CCT College Dublin

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Closing the Feedback Loop in an Emergency Remote Learning Context

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Case Study: Closing the Feedback Loop in an Emergency Remote Learning Context

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What was the nature of the project / initiative and when did it take place?

CCT prioritises continuous improvement in all College activities, facilities and initiatives. Sectoral engagement, research and enquiry to facilitate identifying and adopting national and international best practice, and strategic planning and implementation provide the foundation for a proactive approach to enhancement. Feedback from stakeholders plays an important role in this, aiding the College to determine the suitability of proposed initiatives and developments and determining the ongoing benefit of existing initiatives, within the CCT context.

The student satisfaction survey is one of several tools the College uses to secure feedback. The College recognises this process can only be effective where it is deemed to be of value by the students and therefore it is essential that any feedback received is responded to. Dialogue in respect of enhancements, some of which may relate directly to learner feedback or may already be in process and supported by learner feedback, is a central pillar of feedback processes in CCT. This closing of the feedback loop is understood as essential in motivating learners to engage in providing constructive feedback.

Traditionally, Class Reps would be notified of the College's actions or intentions relating to feedback received from learners or initiatives arising from strategic intentions of the College and they would disseminate this to their peers. The pivot to emergency remote learning in March 2020 presented the challenge of finding an alternative approach to closing the feedback loop that would reach all learners while also allowing for students to revisit the information or to access it at a later date.

Who was involved in the project / initiative?

A cross-college team including representatives from Student Services, the CCT Centre for Teaching and Learning, the Management Team and the Executive Leadership Team researched, coordinated and implemented the project, agreeing the timeline, approach and format to be used.

Describe the aim(s) of the project?

- Determine the suitability and fitness for purpose of contingency arrangements from a learner perspective and identify opportunities for enhancement.
- Understand the student experience during the pandemic to inform any future remote learning experience
- Employ mechanisms to promote two-way dialogue between the College and learners in the remote learning context
- Communicate clearly with learners to advise of actions or intentions relating to feedback which can be acted upon and provide justification where matters are deemed beyond the scope of reasonable expectation
- Incorporate changes into policy where appropriate and needed
- Provide Class Reps with the support and information they need to be successful in their role

What were the learning outcomes / intentions or objectives of the project / initiative?

The objectives of the project were:
- ✓ To ensure continued effective dialogue in an emergency remote learning context, of relevance to that context.
- ✓ To determine the effectiveness of the College's contingency arrangements and identify areas for further enhancement.

The output of the project would be a short video comprising of image and text-based slides, informing students of recent and new developments and plans that are of relevance to the feedback they had provided as well as those which will be of interest to students in general. This could be as simple as confirming continuation of supports and services that were highly rated in the student survey, or it could be advising of new developments the College had been implementing ready for the next academic year. The video slides would be designed in a way that showed students there was a benefit to providing feedback and hence the format of "You said, and we did…" was introduced. The College actions were not necessarily a direct response to student feedback alone, but this format was helpful as a means of updating students on enhancement initiatives that were of relevance to their feedback. The first slide of each sub-section would summarise what students had indicated in their feedback, followed by a slide that summarised any recent or planned actions of the College.

Describe the project / initiative

Prior to the COVID shift online, CCT gathered, and responded to, feedback from students through different avenues, both formal and informal. Formal feedback was given through Class Rep meetings, survey feedback, and "Pizza with the President" events. Informal feedback was gathered through the open-door policy, individual student feedback (usually through email or face to face conversation), and from faculty/staff observation.

Prior to the College closure, a risk assessment identified the need for alternative communication channels for students at institution, programme, module and service level, in the event of campus closure. Measures were taken to implement these, prioritising the more immediate needs. In April, work commenced on revising the standard CCT student feedback survey as it was determined this would not gather the information required to reflect accurately on the semester, nor would it give learners the opportunity to share their experience of the emergency remote learning context. The survey was re-designed to allow room for additional questions that would be relevant to the semester under review. These were approved by the Executive Leadership Team and the new survey was created and distributed. Existing mechanisms to promote completion of the survey were continued and response rates reflected those normally attained. On receipt and analysis of the data, the ELT and management team reviewed the feedback. In order to ensure learners were confident their views had been considered, and were aware of this, but also to make sure all learners were fully aware of existing supports and initiatives as well as enhancements that were recently implemented or planned for the year ahead, the project team designed and implemented the slide-based video *"You said, and we did".* The video was posted to the VLE and all students were notified of its presence. This particular feedback approach didn't operate in isolation but was supported by additional existing feedback mechanisms which were transitioned to the online context.

All Class Rep meetings shifted to online and virtual office arrangements that allowed students to drop in or make appointments were introduced by different departments, facilitating general enquiries or specific support needs. Additional technology-based communication channels were also introduced to ensure maximum opportunity and ease for students to engage with the College.

The *Pizza with the President* events are scheduled each semester to provide an opportunity for Class

Reps to engage directly with the College President to secure a strategic update from the President, receive information on initiatives, implemented or planned, as a result of feedback from students and other stakeholders. The Class Reps are also invited to share their views, and that other their peers, in respect of all aspects of life as a CCT student. In 2019/20 the *Pizza with the President* meeting took place on campus in December 2019 and a zoom meeting was arranged as an alternative in Spring 2020 providing students with the opportunity to give verbal feedback and secure feedback from the President.

Communications from students suggest these initiatives were well received and, in particular, as contingency arrangements appeared likely to continue into the following academic year, students were comforted and reassured to have an understanding of the approaches, resources and services that would be implemented in the year ahead and knowing that there continued to be opportunities to have their voices heard.

What data was collected during this project / initiative?

The feedback surveys, minutes from the Class Reps meetings, and minutes from Zoom with the President provided valuable insights to inform ongoing or future initiatives to promote student feedback and closing the feedback loop. It is worth noting that alongside this formal initiative the College receives regular feedback from class reps through the class rep meeting structure and through real time communications. This feedback is generally acted upon and responded to as it arises so students know they can influence or inform developments and enhancements without having to wait for end of semester surveys.

What insights were gleaned from the project / initiative data?

Opportunities for continued student feedback in emergency remote learning contexts need to be planned for in any contingency proposals. Such plans must factor in the changed context in terms of the mechanisms that will be used to facilitate dialogue but also the feedback that is sought must be of relevance to that revised context.

Primarily there was a notable appreciation for the range of opportunities for students to continue sharing their views and feedback but moving to a loop closing mechanism that reached the entire learner community first-hand was deemed to be a significant enhancement, reducing the reliance on communication through class reps and also reducing the potential for non-receipt of the College response. The use of the video meant it not only had wide reach, but it improved accessibility for students and could be revisited easily.

How has practice changed as a result of the project / initiative?

A number of these practices were either being tested or already in place in the physical environment but needed to be adjusted to, and expanded for, the virtual context. It is anticipated that these will have merit when returning to the provision of on-campus learning. In effect, the experience of using technology to support two-way dialogue in the emergency remote learning context has resulted in enhancements to existing practices. The use of technology to facilitate interaction between the College and students will continue along with the direct first-hand response to student feedback through the use of video.