**Media Release**

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**More than 27,000 students provide feedback on their higher education experience in national survey**

**- Publication of 2015 results from the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE)**

The results of a national survey of third level students, published today (Thursday 5th November 2015), will help Irish higher education institutions to enhance the quality of education they provide. This year, more than 27,300 students from 30 higher education institutions responded to the survey taking the total number of responses to almost 60,000 in the three years since the survey was first run as a pilot. Details of their experiences will be used by institutions to identify which aspects are working well for students and which areas would benefit from further improvement. In addition, the survey informs national policy as a key source of information. It is the first system-wide survey of its kind in Europe and one of only a handful of similar surveys worldwide.

Participating institutions are committed to providing effective feedback on survey results and to taking appropriate action. A related report, published in January 2015, provides examples of how individual institutions are making use of the evidence generated by this national survey.

Commenting on the report, **Minister for Education and Skills, Jan O’Sullivan, TD, said, “I welcome the ongoing commitment of Higher Education Institutions to listen to their students’ feedback in order to inform continued enhancement of the student experience. This commitment is evident in the number of students participating in the Irish Survey of Student Engagement which has increased again in 2015. Almost 60,000 students have taken part in the three years since the survey ran as a pilot in 2013. The information gathered provides a critical evidence base for the student experience within institutions and at a national level.”**

The Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) is designed to ask students directly about their full experience of higher education. Student feedback provides institutions with valuable information to identify effective practice and provision and to prompt awareness of, and action on, any particular issues or challenges that affect students.

The survey is open to all first year undergraduate, final year undergraduate and taught postgraduate students in thirty higher education institutions including all Universities, all Institutes of Technology and all Colleges of Education. The number of students participating has steadily increased from the national pilot survey in 2013 through implementation of the full survey in 2014 and 2015.

**President of the Union of Students in Ireland (USI), Kevin Donoghue, said "Each year more and more students complete the survey. ISSE is quickly becoming the accepted authority on student opinions of their academic and college experiences. It is crucial that Students’ Unions and institutions’ staff use this data to its full effect."**

Student engagement with institutional life is a vital ingredient to ensure that students develop key skill-sets such as critical thinking, problem-solving, writing skills, team work and communication skills.

**Some results from the 2015 survey from Athlone Institute of Technology**

* 63.3% of all participating students selected *often* or *very often*, when asked if they were improving knowledge and skills that will contribute to their employability (62.2% in 2014)
* 75.8% of all participating students reported positive relationships with teaching staff, finding them to be *available, helpful and sympathetic* (a score of 5 or greater on 7 point scale) (74.9% in 2014)
* 74.3% of all participating students selected 'quite a bit' or 'very much' when asked how much their experience had helped them to think critically and analytically (73.9% in 2014)
* 52.9% of all participating students selected *quite a bit*, or *very much* when asked if they were solving complex real world problems (52.3% in 2014)
* 83% of all participating students selected *good* or *excellent*, when asked how they would evaluate their entire educational experience at their institution (83.6% in 2014)
* 70% of all participating students selected *often* or *very often*, when asked if they used an online learning system to complete an assignment (71.5% in 2014)
* 57.2% of all participating students selected *often* or *very often*, when asked if they had conversations with students of a different ethnicity/nationality (56.7% in 2014)
* 25.5% of all participating students selected *plan to* or *done*, when asked if they were considering Study abroad/student exchange (26.1% in 2014)
* 72.8% of all participating students selected *quite a bit* or *very much*, when asked if they spend a significant amount of time studying and on academic work (73.5% in 2014).

The ISSE project is funded by the HEA and co-sponsored by the Higher Education Authority, Institutes of Technology Ireland (IOTI), the Irish Universities Association (IUA) and the Union of Students in Ireland (USI). The survey was developed in response to a key recommendation of the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* that every higher education institution should put in place a comprehensive anonymous student feedback system to inform institutional and programme/course development, as well as national policy.

ISSE is based on best practice internationally as developed by the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) since 2007 and the US National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) since 2000.

**Ends.**

**For more information contact:**

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**Notes for the Editor:**

More information can be found on [www.studentsurvey.ie](http://www.studentsurvey.ie)

Report: The Irish Survey of Student Engagement – Results from 2015 (attached)

* The Higher Education Authority (HEA) is the statutory policy and funding body for higher education
* Institutes of Technology, Ireland (IOTI) is the representative body for thirteen of Ireland’s Institutes of Technology
* The Irish Universities Association (IUA) is the representative body for Ireland’s seven universities
* The Union of Students in Ireland (USI) is the national representative body for students in higher education.