

## **Stance on StudentSurvey.ie**

### **Introduction**

StudentSurvey.ie (formerly known as ISSE, the Irish Survey of Student Engagement) is a collaborative partnership between the HEA (Higher Education Authority), IUA (Irish Universities Association), THEA (Technological Higher Education Association), and USI (Union of Students in Ireland).

Since its inception in 2013, its main purpose (according to THEA) was to help each institution and its students by collating feedback and developing appropriate follow-up actions; objectives included improving transparency in relation to the student experience, enabling direct student input, and helping institutions identify areas requiring further development.

The survey asks students about their experiences in higher education, and is open to first year, final year (undergraduate), and taught postgraduate students. The survey has, for the most part, been carried out on an annual basis, in semester two of the academic year.

### **Reality across Institutions**

Despite its objectives, StudentSurvey.ie has been criticised for years by both Students' Unions and University staff. Concerns include:

- 1) The length of the survey (>20 minutes per student)
- 2) The effort required by all institutions + SU's during rollout (>2 weeks each)
- 3) The questions themselves being unclear or unhelpful (no facility-based questions, few questions relating to the Student Experience / actually asking the 'why')
- 4) The lack of efficiency and transparency around receiving the results (TUDSU was only given a presentation of 'some' results in November, 9 months later)
- 5) The lack of meaningful action plans made by Institutions based on the feedback

Last year, in TU Dublin SU alone, multiple Officers spent several weeks and a significant amount of funding promoting the survey. Despite this, the Union only received a summary of some data in November (approximately 9 months later) with no action plan or mechanism to address any of the issues/trends that appeared. This meant that student time, energy and money was invested, without any tangible improvements to their college experience.

### **Current Decisions Taken**

Despite these concerns being voiced for years, very few meaningful changes were made to reflect this feedback. While the survey did recently undergo an external review (results still pending), some Union's (such as TCDSU) have still voted to boycott the Survey entirely.

These factors are likely what lead to the recent decision by the steering committee of StudentSurvey.ie to not run the survey for this academic year (23/24). The current understanding of TU Dublin SU is that they plan to review the feedback provided by the external review, and make amendments to resolve the concerns listed previously.

### **Stance taken by TU Dublin SU**

TU Dublin SU accepts the value that a well-run, relevant, nationwide survey could have for its students. For this reason, the Union will seek to work with StudentSurvey.ie in order to ensure that all of the complaints listed previously (including but not limited to: survey length, questions themselves, length of time taken for results, lack of resulting action plans) are amended before the next iteration of Student Survey. The Union will also seek to work with StudentSurvey.ie to reimagine the survey in its entirety.

However, prior to the next rollout (expected in the academic year 25/26), should StudentSurvey.ie not be deemed 'fit-for-purpose', TU Dublin SU will then seek to boycott it. This decision will be based on the recommendation of the Executive (championed by the VP for Academic Affairs), which will ultimately be voted on by Student Council.

**Proposed by:** Shauna O'Toole, VP for Academic Affairs

**Seconded by:** Brian Jordan, President of TU Dublin SU