



student engagement IN ACTION

Stories and lived experiences of staff and students working together to enhance Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Student Engagement (TLASE) through Le Chéile activity.

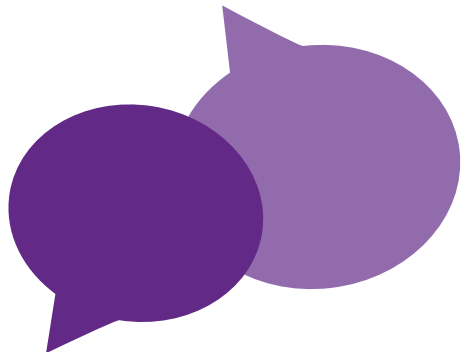
welcome

At Munster Technological University (MTU), our students matter. AnSEO – The Student Engagement Office – has been intentional in adopting a whole-institution approach to our student engagement and communication practices, enabling students and staff to work collaboratively, engaging in activities to enhance our teaching, learning, assessment and student engagement (TLASE) practices, to improve student success and graduate outcomes. Le Chéile offers resources and processes that scaffold staff and students to engage with each other and work together, listening to and understanding each other's perspectives on a wide range of TLASE topics and crucially, identifying **common purpose** and **collaborative processes** to bring forward enhancements.

As a team we are excited to continue to support opportunities for students and staff to work together enhancing education for all at MTU.

Marese Bermingham

Head, AnSEO – The Student Engagement Office
Head, Teaching and Learning Unit
Head, Arts Office



“

MTU's staff and students are our greatest asset, and we are committed to making our university a great place to work and study. Le Chéile, which means 'together', speaks to these principles by offering our students and staff the opportunity to collaborate as equal partners and learn from each other's perspectives. Through our Le Chéile programme, our Student Engagement team provide space and opportunities for students and staff to enrich their learning and teaching experiences through consultation, discussion and collaboration, allowing us all to succeed together.

”

**Professor Maggie Cusack,
President of MTU**

“

As Student Union President, as well as a former Le Chéile partner, I understand the importance of the student voice being heard and acted upon. Through the Le Chéile programme, students have the opportunity to collaborate with staff in developing solutions that enhance the student learning experience.

”

**Isobel Kavanagh,
MTU Cork Students' Union
President**

Timeline



2021

Le Chéile wins Best Student Engagement and Communications Award at the Irish Education Awards.



2020



Launch of Le Chéile (Together) programme, expanding our offerings and better reflecting our values of collaboration partnership and positive change.



2016

CIT along with its Students' Union were selected as one of five institutions chosen to partner in the establishment of the National Student Engagement Programme (NSTEP).



2013



Establishment of Students as Partners in Quality (SPARQ@CIT), a student voice initiative. In partnership with SPARQS, a publicly funded student engagement agency in Scotland. SPARQ@CIT delivered survey work, facilitated student consultation workshops and worked with academic departments on areas where students wanted action or change.

Programme Structure

Our core offerings are



Surveys

Our survey work gives students opportunities to share their opinions and thoughts on various aspects of learning, assessment, feedback and the student experience at MTU.



Consultations

In instances where staff may like a deeper understanding of student experiences, consultations, which are facilitated conversations with students, are very often an effective way to gather information.



Staff-Student Partnership Projects

Students and staff work together as equals and as mutual learners on short-term projects related to TLASE. These projects enable both parties to benefit from each other's experiences, insights and expertise.



Student-Led Projects

These are short-term projects which are led by teams of students, related to TLASE, and may involve staff input.

How we Work



Interest in Le Chéile's work comes via many routes from both our student and staff communities. AnSEO - The Student Engagement Office and Teaching and Learning Unit (TLU) teams currently work with many academic and professional, management and support staff departments across MTU. The inter-connected structure of our programmes allow plenty of opportunity for referrals, collaboration and cross departmental learning which inform our activities and the direction of projects funded within AnSEO and TLU while also complementing our work with StudentSurvey.ie data.

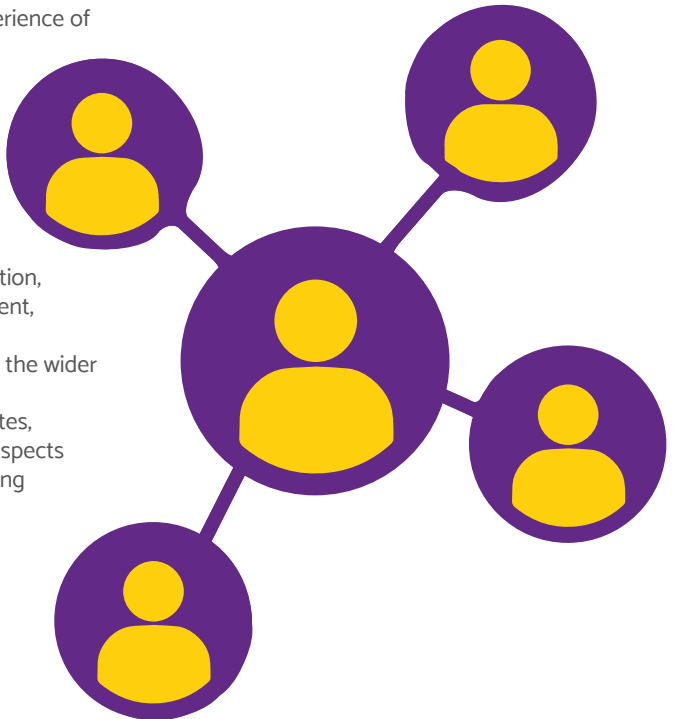
What are the Benefits?

For Staff

- > Closer working and learning engagement with students
- > Learn from and with students including the development of their own professional/ social capabilities
- > Increase interest in innovative teaching practises and students' perspectives
- > Raise individual profiles in their institutions and in the sector
- > Potentially enhance input into research and papers via student engagement
- > Improve sense of belonging and engagement with the University.

For Students

- > Gain knowledge and experience of influencing change
- > Gain experience of using research to shape change
- > Develop new relationships/ways of working with staff
- > Increase confidence and skills (eg communication, team-working, management, research skills)
- > Enhance networking with the wider professional community
- > Improve graduate attributes, employability and job prospects
- > Improve sense of belonging and engagement with the University.





SURVEYS

We work with staff to design and distribute surveys to help them understand how best to understand, respond to and meet students' needs. Giving students opportunities to share their experiences is integral to our students feeling empowered as active members of MTU's learning community. Feedback opportunities under this part of the programme include but are not limited to online surveys, polls and StudentSurvey.ie

Example 1



Who

Cork School of Business



Research Question

School of Business Placement Coordinators and Academic Management wanted to understand how students were experiencing their placement



Le Chéile Intervention

- **Collaborated** with school of business staff
- **Created** a comprehensive survey
- **Examined** the findings
- **Identified** what changes can be made
- **Communicated** findings with staff
- **Informed** students of upcoming changes



Outcome

A report comprising an overview of students' work placement experiences

Testimonial

“

The School of Business Work Placement Managers (WPM) engaged with Le Chéile to conduct surveys and gather feedback from 3rd year work placement students.

The WPM decided to undertake these surveys to gather information on various issues which they can now work on to improve the module for students in the future. Some of the data is being used in pilot initiatives on assessment as part of the Reimagining Assessment & Feedback Together (RAFT) project. The data and feedback gathered from the surveys is proving to be very valuable to the WPMs in the School of Business.

”

Sean Donovan, Extended Campus Business and Humanities Academic Faculty Representative, Lecturer & Work Placement Manager, Dept of Management & Enterprise

Example 2



Who

Recreation and Leisure Management Course



Research Question

To understand students' awareness of what modules they needed to complete throughout their four year course in order to become members of The Register of Exercise Professionals, Ireland (REPS)



Le Chéile Intervention

- **Development** of survey in collaboration with the Department of Sports, Leisure & Early Childhood Studies
- **Distributed** survey to year groups to establish level of awareness of REPS Ireland, the connection between students' module choices and qualifying to register for REPS membership
- **Analysed** the results and reported back to the department on the findings



Outcome

A report providing an insight to staff on the awareness 1st to 3rd year students have about REPS, Ireland



Testimonial

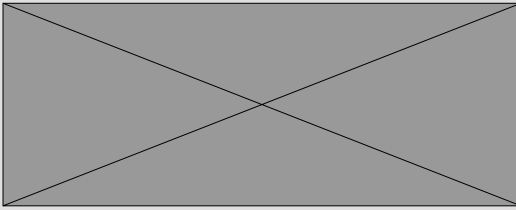
“

Le Chéile engaged with our students to investigate their level of understanding of the professional pathways that are embedded in our programmes. The insights gleaned from the surveys and the suggested 'next steps' from the Le Chéile team have enabled us to begin a process of information sharing and continuous engagement with our students.

”

Joan Dinneen, Lecturer, Sports, Leisure and Early Childhood Studies, MTU





Consultations are run as small or large-scale focus groups. Sessions are facilitated in person or online and staff are often invited to participate. The topic/range of questions are agreed in advance between the Le Chéile team and collaborating department/function and the sessions are facilitated by staff from AnSEO – the Student Engagement Office, with a report generated post-event for action.

Example 1



Who

Equality Diversity and Inclusion Team (EDI)



Research Question

The development of an EDI toolkit for MTU's community to engage with



Le Chéile Intervention

Facilitation of online workshops with staff and students to identify key resources and topics for this toolkit



Outcome

Identification of 5 key themes for which an online toolkit with resources could be developed.

Testimonial

“

Working with both staff and students can be challenging, but thanks to the expert facilitation, guidance and support from our Le Chéile team we have been able to maximise time and effort and make the most of the contributions shared. It makes such a difference to have skilled, experienced facilitators who are able to advise on the planning as well as support the implementation of the various initiatives we are working on at MTU – we couldn't do what we do without them!

”

Siobhán Kangataran,
Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
Manager, MTU



Example 2



Who

EDGE Graduate Development Programme in AnSEO - The Student Engagement Office



Research Question

To gather feedback from students on the EDGE framework to ensure that the information was accessible and relevant to students



Le Chéile Intervention

- **Consultation** with students from a range of academic departments
- **Gathered** insights on students' motivations, aspirations and limitations to inform framework



Outcome

Clear insight into the benefits and potential barriers to engaging with the EDGE programme.

Testimonial

“

Our vision for the awards came into focus through our staff-student consultations where students voiced their ideas, needs and wants for the success of the programme. Viewing the EDGE awards programme through the eyes of our students is helping us to design a programme that will address and reflect the student perspective.

”

Dr Angela McGlynn, EDGE Project Officer, AnSEO - The Student Engagement Office

Example 3



Who

Chemical & Biopharmaceutical Engineering



Research Question

Evaluation of 3rd year placement & Research Project



What Le Chéile did

- **Co-designed** an online survey for students
- **Consultation** with students informed by the results of the survey
- **Informed** departmental processes on supporting students on work placement



Outcome

Continuous feedback from this cohort of students has allowed department staff to continuously develop and enhance the 3rd year placement experience.

Testimonial

“

Five years ago, we changed the delivery of Semester 1. To evaluate our performance, we liaised with Le Chéile who facilitated workshops and surveys for our students. Their professional analysis identified critical areas for student development. Through our engagement with Le Chéile, we have equipped our graduates with excellent professional and personal skills.

”

Dr Sandra Lenihan, PhD AMIChemE
PI and Head of Process Innovation Engineering
Research Group (PiERG) Chemical and
Biopharmaceutical Engineering Lecturer

“

Everyone had opinions heard and respected.

”

Student



These projects facilitate opportunities to connect the diverse voices, skills and talents within the MTU community and aims to enhance the University experience for both students and staff.



Case Study 1

Online Open Education Resource



Partners

Cork Library Services and students



Partnership Project

To develop an open education resource to help, support and guide students throughout the entire process of assignment writing.



Le Chéile Intervention

- **Recruitment** of students to participate in the project
- **Facilitated** the establishment of cross departmental partnership meetings between staff and students to support the creation of:
 - Online assignment toolkit
 - Virtual tours of MTU library
 - Introduction to Cork’s library facilities and services.



Outcome

Creation of an Assignment Toolkit, which is a suite of modules that guide students through the assignment completion process and provides a grounding in academic integrity.

Testimonial

“

Le Chéile was instrumental in the success

of the student partnership project. They were always there with advice and guidance; from how best to engage via survey, to leading our first meeting so that we started off on the right tone of staff and students being equal in the partnership, right up to the launch, when they facilitated the feedback from the students. We simply could not have done it without them!

“

Sinéad Hanrahan Digital Scholarship Services Librarian, MTU-Cork Library

Case Study 2

Belonging to a Healthy MTU



Who

Cross campus collaboration between Dept of Sport, Leisure & Childhood studies and students across disciplines



Partnership Project

- To visibly embed health and wellbeing on Canvas
- Streamline access to health-related supports, resources, activities and initiatives online.



Le Chéile Intervention

- **Recruitment** of students to participate
- **Facilitate** the establishment of a partnership team to collaborate and provide feedback on the design, the functionality, and the user experience of the online modules.



Outcome

Co-creation of a module through a student/staff partnership structure.

Testimonial

“

Overall, this project worked very well. We were extremely well facilitated to put a sustainable and effective partnership structure in place by colleagues within Le Chéile. This meant that from the outset the project felt very 'safe' to us all. My personal ethos has changed permanently as a result of this experience, and I would now be keen to implement a co-creative process within all projects that pertain in any way to pedagogy, the student experience and/or extra-curricular activity, as applicable.

“

**Dr Andrea Bikerdike, Assistant Lecturer,
Department of Sport, Leisure & Childhood Studies**



Co-Creating/Working with Students in an Academic Setting

'Reimagining Assessment and Feedback Together' (RAFT) was a Teaching & Learning project supported by the National Forum's 'Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement' (SATLE 2020) fund.

Adopting an action-research, cross-disciplinary and multi-campus approach, the project set out to enhance the Assessment and Feedback (A&F) experience for students and staff.

The 'T' – Together – was a key word for RAFT.


Staff and students collaborated to develop interventions.




14 departments took part and developed 16 interventions at a module and/or programme level.

Example: Group based Learning Plans in Lab Classes

 **Who**
3rd Year Chemical & Biopharmaceutical Engineering Students

 **Problem to solve:**
Year 3 students take a lab module to develop their own experimental protocol as preparation for their Final Year Project, and to develop professional competencies in preparation for placement. Reflections from Year 4 student consultants suggested students were not 'realising' the opportunities of completing their lab reports in year 3.

 **Outcome**
A student/staff co-designed learning plan was used by Year 3 students comprising

- i) identifying specific skills to be developed
- ii) proposing a strategy to develop skills during subsequent work,
- iii) reflecting after feedback is received.



In addition to 16 different approaches to student-staff co-creation of A&F activity, we have seen a range of positive by-products such as

-  raising A&F literacy amongst students and staff
-  developing mutual appreciation and an empathetic view of the various challenges and experiences of A&F
-  staff colleagues see the impact of the interventions on their motivation and teaching approaches



STUDENT-LED PROJECTS

Student-led projects are an exciting pillar of Le Chéile which will put students at the forefront of positive change within the MTU community. The projects are short-term in length and will be led by teams of students, related to themes from TLASE. They may, at different stages of the project, involve staff input.

The benefits of engagement for students will include:

- 1** Developing practical skills, knowledge and expertise to develop projects and action ideas.
- 2** Gaining an insight into how MTU operates and the potential within the student community to affect positive change related to TLASE.
- 3** Partnering with staff and learning from the experience of people within the MTU community.
- 4** Developing graduate attributes, learning how to overcome challenges and build supportive networks.
- 5** Engagement in such a project will result in a Gold EDGE award.
- 6** Working in partnership with MTU-Cork's Students' Union, we're hoping to launch Student-Led projects in the 2022/2023 academic year.

Le Chéile Activity at a Glance

Since 2016, we've had:

50

Student/Staff
consultation
workshops



290

Staff engaged
in student voice
activities



1,850

Students engaged
in student voice
activities



National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP) Involvement



CIT along with its Students' Union were selected as one of 5 Institutions chosen to partner in the establishment of NStEP (2016)



Hosted NStEP's national network meeting at CIT, 2017



Led a cross-Institution project on co-creating a series of NStEP staff resources: "Quick Guides to Student Engagement" (2017/2018)



Presented sparq@CIT programme and journey to partnership to NStEP national network meeting, 2020



Represented MTU on the NStEP working group creating an online "Short Course in Student Engagement" (2020/2021)



Represented MTU on NStEP National Advisory Group (2019/2021)



Contributed case studies from MTU of student/staff partnership in action to NStEP's Resource Hub for student engagement (2022)

Glossary Of Terms

The terms, students as partners, partnership, and co-creation of learning and teaching are often used interchangeably but for clarity, we've provided the following definitions:

Student Engagement: In Ireland, this refers to both engagement in learning and teaching and in student representation and governance systems. It generally refers to a very broad range of activities universities employ to motivate and interest students, as well as the time and effort students give to meaningful activities (Kuh, 2009).

Student Voice: “is the act of students sharing their individual and collective lived experiences within the learning community, expressed through views and perspectives, demonstrated by formal and informal conversation, debate, feedback, and ultimately, active listening and being heard” (National Student Engagement Programme, 2021).

Co-creation: occupies the space in-between student engagement and partnership. It's a “meaningful collaboration between students and staff, with students becoming more active participants in the learning process, constructing understanding and resources with academic staff” Bovill and colleagues (2016, p. 197). Co-creation does not assume the level of equality sometimes implied by partnership but goes beyond only listening to student voices. The focus within co-creation is on empowering students to actively collaborate with their lecturers (Bovill et al., 2016).

Student/Staff Partnership: this can be described as ‘a collaborative, reciprocal process through which all participants have the opportunity to contribute equally, although not necessarily in the same ways, to curricular or pedagogical conceptualization, decision making, implementation, investigation, or analysis’, Cook-Sather and colleagues (2014, pp. 6-7). It's emphasised that all partnerships must be built on strong working relationships that foster respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibility. Partnership is characterized by a focus on equality between students and staff. Practically, it looks like staff and students working together in project teams to achieve a mutually-agreed output.

Cited Work

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TOGETHER

<https://studentengagement.cit.ie/studentpartnership>



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