Technological University for Dublin

Re-imagining our curriculum
Consolidating the First Year Experience

Prototype Project Updates:

January 2016

General Details	
Project Title	First year transitions questionnaire/tool
Name of Main Applicant	Dave Kilmartin
Position Held	Head of Career Development Centre
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Names of any co-applicants (& colleges they are based in):	
Signed	
Date	

TU4D Theme (Please tick)

☐ **Induction/early orientation** **Yes** **First 5,6 or 7 weeks;**

☐ **Peer mentoring**   ☐ **Assessment and feedback;**

☐ **Graduate Attributes**   ☐ **Students/ autonomous self-directed learners,**

☐ **Learning spaces – virtual & physical**   ☐ **Alternative Curriculum models**

Summary of Prototype project (max 200 words)	**Original project aims** To develop an online self reported transitions questionnaire/tool around the 4 key dimensions of transition into third level education – academic, social, personal and vocational. It is envisaged that there will be between 20 – 30 questions based around the dimensions. Depending on how students answer the questions they will be pointed to (and connect with) appropriate resources both online, in student services and academic support. The key goal is to increase student self awareness with respect to how they are transitioning and to support and empower them to take ownership and action to ensure they are optimising their capacity to transition well. Student autonomy is actively encouraged. Putting the questionnaire online will make it accessible to all students in all TU4 Dublin colleges. Students can choose to share the information with student services or academic staff. Ideally all students would be encouraged to take the questionnaire within the first six weeks, with the potential of it being core to a conversation between student and a first year tutor. The benefits of this questionnaire will help students identify personal challenges as well as providing them with key sources of support. This in turn can help early engagement with and potential solving of transition challenges. This project is based around an award winning workshop (Connect, Commit Communicate) developed and run by the Career Development Centre in 2014/15 See http://www.dit.ie/careers/academics/engagingfirstyears/ for full details (rationale, resources, feedback) of the session.
Project dates	
Main proposed original project outputs for the TU4D (max 100 words)	- Development of a transition questionnaire/tool - Building of an appropriate online platform for the questionnaire - Increased student self awareness - Signpost and promote student services amongst students and academic colleagues - use the information from the questionnaire as a basis for student consultation with first year tutors

Project outputs including any evaluation data (max 300 words, data to be included in an appendix but can be summarised here)	**First 6 weeks** - The questionnaire/tool is designed to be taken by students within the first six weeks -- ideally between weeks 4-6 when students have had sufficient time to experience the transition. At this point issues can emerge, some of which can be dealt with and managed if correctly signposted, thereby preventing the issue exacerbating as well as mitigating against more challenging consequences and perhaps drop out or failure. **Update** **Focus shift**: During the course of working with campus life and academic colleagues the structure of the questionnaire changed. The decisions was taken to move away from a four dimensional structure to six more specific dimensions of the student transition to third level: Adjustment to college; Engagement; Finance; Career; Academic; Health (physical and psychological) . Depending on how the students answer the set of questions they will be directed to an advice section which will point them to things they can do for themselves as well as links to appropriate services and resources The questionnaire is now with an IT professional to program the algorithm and create the online form. It will be developed in such a way that it can be edited, extended and further developed and refined over time. This also turned out to be slightly more complex that originally thought. It is expected that this will be completed by the end of February, after which the questionnaire will be piloted with first year students from a range of disciplines. Feedback from this will be fed into a further iteration. The intention will then be to roll it out to as many first years as possible in 2016/17 academic term. **Software platform** The software will be made available to colleagues in ITB and ITT to allow them to make it more bespoke to services on local campuses. Including links to those services in ITT and ITB in the first instance would potentially cause confusion for students taking the questionnaire..

Lessons Learned (max 200 words)	**Multi stakeholders**: Given the project is still in development, one key lesson relates to the challenge of involving 5 - 6 other services/colleagues in the development phase. Perhaps a better way would have been to put forward a template or sample and then seek feedback from colleagues. The process of asking colleagues to start from baseline considerably added to the timeframe for the project. Efforts were made to gather partners around the table for a brainstorming session. Unfortunately however, it simply wasn't feasible to get a suitable time given workloads, locations, and summer holidays. The **software development** aspect of the project is also more complex than originally envisaged and has extended the timeline
Next stage(max (max 200 words)	The project will be evaluated by focus groups, primarily with students. Student services and academic colleagues will also be asked for feedback. This feedback will be incorporated into a further refinement of the tool.
	Implementation and the future If the tool proves successful there should be scope to deepen the questions contained within the tool, perhaps making it more focussed and granular. If the data from each questionnaire taken could be collected and analysed, a clear picture of the key transition issues facing students could be gathered and recommendations regarding more precise interventions could be made. Some of this data is available through existing students surveys but this tool has the added advantage of the 'live' pointing of students to appropriate supports based on their expressed need, as well as the potential of providing more research data. This could have implications for induction processes and indeed the first six weeks of transition to higher education. A more needs based approach could be developed. It could also have implications for the kind of information and resources sent to students in advance of entering TU4Dublin. **Funding** - A scoping exercise would have to be carried out as to the optimum way to gather and analyse the data. A cost benefit analysis of this would have to be conducted.