



Summary of INDEx Findings from Students and Staff who Teach in Higher Education – CUA Results

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The INDEx Survey was undertaken in Autumn 2019 to explore the digital experiences of students and staff who teach in Irish higher education. The survey was coordinated and managed by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education in partnership with members of the higher education community.

The aim was to highlight what makes a difference to students and staff who teach in Irish higher education, providing an evidence base to inform decision-making and future enhancement of digital teaching and learning.

This summary report provides an overview of the key findings with regard to the data collected at the Connacht-Ulster Alliance (hereafter CUA) which is a collaboration between GMIT, IT Sligo and Letterkenny IT, who are in the process of applying for technological university designation. Responses were collected from over 2,600 students and almost 600 members of the teaching staff across the three individual institutions. The national response rate for students was 11 percent, whereas at CUA it was 15 percent. The national response rate for staff was 25 percent, whereas at CUA it was 49 percent.

Please note that the figures provided in this summary report are a combination of weighted and unweighted figures. Figures for staff are unweighted due to the unavailability of detailed information about the composition of the staff population. For students however, the figures have been weighted by gender and age to ensure that the response profile matches that of the known population profile within each institution. As a result, the figures presented for CUA are reflective of the whole student populations at GMIT, IT Sligo and Letterkenny IT, and not just of the students at these institutions who completed the survey.

Key Findings

Importance of digital technologies to student learning in Irish Higher Education

- In the national report 74 percent of students agreed that digital skills were important for their chosen career, and 46 percent said their course prepared them for the digital workplace. In comparison, 79 percent of CUA students believed that digital skills were important for their chosen career, and 59 percent thought that their course was preparing them for the digital workplace.
- Seventy percent of students at CUA agreed that when digital technologies are used on their course, they understood things better, 71 percent enjoy learning more, 76 percent are more independent in their learning, and 75 percent can fit learning into their life more easily. Similar figures were observed at the national level.

- Forty-nine percent of students at CUA would like digital technologies to be used in their course more than they are now, and 68 percent of staff who teach would like digital technologies to be used in their teaching practice more than they are at present. Similar figures were observed for each group at the national level.

Supporting student and staff digital capabilities

- In the national report 80 percent of students, and 64 percent of staff who teach, rated the overall quality of their institution's digital provision (e.g., software, hardware, learning environment) as above average. In comparison, 80 percent of students, and 62 percent of staff who teach at CUA rated the institution's digital provision as above average.
- Seventy-six percent of students at CUA rated the overall quality of digital teaching and learning on their course at CUA as above average (compared to 71 percent at the national level). However, only 44 percent of teaching staff rated the support they received from CUA to develop the digital aspects of their role as above average, compared with 46 percent of teaching staff at the national level.
- Lecturers were seen by students as their main source of support to use digital technology in their learning; there was a relatively even split between the sources of support that staff most relied on to use digital technology in their teaching: online videos and resources, and their teaching colleagues.

Online teaching and learning

- In the national report, 70 percent of teaching staff had never taught in a live online environment. This compares with 65 percent of teaching staff in CUA who had never taught in a live online environment.
- Seventy-nine percent of staff who teach report having access to file storage and back-up whenever they need them compared with 77 percent at the national level. However, 59 percent of students reported having access to file storage and back-up, which is higher than that found at the national level (44 percent).
- For teaching staff at CUA, 25 percent thought that their institution gave them guidance about the digital skills they needed as a teacher (compared with 34 percent in the national report). Approximately 16 percent thought they had time and support with

which to innovate (compared with 16 percent in the national report), and 39 percent of staff thought that CUA provided them with regular opportunities to develop their digital skills, compared with 41 percent found at the national level.

- In the national survey, 25 percent of students reported having access to lecture recordings and 29 percent of staff who teach reported having access to lecture capture. In comparison, at CUA, 35 percent of students reported having access to lecture recordings, and 36 percent of teaching staff reported having access to lecture capture.

Access to wi-fi, devices and digitally-enabled teaching and learning spaces

- Around 80 percent of students in CUA reported that they have reliable access to institutional wi-fi. However, this still leaves around 20 percent who reported that they lacked such access. A similar proportion was observed in the national report.
- For staff who teach in CUA, only 63 percent reported that they have access to reliable wi-fi, compared with 79 percent in the national report.
- Student device ownership and use for learning was high overall, but it is not universal. For example, 80 percent of CUA students have access to a laptop computer, 82 percent have access to smartphone, and 40 percent have access to a desktop computer. Similar proportions for each were observed in the national report.
- Fifty-two percent of students at CUA thought that the teaching spaces were well-designed for digital technologies, but only 25 percent of staff thought the same. A similar pattern was evident for students in the national report, however for staff who teach, 29 percent thought that their teaching spaces were well designed for digital technology use.

Supporting the needs of all students

- Nine percent of students reported that assistive technologies were vital to meet their learning needs, and of this cohort 68 percent reported that their institution provided them with support for their essential assistive technologies.
- Students' positive assessments regarding digital teaching and learning were consistent across almost all cohorts of students in the CUA. However, some differences in engagement and attitudes were evident across age bands, with younger students less

likely to use digital tools or apps to manage links and references, to organise their study time, and to look for additional resources not recommended by their lecturers than older students.

- Age also appears to be a factor in certain types of digital activities. For example, over 90 percent of students look for information online regardless of age profile. However, younger students are marginally less likely to work online with others compared with older students. In addition, older students are less likely to use an education game or simulation for learning than younger students.

Data Privacy

- Fifty-nine percent of students at CUA agreed that their institution protects their data privacy (compared to 52 percent found nationally), though only 35 percent said they were informed about how their personal data was stored and used (similar to that found nationally).
- At the national level, 52 percent of staff said they were informed about their responsibilities with regard to managing learner data securely. In comparison, at CUA 57 percent of staff members said they were informed about their responsibilities with regard to managing learner data.
- 41 percent of students said that CUA helped them to stay safe online (compared with the national level of 40 percent), while 14 percent of staff said they were informed about their responsibilities with respect to ensuring students' online safety (compared with 15 percent in the national report).