**Source:** HEA 2016 p. IX

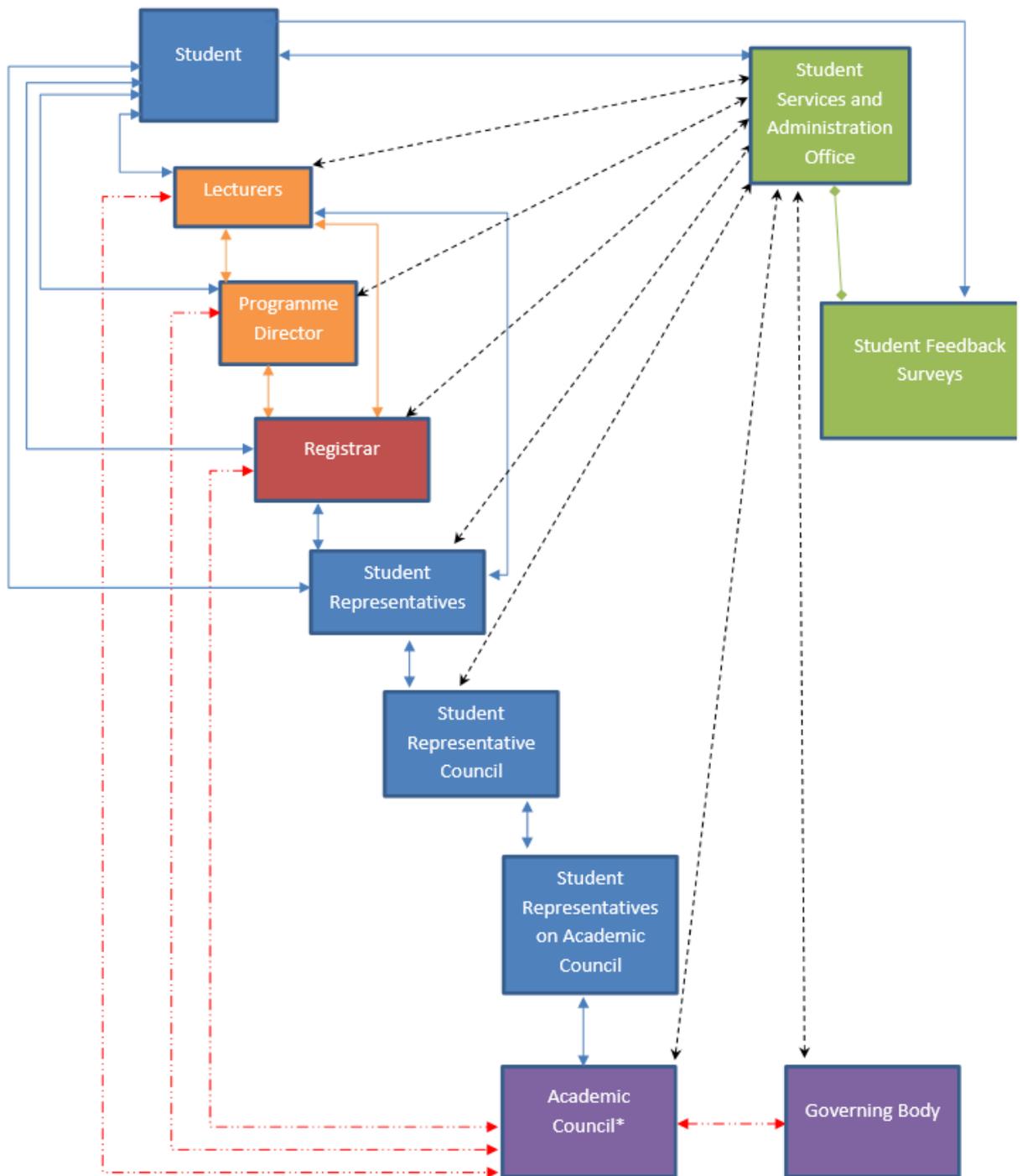
At ICD, we have formal and informal structures to facilitate student engagement at all governance levels:

- **At the student level:** all ICD students are given a vote in electing student representatives
- **At the course level:** all ICD students have the opportunity to provide feedback on every module through student feedback surveys
- **At the department level:** The Student Representative Council liaises with Programme Directors, lecturers, the Head of Academic Development and the Registrar to represent student voice, needs, and welfare
- **At the faculty/college/school level:** ICD holds regular student engagement initiatives such as the annual barbeque (attended by staff, management, and students), ongoing funding of

the cricket team, annual daytrips to visit sites of Irish heritage (attended by staff, management and students)

- **At the institution level:** The Student Representative Council elects student representation to sit at Academic Council meetings to include students in the highest levels of decision making regarding academic matters, the teaching, learning, and assessment strategies and environment
- **At the national level:** ICD maintains a membership of and relationship with ICOS, the Irish Council for International students. ICOS is consulted by ICD on student welfare matters, principally by the Governing Body. ICOS help to advise ICD to ensure that ICD follows best practice, national and international education policy, in order to deliver a quality education that is firmly focused on the educational and social needs of all ICD students
- **At the international level:** ICD students regularly (and currently) represent ICD as part of the prestigious government-recognised *Education in Ireland Student Ambassadors Programme*. ICD's student ambassadors promote quality in, and the quality of, Irish education, most specifically international student education in Ireland.

We follow the proposal of Professor Tom Collins, Chair of the Working Group on Student Engagement in Irish Higher Education, that “it is axiomatic that higher education institutions (HEIs) in democratic societies have a responsibility to model democratic practices in their decision-making and routine functioning” (HEA 2016 p. 1). The communications system within the ICD community is illustrated in Figure 5.5 below.



**Figure 5.5:** Illustration of the Communications System at ICD

**\*Please note:** The Academic Council includes various members as described elsewhere in ICD's QA Policy documents not specifically included in the above diagram for simplicity (i.e. Director of Academic Affairs; Head of Academic Development)

## **Democratically Elected Student Representatives:**

Every year/stage of every programme has at least one student representative. Cohorts can opt to have more than one student rep at their discretion and ICD encourages, where possible and selected by the students, that all cohorts should consider gender balance in their representation. Student representatives convene meetings (the Student Representative Committee (SRC)) ideally at least once per semester. ICD provides a high degree of autonomy to its SRC enabling meeting convening, agendas, and ad-hoc meeting setting to be controlled by the students (representatives) themselves. ICD facilitates the committee with rooms and any other resource requirements wherever possible and requested. Providing both autonomy to and support to the student body and its representatives follows the recommendations of the HEA (2016 p VII) report on enhancing student engagement:

Student engagement is now understood to be a two-way process. While students are ultimately responsible for their own learning and level of engagement, student engagement is also dependent on institutional conditions, policies, and culture that enable and encourage students to get further involved.

Historically, ICD management have held regular (at least once per academic year) meetings with student representatives, both informal and formal. An example of a formal meeting between ICD staff and student representatives is shown in the following short extract from the minutes of that meeting. Please note, the title of Student Union President is no longer used at ICD. This is as a result of student feedback that:

- They found the mixing of titles between 'student representatives' and 'student union' confusing
- They found the requirement to have a single 'Student Union President' somewhat alienating, believing that it should be a democratic committee rather than a hierarchical one

For the above reasons, ICD no longer uses the term student union (choosing Student Representative Committee instead), and ICD no longer recommends the SRC to have a single president. Instead ICD requests that the SRC elects more than one student representative (ideally one per programme) who will sit on the Academic Council. Having one SRC Academic Council member per programme provides a much greater likelihood that the needs of all students on all programmes will be represented by the SRC and by its elected SRC Academic Council members. The following is the extract of the meeting minutes:

START OF MINUTES EXTRACT

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# **ICD Business School**

## **Students Representatives Meeting**

**Dated on Tuesday November 14, 2017, 8:00am**

### **Present:**

MAAF	Class Representative
BABS, Year 1, Group B	Class Representative
BAAF, Year 3	Class Representative
BAAF, Year 2	Class Representative
BAAF, Year 1	Class Representative
Ms. Joyce Zhao	Registrar
Mr. Vincent Barry	Director
Ms. June Shannon	Student Liaison Manager
Mr. Silvino Lucena Medeiros	ICD Student Union President

## Agenda:

1. Room 305 is not suitable for study, Librarian is not there all the time, room is not quiet area.  
**Solution** – Room 305 is set up as resource room, not as a quiet study room. From now on, a proper quiet study room is set up every day till January 2018 examination period, the room number will be allocated on the daily schedule outside reception
2. There is not drinking water facility or at least there is a machine which can sell water bottle.  
**Solution** – ICD management board will find a solution for that
3. Notes in the Moddle system – students were told before that late arrivals may not get the class notes, but now everyone can get the notes from the Moodle system  
**Solution** – ICD will ask the Moodle consultant to look into this matter
4. Feedback from lecturer, students feel they will not get feedback from their assignments/tests on time  
**Solution** – ICD management board will make sure lecturers are giving the feedback to students (maybe arrange extra class time)

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END OF MINUTES EXTRACT

Student representatives play a vital role in supporting the student body at ICD, e.g.:

- informing students about and helping students with their day-to-day studies and related;
- providing, on-request, representation and support for students who may be involved in academic misconduct, plagiarism, appeals, or complaints processes;
- providing information, support, and representation for students who may have specific needs or requests or personal circumstances

### **Democratically Elected Student Representation on the Academic Council:**

The SRC are requested to elect at least one SRC representative per programme to sit on the Academic Council, who will be invited to at least one Academic Council meeting per academic year. The SRC may request a higher number of SRC members to sit on the Academic Council and this request is decided upon by the Academic Council on an ad-hoc, by request basis. SRC representation on the Academic Council provides the student body with a direct channel of communication and feedback with the most senior academic governance body at ICD. This initiative follows recommendations of the HEA (2016 p. VII) Working Group on Student Engagement in Irish Higher Education:

The concept of student engagement refers to student involvement in decision-making processes in higher education institutions in relation to governance and management, quality assurance, and teaching and learning.

ICD places the students' needs at the centre of all decision-making and relies on student feedback to continuously improve ICD's learning environment, teaching and learning strategies, modules, programmes, physical facilities, technological facilities, and staff and student resourcing.

### **Learner feedback surveys:**

Every semester, in the final weeks of every module, a member of ICD staff visits a scheduled lecture to distribute feedback surveys to every student present. Right now, ICD uses a paper-based survey (see appendix 5.5 for the survey [at August 2019]). The rationale for this is because it:

- ensures valid data provenance (i.e., only members in a specific module can complete the survey for that module)
- response rates are excellent, compared to what may otherwise be the case if online surveys are used. Depending on the module and who is in attendance on the day feedback surveys are distributed, it can be as high as 100% response from a module cohort. However, an example of a low response rate for a learner survey at ICD is around 50% and a response rate that low, at ICD, is quite rare and will often lead to a re-running of the survey on another day when a higher percentage of learners are present.

While ICD are currently considering, either, changing to an online student survey, or augmenting the paper-survey with an online survey, we are concerned about the potential damage this may do to response rates and certainty surrounding data/feedback provenance. Regarding student survey response rates (currently at ICD almost every module achieves over 50% response rate every semester and various cohorts achieve a 100% response rate), we are conscious of how low response rates can be to online student surveys. For example, the national Irish Survey of Student Engagement (StudentSurvey.ie 2018), which is an excellent and thoroughly informative initiative, receives overall response rates of 21.9% in 2015 and 28% in 2018. Despite this, we are continuing to consider different possibilities to roll out online student surveys but only if it ensures data provenance validity and high response rates.

The focus at ICD on collecting survey data using the method that returns that highest possible response rate is due to our strategy to follow the recommendations of the HEA Working Group on Student Engagement in Irish Higher Education. Rather than viewing “the student as a consumer” (HEA 2016 p. VII) or simply external stakeholders or users of the institution with consumer rights alone, ICD places the consumer at the centre of the organisation, an internal “partner in a learning community” (ibid). ICD adopts a developmental model for our educational strategy emphasising that ICD, its staff, and its students all have “both the rights and the responsibilities of citizens...[in] a learning community [where] students contribute to the success of their institution [and their own success] as ‘co-creators’ of their own learning” (ibid). ICD’s goal is, ideally, to receive ongoing feedback from all ICD students [or, at least, the vast majority, rather than a small sub-set of students] on how we can continuously improve the learning environment and the learning community at ICD.

After survey data is collected, it is then analysed and reported to:

- The Academic Council
- The Registrar
- The respective module lecturer
- Programme Director(s)

The findings of these surveys are beneficial in numerous ways, including, but not limited to:

- **Lecturer** Module level planning so the relevant lecturer can learn what works well and how the module or its delivery might be improved as recommended by the students

- **Programme Director** Programme level planning, including updating and improvement of module descriptors, teaching strategies, assessment strategies, and other resourcing, where beneficial and recommended by the students
- **Academic Council and Registrar** use data to improve overall teaching and learning strategies and quality assurance procedures across the entire college learning environment and across all programmes

### **Drivers of student engagement at ICD:**

The above, three, elements (democratically elected SRC members; democratically elected SRC representation on the Academic Council; learner feedback surveys) of formal learner voice/feedback/communications infrastructure at ICD enable the institution to continuously improve towards our objective of instilling the three drivers of student engagement (identified by HEA 2016) as pillars of ICD's teaching and learning culture:

1. **ICD as a site of democratic citizenship** through fostering a sense of civic responsibility in the student body, fostering debate, and enabling participation in decision-making structures and processes
2. **ICD as a learning community** where students are encouraged to engage with staff and students as in-group learning community members and students are encouraged to "voluntarily seek to improve structures within the institution for all students, present and future" (HEA 2016 p. VIII)
3. **ICD as a critical institution** where students' "academic freedom is an essential principle...[which] guarantees the right to pursue knowledge without fear of sanction [excepting cases of academic or other student or staff impropriety]...[and encourages staff and students'] ability, and duty, to speak truth to power...[and where all staff and students have a shared responsibility to build and maintain a two-way] culture of

challenge, critique and free speech” (HEA 2016 p. VIII). Students and staff as members of the learning community at ICD learn the beneficial role of providing and receiving constructive feedback and criticism on how teaching [and all staff], learning [and related infrastructure], student engagement and performance can be improved.

## Appendix 5.5: Student Feedback Survey

### International College Dublin Business School

#### *INTERIM Quality Assessment Form*

Thank you for enrolling in ICD. To ensure the sustained quality of the lectures, material and support provided, I would be grateful if you would complete the following questions in relation to your module.

***Completion of this section is optional:***

Participant's Name:- \_\_\_\_\_ Course Module:- \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Telephone No: \_\_\_\_\_ Lecturer's Name:- \_\_\_\_\_

		Very			
		Good	Good	Fair	Poor
1.	Preparation for Lecture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	Pace adopted in lecture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Logical approach to course	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

		_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	Delivery of Course	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	Ability to deal with questions during lecturers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	Ability to highlight major points for study	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	Was lecture time used to maximum advantage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.	Lecturers interest in course	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.	General Comments				

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**Student Support / Facilities**

*Please tick the box with the most appropriate response;*

- ◆ I am satisfied with the quality of service provided by course administration to date.  
**Strongly Agree** ☐      **Agree** ☐      **Disagree** ☐      **Strongly Disagree** ☐

- ◆ I was happy with enrolment, fee payment and material distribution procedures at commencement.

**Strongly Agree** ☹      **Agree** ☹      **Disagree** ☹      **Strongly Disagree** ☹

- ◆ I have experienced a satisfactory level of service at ICD

**Strongly Agree** ☹      **Agree** ☹      **Disagree** ☹      **Strongly Disagree** ☹

- ◆ I am satisfied with the level of cleanliness of the college/toilets etc.

**Strongly Agree** ☹      **Agree** ☹      **Disagree** ☹      **Strongly Disagree** ☹

- ◆ I have a favourable impression of the college so far and would recommend it to colleagues.

**Strongly Agree** ☹      **Agree** ☹      **Disagree** ☹      **Strongly Disagree** ☹

### **Suggestions?**

*If you have any suggestions which you feel would improve the quality of our courses in ICD, please outline these below for my attention:-*

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***Thank you for taking the time to undertake this quality audit***

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