
Implementing the first national survey for postgraduate research (PGR) students

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Sean O'Reilly

Technological Higher Education Association

Lewis Purser

Irish Universities Association

**STUDENT
SURVEY.IE**
NATIONAL
SURVEY,
LOCAL
IMPACT

Context: Irish higher education system



- ❑ 7 universities
- ❑ 14 institutes of technology
- ❑ Colleges of education & smaller institutions
- ❑ Private HE providers
- ❑ ***National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030***

Development of first national survey(s)

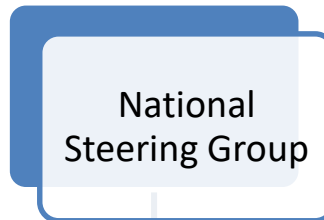
- ❑ Recommendation of *National Strategy for HE to 2030*
- ❑ 2013 pilot national student survey for taught students (first, final year undergraduate, taught postgraduate)
- ❑ All state-funded institutions
- ❑ 163,000 total responses from 2013 to 2018 (28% national response rate in 2018)
- ❑ Based on international best practice (US National Survey of Student Engagement, “NSSE” -derivatives in Ireland, UK, China, South Africa, Denmark)
- ❑ Governance and management by collaborative partnership

National collaborative partnership

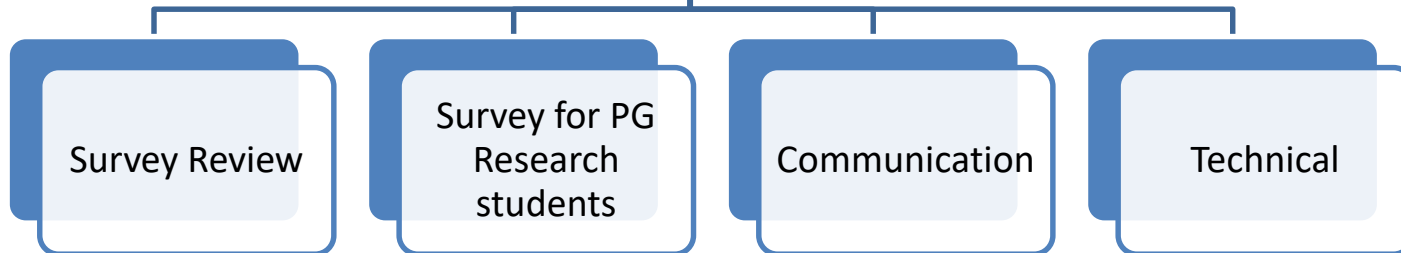
- ❑ Funded by state policy & funding body (HEA) as shared service for institutions under HEA remit
- ❑ Co-sponsored by institutions' representative bodies and national students' union
- ❑ Partnership and working groups supported by project manager & contracted external company for technical delivery of survey / return of data
- ❑ Data returned confidentially to individual institutions
- ❑ Collaboration has achieved more than individual actors could

Collaborative partnership

Project
co-sponsors



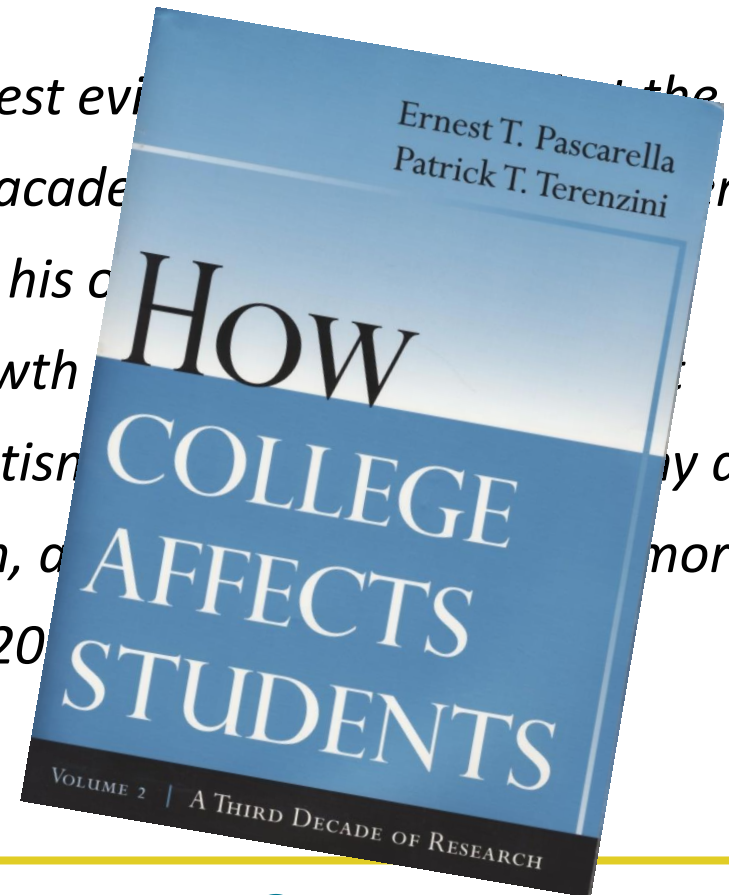
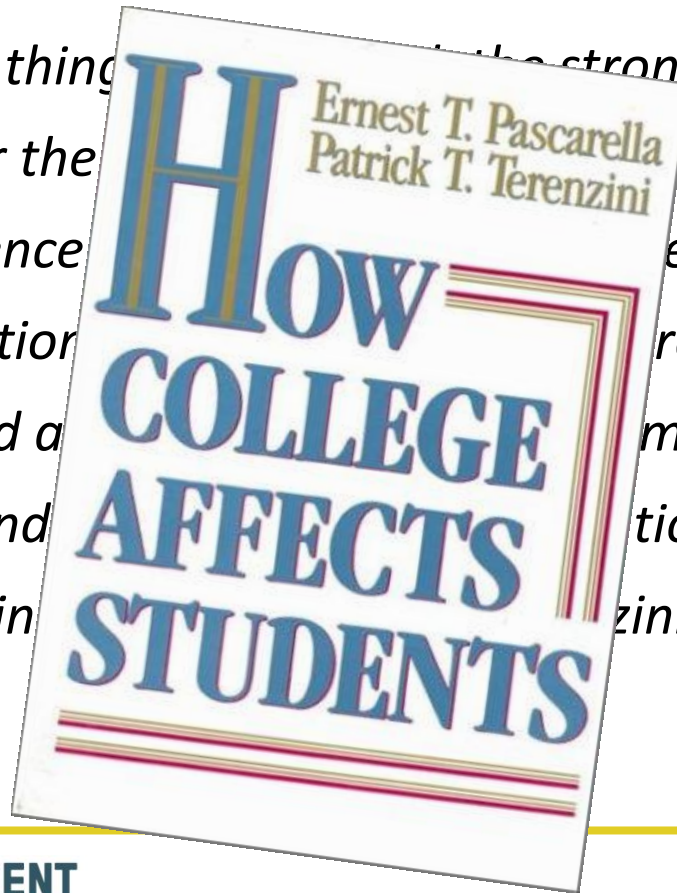
Representative of institutions and
external quality assurance agency



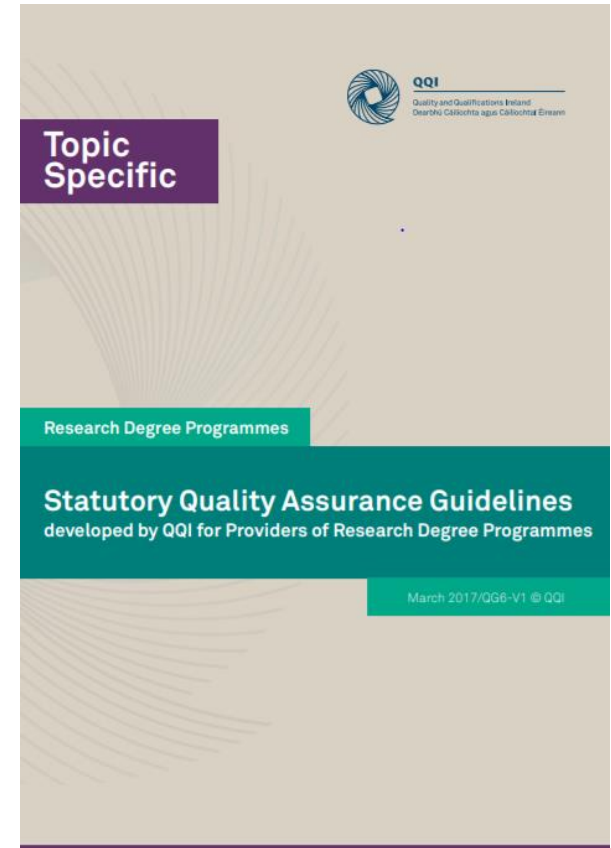
Based on effective practice

Why focus on engagement, not satisfaction?

- “Other things being equal, the stronger evidence is that the greater the engagement, the greater the academic achievement. The more experience a student has with college, the more likely they are to acquire the skills and knowledge needed for success in the workplace. Engagement is also associated with reduced attrition, increased independence, and improved reasoning skills.”



Postgraduate Research – the context



Pilot: process & sections (“aspects”)



Questions on each of these “Aspects” with closed responses (disagree -> agree) – commonly 4 such questions, plus one open text for each aspect

- Research Infrastructure and Facilities
- Supervision
- Research Culture
- Progress and Assessment
- Research Skills
- Other Transferable Skills
- Responsibilities and Supports
- Motivations
- Career Aspirations
- Overall Experience

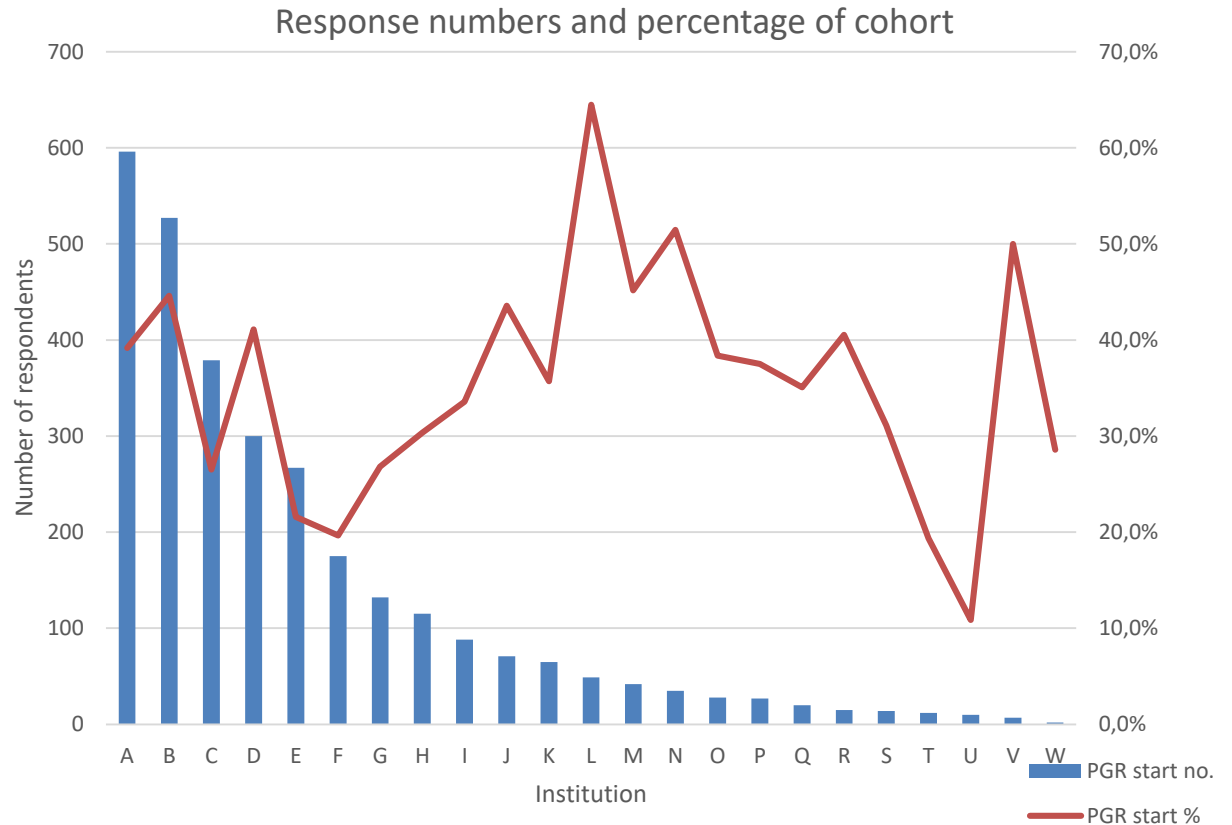
Respondents and response rates

National response rate 32.5%

24 participating institutions with (starting) response rates ranging from 10.9% to 64.5%

Important distinction between number of respondents and percentage of target cohort

Respondents in “smaller” research settings still contribute to the national data set



Current status

- ❑ 32.5% national response for pilot
- ❑ Anonymous aggregate data returned to institutions
- ❑ National report to be published November 2018
- ❑ First “non-pilot” fieldwork in 2019
- ❑ The transparency challenge

Discussion

- ❑ Advantages / disadvantages of approach taken in Ireland?
- ❑ Do similar instruments exist in your system? Why / why not? What lessons can be learned?
- ❑ How to balance return of detailed data vs. student confidentiality?

Thank you – further information

- ❑ www.studentsurvey.ie / @StudentSurveyIE
- ❑ Lewis Purser, Irish Universities Association,
lewis.purser@iua.ie
- ❑ Sean O'Reilly, Technological Higher Education
Association, sean.oreilly@thea.ie