

# Strategy for Supporting Learner Success



National College of Ireland (NCI)

2023/24 - 2025/26

# Contents

<b>Background and Context</b> .....	1
<b>Measuring and Monitoring Strategy Success</b> .....	2
Defining Strategy Success .....	2
Monitoring Success .....	2
Measuring Success .....	2
<b>Key Area 1: Streamlining Services: Applicant to Alumni</b> .....	3
<b>Key Area 2: Academic Support</b> .....	4
<b>Key Area 3: Health and Wellbeing Support</b> .....	5
<b>Key Area 4: Supporting a Sense of Community</b> .....	6

## Background and Context

In response to our Mission *'To change lives through education'*, NCI prides itself in our shared commitment to being learner centred.

Together, we continuously strive to meet our Learner Centred Value of placing the learner: *'at the heart of everything we do; our combined energies are focused on their individual and collective, life-long needs'*.

In Semester 2 2022, the Registrar launched the Streamlining Student Success Initiative, a holistic learner-centred approach to reviewing NCI policies, procedures and practices across the entire learner journey, from applicant to alumni.

The objectives of the Initiative were to enhance:

- (i) the quality of the learner experience
- (ii) the quality of the staff experience, and
- (iii) institutional effectiveness.

A Student Success Steering Committee was established in April 2022 to oversee this review process. Chaired by the Director of Student Registry, six Task and Finish Groups were created to engaged over 100 members of staff, faculty, learners, and learner representatives. The groups spanned the following six key stages of the learner lifecycle and will continue to work throughout the 2023/24 Academic Year.



This strategy therefore outlines how NCI will utilise and build upon the contributions of our key internal stakeholders gathered through the Streamlining Student Success Initiative, to enhance our learner-centredness and respond proactively to the 2022-2027 [NCI Strategic Plan](#) Objective 1.5: *'To drive excellence and accessibility in our learner supports across our physical and digital campuses'* and Objective 5.2: *'To embed access in our programme design, delivery, assessment and in all student services'*. Our supports for enhancing learner centred success will be delivered across these four key areas:

### Supporting Learner Success

- Streamlining Support Services: Applicant to Alumni
- Academic Support
- Health and Wellbeing Support
- Supporting a Sense of Community

# Measuring and Monitoring Strategy Success

## Defining Strategy Success

Success for this Strategy, is defined as **NCI learners:**

- Have accessible information on our programmes, our delivery modes and notional timetables at application and enrolment.
- Feel supported throughout their academic, personal and wellbeing journey at NCI and can access timely and accurate support and guidance in person and online.
- Are engaged with the range of learning, welfare, support, careers and social activities available at NCI and feel part of the NCI community.
- Feel heard and that NCI listens and responds to their voice and experiences.
- Achieve their programme learning outcomes and receive their awards.
- Secure graduate jobs and feel their experience equipped them well for entering the workplace.

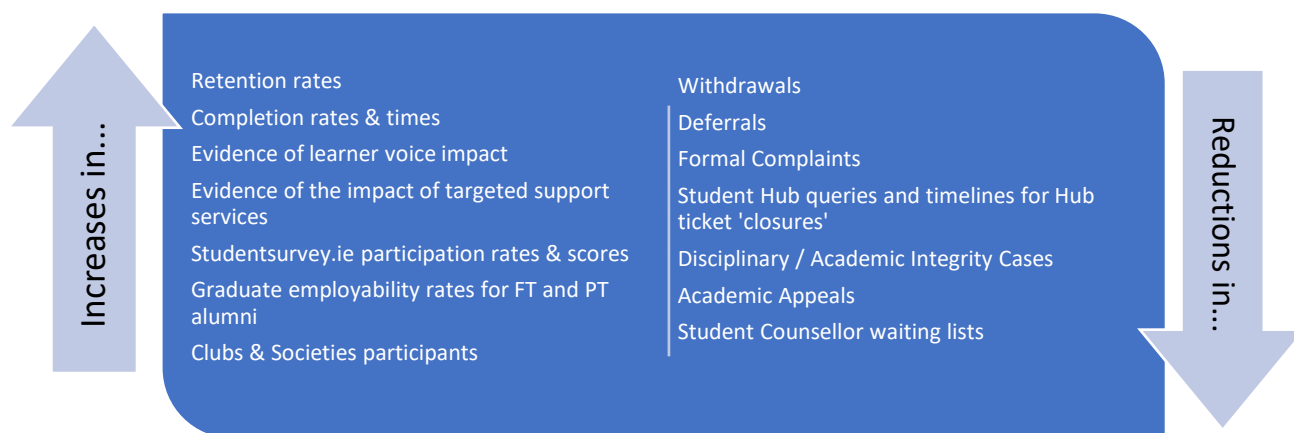
## Monitoring Success

NCI will review and refresh our technological solutions throughout 2023/24, in consultation with key stakeholders, to ensure we are able to gather and monitor qualitative and quantitative data to assess the impact of this Strategy. Mechanisms to be reviewed and maximised to monitor learner success, to optimise resource allocation and effective decision making including: (i) our CRM; (ii) existing engagement monitoring systems such as Moodle, (iii) learner and graduate survey systems, and (iv) our student record system outputs.

This data-driven approach will enhance our ability to support the retention and academic success of learners by targeting supports at key times throughout the learner journey, particularly towards individuals and cohorts of learners where data suggests they are appearing to disengage. Timely academic and welfare support interventions and an ongoing commitment to enhance engagement in the NCI community are critical to enhancing learner's success and retaining learners within NCI to complete their awards.

## Measuring Success

Through the regular collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data, NCI will identify trends and patterns to target interventions, supports, communications and resources. Success measures should be quantifiable in terms of:



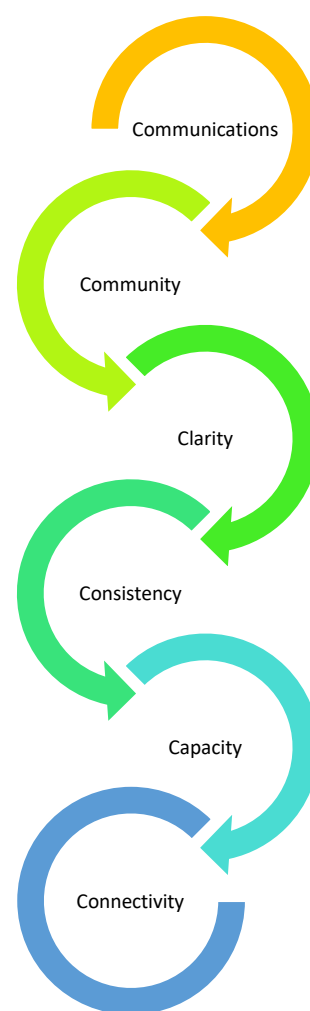
## Key Area 1: Streamlining Services: Applicant to Alumni

In line with our mission of offering a transformative experience, we will utilise the Streamlining Student Success Task and Finish Groups, and consult with staff and students, to ensure our student-facing policies, procedures and practices are clear, understandable and consistently applied. We aim to support delivery of a streamlined learner-centred digital and physical campus environment, that provides high quality accessible supports, services and guidance. NCI will achieve this by sharing data and analysing qualitative and quantitative data to continuously improve service delivery across the learner lifecycle.

### We will:

1. Ensure our admissions and enrolment processes and services are accessible to all, and information accurate and complete.
2. Provide online and on-campus orientation sessions at the start of each semester, with input from the NCISU and colleagues across NCI, to ease the transition into/return to the NCI campus community.
3. Refresh our learner-facing policies and procedures to ensure they are accurate, complete, accessible and understandable and applied consistently across the College.
4. Deliver a 'one-stop-shop' approach to physical support services and maximise the utilisation of the digital support hub to respond to learner needs in an efficient and effective manner.
5. Review academic data, including entry, withdrawal, deferral and completion rates, and attendance records, to identify learners who are struggling academically or at risk of falling behind and target supports accordingly.
6. Evaluate learner engagement data, such as participation in campus orientation activities, clubs, sports, careers and social events, tailor events and enhance the campus community.
7. Collect and monitor feedback from learners through surveys as well as focus groups to identify areas where they feel additional supports or information would be beneficial.
8. Deliver individual, programme, and cohort-specific career supports and work placement opportunities.
9. Extend the reach, visibility and impact of our alumni network, to enhance lifelong learning and engage with the HEA Graduate Destinations Survey.

### Principles of Effective Learner-Centred Delivery:



### Success measured by:

- ✓ Increased retention, progression and completion rates
- ✓ Increased data on the impact of the Library Academic Support Centre, Careers, Counselling, Assistive Technology, Learning and Disability supports.
- ✓ Reduction in Student Hub tickets and timelines for closing tickets
- ✓ Increases in our alumni network and graduate destinations data



## Key Area 2: Academic Support

While the primary responsibility for the academic experience lies with academic leaders and faculty at a programme and School/CELL level, holistically NCI will offer a range of embedded and targeted learner-centred supports to enhance the quality of the learner academic experience. When a learner excels academically, their self-esteem and confidence can be boosted which can have a positive impact on their overall wellbeing and encourage them to feel more confident in other areas of their life.

### **We will:**

1. Deliver a comprehensive orientation programme online and on-campus at the start of each semester, with emphasis placed on academic skill supports available throughout the learner journey.
2. Deliver targeted, group and individual IT, academic integrity, academic writing, thesis and assignment support, mathematics, careers, assistive technology and counselling supports throughout the academic journey online and on-campus.
3. Deliver online and on-campus *'Getting to Grips'* study skills workshops at the start of each Semester, and *'Back on Track'* sessions, for those identified or at risk of disengaging.
4. Strengthen partnerships with academic leaders to identify and utilise data to track academic progress and trigger intervention strategies at an individual and class/programme level as required.
5. Engage with and publish a range of academic guidance materials benchmarked against national and international best practice, particularly in relation to academic integrity.
6. Ensure notional timetables are published in advance of enrolment to aid learner planning of academic, personal and professional commitments.
7. Make rooms easily bookable on both campuses and online for learners to complete quiet study and group projects.
8. Utilise technology and communications tools to support learner engagement and participation in scheduled teaching, learning and assessment events, at our digital and physical campuses.
9. Enhance the accessibility and consistency of information about NCI academic programmes, their modules, electives, learning outcomes, progression opportunities and career pathways.
10. Facilitate surveys by faculty and review the outcomes of learner feedback at a module and programme level to inform effective decision making and programme review/redesign.
11. Analyse the outcomes of annual and cyclical programme monitoring processes to inform and capture examples of continuous quality improvements.
12. Support the embedding of career skills into the curriculum and the management of work placement opportunities for validated programmes.
13. Gather, analyse and disseminate data on our assessment processes and learner results, benchmarking against internal and national data, where available, to inform assessment strategies and protect academic integrity and the reputation of NCI graduates and programmes.

### **Success measured by:**

- ✓ Reduction in withdrawal and deferral rates
- ✓ Increased retention, progression and completion rates
- ✓ Increase in data on learner engagement and the impact of targeted supports including the Library Academic Support Centre, Careers, Counselling, Assistive Technology, Learning and Disability supports.
- ✓ Reduction in academic disciplinary cases



## Key Area 3: Health and Wellbeing Support

We recognise the impact of health and wellbeing on learner success, and will ensure that our policies, procedures and practices support the overall health and wellbeing of our learners. We will ensure that all learners have equal opportunities to achieve their goals and overcome any barriers they may face during their academic journey. We will support the adoption of a “Healthy Campus” approach by promoting the health and wellbeing of learners, while fostering the need for care, empathy, compassion, equality and inclusion across the NCI community.

### We will:

1. Deliver a supportive and inclusive digital and physical campus environment, by promote awareness of mental health and wellbeing through workshops and campaigns, in partnership with the NCISU and HR.
2. Offer and promote a wide range of accessible counselling services and mental health supports on campus, online and nationally, to help learners access a range of services and develop coping mechanisms in the areas of anxiety, resilience, stress, depression, alcohol, drugs, sleep and financial worries.
3. In conjunction with HR, train staff on how to identify and support people experiencing thoughts of suicide. Guidelines and policies on how to support a learner in distress are also provided to all staff including procedures outlined on how to respond to a critical incident.
4. Develop a Mental Health Taskforce within NCI to promote positive mental health conversations and to promote a culture of support, wellbeing and open conversations.
5. Facilitate access to healthcare services and promoting physical wellbeing.
6. Provide all learners with access to SV Fitness, our on-campus gym.
7. Provide extra supports to learners registered as having learning difficulties and disabilities, including learning support, exam accommodations, occupational therapy, library supports and assistive technology.
8. Provide access to NCI’s Sensory Room which provides a safe space for learners to decompress and self-regulate during their time on campus.
9. Offer financial aid to learners experiencing financial strain through the Learner Assistance Fund and Laptop Loan Scheme, and in partnership with the NCISU, offer short-term financial loans.
10. Offer extensive scholarship opportunities to help learners achieve their academic and career goals.
11. Facilitate surveys by faculty and support teams to target wellbeing supports to learners where a need has been identified.



### Success measured by:

- ✓ Reduction in withdrawal and deferral rates
- ✓ Increased retention, progression and completion rates
- ✓ Increase in data on learner engagement and the impact of targeted supports including Counselling, Assistive Technology, Learning and Disability supports.

## Key Area 4: Supporting a Sense of Community

Fostering a sense of community is recognised to be key to learner retention, success, and the willingness of learners to engage with NCI throughout and beyond their programme duration. We will ensure that all learners, online and in-person, have a range of social and community support structures, led by their peers, NCISU and NCI, to foster a strong sense of community and belonging. This is particularly important in the post-COVID environment for both domestic and international learners, and for learners who are transitioning to the College environment, as it can be overwhelming to navigate a new social landscape.

### We will:

1. In partnership with the NCISU, promote and publicise clubs, societies, cultural, volunteering and social events to ensure that learners are aware of the opportunities available to them and foster a sense of belonging.
2. Ensure learners get the opportunity to create new clubs and societies at a social or competitive level.
3. Encourage learners to engage in volunteering opportunities internally and externally.
4. Deliver 'Find your Feet' support sessions to build social connections between learners, delivered after the initial orientation meetings via social media channels.
5. Ensure learner-centred social spaces are available online and at both NCI physical campuses.
6. Facilitate peer support networks and mentorship programmes.
7. Organize and promote NCI and NCISU social events and activities, such as the annual Graduation Ball and the Clubs and Societies Ball.
8. Increase awareness and understanding from induction/orientation onwards, of diversity and inclusivity among staff and learners through training and awareness campaigns and cultural events.
9. Use a range of communication tools to engage learners in the NCI community during their studies and after via the alumni network.
10. Regularly measure learner happiness, feedback and satisfaction by analysing qualitative and quantitative data a module, programme and institutional level.
11. Work with the NCISU to involve learners in a range of representative, team and leadership roles to enrich the learner experience overall.

### Success measured by:

- ✓ Reduction in withdrawal rates
- ✓ Increased retention and progression rates
- ✓ Increases in completion rates
- ✓ Increased satisfaction scores in studentsurvey.ie
- ✓ Increased numbers engaged in Clubs and Societies
- ✓ Increased attendance at the Graduation Ball
- ✓ Increased engagement in the NCI Alumni Network

