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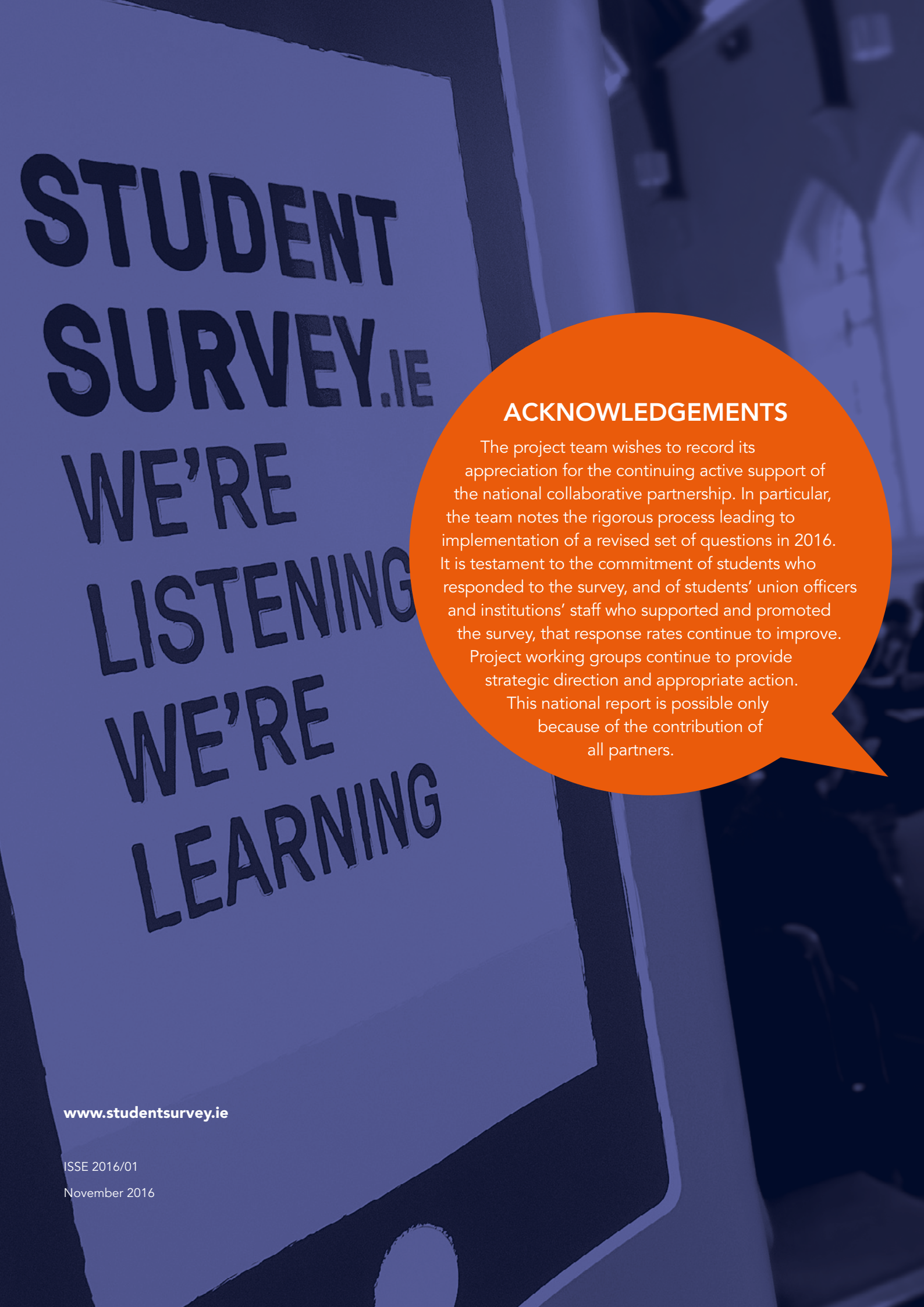
STUDENT SURVEY.IE

The Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE)

Results from 2016

HEA HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY AN tÚDARÁS um ARD-OIDEACHAS
iua IRISH UNIVERSITIES ASSOCIATION
thea Technological Higher Education Association IRELAND
USI Union of Students in Ireland Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project team wishes to record its appreciation for the continuing active support of the national collaborative partnership. In particular, the team notes the rigorous process leading to implementation of a revised set of questions in 2016. It is testament to the commitment of students who responded to the survey, and of students' union officers and institutions' staff who supported and promoted the survey, that response rates continue to improve. Project working groups continue to provide strategic direction and appropriate action. This national report is possible only because of the contribution of all partners.

www.studentsurvey.ie

ISSE 2016/01

November 2016

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

This report presents results from 2016 fieldwork of the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE). 2016 saw the first implementation of a revised and substantially shortened survey instrument. This followed three years' data collection with the original survey. When the national pilot from 2013 is included, almost 60,000 students responded to the original ISSE questions.

More than 29,000 students from thirty higher education institutions participated in the revised survey in 2016, contributing to an increasingly valuable data set on how students engage with their learning environments. The survey of student engagement, in this context, explores the amount of time and effort that students put into their studies and other educationally purposeful activities, and, also, how effectively institutions facilitate, encourage and promote student engagement in activities that are linked to learning. The results of the survey are intended to add value at institutional level, and to inform national policy.

Overview of the report

CHAPTER 1 of the report outlines the focus on student engagement and provides an overview of the structure of the revised survey. This chapter reiterates the objectives for developing and implementing the ISSE and offers some guidance on interpreting the resulting data.

CHAPTER 2 of the report provides details of student responses to each of the questions asked. These are presented as percentages of students selecting each response. Results are provided for all participating students and for each of the year groups / cohorts i.e. first year undergraduate, final year undergraduate and taught postgraduate. Questions are grouped together according to the index to which they contribute. Questions that do not contribute to specific indices are included in this national report for the first time.

CHAPTER 3 presents an analysis of index scores relating to student engagement. Indices present an additional way to explore the data by signalling differences in results of different groups of students or of similar groups over multiple survey iterations. As such, scores for any given index act as relative indicators or 'signposts' to areas of potential further interest. The chapter includes charts illustrating 2016 index scores for various student groupings i.e. index scores presented by each year group / cohort, by institution-type, by mode of study (full-time or part-time) and by field of study. Some key observations follow each chart. Fuller understanding of what the data may tell us requires consideration of influencing factors, including the local context.

CHAPTER 4 considers the results from ISSE 2016 in a wider context. This chapter presents selected results from the revised survey alongside results from previous years. It explores questions relating to *Student-Faculty Interaction* and *Higher Order Learning*. The chapter also explores the data from the perspective of assessment - which aligns with upcoming activities of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.

CHAPTER 5 provides a deeper insight into particular subsets of the data. This chapter is intended to illustrate the potential offered by further analysis of the rich dataset generated by the ISSE. It explores responses of different student groups to question items not considered in previous years' national reports. Questions newly introduced in 2016 examine students' experiences of *Effective Teaching Practices*. In addition, results are presented for a number of questions relating to personal growth and skills development. The questions selected here reflect some of the areas explored in the *National Employer Survey*[1] published in May 2015. Most of these skills-related items have been included in the ISSE since 2013 but do not directly contribute to specific indices and, therefore, have not been included in previous national reports. The analysis in this chapter exemplifies the detail that can be explored to inform discussion of identified local, sectoral or national objectives and priorities.

CHAPTER 6 considers ISSE results in an international context. Revision of ISSE questions from 2016 increases the potential to consider Irish results alongside similar data from a number of other countries. This chapter explores responses to a number of questions for Ireland, the UK and the US. Care is needed when considering comparisons with other higher education systems. It is important to note that institutional participation in the UK and US surveys is voluntary whilst the ISSE is system-wide. Cultural and contextual differences also impact on results but it is informative to explore the international context.

CHAPTER 7 provides an outline of continuing actions being taken to support and encourage institutions to realise the potential of this increasingly valuable source of data. It refers to an ongoing series of workshops, organised in partnership with the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, which explore the data from the perspective of different disciplines.

This chapter also refers to continued development of the survey with plans to explore the potential of developing a survey appropriate for postgraduate research students and to develop sets of optional additional questions that individual institutions could offer to their students to investigate areas of particular local or topical interest.

1. http://www.hea.ie/sites/default/files/employersurveymay2015final_web_0.pdf

NOTES

NOTES FOR INTERPRETING THE DATA

Q: How is the score for each index calculated?

Index scores are indicators of relative performance and are **not** percentages. They are calculated scores to enable interpretation of the data at a higher level than individual questions i.e. to act as signposts to help the reader to navigate large data sets. With the revised survey in use from 2016, responses to individual question items are converted to a 60 point scale (rather than the 100 point scale used in previous years) with the lowest response placed at 0 and the highest response placed at 60. To illustrate, if response 3 is chosen from 4 possible responses to this question, this response converts to a score of 40 as in the example below:

Question	Responses			
(During the current year, how much has your coursework emphasised...) Evaluating a point of view, decision, or information source	Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
Responses transformed to 60-point scale	0	20	40	60

Index scores are calculated for an individual student when he/ she provides responses to all, or almost all, contributing questions. The exact number of responses required varies according to the index, based on psychometric testing undertaken for the NSSE. All responses are required for Higher Order Learning, Quantitative Reasoning, Learning Strategies, Collaborative Learning and Student-Faculty Interaction. All but one response are required for Reflective and Integrative Learning, Effective Teaching Practices, Quality of Interactions, and Supportive Environment. The index score is calculated from the mean of (non-blank) responses given. Index scores for any particular student group, for example first years, are calculated as the mean of individual index scores.

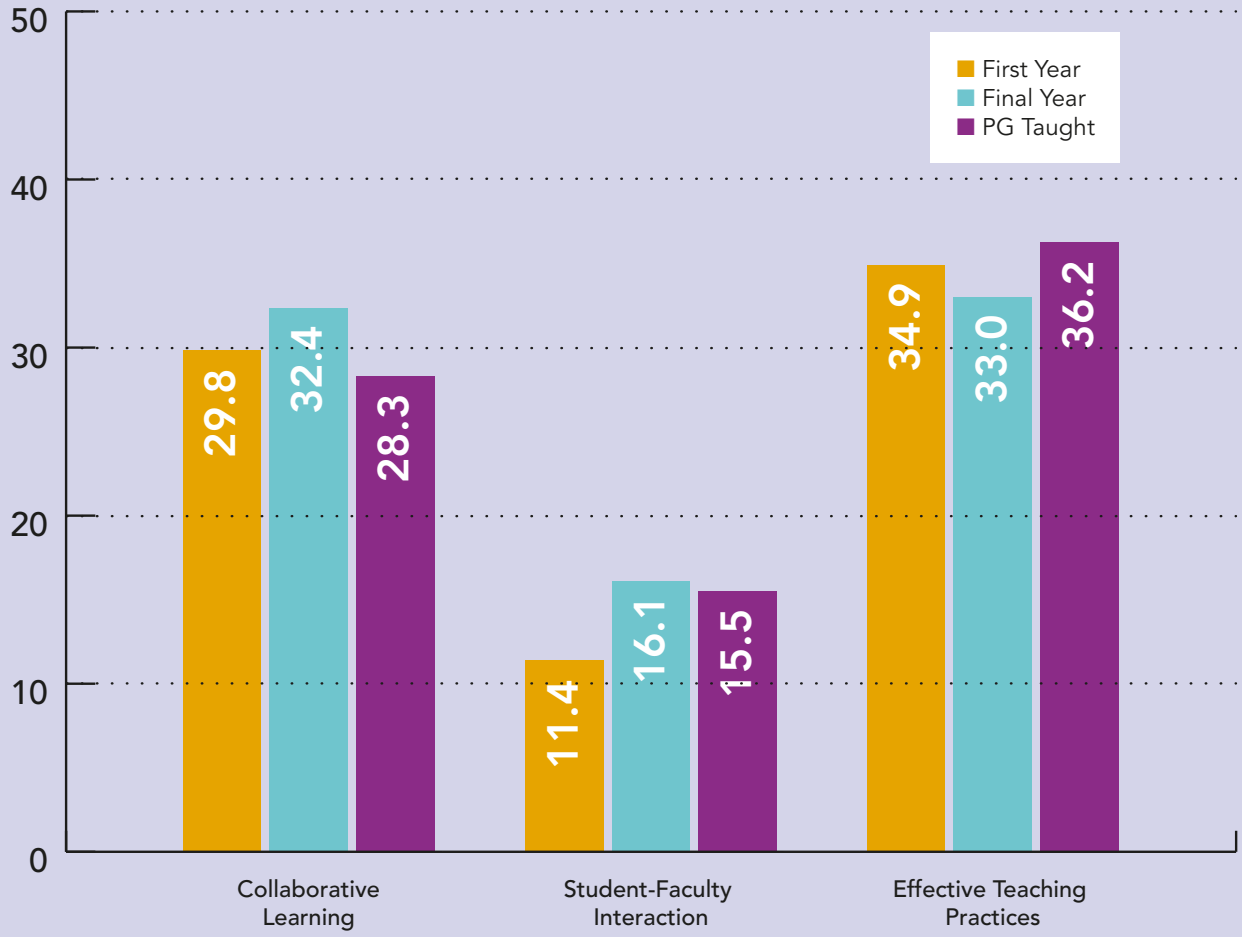
Q: How can I make best use of index scores?

Index scores provide greatest benefit when used as signposts to explore the experiences of different groups of students - for example, final year full-time students and final year part-time students. In particular, index scores provide an insight into the experiences of comparable cohorts over multiple datasets e.g. the experiences of 2016 first year students relative to 2015 first year students. If a particular index score prompts interest, it is most appropriate to investigate further by considering the number of respondents (to check if responses may be regarded as representative of that group) and by reviewing responses to contributing questions.

Index score appears higher / lower than for other groups → **Review number of respondents to form view on how representative the data may be** → **Review responses to related questions** → **Potentially, explore further with student groups**

Q: Should I compare scores for different indices?

Different indices should not be compared to each other. For example, there is no simple direct link between scores for Collaborative Learning and scores for Student-Faculty Interaction. The following chart is used to illustrate this point. No useful interpretation can be drawn from the fact that scores for Collaborative Learning are generally higher than scores for Student-Faculty Interaction. However, the following differences may usefully be explored: Collaborative Learning scores for final year students are higher than Collaborative Learning scores for other cohorts; Student-Faculty Interaction scores appear notably lower for first years than Student-Faculty Interaction scores for other cohorts.



Interpretation of responses requires appreciation of the local context.

This leads to the inevitable conclusion that staff and students within individual institutions, and, indeed, individual faculties, are best placed to "own" and to interrogate institution-level data.

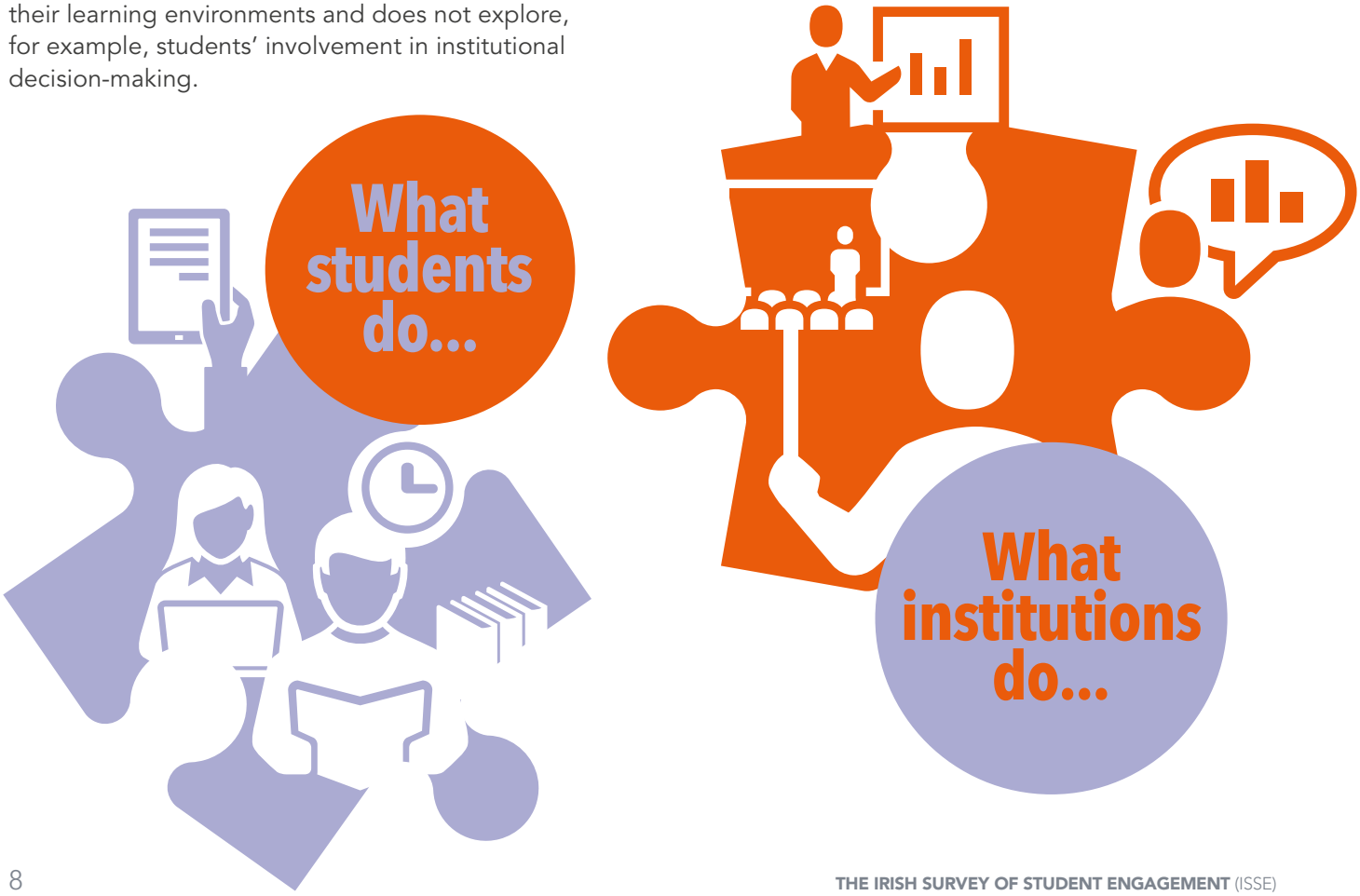
CHAPTER 1
CONTEXT FOR THE IRISH SURVEY OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

1.1
WHAT IS STUDENT ENGAGEMENT?

The term 'student engagement' is increasingly used to refer to a range of related, but distinct, understandings of the interaction between students and their higher education institutions. Most, if not all, interpretations of student engagement are based on the extent to which students actively avail of opportunities to involve themselves in "educationally beneficial" activities and the extent to which institutions enable, facilitate and encourage such involvement. The ISSE focuses on students' engagement with their learning and their learning environments and does not explore, for example, students' involvement in institutional decision-making.

Accordingly, for the purposes of the ISSE, student engagement reflects two key elements:

The first is the amount of time and effort that students put into their studies and other educationally purposeful activities. The second is how institutions deploy resources and organise curriculum and other learning opportunities to encourage students to participate in activities that are linked to learning.



1.2 REVISION OF QUESTION ITEMS

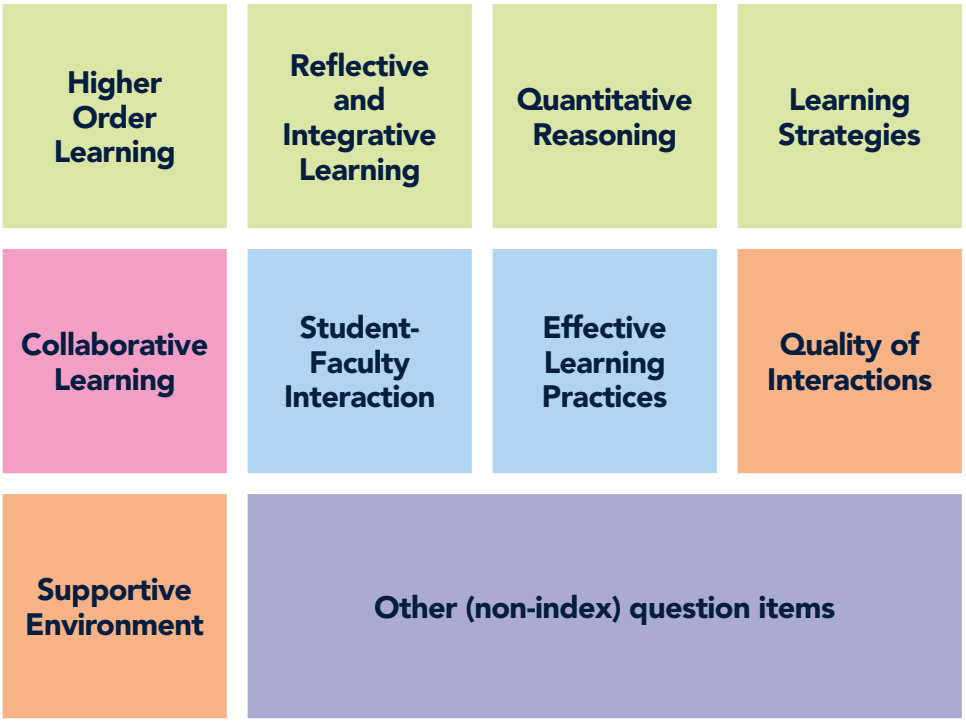
A thorough review of survey questions was undertaken following fieldwork in 2015, with the intention of revising the survey for use in 2016 and future years. A rigorous process was undertaken with the following key objectives:

- To reflect the breadth and richness of the higher education experience
- To focus on aspects of student engagement that can be acted upon by institutions, while taking account of the uses of data by other project partners
- To maintain the ability to interpret ISSE data in the context of equivalent international measures

Following extensive consultation and testing, the set of questions presented in this report was finalised. The revised survey is considerably shorter than the original, takes account of experience gained from three years' interaction with the original question set, and is informed by international developments. Further detail of the revision is provided in appendix 2. The revised question set leads to the use of new engagement indices, as illustrated below.

1.3 USING ISSE TO SUPPORT ENHANCEMENT

Development and implementation of the ISSE is driven by the intention to inform, support and encourage enhancement discussions and activities – primarily, but not exclusively, at institutional level – and to inform national policy discussions. This key focus is reinforced by the objectives of the process to revise and improve the question items (as listed in section 1.2). The dataset generated by the survey reflects many aspects of students' experiences of higher education and interpretation of responses to individual questions, for example, requires appreciation of the local context. This leads to the inevitable conclusion that staff and students within individual institutions, and, indeed, individual faculties, are best placed to "own" and to interrogate institution-level data. As noted in previous years' reports, current capacity to analyse and interpret these data in a timely manner varies between institutions. The national project is committed to promoting and supporting such local analysis via national, regional and bespoke workshops.



CHAPTER 2
RESULTS AND FINDINGS OF THE 2016 ISSE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents results from implementation of the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) in 2016. It provides an overview of response rates for different groups of the student population and of the demographic profile of respondents. This is followed by national-level percentage responses for individual questions. Responses to individual questions are presented in groups corresponding to the index to which they contribute.

2.2 RESPONSE RATES AND DEMOGRAPHICS

A total of 29,173 students responded to the 2016 survey. This produced an overall national response rate of 22.2%. The sample includes 14,076 first year undergraduate students, 10,650 final year undergraduate students and 4,447 postgraduate students. Table 2.1 presents the demographic profile of respondents.

As in previous years, the profile of respondents closely matches the overall student population profile at national level. For clarity, other than the demographic data presented in table 2.1, results used in this report are weighted by sex, mode of study and year / cohort. The use of weighting improves the extent to which respondents match the target student population and is regarded as standard practice with survey data.

It is positive to note that the number of responses nationally has increased from previous years. Most notably, the use of a revised questionnaire has impacted on the proportion of students reaching the end of the survey. This has increased significantly from 74.4% in 2015 to 86.0% in 2016. Response rates for individual institutions have varied from previous years.

The response rate for Universities, overall, increased from 17.8% in 2015 to 19.2% in 2016. The response rate for Institutes of Technology, overall, decreased from 25.8% in 2015 to 24.2% in 2016. The response rate for 'Other Institutions' increased from 29.2% in 2015 to 31.8% in 2016. These figures should not be taken as a direct indication of the effort expended to promote participation within individual institutions as experience demonstrates that a range of factors can influence the number of responses achieved in any given year.

The ISSE continues to contribute to a substantial dataset to inform discussion of the experiences of students in Irish higher education institutions. From the national pilot in 2013 to the 2015 survey, almost 60,000 students have responded to the original survey. In 2016 alone, more than 29,000 students have responded to the revised survey. Institutions and other partners acknowledge that it is important to continue to increase response rates to support reliable analysis of the experiences of sub-groups of the student population within institutions, for example, at faculty or school level. This is critical to maximise the value of the survey as a tool for the enhancement of teaching and learning within each institution. It is noted, however, that with fifteen of the thirty participating institutions achieving response rates greater than 25%, and with six response rates greater than 40%, some institutions may find it challenging to continue to increase response dates on an annual basis.

Analysis of ISSE data to date demonstrates that, in common with other countries that have implemented comparable surveys, greatest variation is evident within institutions rather than between institutions. This informs the view, as expressed in section 1.3, that staff and students within individual institutions are best placed to own and interrogate institution-level data.

Table 2.1 Demographic characteristics of respondents

Characteristic	Population		Responses		Response Rate (%)
National	**131,161**		**29,173**		**22.2%**
Age					
23 and Under	74,548	56.8%	18,448	63.2%	24.7%
24 and Over	56,541	43.1%	10,682	36.6%	18.9%
Gender					
Female	66,959	51.1%	17,208	59.0%	26.8%
Male	64,202	48.9%	11,965	41.0%	17.9%
Institution-type					
Universities	67,272	51.3%	12,932	44.3%	19.2%
Institutes of Technology	53,520	40.8%	12,942	44.4%	24.2%
Other institutions	10,369	7.9%	3,299	11.3%	31.8%
Mode of Study					
Full-time	105,654	80.6%	25,912	88.8%	24.5%
Part-time / remote	25,507	19.4%	3,261	11.2%	12.8%
Field of Study					
Generic Programmes & Qualifications	58	0.0%	16	0.1%	27.6%
Education	9,561	7.3%	2,538	8.7%	26.5%
Arts & Humanities	20,531	15.7%	4,871	16.7%	23.7%
Social Sciencess, Journalism & Information	7,657	5.8%	1,614	5.5%	21.1%
Business, Administration & Law	28,675	21.9%	5,521	18.9%	19.3%
Natural Sciences, Mathematics & Statistics	11,293	8.6%	2,992	10.3%	26.5%
Information & Communication Technologies	10,256	7.8%	2,381	8.2%	23.2%
Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction	14,056	10.7%	2,953	10.1%	21.0%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries & Veterinary	1,960	1.5%	366	1.3%	18.7%
Health & Welfare	20,235	15.4%	4,227	14.5%	20.9%
Services	6,879	5.2%	1,694	5.8%	24.6%
Year/Cohort					
Undergraduate – First Year	54,792	41.8%	14,076	48.3%	25.7%
Undergraduate – Final Year	48,799	37.2%	10,650	36.5%	21.8%
Postgraduate (taught)	27,570	21.0%	4,447	15.2%	16.1%

2.3 RESPONSES TO INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONS

The majority of individual questions in the survey relate to a specific index or grouping. The scores for each index are calculated from responses to multiple questions that contribute to that index. Percentage responses to each question are presented in the following section and are grouped under the relevant index title. In 2016 for the first time, this national report includes percentage responses for questions that do not contribute to specific indices but are included in the survey because of their value. These questions are presented in section 2.3.10

2.3.1 QUESTIONS RELATING TO HIGHER ORDER LEARNING

These questions explore the extent to which students' work emphasises challenging cognitive tasks such as application, analysis, judgement, and synthesis.

Question and percentage response *During the current academic year, how much has your coursework emphasised...*		All Students	Undergraduate - Year 1	Undergraduate - Final Yr	Postgraduate
Applying facts, theories, or methods to practical problems or new situations	Very little	6.5	7.2	6.6	4.1
	Some	26.4	27.4	27.1	21.5
	Quite a bit	42.1	42.3	41.5	42.5
	Very much	25.1	23.1	24.8	31.9
Analysing an idea, experience, or line of reasoning in depth by examining its parts	Very little	8.1	9.2	8.3	4.3
	Some	30.3	33.0	30.4	21.8
	Quite a bit	38.8	38.2	38.8	40.3
	Very much	22.8	19.5	22.6	33.5
Evaluating a point of view, decision, or information source	Very little	8.2	9.5	8.2	4.3
	Some	30.3	33.5	30.2	20.9
	Quite a bit	40.2	39.1	40.2	43.6
	Very much	21.3	17.9	21.4	31.2
Forming an understanding or new idea from various pieces of information	Very little	5.7	6.3	6.1	3.2
	Some	27.0	28.5	28.0	19.7
	Quite a bit	42.4	42.8	42.0	41.8
	Very much	24.9	22.4	23.9	35.3

2.3.2 QUESTIONS RELATING TO **REFLECTIVE AND INTEGRATIVE LEARNING**

These questions explore the extent to which students relate their own understanding and experiences to the learning content being used.

Question and percentage response *During the current academic year, about how often have you...*		All Students	Undergraduate - Year 1	Undergraduate - Final Yr	Postgraduate
Combined ideas from different subjects / modules when completing assignments	Never	6.3	8.4	4.8	3.0
	Sometimes	37.1	41.5	34.5	29.4
	Often	39.7	37.6	40.9	43.3
	Very often	17.0	12.5	19.8	24.3
Connected your learning to problems or issues in society	Never	18.0	22.2	15.9	9.9
	Sometimes	40.3	43.1	39.9	32.4
	Often	28.6	25.0	30.1	36.3
	Very often	13.1	9.7	14.1	21.3
Included diverse perspectives (political, religious, racial/ ethnic, gender, etc.) in discussions or assignments	Never	32.5	36.1	31.0	24.6
	Sometimes	37.9	38.5	37.6	36.4
	Often	20.6	18.2	21.6	25.6
	Very often	9.1	7.2	9.8	13.3
Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue	Never	11.2	13.5	10.6	5.5
	Sometimes	42.2	44.6	42.2	35.0
	Often	35.4	32.4	35.8	43.8
	Very often	11.2	9.5	11.5	15.8
Tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from their perspective	Never	8.5	10.1	8.1	4.8
	Sometimes	40.7	41.7	40.7	37.4
	Often	36.7	35.6	36.7	40.4
	Very often	14.1	12.7	14.5	17.4
Learned something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept	Never	3.5	4.1	3.2	1.9
	Sometimes	34.4	35.4	35.6	28.3
	Often	44.8	44.2	44.8	46.9
	Very often	17.3	16.2	16.3	22.9
Connected ideas from your subjects / modules to your prior experiences and knowledge	Never	3.1	4.0	2.9	1.0
	Sometimes	31.0	34.8	30.9	19.1
	Often	43.3	42.7	44.1	43.3
	Very often	22.5	18.5	22.0	36.6

2.3.3 QUESTIONS RELATING TO **QUANTITATIVE REASONING**

These questions explore students' opportunities to develop their skills to reason quantitatively – to evaluate, support or critique arguments using numerical and statistical information.

Question and percentage response *During the current academic year, about how often have you...*		All Students	Undergraduate - Year 1	Undergraduate - Final Yr	Postgraduate
Reached conclusions based on your analysis of numerical information (numbers, graphs, statistics, etc.)	Never	28.0	31.0	26.0	23.8
	Sometimes	40.8	40.3	41.0	41.9
	Often	22.7	21.7	23.2	24.2
	Very often	8.5	7.0	9.8	10.1
Used numerical information to examine a real-world problem or issue (unemployment, climate change, public health, etc.)	Never	39.8	43.0	37.8	34.7
	Sometimes	37.9	36.7	39.0	39.0
	Often	16.7	15.5	17.5	18.6
	Very often	5.5	4.7	5.7	7.7
Evaluated what others have concluded from numerical information	Never	39.2	42.3	36.6	36.0
	Sometimes	42.1	41.7	43.3	40.9
	Often	15.3	13.6	16.4	18.4
	Very often	3.3	2.5	3.7	4.7

2.3.4 QUESTIONS RELATING TO **LEARNING STRATEGIES**

These questions explore the extent to which students actively engage with, and analyse, course material rather than approaching learning passively.

Question and percentage response *During the current academic year, about how often have you...*		All Students	Undergraduate - Year 1	Undergraduate - Final Yr	Postgraduate
Identified key information from recommended reading materials	Never	9.8	12.6	8.7	3.2
	Sometimes	40.2	44.8	39.1	28.7
	Often	37.0	32.7	39.1	45.6
	Very often	13.0	9.9	13.1	22.5
Reviewed your notes after class	Never	8.8	8.5	10.1	6.7
	Sometimes	43.3	44.0	44.6	37.9
	Often	33.8	33.7	31.9	38.8
	Very often	14.1	13.9	13.4	16.6
Summarised what you learned in class or from course materials	Never	10.3	10.6	10.8	8.2
	Sometimes	43.3	44.9	42.4	40.8
	Often	34.2	32.9	34.7	36.7
	Very often	12.2	11.7	12.1	14.3

2.3.5 QUESTIONS RELATING TO **COLLABORATIVE LEARNING**

These questions explore the extent to which students collaborate with peers to solve problems or to master difficult material, thereby deepening their understanding.

Question and percentage response *During the current academic year, about how often have you...*		All Students	Undergraduate - Year 1	Undergraduate - Final Yr	Postgraduate
Asked another student to help you understand course material	Never	10.7	9.8	10.0	15.0
	Sometimes	48.3	47.1	47.8	53.5
	Often	29.7	31.4	30.1	23.4
	Very often	11.3	11.7	12.0	8.1
Explained course material to one or more students	Never	6.4	6.6	5.3	8.3
	Sometimes	45.4	46.7	42.7	47.7
	Often	34.7	34.3	36.0	32.6
	Very often	13.6	12.5	15.9	11.4
Prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students	Never	17.0	18.1	13.2	22.8
	Sometimes	36.7	39.3	33.9	35.3
	Often	29.7	29.5	31.0	27.0
	Very often	16.6	13.1	22.0	14.8
Worked with other students on projects or assignments	Never	11.1	11.2	9.3	15.3
	Sometimes	33.2	35.9	29.9	32.6
	Often	32.9	34.0	33.4	28.5
	Very often	22.7	18.9	27.4	23.5

2.3.6 QUESTIONS RELATING TO **STUDENT-FACULTY INTERACTION**

These questions explore the extent to which students interact with academic staff. Interactions with academic staff can positively influence cognitive growth, development and persistence of students.

Question and percentage response *During the current academic year, about how often have you...*		All Students	Undergraduate - Year 1	Undergraduate - Final Yr	Postgraduate
Talked about career plans with academic staff	Never	50.9	60.6	39.7	46.7
	Sometimes	33.7	27.9	40.3	36.5
	Often	11.5	8.9	14.8	12.2
	Very often	3.9	2.6	5.2	4.5
Worked with academic staff on activities other than coursework (committees, student groups, etc.)	Never	68.2	72.2	63.5	66.6
	Sometimes	22.1	19.5	25.1	23.1
	Often	7.6	6.4	8.9	8.0
	Very often	2.1	1.8	2.5	2.3
Discussed course topics, ideas, or concepts with academic staff outside of class	Never	43.1	51.9	35.7	32.7
	Sometimes	38.3	33.6	42.0	44.3
	Often	14.2	11.2	17.0	17.2
	Very often	4.4	3.3	5.2	5.8
Discussed your performance with academic staff	Never	38.2	45.7	31.1	31.4
	Sometimes	43.5	39.5	47.1	47.5
	Often	14.5	11.9	16.8	17.3
	Very often	3.8	2.8	5.1	3.9

2.3.7 QUESTIONS RELATING TO **EFFECTIVE TEACHING PRACTICES**

These questions explore the extent to which students experience teaching practices that contribute to promoting comprehension and learning.

Question and percentage response *During the current academic year, to what extent have lecturers / teaching staff...*		All Students	Undergraduate - Year 1	Undergraduate - Final Yr	Postgraduate
Clearly explained course goals and requirements	Very little	6.0	5.7	6.8	5.4
	Some	24.7	24.9	26.5	19.8
	Quite a bit	43.3	43.9	43.1	41.8
	Very much	26.0	25.5	23.6	33.1
Taught in an organised way	Very little	4.5	3.5	5.8	4.3
	Some	26.9	26.0	29.9	22.6
	Quite a bit	43.2	44.3	42.5	41.5
	Very much	25.4	26.1	21.9	31.6
Used examples or illustrations to explain difficult points	Very little	4.4	3.9	5.4	3.8
	Some	22.1	20.4	25.1	20.3
	Quite a bit	41.2	41.6	41.2	39.5
	Very much	32.3	34.0	28.3	36.4
Provided feedback on a draft or work in progress	Very little	21.6	21.1	22.4	21.2
	Some	33.5	34.0	34.0	30.8
	Quite a bit	28.1	28.8	27.4	27.4
	Very much	16.8	16.1	16.2	20.5
Provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments	Very little	21.7	19.9	24.1	21.5
	Some	33.6	33.6	35.1	30.0
	Quite a bit	28.2	29.3	26.5	29.0
	Very much	16.5	17.2	14.4	19.5

2.3.8 QUESTIONS RELATING TO **QUALITY OF INTERACTIONS**

These questions explore student experiences of supportive relationships with a range of other people and roles on campus, thereby contributing to students' ability to find assistance when needed and to learn from and with those around them. Not applicable is available as a response option. 'Not applicable' responses have been removed from these results.

Question and percentage response *At your institution, please indicate the quality of interactions with...*		All Students	Undergraduate - Year 1	Undergraduate - Final Yr	Postgraduate
Students	1=Poor	2.8	2.5	2.9	3.4
	2	2.5	2.4	2.6	2.7
	3	6.3	5.9	6.8	6.1
	4	13.5	13.5	13.7	13.2
	5	19.2	19.1	19.6	18.6
	6	17.6	17.6	17.6	17.7
	7=Excellent	38.1	39.0	36.7	38.3
Academic advisors	1=Poor	8.0	7.3	9.4	6.5
	2	7.9	8.3	8.2	5.8
	3	13.9	14.3	14.6	10.7
	4	19.9	21.1	19.9	15.9
	5	18.9	18.8	18.9	19.2
	6	13.7	13.4	12.9	16.2
	7=Excellent	17.8	16.7	16.1	25.8
Academic staff	1=Poor	5.0	4.9	5.6	4.1
	2	5.5	5.9	5.5	4.2
	3	11.3	11.7	11.9	8.9
	4	18.6	19.1	19.2	16.0
	5	20.9	20.7	21.4	20.1
	6	16.9	16.9	16.1	18.7
	7=Excellent	21.7	20.9	20.2	27.9

Question and percentage response *At your institution, please indicate the quality of interactions with...*		All Students	Undergraduate - Year 1	Undergraduate - Final Yr	Postgraduate
Support services staff (career services, student activities, accommodation, etc.)	1=Poor	9.3	7.7	11.0	9.7
	2	9.1	8.4	10.3	8.2
	3	13.0	11.9	14.3	13.0
	4	18.1	17.7	18.4	18.6
	5	17.6	18.1	17.0	17.6
	6	13.9	14.6	12.8	14.5
	7=Excellent	19.0	21.5	16.0	18.5
Other administrative staff and offices (registry, finance, etc.)	1=Poor	8.9	7.7	10.7	7.9
	2	9.6	9.1	11.1	7.4
	3	13.3	12.7	14.7	11.5
	4	18.8	19.0	18.6	18.6
	5	18.1	18.3	17.4	19.3
	6	13.9	14.7	12.5	14.8
	7=Excellent	17.5	18.5	15.0	20.5

2.3.9 QUESTIONS RELATING TO **SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT**

These questions explore students' perceptions of how much an institution emphasises services and activities that support their learning and development.

Question and percentage response *How much does your institution emphasise...*		All Students	Undergraduate - Year 1	Undergraduate - Final Yr	Postgraduate
Providing support to help students succeed academically	Very little	9.6	7.7	12.4	9.2
	Some	32.4	29.3	36.0	33.5
	Quite a bit	38.2	39.3	36.2	39.3
	Very much	19.8	23.7	15.4	18.0

Question and percentage response *How much does your institution emphasise...*		All Students	Undergraduate - Year 1	Undergraduate - Final Yr	Postgraduate
Using learning support services (learning centre, computer centre, maths support, writing support etc.)	Very little	16.0	12.5	19.2	19.2
	Some	28.8	24.9	32.9	31.2
	Quite a bit	33.4	35.4	31.0	32.9
	Very much	21.7	27.2	16.8	16.6
Contact among students from different backgrounds (social, racial/ethnic, religious, etc.)	Very little	25.7	21.9	29.6	28.3
	Some	34.9	34.4	35.2	35.4
	Quite a bit	26.6	28.8	24.4	24.6
	Very much	12.9	14.9	10.8	11.7
Providing opportunities to be involved socially	Very little	15.7	11.6	17.3	24.6
	Some	31.0	28.1	33.2	34.8
	Quite a bit	33.2	35.2	32.9	28.1
	Very much	20.0	25.2	16.6	12.5
Providing support for your overall well-being (recreation, health care, counselling, etc.)	Very little	15.4	11.2	17.3	24.1
	Some	30.3	28.1	31.4	34.6
	Quite a bit	33.4	34.7	33.8	28.3
	Very much	20.8	26.0	17.4	12.9
Helping you manage your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)	Very little	40.7	34.6	45.9	47.3
	Some	33.8	35.9	32.0	31.8
	Quite a bit	18.4	21.1	16.2	15.6
	Very much	7.0	8.4	5.9	5.3
Attending campus activities and events (special speakers, cultural performances, sporting events, etc.)	Very little	19.2	16.6	20.4	24.4
	Some	33.8	31.3	35.8	36.5
	Quite a bit	31.4	33.2	30.9	26.9
	Very much	15.7	18.9	12.9	12.2
Attending events that address important social, economic, or political issues	Very little	27.6	24.6	30.1	30.5
	Some	37.6	36.6	38.8	38.3
	Quite a bit	24.7	27.0	22.4	23.0
	Very much	10.1	11.8	8.7	8.2

2.3.10 QUESTIONS NOT RELATING TO INDICES

These questions do not contribute to specific indices but are included in the survey because of the value of student responses to each individual item. Most of these questions were included in the original ISSE and some contributed to original indices.

Question and percentage response *(Different question stems are used to prefix these items)*		All Students	Undergraduate - Year 1	Undergraduate - Final Yr	Postgraduate
Asked questions or contributed to discussions in class, tutorials, labs or online ***During the current academic year, about how often have you...***	Never	7.8	9.8	7.0	3.2
	Sometimes	39.5	43.5	38.7	28.3
	Often	32.2	30.5	32.8	36.1
	Very often	20.6	16.2	21.4	32.4
Come to class without completing readings or assignments ***During the current academic year, about how often have you...***	Never	30.1	30.7	26.7	35.9
	Sometimes	49.5	48.6	50.6	49.6
	Often	14.6	15.0	15.9	10.4
	Very often	5.8	5.7	6.8	4.0
Made a presentation in class or online ***During the current academic year, about how often have you...***	Never	19.0	24.2	12.5	18.1
	Sometimes	44.8	47.5	43.2	40.1
	Often	24.7	20.8	29.2	26.0
	Very often	11.5	7.4	15.1	15.8
Improved knowledge and skills that will contribute to your employability ***During the current academic year, about how often have you...***	Never	6.0	7.5	5.3	2.9
	Sometimes	30.3	33.5	29.6	21.9
	Often	41.5	39.9	42.6	43.9
	Very often	22.2	19.0	22.5	31.4
Explored how to apply your learning in the workplace ***During the current academic year, about how often have you...***	Never	20.2	26.7	16.2	9.5
	Sometimes	36.6	37.3	37.8	31.7
	Often	29.0	25.3	30.7	36.8
	Very often	14.2	10.8	15.4	22.0
Exercised or participated in physical fitness activities ***During the current academic year, about how often have you...***	Never	29.8	29.3	28.6	34.3
	Sometimes	30.1	29.2	31.8	28.9
	Often	20.2	20.5	19.8	20.2
	Very often	19.9	21.0	19.9	16.6
Blended academic learning with workplace experience ***During the current academic year, about how often have you...***	Never	29.6	39.3	22.9	15.4
	Sometimes	31.5	31.8	32.6	28.0
	Often	24.2	19.6	27.5	30.9
	Very often	14.6	9.3	17.0	25.6

Question and percentage response *(Different question stems are used to prefix these items)*		All Students	Undergraduate - Year 1	Undergraduate - Final Yr	Postgraduate
Worked on assessments that informed you how well you are learning ***During the current academic year, about how often have you...***	Never	23.8	22.9	26.3	20.9
	Sometimes	42.6	43.7	43.1	38.0
	Often	26.4	26.5	24.4	31.0
	Very often	7.2	6.9	6.2	10.0
Memorising course material ***During the current academic year, how much has your coursework emphasised...***	Very little	17.6	14.8	13.9	35.3
	Some	35.0	37.5	31.9	34.5
	Quite a bit	33.1	34.6	35.4	23.0
	Very much	14.3	13.2	18.8	7.2
Work with academic staff on a research project ***Which of the following have you done or do you plan to do before you graduate from your institution...***	Have not decided	31.9	45.3	20.1	18.3
	Do not plan to do	22.4	15.5	31.6	21.7
	Plan to do	27.6	35.9	15.2	31.5
	Done or in progress	18.2	3.3	33.1	28.4
Community service or volunteer work ***Which of the following have you done or do you plan to do before you graduate from your institution...***	Have not decided	25.2	27.6	22.7	23.7
	Do not plan to do	24.2	14.8	30.4	38.3
	Plan to do	29.8	41.5	19.6	17.9
	Done or in progress	20.8	16.1	27.2	20.1
Spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work ***How much does your institution emphasise...***	Very little	4.8	5.4	4.6	3.6
	Some	25.6	28.6	23.4	21.6
	Quite a bit	47.1	47.5	46.0	48.6
	Very much	22.5	18.6	26.0	26.2
Writing clearly and effectively ***How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills and personal development in the following areas...***	Very little	13.4	16.3	11.1	9.8
	Some	30.8	34.8	27.1	27.8
	Quite a bit	36.5	34.6	38.3	38.3
	Very much	19.3	14.4	23.5	24.1
Speaking clearly and effectively ***How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills and personal development in the following areas...***	Very little	14.2	16.0	11.8	14.3
	Some	30.4	33.0	27.3	29.6
	Quite a bit	36.3	35.6	37.7	35.5
	Very much	19.1	15.5	23.2	20.6
Thinking critically and analytically ***How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills and personal development in the following areas...***	Very little	4.3	5.0	3.8	3.4
	Some	20.6	23.2	18.3	18.3
	Quite a bit	41.7	42.7	40.8	40.6
	Very much	33.4	29.1	37.2	37.6

Question and percentage response *(Different question stems are used to prefix these items)*		All Students	Undergraduate - Year 1	Undergraduate - Final Yr	Postgraduate
Analysing numerical and statistical information ***How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills and personal development in the following areas...***	Very little	21.3	22.1	20.5	20.8
	Some	31.2	32.3	29.6	31.6
	Quite a bit	29.4	29.3	29.3	29.7
	Very much	18.2	16.3	20.6	18.0
Acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills ***How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills and personal development in the following areas...***	Very little	13.2	14.9	12.5	9.9
	Some	29.7	32.3	27.7	26.2
	Quite a bit	33.7	32.2	35.0	35.4
	Very much	23.4	20.6	24.8	28.5
Working effectively with others ***How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills and personal development in the following areas...***	Very little	7.1	7.1	6.3	9.2
	Some	25.0	25.1	24.1	26.9
	Quite a bit	39.5	40.0	39.7	37.5
	Very much	28.4	27.8	30.0	26.4
Solving complex real-world problems ***How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills and personal development in the following areas...***	Very little	16.6	18.0	16.0	13.7
	Some	33.2	34.1	32.3	32.5
	Quite a bit	32.2	31.4	32.4	34.3
	Very much	18.0	16.5	19.3	19.6
Being an informed and active citizen (societal / political / community) ***How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills and personal development in the following areas...***	Very little	22.5	21.9	23.2	22.9
	Some	35.2	36.5	34.4	33.2
	Quite a bit	27.6	27.6	27.6	27.4
	Very much	14.7	14.1	14.8	16.4
How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution?	Poor	3.3	2.2	4.7	3.5
	Fair	14.5	13.0	16.8	13.7
	Good	49.7	50.2	49.8	48.1
	Excellent	32.5	34.6	28.7	34.8
If you could start over again, would you go to the same institution you are now attending?	Definitely no	4.0	2.4	6.2	3.7
	Probably no	11.9	10.0	14.8	10.5
	Probably yes	41.4	40.1	42.7	42.1
	Definitely yes	42.7	47.5	36.2	43.7

CHAPTER 3
ENGAGEMENT INDICES AT NATIONAL LEVEL

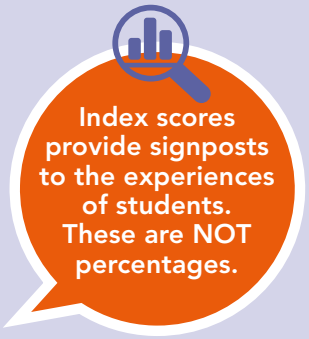
3.1 INTRODUCTION

Having provided detail of responses to individual questions in the previous chapter, this chapter presents an analysis of indices from a variety of perspectives, including:

- By year/cohort
- By institution-type
- By mode of study
- By programme-type
- By field of study

Detailed testing has been undertaken on 2016 data. This is particularly important due to the use of a revised survey instrument this year and reflects testing previously undertaken on data from the original survey. Results of the testing of reliability and validity of data generated by the revised survey are published on **www.studentsurvey.ie**. Results presented in this and the following chapters have been tested for statistical significance, and the commentary that accompanies each chart refers only to those differences that can be proven with 95% confidence or greater. A single asterisk (*) is included on those charts where this is not the case.

NOTES FOR INTERPRETING THE DATA



Please refer to notes for interpreting the data on pages 5-6

3.2 YEAR/COHORT

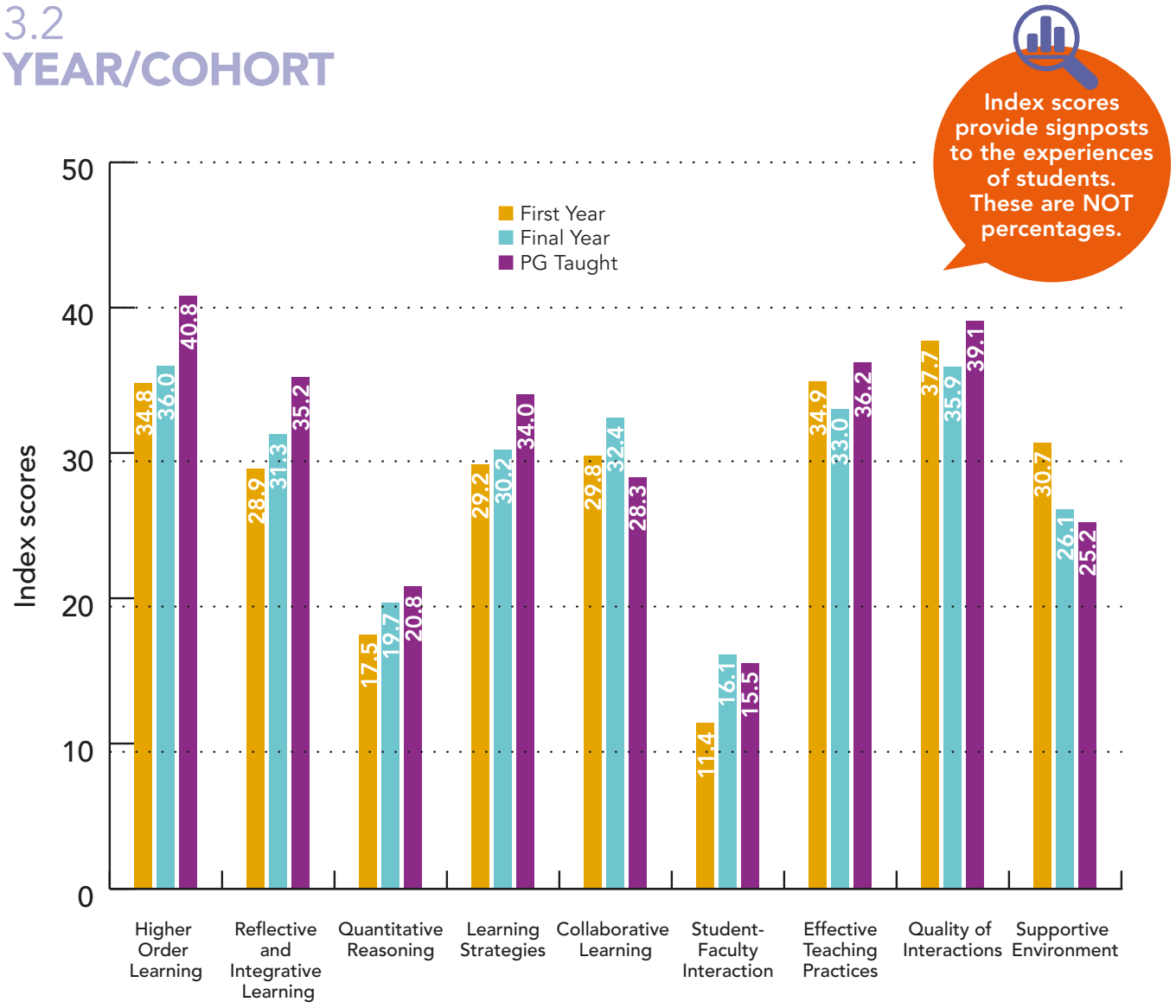


Figure 3.2 presents index scores for all students from each year of study. It illustrates that scores for *Higher Order Learning* and for *Learning Strategies* increase in each year of study, with greatest difference evident between undergraduate and postgraduate experiences. Scores for *Reflective and Integrative Learning*, and *Quantitative Reasoning* also increase for each cohort.

Scores for *Student-Faculty Interaction* reflect the pattern of previous years' data with lowest scores for first year undergraduate students. As in previous years, first year respondents also generate the highest scores for *Supportive Environment*.

The revised focus of questions that contribute to scores for *Quality of Interactions* and *Supportive Environment* highlights the distinction between students' relationships with others on campus and the emphasis placed by institutions on services and activities that support wider learning and development. Postgraduate students identify more positive *Quality of Interactions* than other cohorts but also report lowest index scores for *Supportive Environment*.

3.3 INSTITUTION TYPE

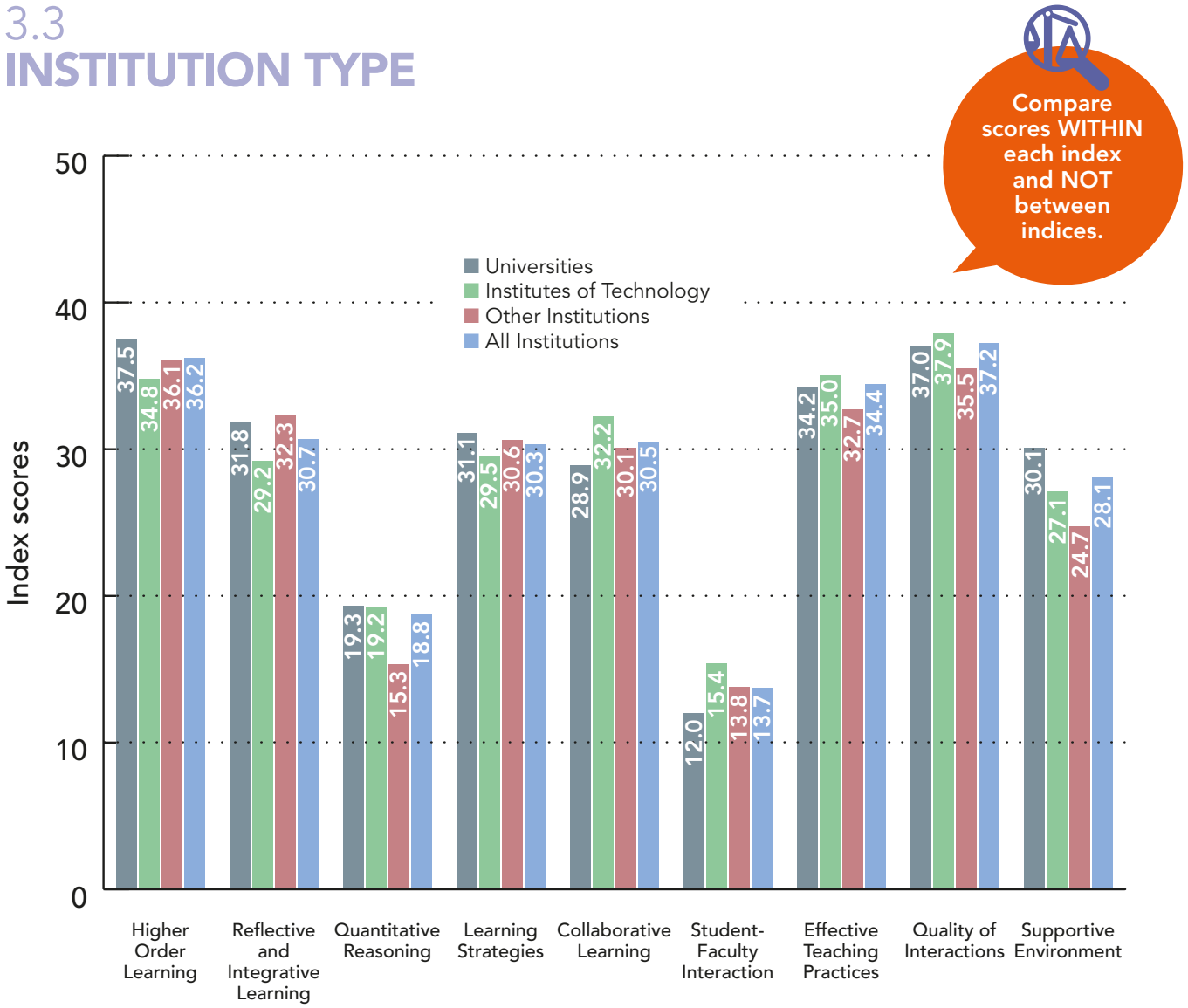


Figure 3.3 presents index scores by institution-type nationally. The institution-types are: Universities, Institutes of Technology and Other Institutions. Participating institutions are listed under these groupings in appendix 3. The results are presented for the full cohort of students.

Index scores each institution-type are broadly similar nationally, reflecting the observation that, in Ireland and internationally, surveys of student engagement find greater variation within institutions than between institutions. Notwithstanding this, some differences are illustrated which may reflect the mission, ethos and culture of different institutions. Index scores for *Higher Order Learning* and *Supportive Environment* are higher for universities than for other institution-types. Scores for *Collaborative Learning* and for *Student-Faculty Interaction* are higher for institutes of technology than for other institution-types. Scores for *Reflective and Integrative Learning* are higher for 'other institutions' than for universities or institutes of technology.

3.4 MODE OF STUDY

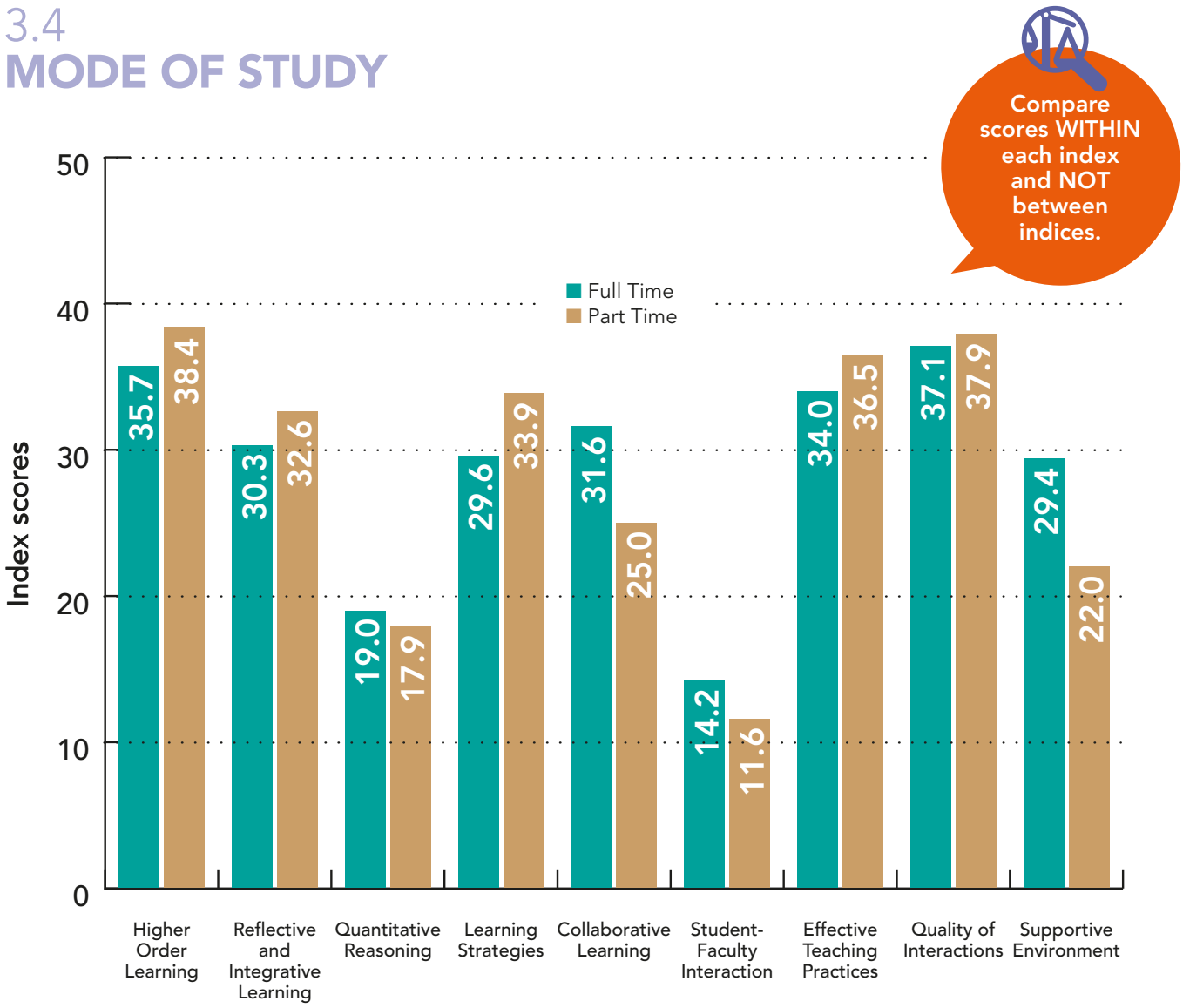


Figure 3.4 presents index scores for full-time and part-time / remote students. It demonstrates that part-time students report more positive experiences of *Higher Order Learning*, *Learning Strategies* and *Effective Teaching Practices*. Index scores for full-time students are higher for the indices *Collaborative Learning*, *Student-Faculty Interaction* and *Supportive Environment*.

3.5 PROGRAMME TYPE

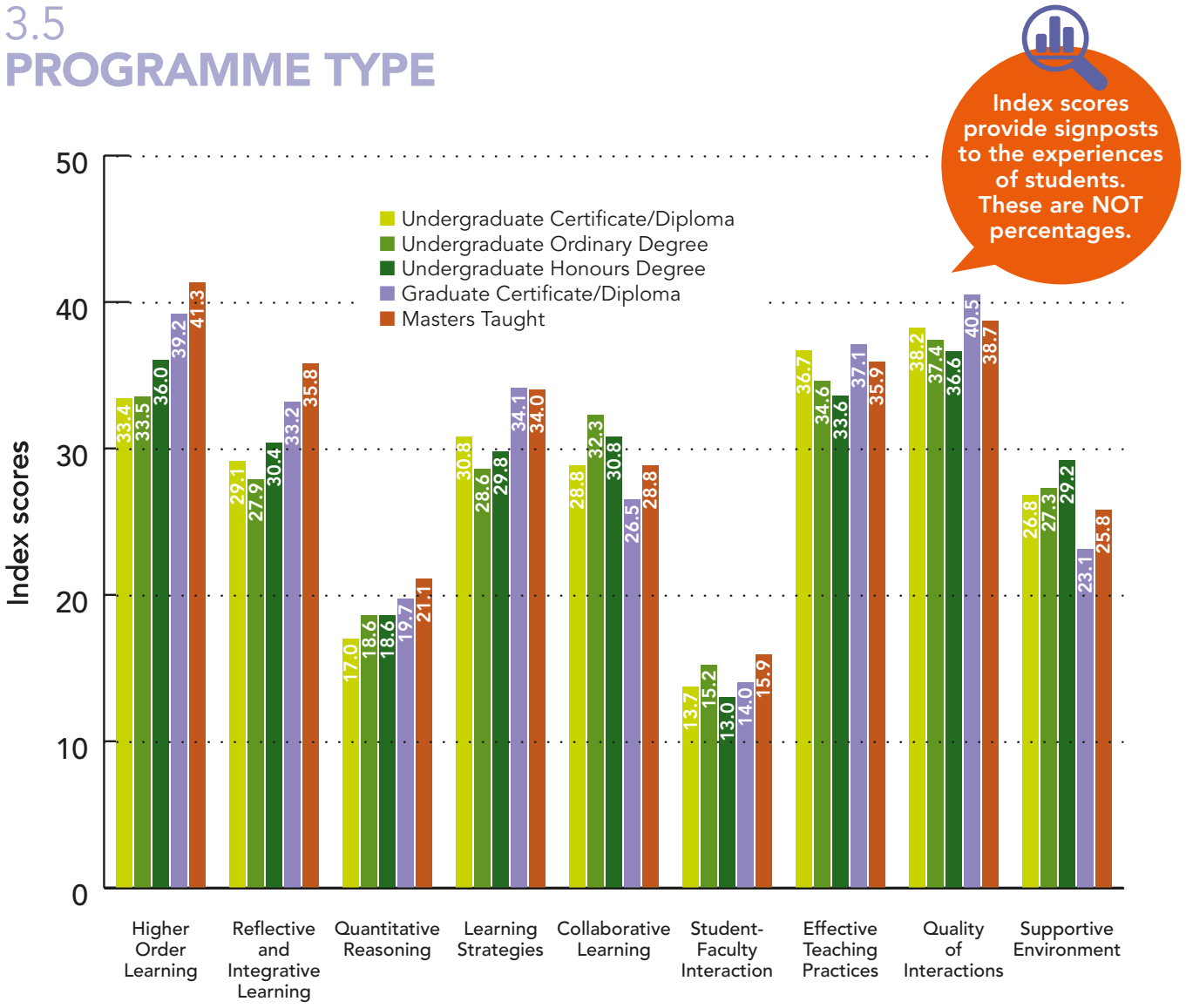


Figure 3.5 presents index scores by programme-type (i.e. programmes leading to Higher Certificate, Ordinary Bachelor Degree, Honours Bachelor Degree / Higher Diploma, Masters Degree / Postgraduate Diploma, qualifications at levels 6 to 9 of the National Framework of Qualifications) for all respondents nationally.

This figure illustrates that students pursuing Masters Degrees generate higher index scores than other students for *Higher Order Learning, Reflective and Integrative Learning,* and *Quantitative Reasoning.* Students pursuing Ordinary Bachelor and Honours Bachelor Degrees report higher scores for *Collaborative Learning* than other groups. It is noted that students on Honours Bachelor Degree programmes report the lowest scores for *Student-Faculty Interaction* and for *Quality of Interactions.*

3.6 FIELD OF STUDY

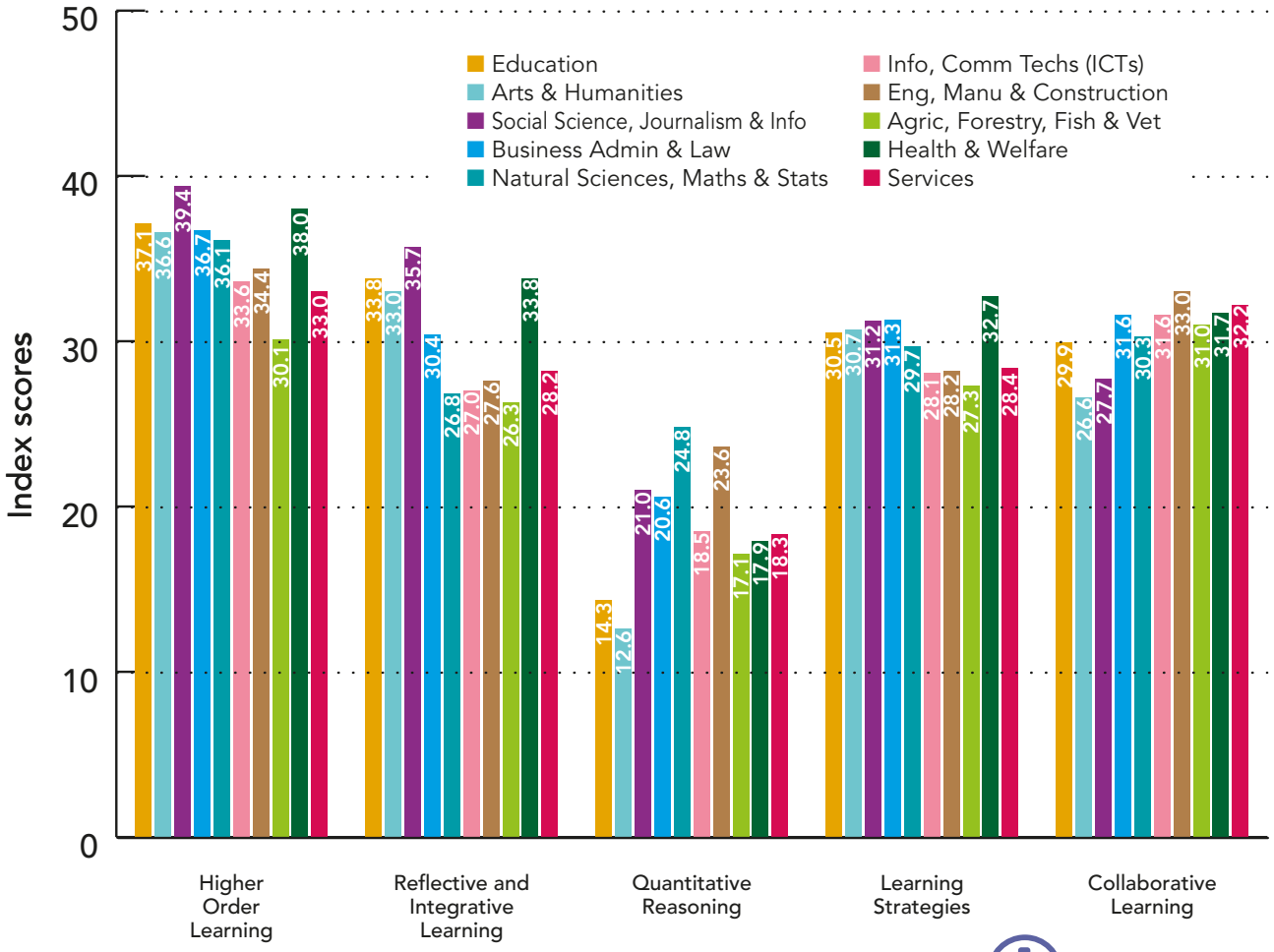
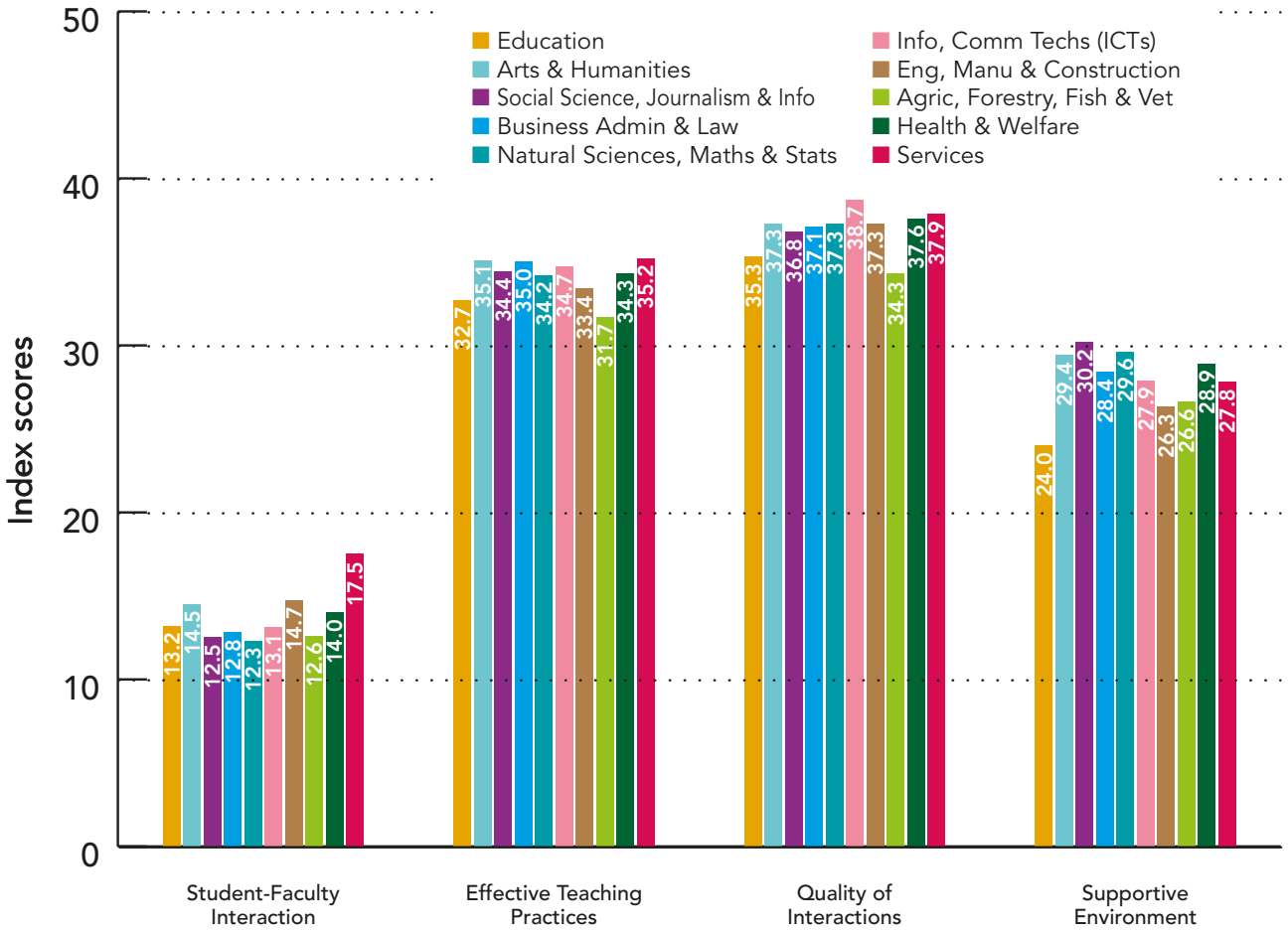


Figure 3.6 presents scores for broad fields of study. As may be anticipated, there are notable differences between fields of study. Social Sciencess, journalism and information students generate the highest index scores for *Higher Order Learning, Reflective and Integrative Learning;* students of Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics generate highest scores for *Quantitative Reasoning*, closely followed by students taking Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction who also present the highest scores for *Collaborative Learning*. Students pursuing Education programmes present the lowest scores for *Supportive Environment* whereas students taking Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary report lowest scores for *Effective Teaching Practices* which may reflect the nature of these programmes relative to the specific questions asked.

Index scores provide signposts to the experiences of students. These are NOT percentages.



Compare scores WITHIN each index and NOT between indices.

3.7 STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

The final section of this chapter presents scores for each engagement index according to the following selected student characteristics:

- Gender
- Age group
- Domiciliary

Additional analysis may be informative to explore the extent to which particular modes of study or gender may be over- or under-represented in specific fields of study. For example, specific fields of study generate quite different results for *Quantitative Reasoning* which may reflect typical gender balances in identified disciplines. Similarly, a proportion, but not all, of the differences reported by different age groups may relate to the programme-type typically being undertaken. Additional detail on potential inter-relationships is provided in section 5.1

3.7.1 Gender

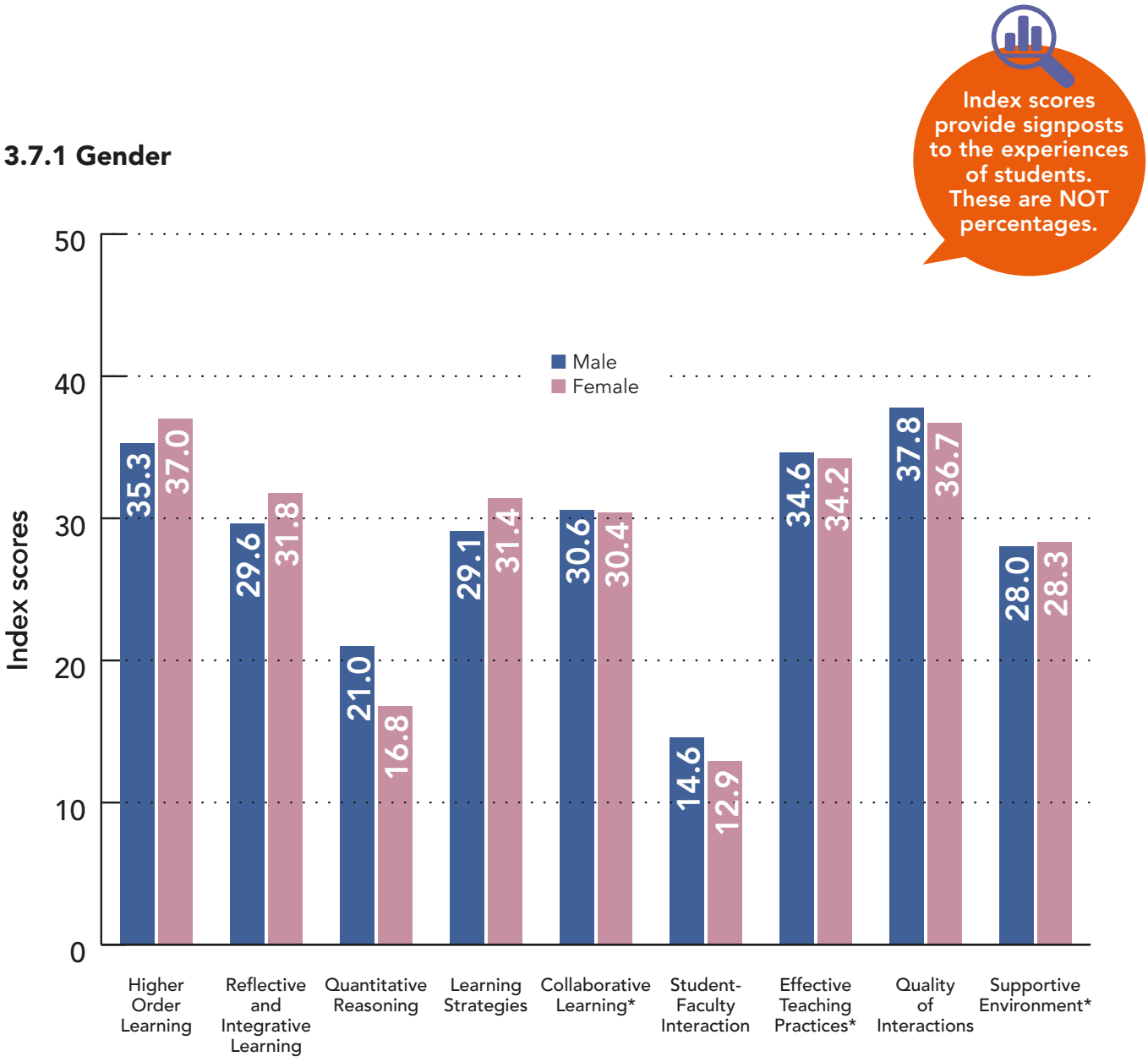


Figure 3.7.1 presents index scores for all respondents by gender. It illustrates that scores are broadly similar for male and female students but that female students' responses generate higher scores than male students for *Higher Order Learning*, *Reflective and Integrative Learning*, and *Learning Strategies*. Responses from male students lead to higher scores for *Quantitative Reasoning* (see comment above re possible relationship with field of study) and for *Quality of Interactions*.

** An asterisk indicates that statistical difference is not proven to 95% confidence or greater*

3.7.2 Age group

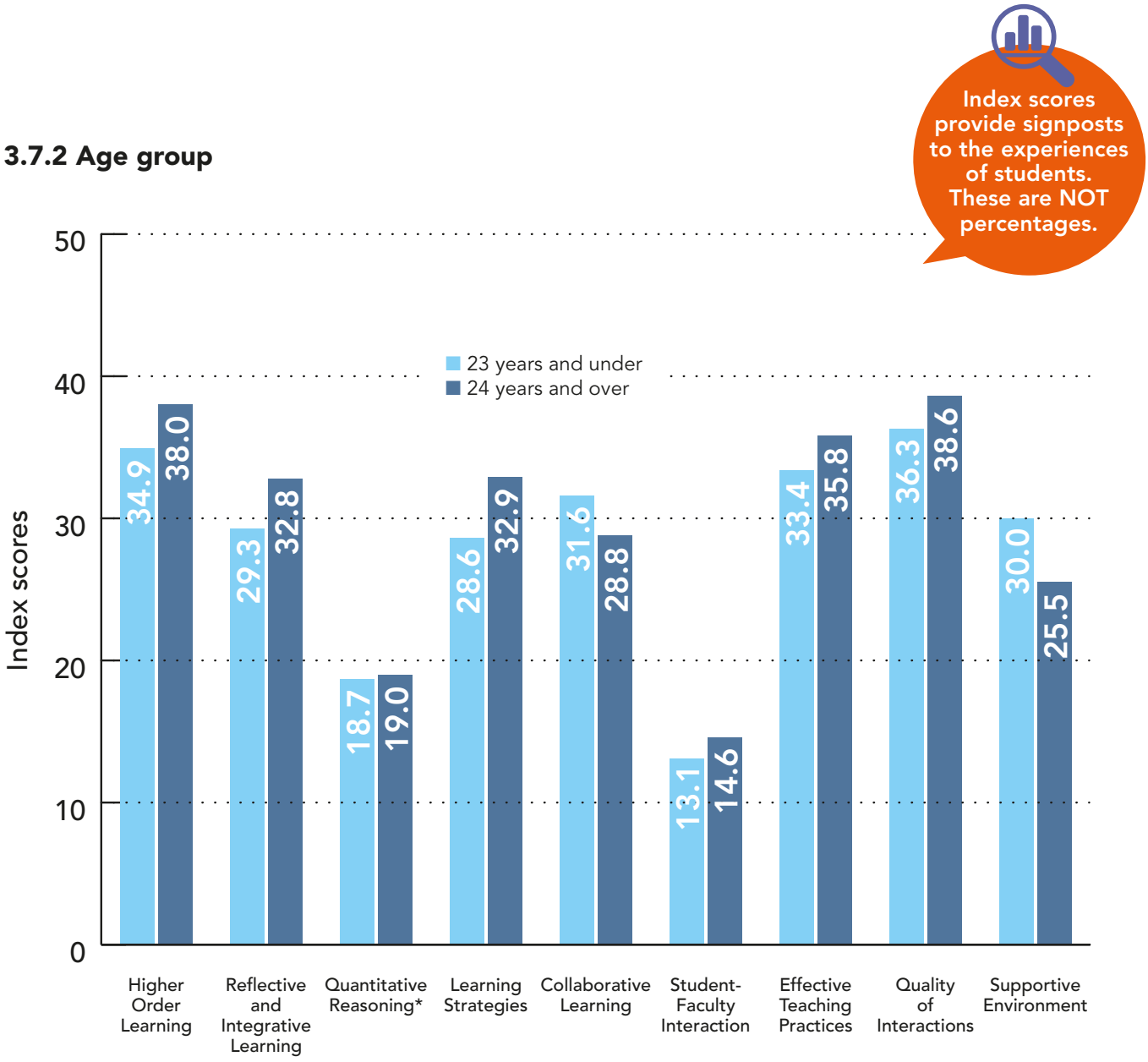


Figure 3.7.2 presents index scores for all respondents by age group. It illustrates that scores for *Higher Order Learning*, *Reflective and Integrative Learning* and *Learning Strategies* are higher for students aged 24 years and older than for other students. Younger students generate higher scores for *Collaborative Learning* and for *Supportive Environment*. As noted in the introduction to this section, these findings may reflect the stage of study or programme-type typically undertaken by the majority of students at certain ages.

** An asterisk indicates that statistical difference is not proven to 95% confidence or greater*

3.7.3 Domicile

Figure 3.7.3 demonstrates that index scores for non-Irish students are higher than for Irish students for all indices, other than *Collaborative Learning* which is not proven to be statistically different for these groups.

** An asterisk indicates that statistical difference is not proven to 95% confidence or greater*

CHAPTER 4
NATIONAL RESULTS IN CONTEXT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, a selection of results from ISSE 2016 is presented alongside results from previous years. It is important to note the impact of revising the questionnaire. The revision, described in greater detail in appendix 2, has introduced new question items, amended wording of some items and removed some items used from 2013 to 2015. Reflecting these changes, new engagement indices are introduced to group related question items. The use of new indices also facilitates comparison with some of the similar surveys used in other jurisdictions. Therefore, to maintain broad comparability with engagement surveys used internationally, scores for new indices are calculated using a scale from 0 to 60 rather than from 0 to 100 as in previous years.

The changes mean that care is needed when comparing index scores from the original and revised surveys. However, this does not impact on the effectiveness of index scores as relative indicators or 'signposts' to areas of potential interest.

4.2 RESULTS FROM 2013 TO 2016

It is noted that any change in wording of questions may impact on students' understanding and on their responses. The following exploration of results, arising from question items that are differently worded, is provided to illustrate the potential for longitudinal analysis of results - notwithstanding use of a revised questionnaire. Due care and appreciation of the amendments are highly recommended for any further bespoke analysis that may be undertaken within institutions or with multiple years' national datasets.

The following charts illustrate the effect of structural changes on presentation of resulting data. Forty five of the sixty seven question items in the revised survey are worded the same as, or very closely to, items used since 2013. Two of the revised indices are particularly closely related to indices used in the original survey. These are *Student-Faculty Interaction* and *Higher Order Learning*. These two indices are examined in greater detail.

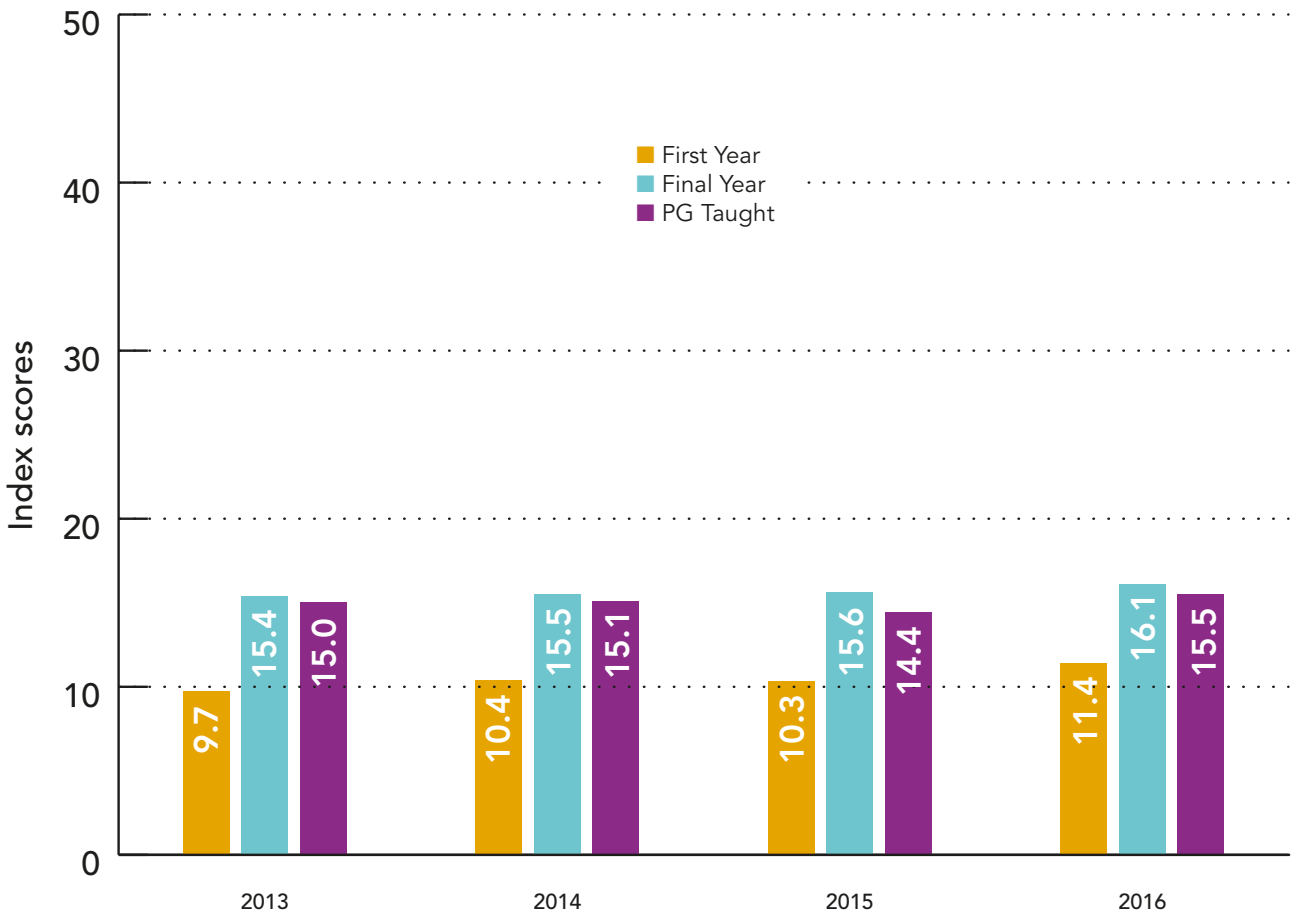
4.2.1 STUDENT-FACULTY INTERACTION

Each version of this index, titled as *Student-Faculty Interaction* in the revised survey and as *Student-Staff Interactions* in the original, explores students' interaction with academic staff. Four question items contribute to the revised index and precursor questions for each of these four items existed in the original survey. Although three items have been slightly reworded, it is felt that their key areas of enquiry remain unchanged.

The following chart illustrates index scores for *Student-Faculty Interaction* from 2013 to 2016. For data from 2013 to 2015, responses provided in those years' fieldwork were used to calculate 'new' index scores using the same method adopted in 2016.

Use of the revised index has the effect of generating numerically lower index scores than the original index but this change does not affect the ability to use index scores as relative indicators or signposts to areas of potential interest. The chart demonstrates that, from

4.2.1 Student-Faculty Interaction: 2013 to 2016



2013 to 2016, first year undergraduates consistently report lowest interaction with academic staff relative to other year groups and that final year undergraduates consistently report highest interactions relative to other year groups. The difference between final year students and postgraduate students is considerably less than the difference between either of these groups and first years.

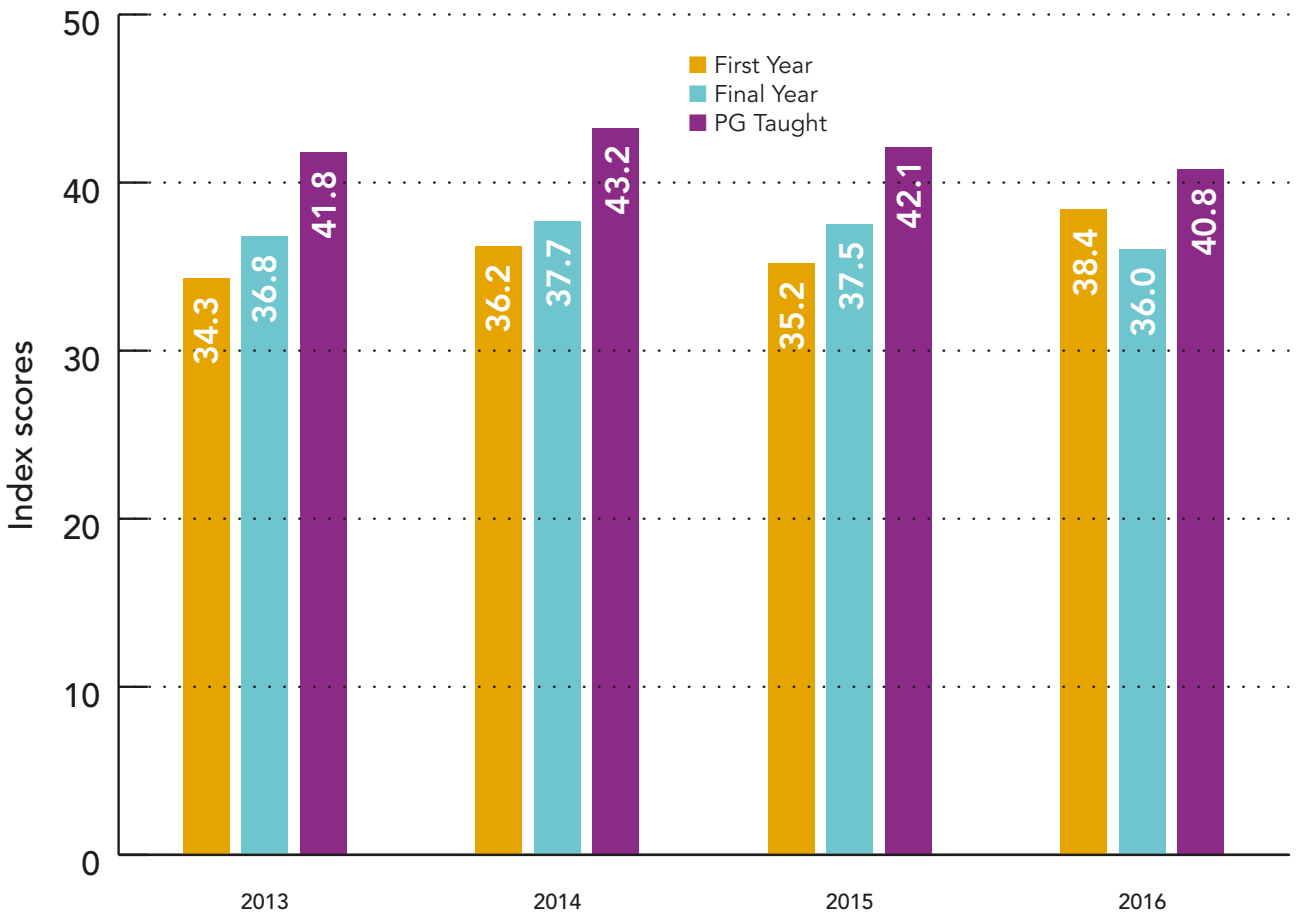
Conversion of previous years' data into the revised index structure (where index structures match) enables further interpretation of 2016 data. The chart demonstrates that index scores for first year students, whilst low relative to other cohorts, are improving. In fact, 2016 data represent the most positive results to date for each of the years / cohorts.

4.2.2 HIGHER ORDER LEARNING

Each version of the *Higher Order Learning* index (titled *Higher Order Thinking* in the original ISSE) explores students' experiences of higher order thinking / learning such as application, analysis, judgement and synthesis. Four question items contribute to the revised index and earlier versions of each item were used in the original survey. Three of the four items have been reworded and, unlike items from *Student-Faculty Interaction*, it is felt that the subtle change of focus for these questions more directly affects student responses.

The following chart illustrates index scores for *Higher Order Learning* from 2013 to 2016. For data from 2013 to 2015, responses provided in those years' fieldwork were used to calculate 'new' index scores using the same method adopted in 2016.

4.2.2 Higher Order Learning: 2013 to 2016



As demonstrated in the previous section, use of the revised index generates lower scores than the original index but this change does not affect the ability to use index scores as relative indicators or signposts to areas of potential interest. The chart demonstrates that scores for *Higher Order Learning* increase from first year to final year to postgraduate students.

Conversion of previous years' data into the revised index structure (where index structures match) also enables further analysis of 2016 data. Remembering that three of the four question items have been reworded for 2016, it is noted that index scores for each year / cohort have remained quite similar from 2013 to 2015, but are somewhat lower in 2016. This prompts a closer look at the wording of individual question items. At national level, two of the four questions relating to *Higher Order Learning* have generated notably different responses in 2016 and in 2015.

In 2016, 61.6% of all students selected 'quite a bit' or 'very much' in response to the question *"How much has your coursework emphasised analysing an idea, experience, or line of reasoning in depth by examining its parts?"* Responses from each year / cohort were first years 57.8%, final years 61.3%, and taught postgraduates 73.8%.

In 2015, 72.4% of all students selected 'quite a bit' or 'very much' in response to the question *"How much has your coursework emphasised analysing the basic elements of an idea, problem, experience or theory, such as examining a particular case or situation in depth and considering its components?"* Responses from each year / cohort were first years 68.1%, final years 73.4%, and taught postgraduates 81.6%. This example illustrates the care required when analysing data as the percentage of all students selecting 'quite a bit' or 'very much' decreased by 10.8%. This coincides with, and may be influenced by, the amended wording of the question.

Another question that relates to *Higher Order Learning* generated notably different responses in 2016 when compared to 2015. In 2016, the question was "*How much has your coursework emphasised forming an understanding or new idea from various pieces of information?*" Responses of 'quite a bit' or 'very much' were: all respondents 67.3%, first years 65.2%, final years 65.9%, and taught postgraduates 77.1%

In 2015, the related question was worded as "*how much has your coursework emphasised organising and synthesising ideas, information or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships?*" Responses of 'quite a bit' or 'very much' were: all respondents 62.2%, first years 56.9%, final years 62.5%, and taught postgraduates 75.5%. For this question, rewording the question coincided with 5.1% more positive responses in the next year.

4.3 SOME ASSESSMENT-RELATED QUESTION ITEMS

Assessment is a vital component of students' experiences and success in higher education. The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning[2] has identified assessment as a major enhancement theme for the next two years (2016 to 2018). The National Forum theme considers three distinct aspects of assessment, namely Assessment OF Learning, Assessment FOR Learning, and Assessment AS Learning. Twenty four questions have been identified to enhance and inform the assessment theme. See section 7.1 for further details.

The Forum states that

> *"Assessment plays a pivotal role in directing the nature and focus of student and teacher effort. It provides evidence of learning by demonstrating that learning outcomes have been achieved, it engages and motivates effort and performance, it influences the way teaching and learning happens and impacts on the way in which teaching experiences are designed and conducted."*

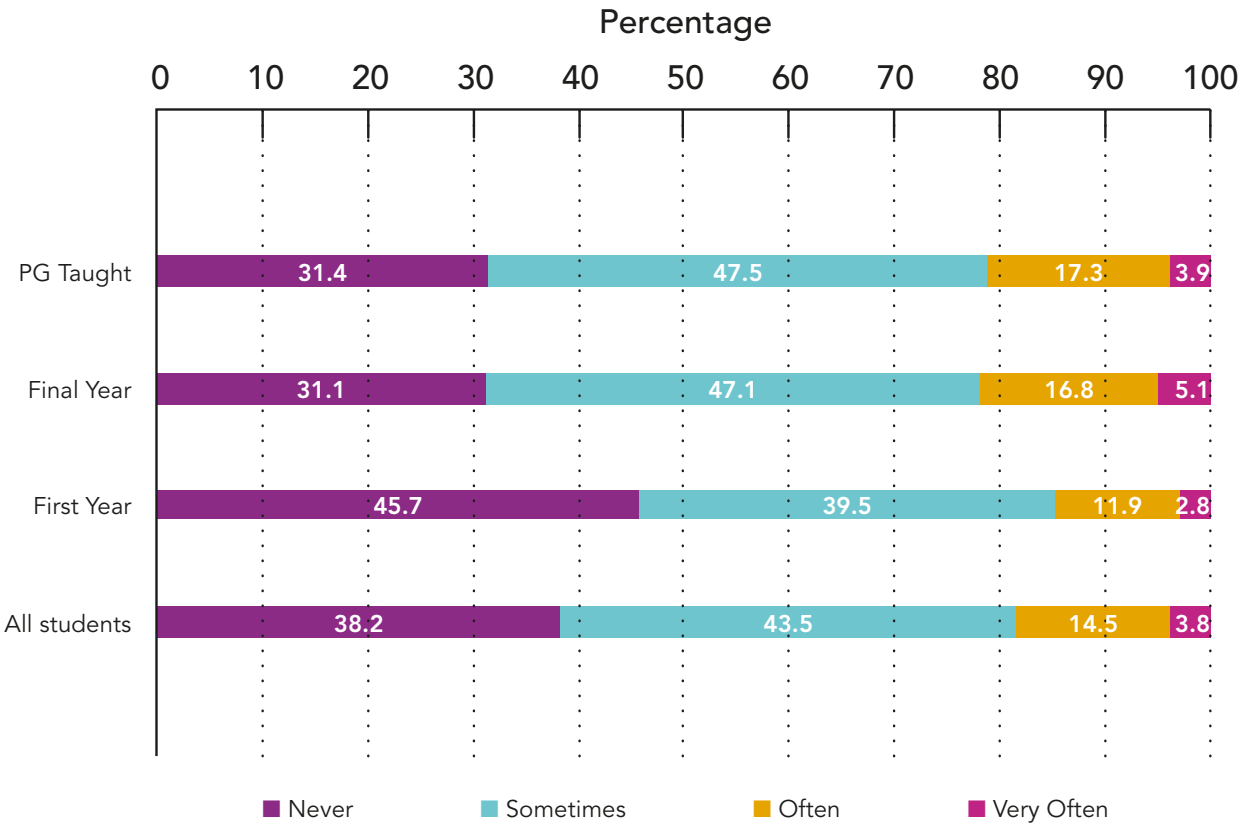
In the context of an emerging national discourse on assessment, it is timely to explore ISSE data from the perspective of assessment. This section is intended to provide a glimpse of the potential of ISSE data to support such thematic activities. Multiple question items relate to assessment issues. In this section, we explore three particular questions, from the revised survey, which ask about students' experiences in this area. A summary of responses to these items is presented in the next sections.

2. www.teachingandlearning.ie

4.3.1 DISCUSSION OF PERFORMANCE WITH ACADEMIC STAFF

Current question: During the current academic year, about how often have you discussed your performance with academic staff?

4.3.1.1 Discussed your performance with academic staff (by cohort 2016)

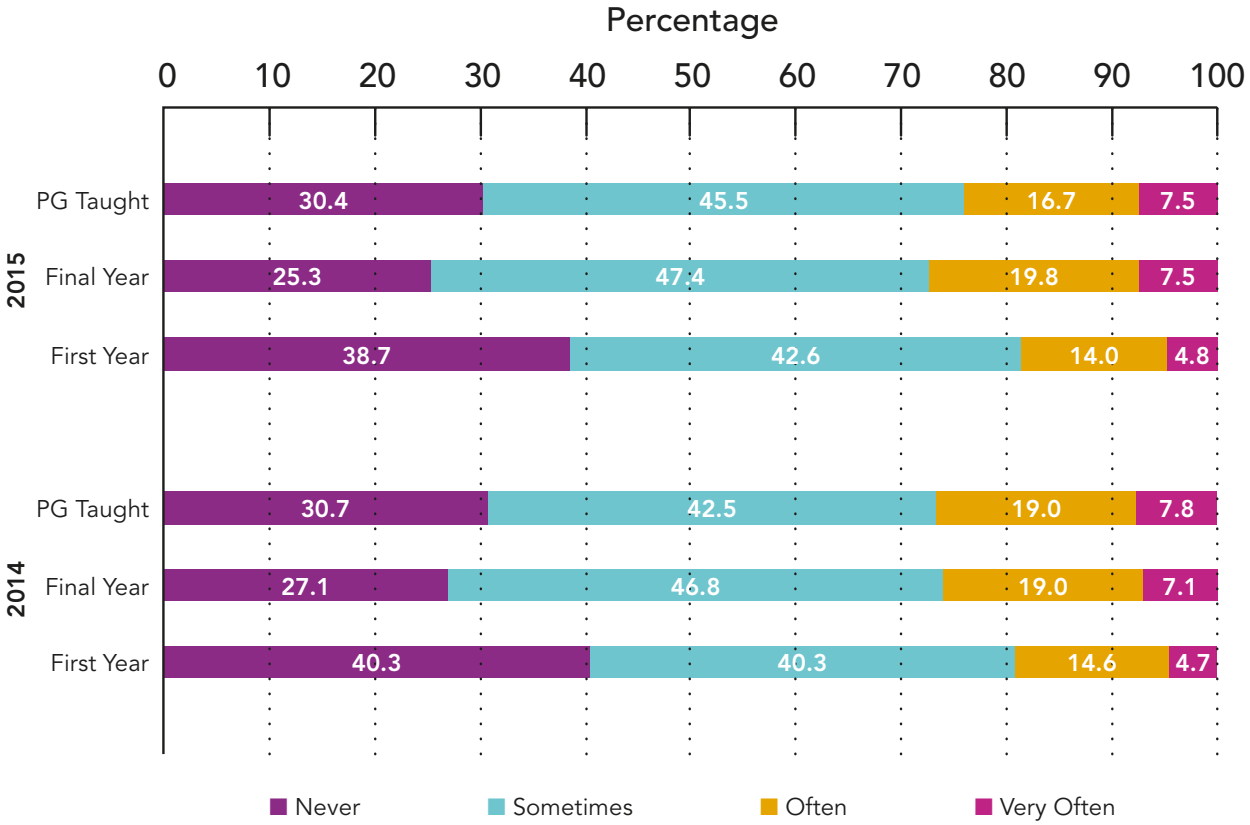


In 2016, 38.2% of all respondents reported that they have never discussed their performance with academic staff. Whilst acknowledging that it would be informative to explore further how this question was interpreted by students (for example, how much detail or time does "discussion of performance" entail?), this remains a startling statistic. There is variation between cohorts with a somewhat more positive position reported by students in final year or taking taught postgraduate courses. Nevertheless, only 14.7% of first year students report discussing their performance with academic staff 'often' or 'very often'. The corresponding figure for final year students is 21.9% and for taught postgraduates is 21.2%.

Prior to revision of the questionnaire, the original (related) question was worded differently.

Original question: In your experience at your institution during the current academic year, about how often have you discussed your grades or assignments with teaching staff / tutors?

4.3.1.2 Discussed your grades or assignments with teaching staff/tutors (by cohort 2014 and 2015)

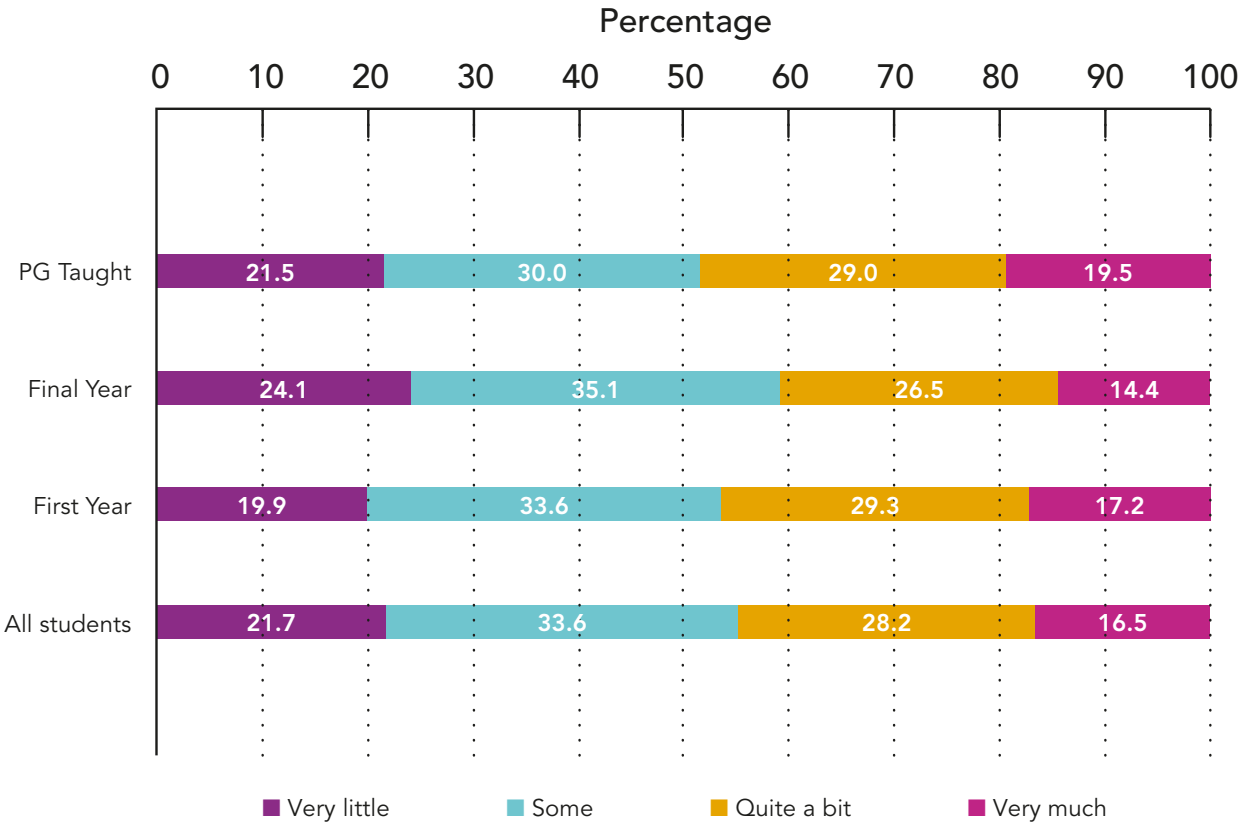


The wording of the original question item was narrower in that it focussed on grades or assignments rather than performance, but the pattern is similar to results from 2016. It is noted that the proportion of each cohort reporting 'never' discussing grades or assignments decreased from 2014 to 2015.

4.3.2
RECEIPT OF TIMELY OR DETAILED FEEDBACK

Current question: During the current academic year, to what extent have lecturers / teaching staff provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments?

4.3.2.1 Provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests and completed assignments (by cohort 2016)

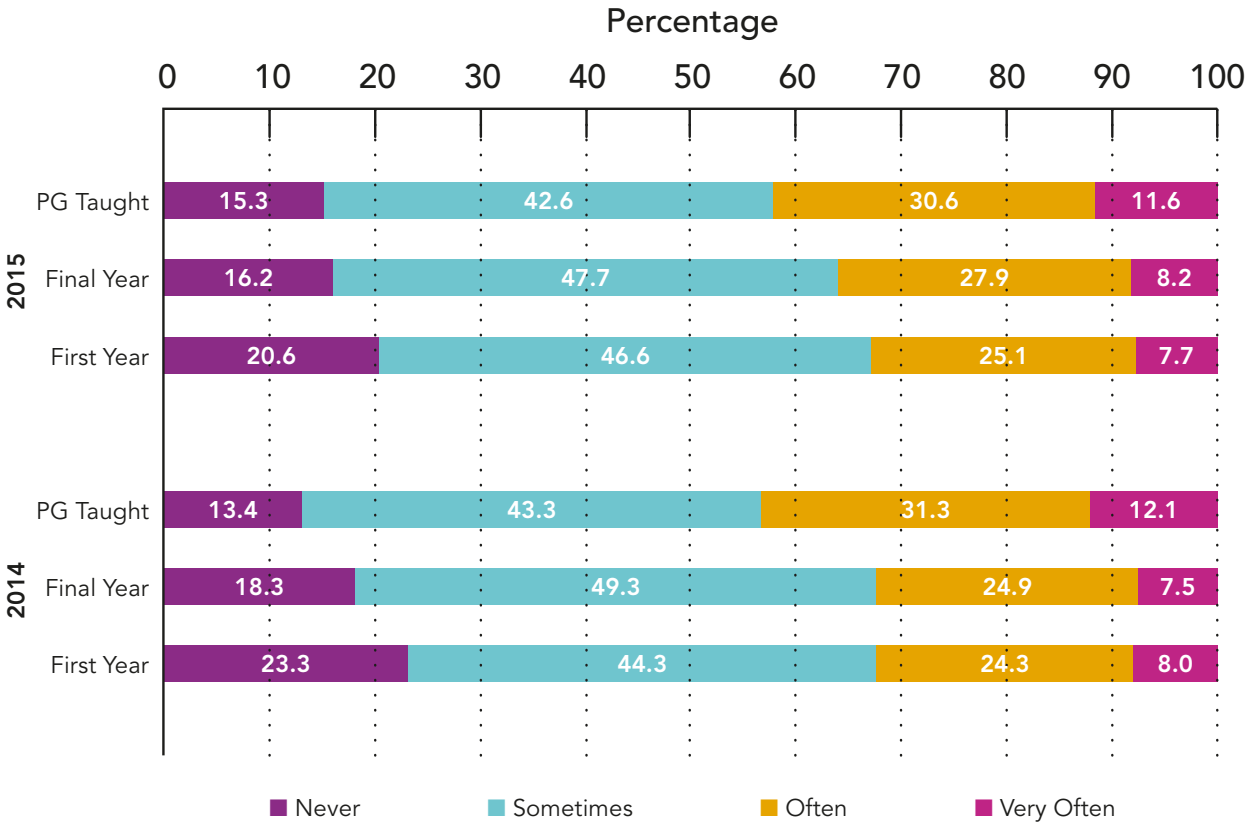


This question item is one of five that contributes to the new index, *Effective Teaching Practices*. Responses to questions related to this index are examined in detail in Chapter 5: Looking Deeper. Responses to this particular question item are included here in order to provide context for the related item from the original survey which explores the same area of enquiry. Students responded to the revised item as illustrated in figure 4.3.2.1

The original question item had a subtly different focus and asked about student receipt of timely written or oral feedback, rather than how much staff provided prompt and detailed feedback.

Original question: In your experience at your institution during the current academic year, about how often have you received timely written or oral feedback from teachers / tutors on your academic performance?

4.3.2.2 Timely written or oral feedback (by cohort 2014 and 2015)

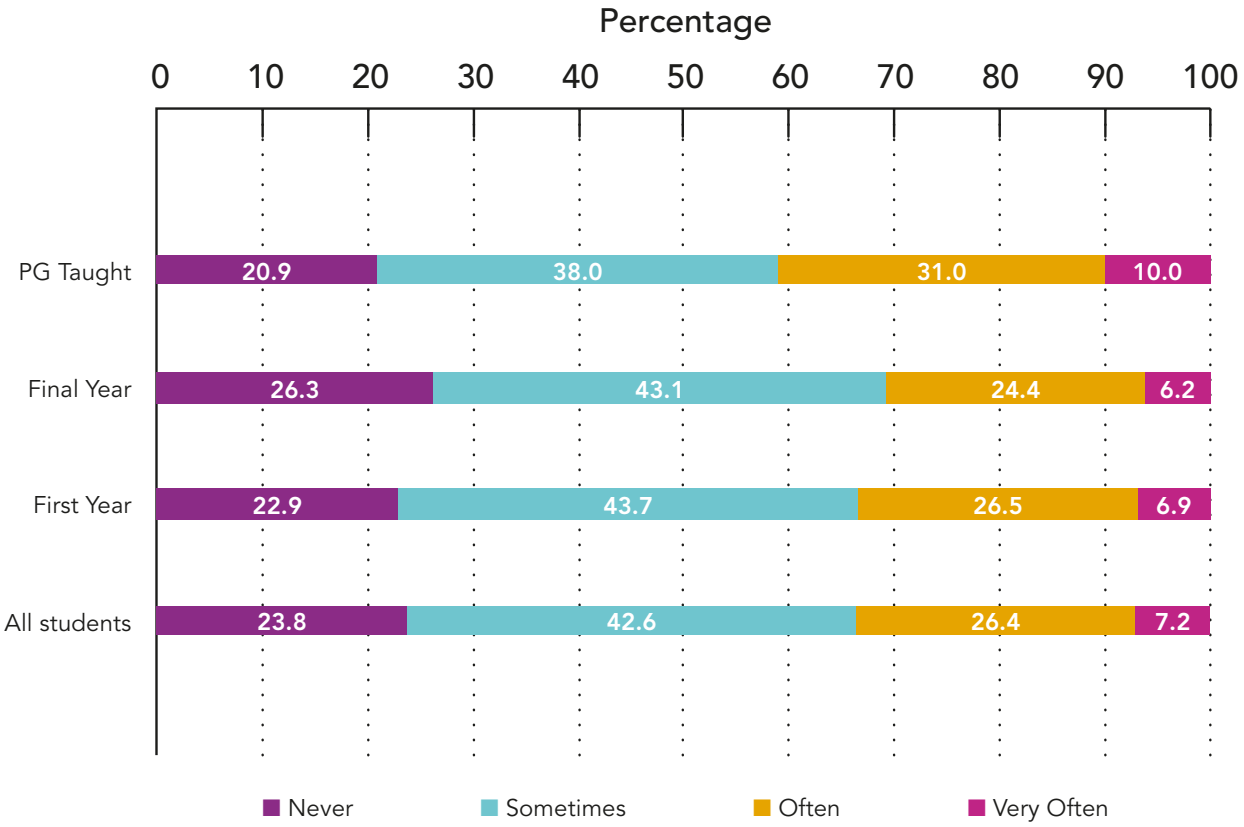


It is noted that, in 2014, 32.3% of first year students reported that they received timely oral or written feedback 'often' or 'very often' and that 32.8% of first years reported this position in 2015. In 2016, with the introduction of a differently worded question which focused on feedback on tests or completed assignments, 46.5% of first years reported receiving prompt and detailed feedback 'quite a bit' or 'very much'. Changes in student responses from year to year appear to indicate a positive trend. This reinforces the message that any detailed consideration of enhancement, within institutions or beyond, is likely to find it beneficial to explore these issues in more depth by discussing findings and perceptions with students.

4.3.3 ASSESSMENT AS LEARNING

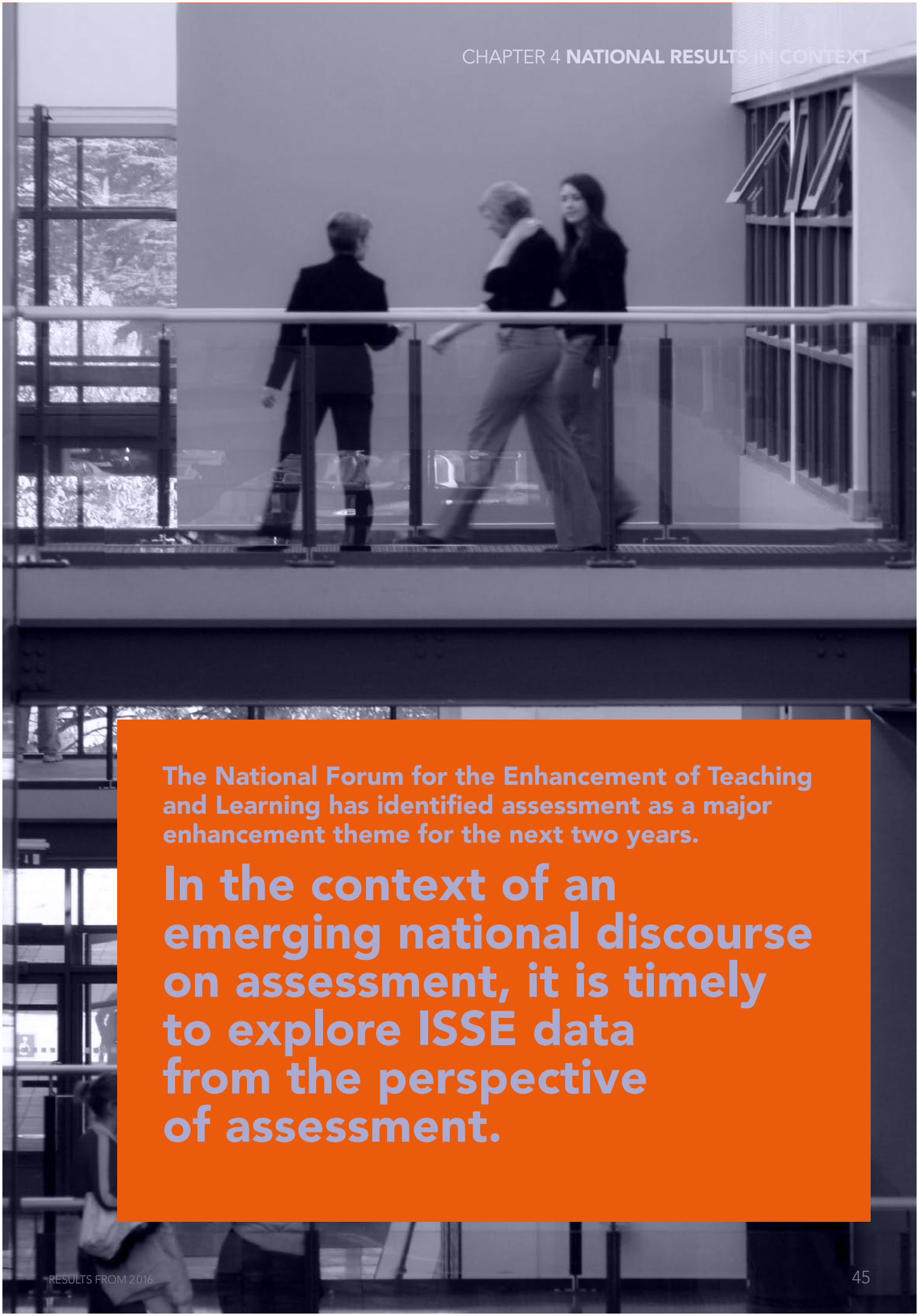
Current question: During the current academic year, about how often have you worked on assessments that informed you how well you are learning?

4.3.3 Worked on assessments that informed you how well you are learning (by cohort 2016)



Reflecting the National Forum's focus on assessment, one of the other original assessment-related items has been replaced with a completely new question which focuses on assessment AS learning.

Responses to this question will, in addition to contributing to the valuable overall dataset, facilitate some monitoring of institutional impact for institutions that choose to participate in related activities with the National Forum over the next two years. Responses demonstrate that 70.1% of first years, 67.5% of final years and 69.0% of taught postgraduate students report that they work 'sometimes' or 'often' on such assessments. However, in 2016, as illustrated, 23.8% of all students report 'never' working on assessments that inform them how well they are learning.



The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning has identified assessment as a major enhancement theme for the next two years.

In the context of an emerging national discourse on assessment, it is timely to explore ISSE data from the perspective of assessment.

CHAPTER 5
LOOKING DEEPER – WHAT DOES ISSE TELL US ABOUT *EFFECTIVE TEACHING PRACTICES* AND OTHER SELECTED ASPECTS OF THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE?

This chapter illustrates the potential offered by further analysis of the rich dataset generated by the ISSE. It explores responses of different student groups to question items not considered in previous years' national reports. Questions newly introduced in 2016 examine students' experiences of *Effective Teaching Practices*. This new index and its five composite questions demonstrate notable differences in students' experiences of practices that are widely regarded as contributing to promoting comprehension and learning.

In addition, this chapter explores results for a number of questions relating to personal growth and skills development. The questions selected here reflect some of the areas explored in the *National Employer Survey*[3] published in May 2015. Most of these skills-related items have been included in the ISSE since 2013 but do not directly contribute to specific indices and have not been included in previous national reports.

The analysis in this chapter exemplifies the detail that can be explored to inform discussion of identified local, sectoral or national objectives and priorities. Exploration of specific areas in this manner offers one of many potential lenses through which the data may be examined in order to inform consideration of the experience of students. There is no assumption that the questions selected here identify aspects of students' experience that are of greater importance nationally than other questions in the report and a variety of themes are explored in the series of national reports.

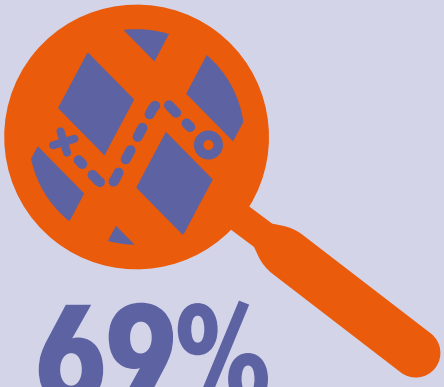
3. http://www.hea.ie/sites/default/files/employersurveymay2015final_web_0.pdf

KEY POINTS

Students report a varied experience of *Effective Teaching Practices*. 69% of students, overall, report that teaching staff clearly explain course goals and requirements either 'quite a bit' or 'very much'. 69% also report that teaching staff teach in an organised way either 'quite a bit' or 'very much'. Over 73% of students report that teaching staff use examples or illustrations to explain difficult points either 'quite a bit' or 'very much'. However, only 45% of students report that teaching staff provide feedback on work in progress either 'quite a bit' or 'very much' with 22% reporting 'very little' for this question. Similarly, only 45% of students report that teaching staff provide prompt and detailed feedback on tests or assignments completed either 'quite a bit' or 'very much'. Again 22% of students report 'very little' for this question. Looking at the responses in more detail:

- **Older, part-time and postgraduate students report more positive experiences of the explanation of course goals and requirements. For instance, 73% of those 24 years old and older report that course goals are explained clearly either 'quite a bit' or 'very much' compared to only 66% of those 23 years old and younger**
- **73% of postgraduate students report that they are taught in an organised way either 'quite a bit' or 'very much' compared to only 64% of final year students**
- **79% of Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics students report that examples or illustrations are used to explain difficult point either 'quite a bit' or 'very much' compared to 70% of Services discipline students**
- **40% of University students report that feedback is provided on draft work either 'quite a bit' or 'very much' compared to 51% of Institute of Technology students**
- **35% of Education students report that feedback is provided on completed work 'very little' compared to only 17% of Arts and Humanities students.**

For the seven skills development questions examined: 56% of all students report that they have developed clear and effective writing skills from their experience at the institution either 'quite a bit' or 'very much', 55% report that they have developed clear and effective speaking skills from their experience at the institution either 'quite a bit' or 'very much', 75% report that they have developed critical and analytical thinking skills either 'quite a bit' or 'very much', 48% report that they developed numerical and statistical analysis skills either 'quite a bit' or 'very much', 57% report that they have acquired job or work related knowledge and skills either 'quite a bit' or 'very much', 68% report that they have developed skills to work effectively with others either 'quite a bit' or 'very much' and 42% report that they have become a more informed and active citizen either 'quite a bit' or 'very much' due to their experience at the institution.



69%

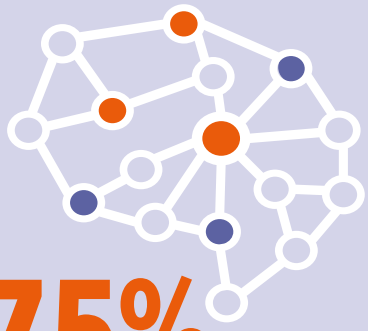
of students report that teaching staff clearly explain course goals and requirements either 'quite a bit' or 'very much'

45%

of students report that teaching staff provide feedback on work in progress either 'quite a bit' or 'very much'

73%

of students report that teaching staff use examples or illustrations to explain difficult points either 'quite a bit' or 'very much'



75%

report that they have developed critical and analytical thinking skills either 'quite a bit' or 'very much'

68%

report that they have developed skills to work effectively with others either 'quite a bit' or 'very much'

56%

of students report that they have developed clear and effective writing skills from their experience at the institution either 'quite a bit' or 'very much'

Looking at the responses in more detail:

- 57% of Information and Communication Technologies students report that they have developed clear and effective writing skills from their experience at the institution only 'very little' or 'some'. In contrast, only 33% of Social sciences, Journalism and Information students report that they have developed clear and effective writing skills from their experience at the institution 'very little' or 'some'
- 55% of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary students report that they have developed clear and effective speaking skills from their experience at the institution only 'very little' or 'some'. In contrast, only 39% of Education students report that they have developed clear and effective speaking skills from their experience at the institution 'very little' or 'some'
- 39% of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary students also report that they have developed critical and analytical thinking skills from their experience at the institution only 'very little' or 'some'. This figure is only 20% for Social sciences, Journalism and Information students
- As may be expected, 76% of Arts and Humanities students report that they have developed numerical and statistical analysis skills from their experience at the institution only 'very little' or 'some' in comparison to only 26% of Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics students
- Almost 63% of Arts and Humanities students report that they have acquired job or work related skills from their experience at the institution only 'very little' or 'some'. This figure falls to only 30% for Health and Welfare students and 31% for Education students
- Also, only 24% of Health and Welfare students report that they have developed skills to work effectively with others either 'very little' or 'some'. This figure rises to 42% for Arts and Humanities students
- In terms of becoming an informed and active citizen as a result of experience at the institution, students of the more technical disciplines report higher levels of only 'very little' or 'some'. These figures are 67%, 66% and 70% for Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction & Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics & ICT students respectively. However, only 40% of Social Sciencess, Journalism and Information students report back 'very little' or 'some'.

5.1 EFFECTIVE TEACHING PRACTICES

The following analysis explores the index *Effective Teaching Practices* in some depth. Five questions contribute to this index:

- During the current academic year, to what extent have lecturers / teaching staff clearly explained course goals and requirements;
- During the current academic year, to what extent have lecturers / teaching staff taught in an organised way;
- During the current academic year, to what extent have lecturers / teaching staff used examples or illustrations to explain difficult points;
- During the current academic year, to what extent have lecturers / teaching staff provided feedback on a draft or work in progress;
- During the current academic year, to what extent have lecturers / teaching staff provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments

Each question allows four response options: very little, some, quite a bit, and very much. As noted in section 2.2, results are weighted by year / cohort, mode of study and gender to improve the extent to which respondents reflect the overall target student population. The demographic characteristics that are used in the analysis are Irish / non-Irish, age cohort, gender, field of study, part-time / full-time, institution type, and year / cohort (first, final or postgraduate). The following chart shows the weighted average *Effective Teaching Practices* index score for each group.

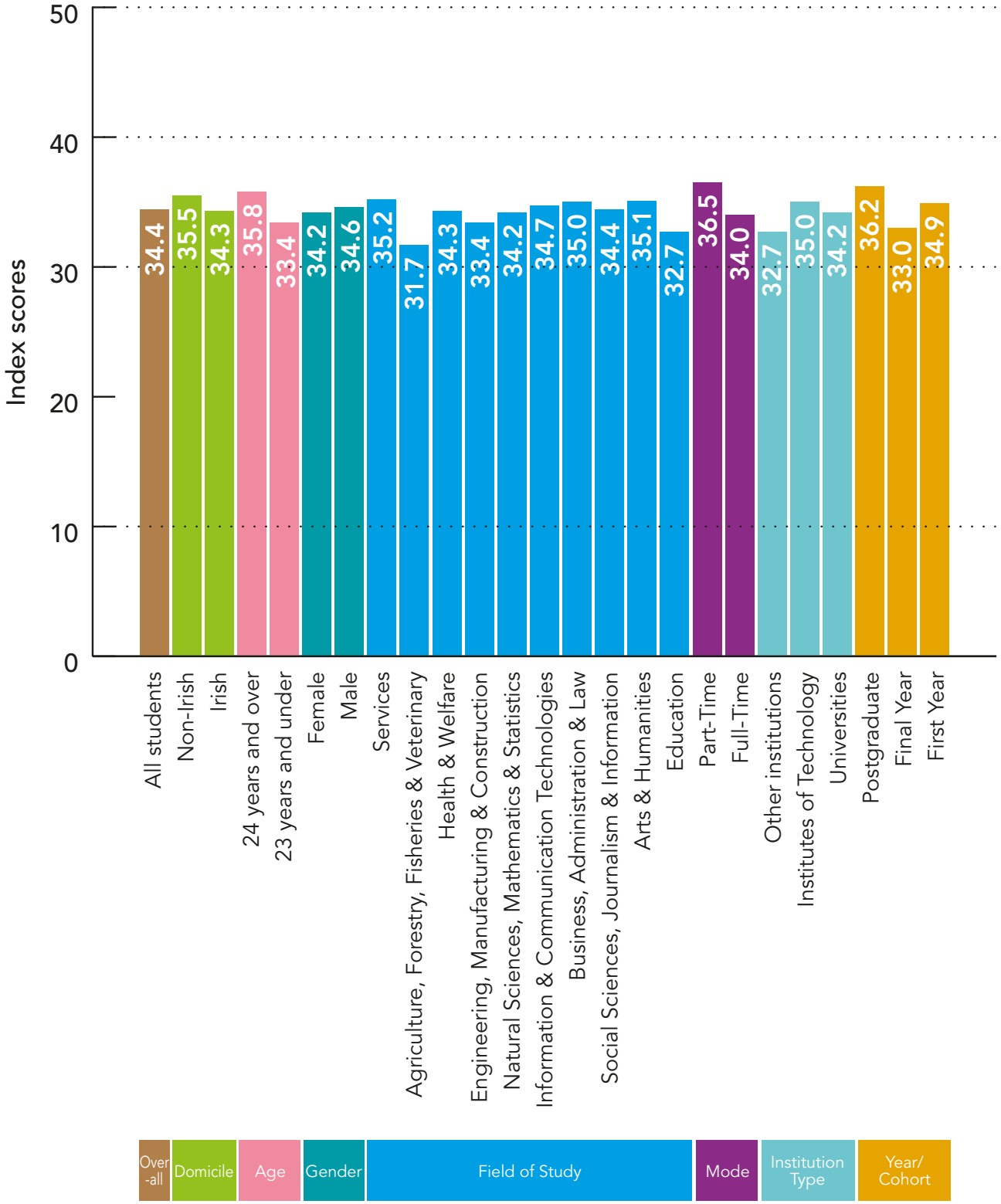
NOTES FOR INTERPRETING THE DATA

Index scores provide signposts to the experiences of students. These are NOT percentages.

Please refer to notes for interpreting the data on pages 5-6

Compare scores WITHIN each index and NOT between indices.

5.1 Overview of *Effective Teaching Practices*



The results show that, on average, index scores are higher for part-time students, postgraduate students, older students and non-Irish students[4]. The fields of study exhibiting the highest index scores are Services and Arts & Humanities. The fields of study exhibiting the lowest index scores are Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries & Veterinary and Education. The male average index score is higher than the female average and the Institutes of Technology average score is higher than both the Universities average score and the Other Institutions average score. The largest differences within cohorts are seen between full-time / part-time students and the two age groups. The average scores range between 31.7 (Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries & Veterinary students) and 36.5 (part-time students). The overall average index score for all students is 34.4 which sits roughly at the average of all cohorts presented here.

There are strong relationships evident across a number of these variables which have a cross pollination effect on index scores. These strong relationships include, but are not limited to: first year students & students aged 23 and under, postgraduate students & students aged 24 and over, full-time students & students aged 23 and under, part-time students & students aged 24 and over, postgraduate students & part-time students, first year students & full-time students, students of Institutes of Technology & male students, University students & female students and Other Institution students & female students. Other notable relationships include a higher proportion of Arts and Humanities, Education and Social Sciences, Journalism and Information students in Universities and a higher proportion of Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction students, Information and Communication Technologies students and Services students in Institutes of Technology. A high proportion of education students are also in the Other Institutions. A higher proportion of postgraduate students are in Universities. A higher proportion of Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction students and Information and Communication Technologies students are male and a higher proportion of Arts and Humanities, Education and Health and Welfare students are female. These inter-relationships are important to consider in the context of the weighted mean index scores presented earlier. For instance, the strong correlation between older students and part-time students drives the relatively higher index scores of both compared to younger students and full-time students. The following cross tabulation tables show the extent of these inter-relationships with examples of strong relationships highlighted. The demographic breakdown of respondents presented earlier in Chapter 2 is also shown to provide context to the detailed results presented in this chapter.

4. The difference between Irish and non-Irish students is not statistically significant in this instance ($p>0.05$).

Table 5.1.1 Demographic characteristics of respondents

Characteristic	Responses	
Overall	29,173	
Age		
23 and Under	18,448	63.2%
24 and Over	10,682	36.6%
Gender		
Female	17,208	59.0%
Male	11,965	41.0%
Institution-type		
Universities	12,932	44.3%
Institutes of Technology	12,942	44.4%
Other institutions	3,299	11.3%
Mode of Study		
Full-time	25,912	88.8%
Part-time / remote	3,261	11.2%
Field of Study		
Generic Programmes & Qualifications	16	0.1%
Education	2,538	8.7%
Arts & Humanities	4,871	16.7%
Social Sciencess, Journalism & Information	1,614	5.5%
Business, Administration & Law	5,521	18.9%
Natural Sciences, Mathematics & Statistics	2,992	10.3%
Information & Communication Technologies	2,381	8.2%
Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction	2,953	10.1%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries & Veterinary	366	1.3%
Health & Welfare	4,227	14.5%
Services	1,694	5.8%
Year/Cohort		
Undergraduate – First Year	14,076	48.3%
Undergraduate – Final Year	10,650	36.5%
Postgraduate (taught)	4,447	15.2%

Table 5.1.2 Cross Tabulations of Respondent Characteristics

Year / Age — Age Less Than 24

Year Cohort	No	Yes	TOTAL
Final Year	15.6%	20.9%	36.5%
First Year	11.1%	37.2%	48.3%
Postgraduate	13.5%	1.8%	15.3%
TOTAL	**40.2%**	**59.8%**	**100.0%**

Mode / Age — Age Less Than 24

Mode	No	Yes	TOTAL
Full-Time	24.1%	59.4%	83.5%
Part-Time	16.1%	0.4%	16.5%
TOTAL	**40.2%**	**59.8%**	**100.0%**

Year / Mode — Mode

Year Cohort	Full-Time	Part-Time	TOTAL
Final Year	32.5%	4.0%	36.5%
First Year	43.3%	5.0%	48.3%
Postgraduate	7.7%	7.5%	15.3%
TOTAL	**83.5%**	**16.5%**	**100.0%**

Year / Gender — Gender

Year Cohort	Full-Time	Part-Time	TOTAL
Final Year	18.6%	17.9%	36.5%
First Year	24.5%	23.8%	48.3%
Postgraduate	8.6%	6.7%	15.3%
TOTAL	**51.6%**	**48.4%**	**100.0%**

Field / Gender — Gender

Field	Female	Male	TOTAL
Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary	0.5%	0.7%	1.2%
Arts and humanities	9.9%	6.1%	16.0%
Business, administration and law	9.5%	9.7%	19.3%
Education	6.9%	2.0%	8.9%
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	1.7%	9.5%	11.1%
Generic programmes	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
Health and welfare	10.4%	3.1%	13.5%
ICT	1.8%	7.1%	9.0%
Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics	5.0%	5.0%	10.0%
Services	2.7%	3.0%	5.6%
Social Sciences, Journalism and Information	3.2%	2.2%	5.4%
TOTAL	**51.6%**	**48.4%**	**100.0%**

Table 5.1.2 Cross Tabulations of Respondent Characteristics *continued*

Irish / Mode Mode

Irish	Full-Time	Part-Time	TOTAL
No	6.7%	0.6%	7.2%
Yes	76.8%	16.0%	92.8%
TOTAL	**40.2%**	**59.8%**	**100.0%**

Year / Irish Irish

Year Cohort	No	Yes	TOTAL
Final Year	2.4%	34.1%	36.5%
First Year	2.5%	45.7%	48.3%
Postgraduate	2.3%	12.9%	15.3%
TOTAL	**7.2%**	**92.8%**	**100.0%**

Institution Type / Gender Gender

Institution Type	Female	Male	TOTAL
IoT	19.4%	25.0%	44.4%
Other Institution	7.8%	3.5%	11.3%
University	24.5%	19.9%	44.4%
TOTAL	**51.6%**	**48.4%**	**100.0%**

Table 5.1.2 Cross Tabulations of Respondent Characteristics *continued*

Year / Institution Type Institution Type

Year Cohort	IoT	Other Instit.	Univer.	TOTAL
Final Year	19.5%	4.7%	12.3%	36.5%
First Year	21.7%	3.8%	22.8%	48.3%
Postgraduate	3.2%	2.7%	9.4%	15.3%
TOTAL	**44.4%**	**11.3%**	**44.4%**	**100.0%**

Field / Institution Type Institution Type

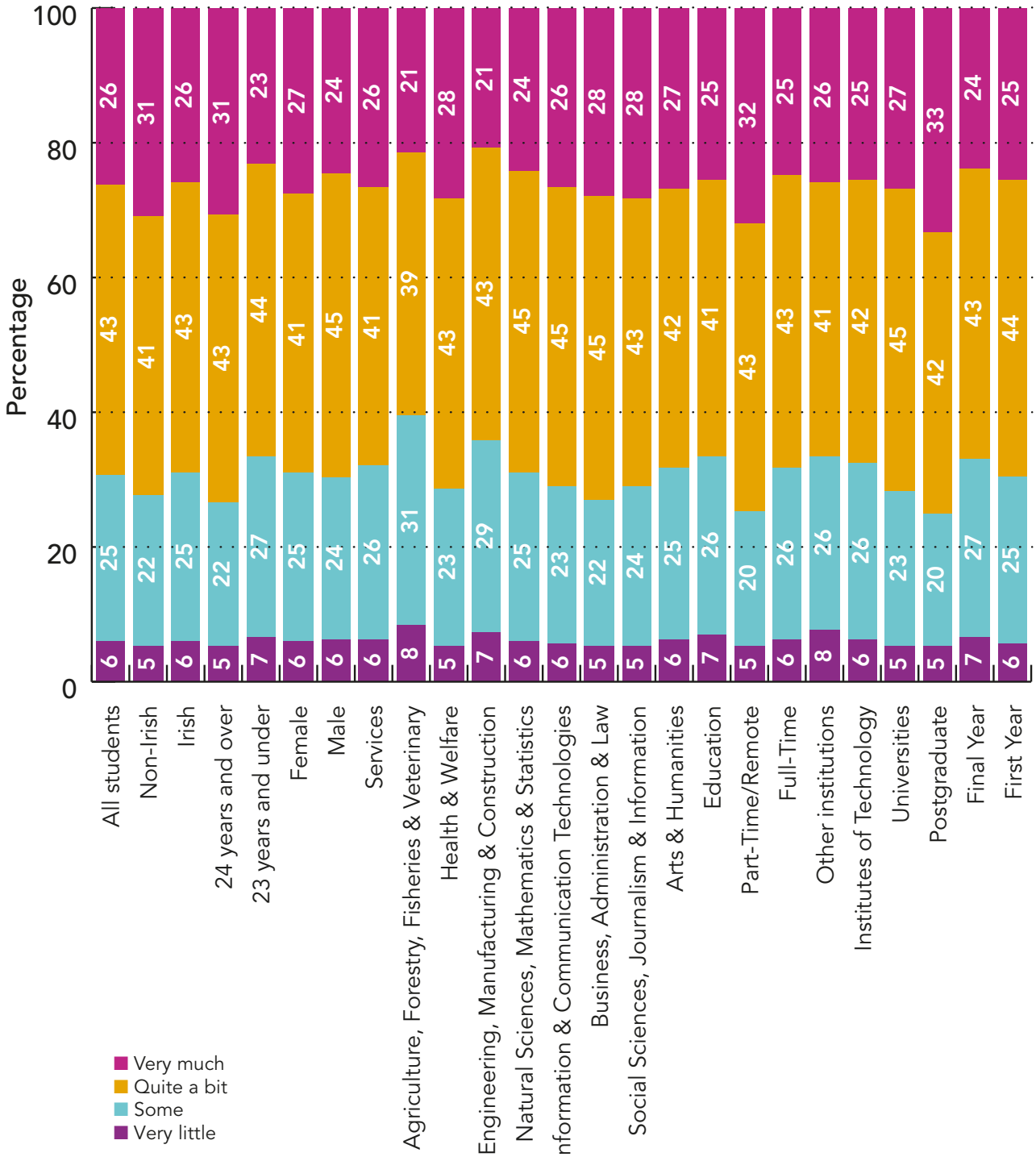
Field	IoT	Other Instit.	Univer.	TOTAL
Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary	0.8%	0.0%	0.5%	1.2%
Arts and humanities	3.9%	2.7%	9.4%	16.0%
Business, administration and law	9.8%	0.8%	8.7%	19.3%
Education	0.4%	5.0%	3.5%	8.9%
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	8.0%	0.1%	3.1%	11.1%
Generic programmes	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Health and welfare	5.9%	1.8%	5.8%	13.5%
ICT	5.5%	0.8%	2.6%	9.0%
Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics	3.9%	0.0%	6.1%	10.0%
Services	5.3%	0.0%	0.3%	5.6%
Social Sciences, Journalism and Information	0.8%	0.1%	4.4%	5.4%
TOTAL	**44.4%**	**11.3%**	**44.4%**	**100.0%**

5.1.1 DETAILED RESULTS FOR *EFFECTIVE TEACHING PRACTICES*

Q1: During the current academic year, to what extent have lecturers / teaching staff clearly explained course goals and requirements?

The groups reporting more positive experiences of course goals and objectives being clearly explained include non-Irish students, older students, part-time students and postgraduate students. 32% of part-time students report that course goals are clearly explained 'very much' compared to 25% of full time students. 31% of non-Irish students report 'very much' to this question compared to 26% of Irish students. 33% of postgraduate students report 'very much' to this question compared to 24% of final year students and 25% of first year students. 31% of students aged 24 years and over report 'very much' to this question compared to 23% of students aged 23 years and under. Across the fields of study, more positive responses are reported by Health and Welfare students with less positive responses reported by Agriculture and Engineering students. Across the all respondents, 26% report 'very much' in response to this question, 43% report 'quite a bit', 25% report 'some' and 6% report 'very little'.

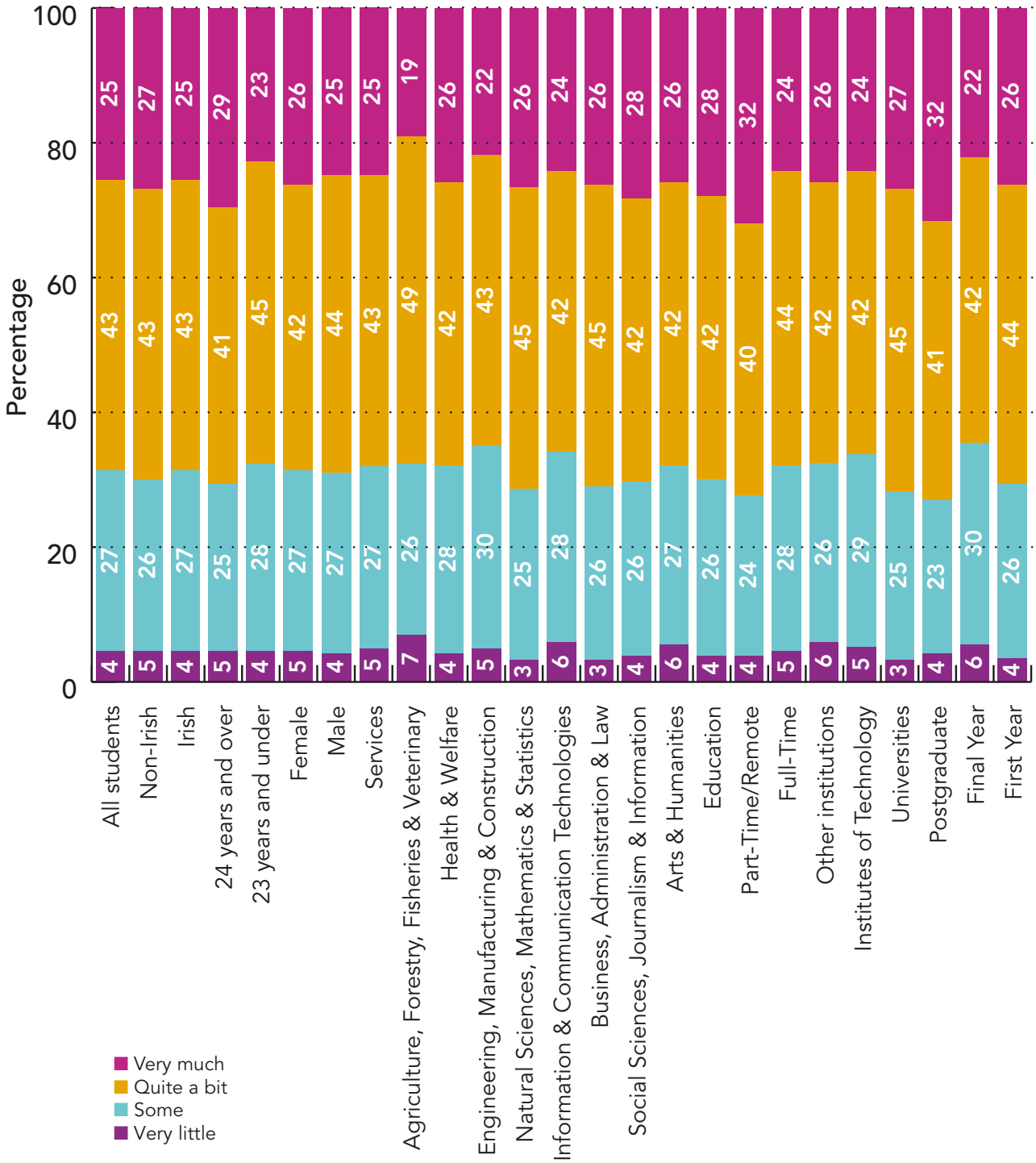
Q1: During the current academic year, to what extent have lecturers / teaching staff clearly explained course goals and requirements?



Q2: During the current academic year, to what extent have lecturers / teaching staff taught in an organised way?

The groups reporting more positive experiences of being taught in an organised way include older students, part-time students and postgraduate students – the same groups reporting positive experiences for the 'clearly explained course goals' question. 29% of students aged 24 years and over report 'very much' when asked to what extent teaching staff have taught in an organised way. This is compared to 23% of students aged 23 years and under. 32% of part-time students report 'very much' in response to this question compared to 24% of full-time students. 32% of postgraduate students report 'very much' in response to this question compared to 22% of final year students and 26% of first year students. Across the different fields of study, more positive responses are reported by Education and Social Sciencess, Journalism and Information students with less positive responses reported by Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary students. Across all respondents, 25% report 'very much' in response to this question, 43% report 'quite a bit', 27% report 'some' and 4% report 'very little' (not equal to 100% due to rounding).

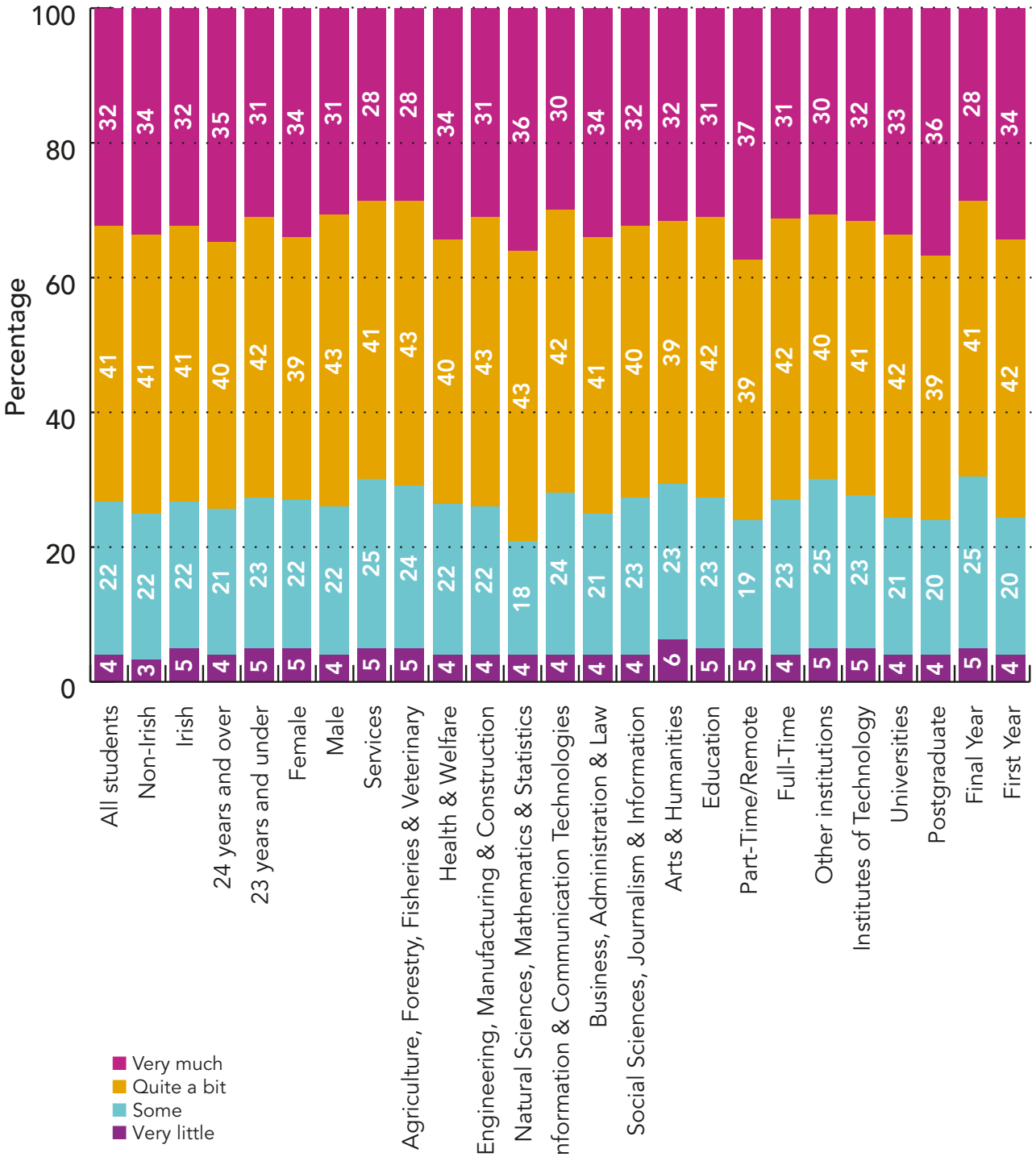
Q2: During the current academic year, to what extent have lecturers / teaching staff taught in an organised way?



Q3: During the current academic year, to what extent have lecturers / teaching staff used examples or illustrations to explain difficult points?

The groups reporting more positive experiences of teaching staff using examples to explain difficult points include older students, part-time students, postgraduate students and students of the Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics. 35% of students aged 24 years and over report 'very much' in response to this question. This is compared to 31% of students aged 23 years and under. 37% of part-time students report 'very much' compared to 31% of full-time students. 36% of postgraduate students report 'very much' compared to 28% of final year students and 34% first year students. Across the various fields of study, more positive responses are reported by Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics students, Health and Welfare students and Business, Administration and Law students. 36% of Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics students report 'very much', as to be expected for this field. Less positive responses are reported by Services students and Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary students. Across all respondents, 32% report 'very much' in response to this question, 41% report 'quite a bit', 22% report 'some' and 4% report 'very little' (not equal to 100% due to rounding).

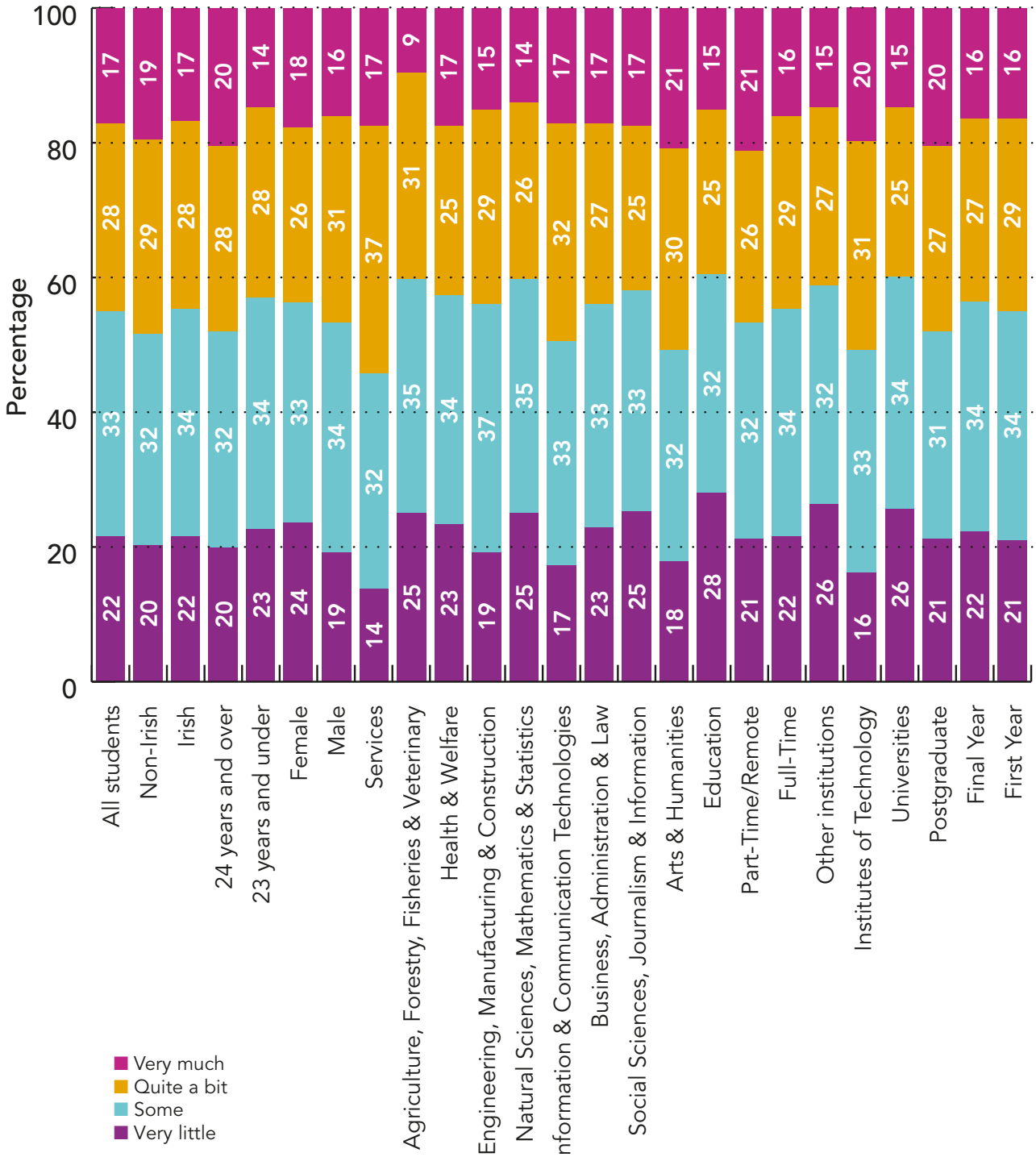
Q3: During the current academic year, to what extent have lecturers / teaching staff used examples or illustrations to explain difficult points?



Q4: During the current academic year, to what extent have lecturers / teaching staff provided feedback on a draft or work in progress?

The groups reporting more positive experiences of teaching staff providing feedback on draft work include Arts and Humanities students and students from the Institutes of Technology. 21% of Arts and Humanities students report 'very much' in response to this question in comparison to 15% of Education students and only 9% of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary students. Only 18% of Arts and Humanities students report 'very little' in response to this question compared to 28% of Education students and 25% of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary students. 20% of students from the Institutes of Technology report 'very much' in response to this question compared to 15% for both University students and students from other institutions. Only 16% of students from the Institutes of Technology report 'very little' compared to 26% for both University students and students from other institutions. Across all respondents, 17% report 'very much' in response to this question, 28% report 'quite a bit', 33% report 'some' and 22% report 'very little'. Note that responses, overall, to this question are very different to the previous questions – in general less positive experiences are reported.

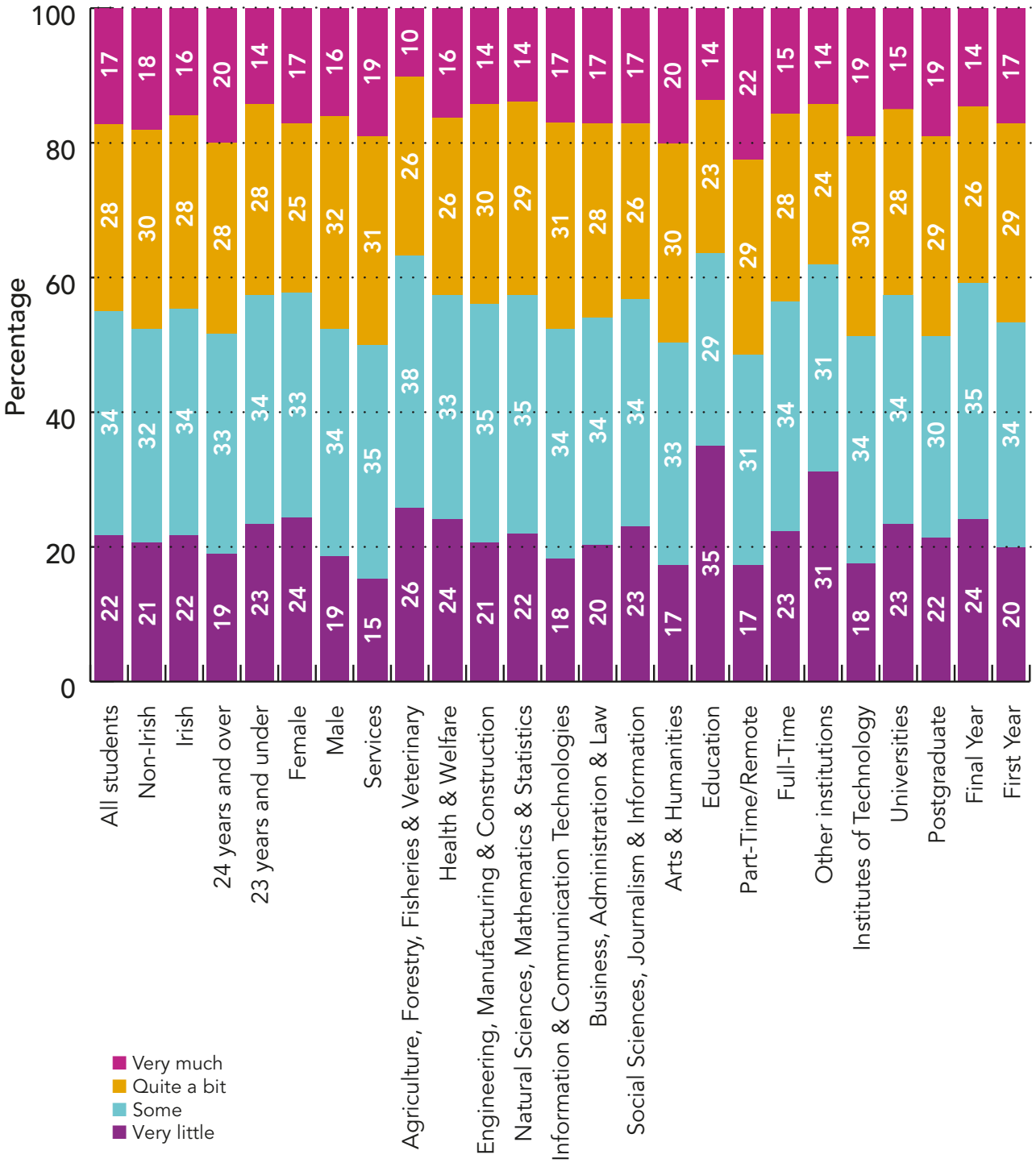
Q4: During the current academic year, to what extent have lecturers / teaching staff provided feedback on a draft or work in progress?



Q5: During the current academic year, to what extent have lecturers / teaching staff provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments?

The groups reporting more positive experiences of feedback on tests or completed assignments include older students, Services students, Arts and Humanities students, part-time students, students from the Institutes of Technology and postgraduate students. 20% of students aged 24 years and over report 'very much' compared to 14% of students aged 23 years and under. 19% of Services students and 20% of Arts and Humanities students report 'very much' compared to 10% of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary students and 14% Education students. 35% of Education students report 'very little', far more than for any other single student cohort. 22% of part-time students report 'very much' compared to 15% of full-time students. 19% of students from the Institutes of Technology report 'very much' compared to 15% of University students and 14% of students from other institutions. 19% of postgraduate students report 'very much' compared to 14% of final year students and 17% of first year students. Across all respondents, 17% report 'very much' in response to this question, 28% report 'quite a bit', 34% report 'some' and 22% report 'very little' (not equal to 100% due to rounding).

Q5: During the current academic year, to what extent have lecturers / teaching staff provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments?



5.2 SELECTED QUESTIONS RELATING TO SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

The following analysis looks at non-index questions. The survey includes 22 question items that are not directly related to an index. Seven questions relating to personal growth and skills developments are analysed here. These questions reflect some of the areas explored in the *National Employer Survey* from May 2015. The questions are:

How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas:

- Writing clearly and effectively;
- Speaking clearly and effectively;
- Thinking critically and analytically;
- Analysing numerical and statistical information;
- Acquiring job or work related knowledge and skills;
- Working effectively with others and
- Being an informed and active citizen.

Each question allows four response options: very little, some, quite a bit, and very much. As explained earlier, results are weighted by year / cohort, mode of study, and gender to improve the extent to which respondents reflect the overall target student population. This is regarded as standard practice with survey data. The demographic characteristics that are used in the analysis are Irish /non-Irish, age cohort, gender, field of study, part-time/full-time, institution type, and year cohort (first, final or postgraduate). Since these questions are not part of a composite index, there is no analysis of an aggregate index but rather individual analyses of question items.

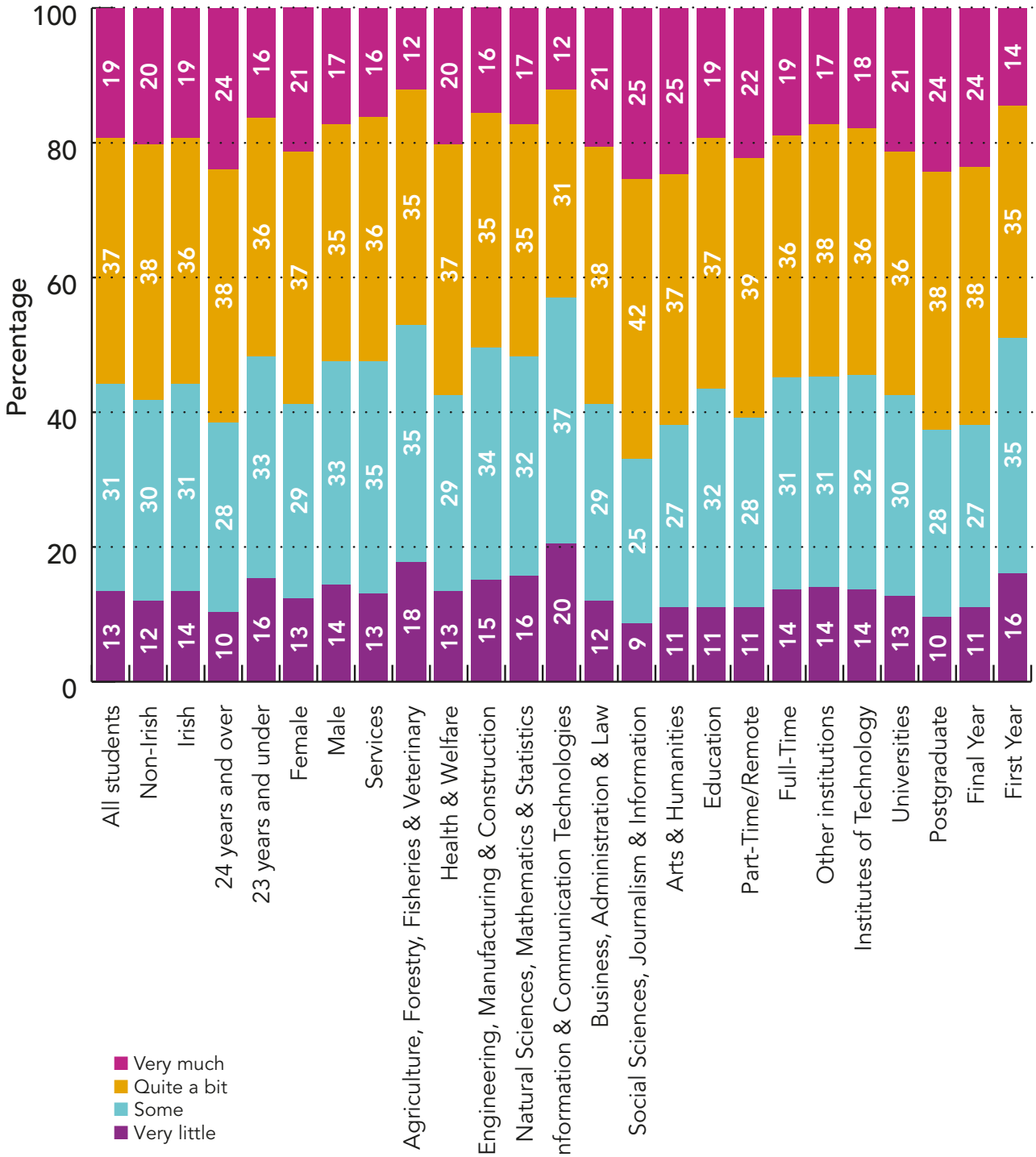
22 questions do not directly relate to an index but are included because they collect valuable data on other aspects of students' experiences.

5.2 .1 DETAILED RESULTS FOR *SELECTED QUESTIONS RELATING TO SKILLS DEVELOPMENT*

Q1: How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following area: Writing clearly and effectively?

The groups reporting more positive experiences of developing clear and effective writing skills include older students, Social sciences, Journalism and Information students, Arts and Humanities students, postgraduate students and final year students. 24% of students aged 24 and over report 'very much' compared to 16% of students aged 23 and under. 25% of both Social sciences, Journalism and Information students and Arts and Humanities students report 'very much' compared to 12% for both Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary students and ICT students. 20% of ICT students report 'very little' in response to this question with another 37% reporting 'some', i.e. 57% of ICT students report poor levels of clear and effective writing skills development. 24% of both postgraduate students and final year students report 'very much' compared to only 14% of first year students. Across all respondents, 19% report 'very much' in response to this question, 37% report 'quite a bit', 31% report 'some' and 13% report 'very little'.

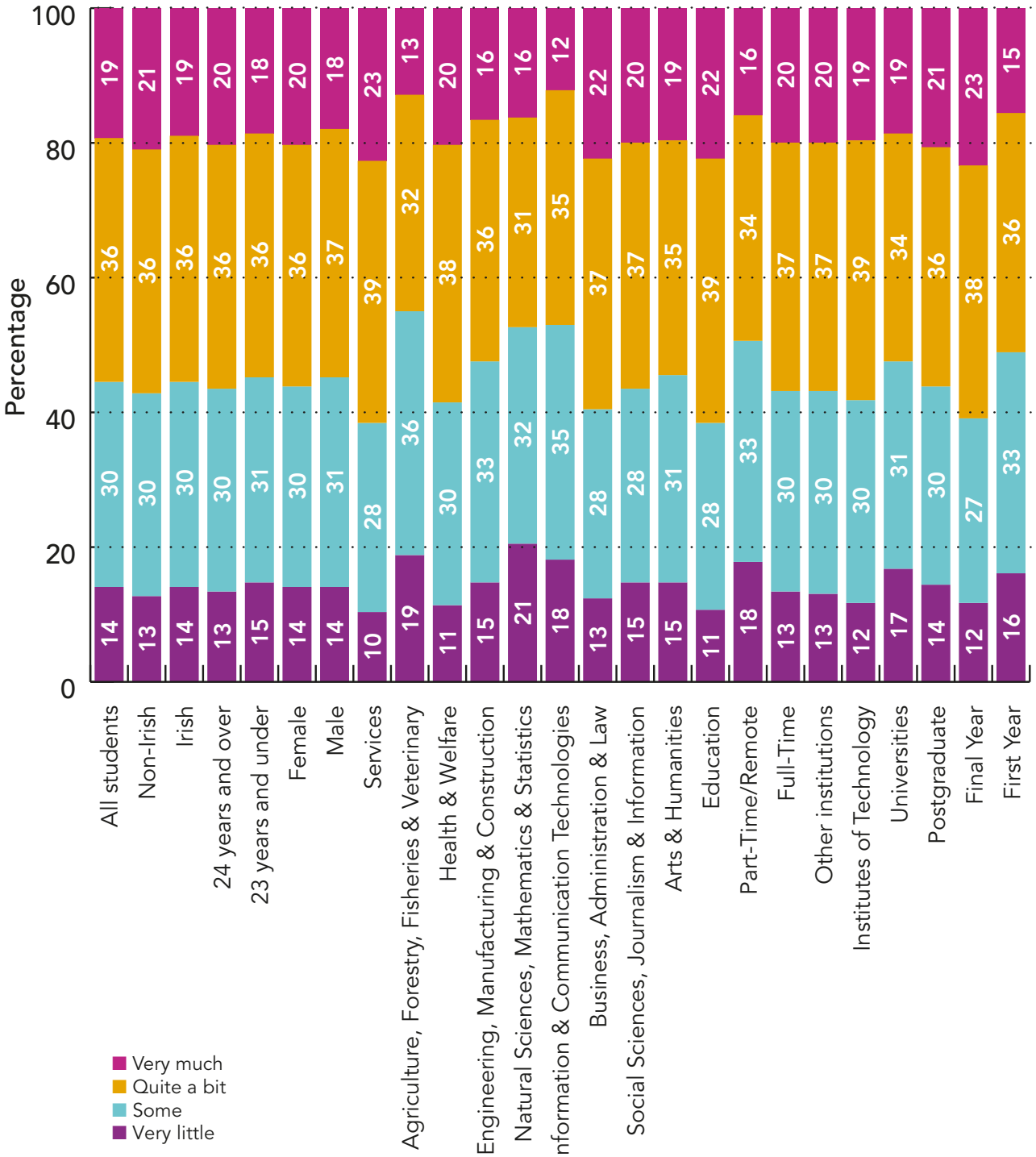
Q1: How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following area: Writing clearly and effectively?



Q2: How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following area: Speaking clearly and effectively?

The groups reporting more positive experiences of developing clear and effective speaking skills include Services students, Business, Administration and Law students, Education students and final year students. 23% of Services students, 22% of Business, Administration and Law students and 22% Education students report 'very much' in comparison only 13% and 12% of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary students and Information and Communication Technologies students respectively report 'very much'. Only 10% of Services students and 11% of Education students report 'very little' in comparison to 19% of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary students and 21% of Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics students. 18% of part-time students report 'very little' with only 16% reporting 'very much'. These figures are 13% and 20% respectively for full-time students. Perhaps this is due to the lower levels of face to face class time experienced by part-time students. Across all respondents, 19% report 'very much' in response to this question, 36% report 'quite a bit', 30% report 'some' and 14% report 'very little' (not equal to 100% due to rounding).

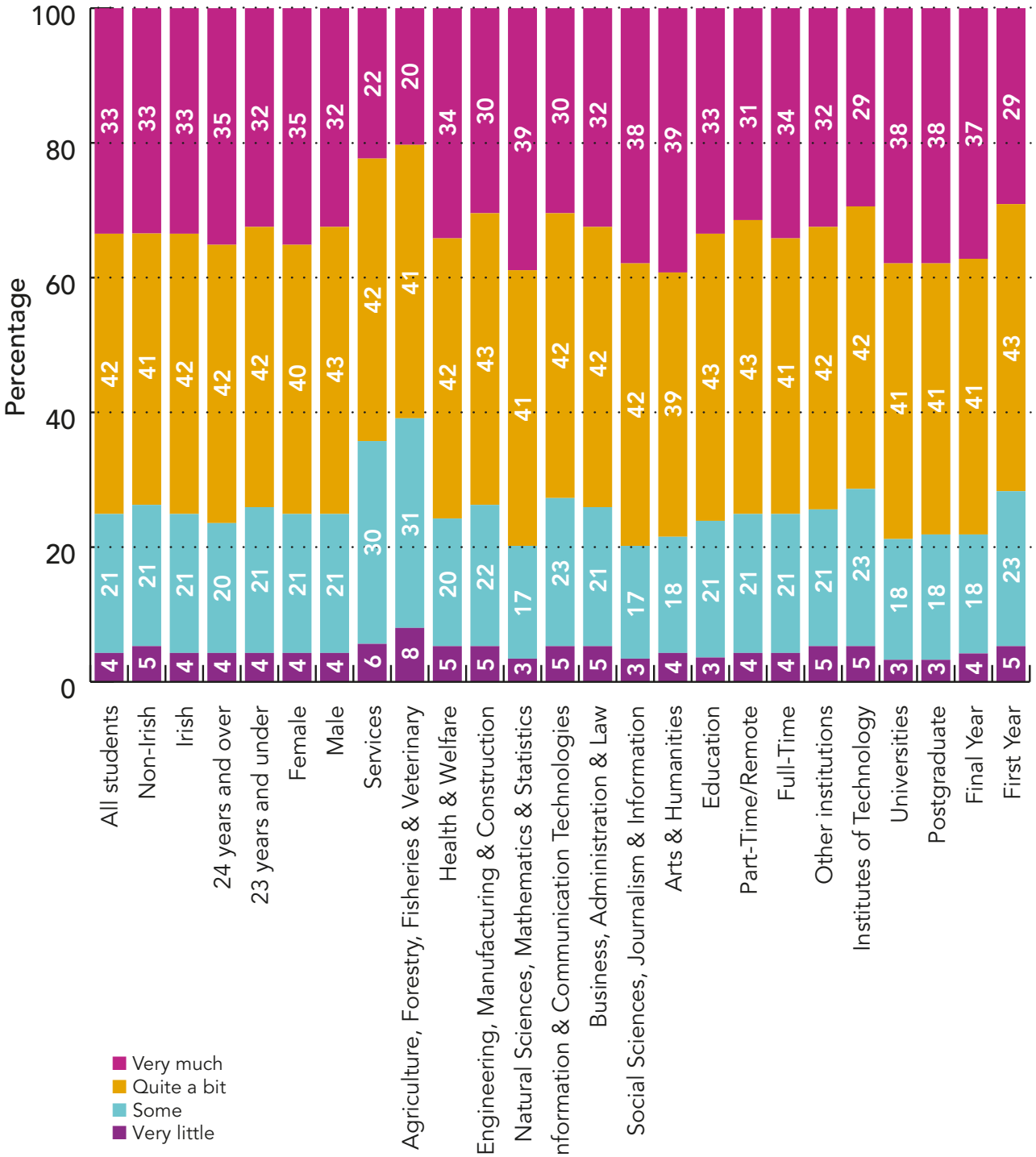
Q2: How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following area: Speaking clearly and effectively?



Q3: How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following area: Thinking critically and analytically?

The groups reporting more positive experiences of developing critical and analytical thinking skills include Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics students, Social Sciencess, Journalism and Information students, Arts and Humanities students, University students, postgraduate students and final year students. 39% of Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics students, 38% of Social Sciencess, Journalism and Information students and 39% of Arts and Humanities students report 'very much' compared to only 22% of Services students and 20% of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary students. 38% of University students report 'very much' compared to only 29% of students from the Institutes of technology. 38% of postgraduate students and 37% of final year students report 'very much' compared to 29% of first year students. Across all respondents, 33% report 'very much' in response to this question, 42% report 'quite a bit', 21% report 'some' and 4% report 'very little'. Responses to this question are, across most cohorts, more positive than the responses to the writing and speaking skills questions above with respondents less likely to report lower levels of development in this area.

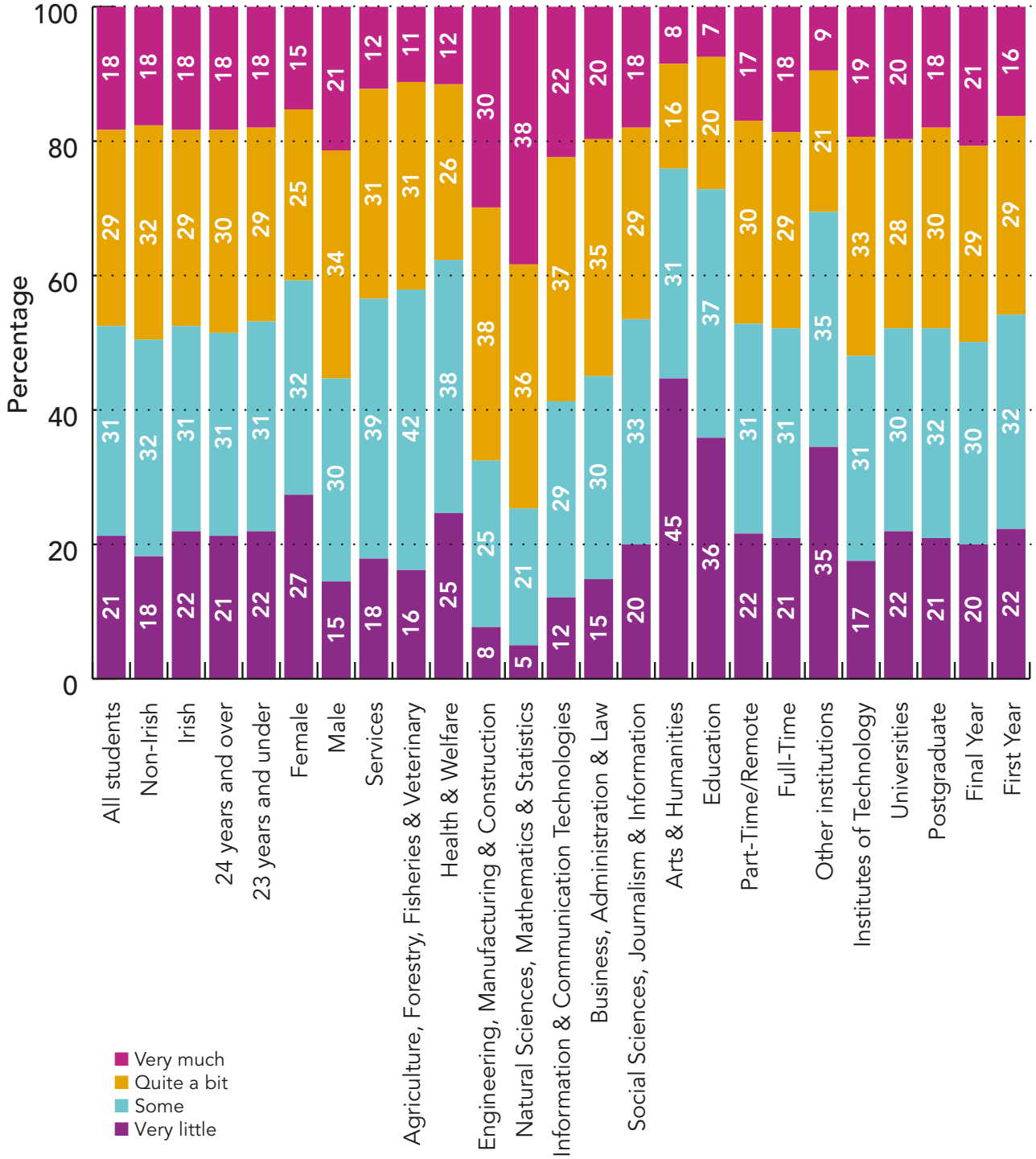
Q3: How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following area: Thinking critically and analytically?



Q4: How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following area: Analysing numerical and statistical information?

Given the specialised nature of these skills, there is greater variance in the responses to this question than to any other question analysed here. The groups reporting more positive experiences of developing numerical and statistical analysis skills include Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction students and Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics students (30% and 38% report 'very much' for these two cohorts respectively). In contrast, only 8% of Arts and Humanities students and 7% of Education students report 'very much' with 45% and 36% reporting 'very little' for these cohorts respectively. Other differences of note here include 21% of males reporting 'very much' compared to 15% of females (only 15% of males report 'very little' compared to 27% of females). Responses are also less positive for students from Other Institutions, perhaps due to the education focus of many of these institutions (less positive responses for the education field in general). Across all respondents, 18% report 'very much' in response to this question, 29% report 'quite a bit', 31% report 'some' and 21% report 'very little' (not equal to 100% due to rounding).

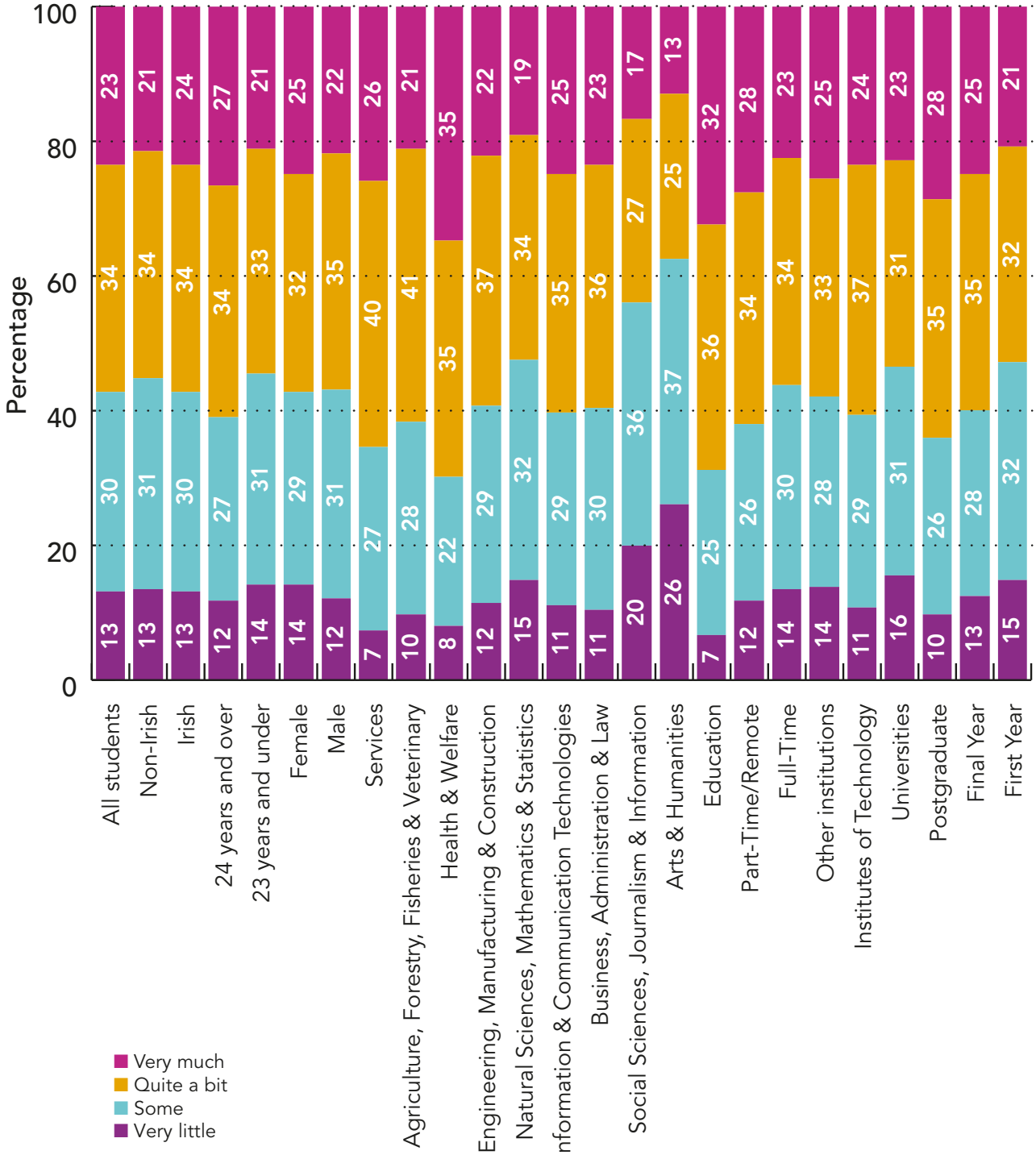
Q4: How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following area: Analysing numerical and statistical information?



Q5: How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following area: Acquiring job or work related knowledge and skills?

The groups reporting more positive experiences of developing work related knowledge and skills include Health and Welfare students, Education students, part-time students and postgraduate students. 35% of Health and Welfare students and 32% of Education students report 'very much' in comparison to only 17% of Social Sciencess, Journalism and Information students and 13% of Arts and Humanities students. This is to be expected as vocationally-oriented courses such as those in the health and education fields tend to include more work-related content than courses for other fields of study. 56% of Social Sciencess, Journalism and Information students and 63% of Arts and Humanities students report either 'very little' or 'some' in response to this question. 28% of part-time students report 'very much' compared to 23% of full-time students. 28% of postgraduate students report 'very much' compared to 25% of final year students and 21% of first year students. Across all respondents, 23% report 'very much' in response to this question, 34% report 'quite a bit', 30% report 'some' and 13% report 'very little'.

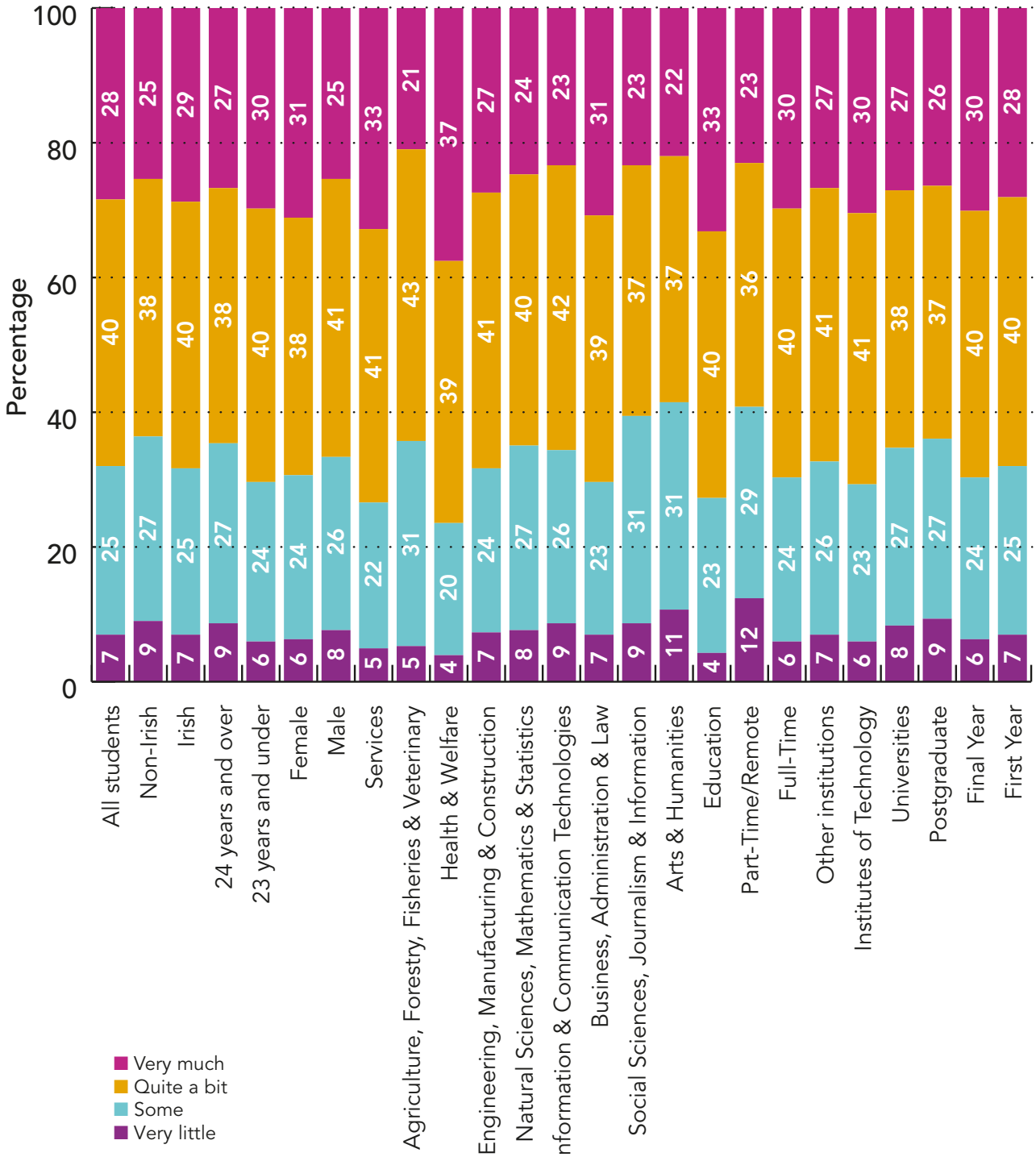
Q5: How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following area: Acquiring job or work related knowledge and skills?



Q6: How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following area: Working effectively with others?

The groups reporting more positive experiences of developing skills to work effectively with others include Services students, Health and Welfare students, Business, Administration and Law students and Education students (33%, 37%, 31% and 33% report 'very much' for each of these cohorts respectively). In contrast, only 21% of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary students, 23% of Information and Communication Technologies students, 23% of Social Sciencess, Journalism and Information students and 22% of Arts and Humanities students report 'very much'. Females report more positive experiences than males – 31% report 'very much' compared to 25% of males. Full-time students report more positive experiences than part-time students – 30% report 'very much' compared to 23% of part time students. 12% of part-time students report 'very little'. Across all respondents, 28% report 'very much' in response to this question, 40% report 'quite a bit', 25% report 'some' and 7% report 'very little' – responses are generally quite positive compared to some other questions with low rates of 'very little' reported across most cohorts.

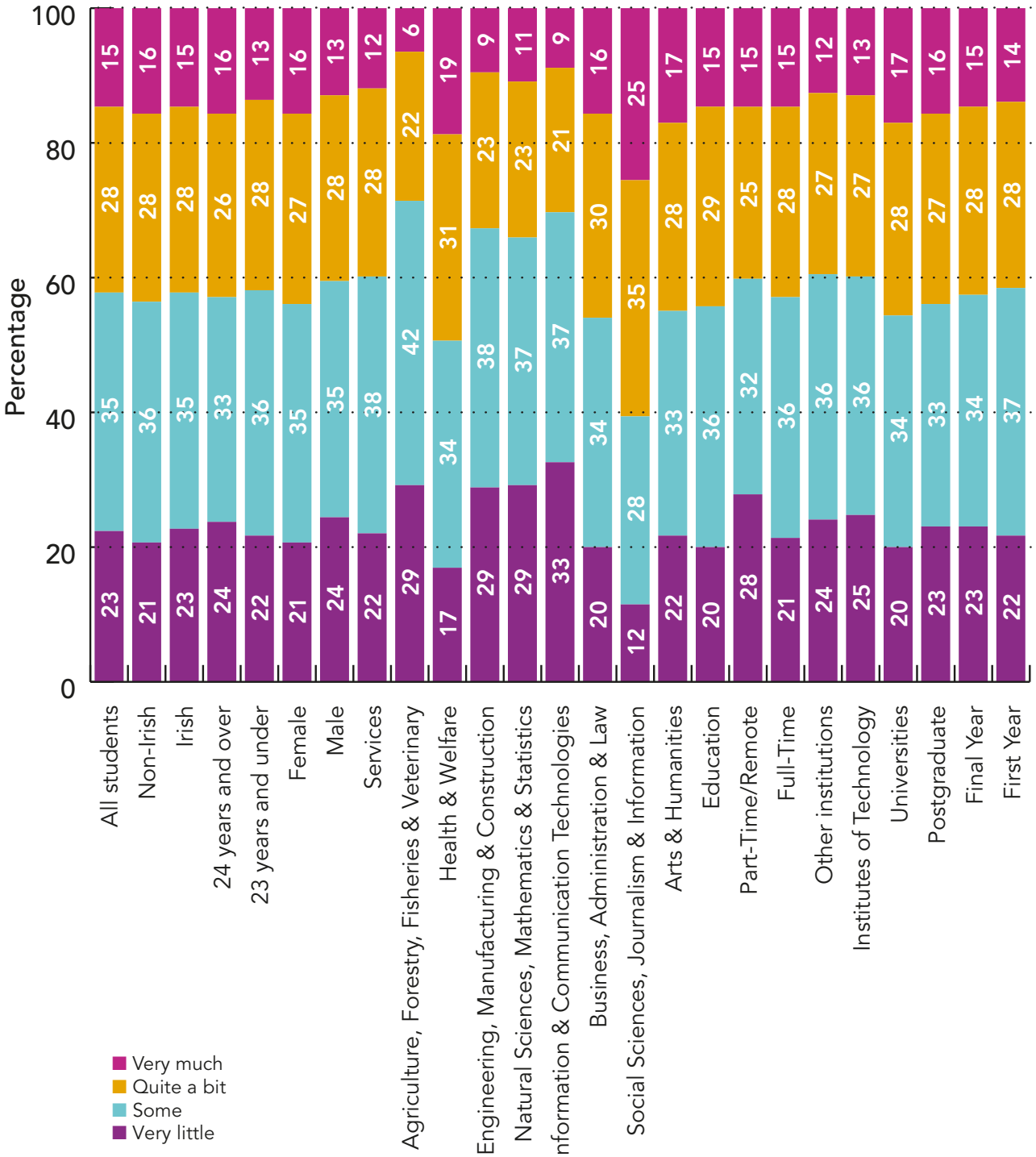
Q6: How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following area: Working effectively with others?



Q7: How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following area: Being an informed and active citizen?

Experiences reported in response to this question are less positive than many of the previous question responses analysed with relatively high proportions of most cohorts reporting 'very little'. The groups reporting more positive experiences of developing skills and knowledge to be a more informed and active citizen include Health and Welfare students and Social Sciencess, Journalism and Information students (19% and 25% report 'very much' for each of these groups respectively). Of course, one may expect quite positive responses to this question from the Social Sciencess, Journalism and Information students. In comparison, only 6% of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary students and 9% of Information and Communication Technologies students report 'very much'. In fact, 72% of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary students and 70% of Information and Communication Technologies students report either 'very little' or 'some' in response to this question. Across all respondents, 15% report 'very much' in response to this question, 28% report 'quite a bit', 35% report 'some' and 23% report 'very little' (not equal to 100% due to rounding).

Q7: How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following area: Being an informed and active citizen?



5.3 GENERAL CONCLUSIONS FOR *EFFECTIVE TEACHING PRACTICES* AND SELECTED QUESTIONS RELATING TO SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

For questions relating to *Effective Teaching Practices*, responses vary considerably between the first three questions relating to clearly defined course goals, organised teaching and the use of examples to explain difficult points, and the final two questions relating to feedback. Responses are more positive in general for the first three questions. Reported experiences relating to feedback are less positive. Certain cohorts report more positive experiences in general across these five questions – older students, part-time students and postgraduate students. Responses from Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary students are less positive in general than the responses from all other students. However, as per the demographics table, there are far less Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary students than students from all of the other main disciplines.

For the selected questions relating to skills development, there is less consistency across the seven questions than is the case for the five questions comprising the *Effective Teaching Practices* index. Although responses are generally quite positive to the 'thinking critically and analytically' question and 'working effectively with others' question, responses to the 'being an informed and active citizen' question are far less positive in general with almost 58% of all students reporting either 'very little' or 'some' in response to the question. Postgraduate and final year students in general report more positive experience across these questions than first year students. Health and Welfare students and Education students also report quite positive experiences across these areas. Once again, the responses from Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary students are far less positive in general.

The questions relating to skills development were selected because they reflect some of the areas explored in the *National Employer Survey 2015*. A summary of responses is shown in the following table, alongside employer responses to related (but differently worded) questions.

It is noted that, due to the target populations, the number of respondents to the employer survey is considerably less than the number of student respondents. The number of valid responses varies for different question items but, for the ISSE item 'writing clearly and effectively', n is 9434 for final year; 3959 for taught postgraduate'. For the Employer survey, n is of the order of 260-298 for indigenous; 177- 182 foreign for these items.

Table 5.3 Selected responses from student and employer surveys

ISSE question item**	Final Year	Postgrad (taught)	National Employer Survey item ***	Indigenous	Foreign
Writing clearly and effectively	62	62	Effective written communication	68	76
Speaking clearly and effectively	61	56	Effective verbal communication	75	84
Analysing numerical and statistical information	50	48	Numeracy / processing and interpreting numeric data	77	92
Working effectively with others	70	64	Working effectively with others	82	88
Informed and active citizen	42	44	Ethically and socially aware	87	91
Thinking critically and analytically	78	78			
Acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills	60	64			

** Percentage of students selecting 'quite a bit' or 'very much' in response to the question "How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills and personal development in the following areas?"

*** Percentage of employers who have expressed satisfaction with at least 75% of graduates recruited in the previous two years

CHAPTER 6
ISSE IN AN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

During development of the national survey for students in Irish higher education, it was regarded as important that any such survey would facilitate consideration of Irish results in an international context, particularly until an understanding had been developed of a substantial national data set. This was one of the factors leading to development of the ISSE in its original form. The question set used in the ISSE from 2013 to 2015 was based on questions used in the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE). The AUSSE was itself based on the US National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). As outlined in previous years' reports of annual results from ISSE, a number of developments in other jurisdictions significantly limited the ability to undertake such comparisons with international data later than 2012. The use of the revised question set in ISSE fieldwork from 2016 increases the potential of analysing ISSE data alongside much of the results from other implementations of NSSE-related surveys. Such surveys are used, in varying forms, in the the UK, the US, Canada, South Africa and China as well as a number of smaller multi-institution initiatives in other countries.

Care is needed to take account of cultural and contextual differences when considering comparisons with other systems. Importantly, comparison of results from any survey of students' experiences will be influenced by the fact that, while the ISSE operates as a system-wide survey for state-funded institutions, participation in other countries' engagement surveys is voluntary and potentially not representative of those entire higher education systems. Other influencing factors include the levels of overall funding available to participating institutions in different countries. Funding of higher education has been subject to much discussion in Ireland (and other countries) in recent years and this is likely to continue in the short to medium term. In this relatively complex context, care should be taken to avoid superficial comparisons of different higher education systems or sub-systems.

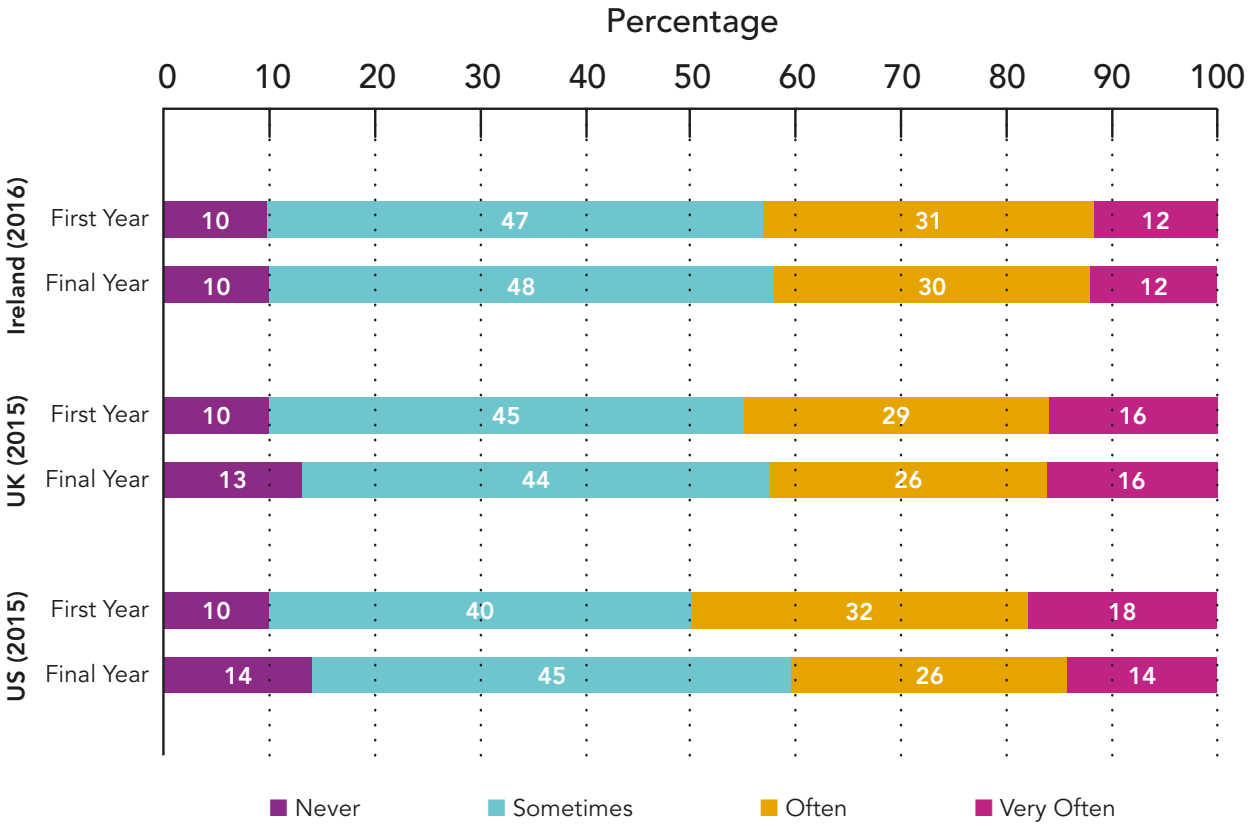
Nevertheless, individual institutions participating in the ISSE have the potential to interpret results from their own students in the context of similar institution-types nationally, all institutions nationally, and selected institutions and institution groupings internationally. It is likely that greatest benefit will ensue, at institutional level, from consideration of data from other individual institutions that may be regarded as models of good practice or as "aspirational comparisons". In general, access to such data would involve direct contact with, and the agreement of, the institution in question.

Two international surveys of student engagement are likely to be of particular interest to Irish institutions, namely the US NSSE[5] and the UK Engagement Survey[6] (UKES). In both cases, participation in the survey by institutions is voluntary. Data used here originates from 2015 fieldwork for these surveys[7].

In line with the pattern identified in previous years' ISSE national reports (from 2013 and 2014), index scores for Ireland in 2016 are, in general, lower than those from the latest US fieldwork (2015). Least difference exists in scores for *Collaborative Learning*. Greatest differences are evident for the index *Student-Faculty Interaction.*

5. http://nsse.indiana.edu/
6. https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/institutions/surveys/uk-engagement-survey
7. Percentage results are presented as integers to correspond to data published internationally

6.1 Asked another student to help you understand course material

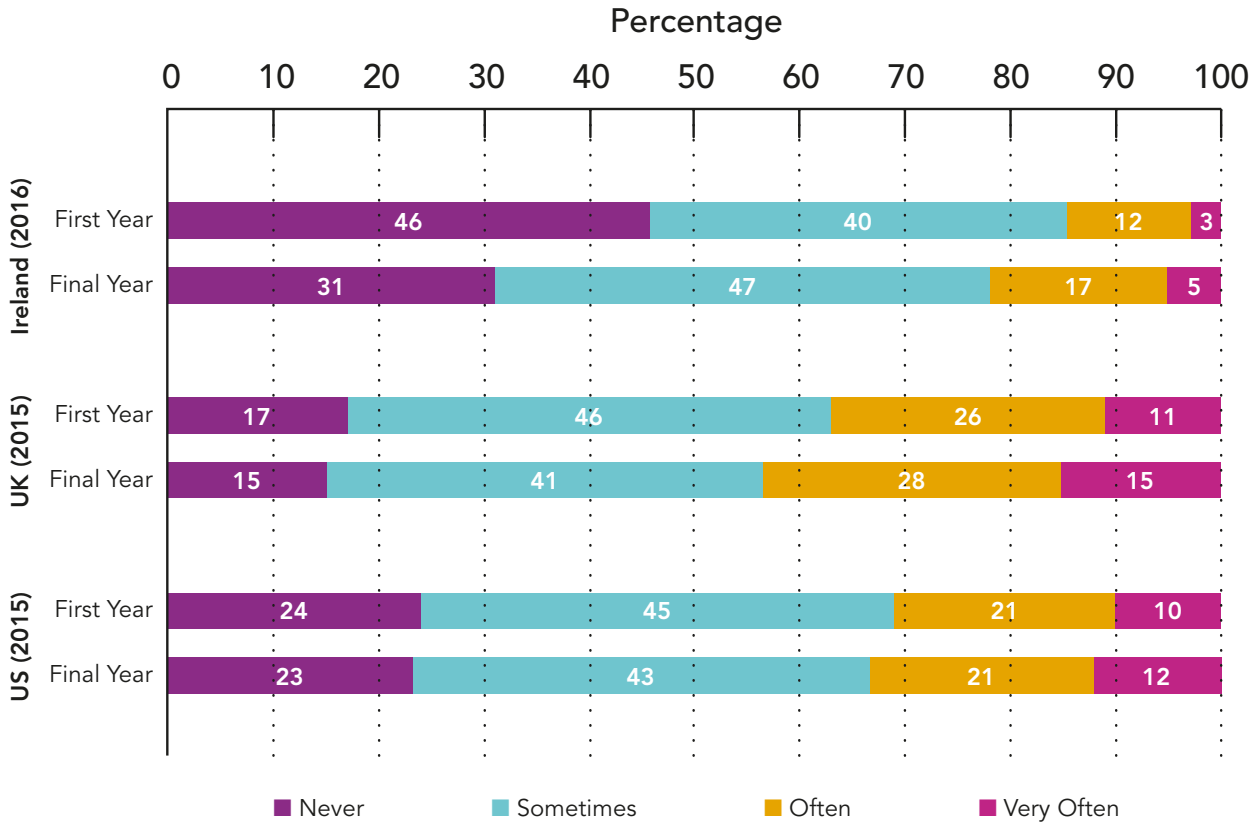


Results from the UKES are not presented using indices but many individual questions are closely related to the items used in the ISSE and NSSE. Responses to a number of questions that relate to *Collaborative Learning* and to *Student-Faculty Interaction* are illustrated in these charts.

For this question relating to *Collaborative Learning*, the chart illustrates that there is very little difference in the percentage of final year students who ask other students for help 'often' or 'very often' (Ireland 42%, UK 43%, US 40%). There is greater difference between first year students in the US who choose the two most positive responses and those in Ireland or the UK (Ireland 43%, UK 45%, US 50%). The differences illustrated between countries are not statistically significant for first years or for final years.

Student interaction with academic staff is explored with question items relating to the ISSE index, *Student Faculty Interaction*. The index from the original survey, titled *Student Staff Interactions*, was identified as an area for development in previous annual reports and Irish results over several years are summarised in section 4.2.1 of this report. One of the specific questions in the revised ISSE asks about how often students have discussed their performance with academic staff. Responses to this question can also be explored in an international context.

6.2 Discussed your performance with academic staff



This chart illustrates the notably different experiences reported by students in the three surveys. 46% of first years in Ireland report that they have 'never' discussed their performance with academic staff. The equivalent percentage in the US is 24% and in the UK is 17%. (Note that the UK question is subtly different as it asked about discussing performance and / or feedback). In Ireland, 15% of first years report discussing their performance with academic staff 'often' or 'very often' while 37% of UK respondents and 31% of US respondents report this experience.

As outlined at the start of this chapter, local contexts should always be considered. It is possible, perhaps likely, that the timing of fieldwork impacts students' responses. Both the UK and US surveys operate fieldwork up to June of each academic year whereas the ISSE closes at the end of March. A number of other factors impact on the potential statistical significance of these differences and it is important, as with other ISSE results, to seek to fully appreciate the context.

Regardless of some contextual influences, the results illustrated in this chart warrant further exploration and discussion within institutions and more widely. The National Forum enhancement theme of assessment offers one timely vehicle for such exploration.

CHAPTER 7
NEXT STEPS

7.1 EXPLORING THE POTENTIAL OF ISSE DATA

It is essential that collection of data on students' experiences leads to analysis, appropriate action and feedback to students. Survey data are of potential interest and benefit to inform discussion of many different aspects of the student experience. This variety is reflected across institutions currently participating in the ISSE. Within institutions, the lead role for the ISSE may reside within units / committees dealing with teaching and learning, quality, strategy, student supports or within the offices of Registrars or Vice-Presidents. The location is entirely a matter for individual institutions. Most institutions find it most effective to ensure that academic and administrative staff and local student representatives are fully informed of the importance of the survey and of analysis and interpretation of results.

That national project continues to seek to support and facilitate wider understanding of ISSE data. Briefings and discussions are facilitated for various stakeholders including the statutory quality assurance agency, Quality and Qualifications Ireland. ISSE also participates in the national working group for the pilot of the National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP) which is a collaborative initiative of the Union of Students in Ireland (USI), the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). The National Student Engagement Programme will develop student capabilities and institutional capacity to enhance engagement at all levels across the higher education system with a particular focus on quality assurance and institutional structures.

As in 2015, a series of workshops has taken place in partnership with the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning. These workshops were aimed at academic staff and explored three years' collated data from the perspective of different disciplines. The collation of three years' data ensured that significant data sets were available for all broad fields of study. Data used in these workshops has been published on **http://studentsurvey.ie/isse-subject-based-data-workshops/**

As mentioned in section 4.3, the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning has chosen Assessment as its enhancement theme for 2016 to 2018. The Forum defines three distinct aspects of assessment:

- **Assessment OF Learning**: completing assessment to demonstrate learning. This is the traditional approach to assessing students' learning in order to ensure that they have achieved the learning outcomes and have met a specified standard.
- **Assessment FOR Learning**: using assessment to give feedback on teaching and student learning. This involves teachers taking the lead in exploring and understanding student progress in order to enhance teaching approaches. It focuses on how teachers can use information about students' knowledge, understanding and skills to inform their teaching strategies and their students' learning. Assessment FOR Learning is strongly formative in nature, as, in addition to giving feedback to staff, it also is used as the basis for providing descriptive feedback to students.
- **Assessment AS Learning**: student empowerment and engagement to become a better learner. The process involves students actively engaging in self-monitoring or self-regulating their own learning.

National Forum activities will profile current assessment practices across ISCED fields and sub-fields in Irish higher education. The ISSE data will enhance and inform this research by adding valuable information regarding how students experience current assessment practices. Twenty four specific ISSE questions have been broadly classified as relating to Assessment OF, FOR or AS Learning. The intention is to analyse the data from these questions to inform subsequent activities.

7.2 CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT

In January 2015, after the first non-pilot survey, a report was published online demonstrating how participating institutions were raising awareness of the ISSE by providing feedback and utilising survey data. The report, *Effective feedback and uses of ISSE data: an emerging picture*[8], provided examples and short case studies of how institutions were committed to realising the potential of the data. That report included a number of potential indicators of impact for institutions. These included multi-year analysis of data; an evidence base for understanding of relative strengths and weaknesses; particular discussion at faculty / school / working group levels; and, potentially, specific personnel with responsibility for overview of ISSE-related aspects of the student experience. These indicators of impact are increasingly visible within institutions and the ISSE is increasingly becoming embedded into institutional operational calendars and practice.

Project partners are determined to continue to offer additional benefits to institutions and wider stakeholders and have initiated a process to consider strategic priorities for future developments. Consultation is underway at the time of writing but there is interest in developing and implementing a discrete survey that is relevant to the experiences of postgraduate research students. Institutions have also expressed an interest in offering optional additional questions to their students in order to investigate particular local or topical themes.

The capacity of individual institutions to analyse and interpret data in a timely manner continues to present challenges to harnessing the full potential of the ISSE. The national project is committed to promoting and supporting such local analysis via national, regional and bespoke workshops. A number of institutions have also availed of additional configuration and presentation of data to reflect internal organisational structures. This approach supports discussions at, for example, faculty level. Working groups are acutely aware of the need to balance actions to facilitate appropriate interaction with the data by greater numbers of staff and students within institutions, against the benefits of encouraging greater ownership and deeper understanding within institutions. In summary, the given the need for clear understanding of the local context, the national project seeks to work with those institutions that request additional support rather than to undertake analysis for them.

The national project also considers it timely to facilitate and encourage further analysis of the increasingly large, comprehensive data set. Chapters 5 and 6 of this report provide starting points for some examples of such analysis. Project partners will explore appropriate approaches to deeper examination of multivariate analysis to examine in greater depth the 'cross-pollination' effect of relationships outlined in table 5.1.2. Further exploration of ISSE data in an international context would also be informative and could, for example, examine different disciplines to gain a deeper understanding of the notable variations in national data.

8. http://studentsurvey.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/ISSE-Feedback-Report.pdf

APPENDIX 1
PROJECT RATIONALE AND GOVERNANCE

The *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*, published in 2011, recommended that higher education institutions should put in place systems to capture feedback from students to inform institutional and programme management, as well as national policy. It also recommended that every higher education institution should put in place a comprehensive anonymous student feedback system, coupled with structures to ensure that action is taken promptly in relation to student concerns. This recommendation was informed by legislation (namely, reference to the involvement of students in evaluating the quality of their educational experience in the *Universities Act, 1997*, and the *Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999*) and other key policy drivers such as *Standards and Guidance for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, (ENQA 2005 and 2009), and *Common Principles for Student Involvement in Quality Assurance/Quality Enhancement* (IHEQN 2009). The National Strategy report noted in 2011 that "substantial progress (in this area) has been made" but also stated that "students still lack confidence in the effectiveness of current mechanisms and there remains considerable room for improvement in developing student feedback mechanisms and in closing feedback loops."

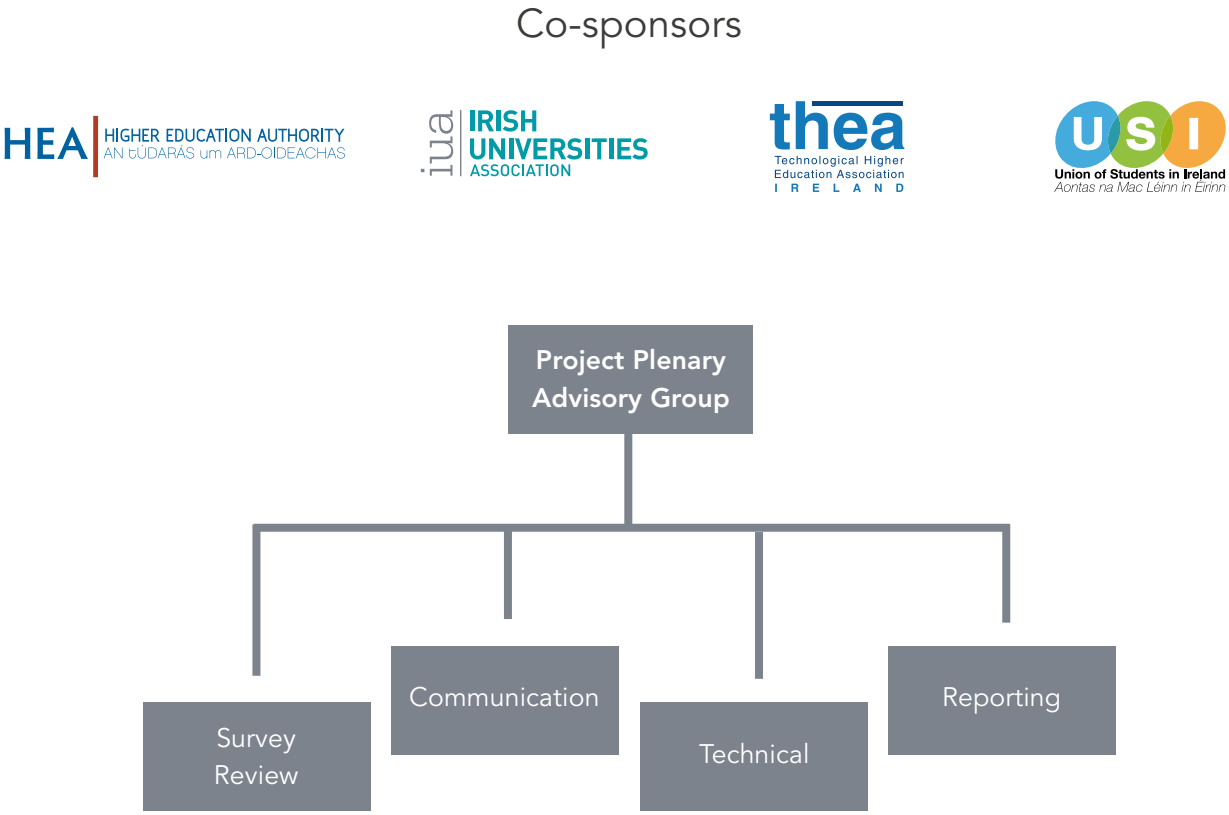
In 2012, a national project structure was established which was representative of all institutions, relevant agencies and the Union of Students in Ireland. This project team implemented a pilot national student survey in 2013 involving all Universities, Institutes of Technology and most colleges of education. The national pilot was regarded as successful, with 12,732 students from twenty six institutions responding to the survey. It was agreed to proceed to first full implementation in 2014 and future years. A full report on implementation of the 2013 national pilot, and other resources and results from subsequent years' implementation, are published at **www.studentsurvey.ie.**

Implementation of the Irish Survey of Student Engagement is funded by the Higher Education Authority as a shared service for participating institutions. The project is co-sponsored by the Higher Education Authority (HEA), the Irish Universities Association (IUA), the Technological Higher Education Association (THEA), and the Union of Students in Ireland (USI).

The governance and management structures for the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) were designed to ensure wide representation of partner higher education institutions and sponsoring organisations. A Project Plenary Advisory Group was established with representatives from Universities, Institutes of Technology, Quality and Qualifications Ireland, and the project co-sponsors (HEA, IUA, THEA and USI). This Plenary Group is responsible for the overall management of the project. There are a number of working groups addressing specific aspects of the project. These include survey design / review, technical, communications and reporting. Each of the sub groups is chaired by a member of the Plenary Group and members are nominated by participating organisations. A full-time project manager was appointed to lead developments and to ensure coherence and consistency between the various elements of the project.

9. http://www.hea.ie/sites/default/files/national_strategy_for_higher_education_2030.pdf
10. The statutory quality assurance agency, www.QQI.ie

Figure A.1 Project working group structures



APPENDIX 2 METHODOLOGY

A.2.1 PROCESS TO REVISE THE SURVEY INSTRUMENT

A detailed review of the question items used in the Irish Survey of Student Engagement was undertaken in 2015 with the key objective of providing an improved instrument to inform discussions and activities relating to enhancement, within institutions and at national level. A specific working group was formed with representation from participating institutions and relevant national organisations such as the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, the Union of Students in Ireland (USI), and Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). A rigorous process was undertaken, leading to the revised question set presented in this report.

The Survey Review Group sought to achieve the following objectives:

- To reflect the breadth and richness of the higher education experience
- To focus on aspects of student engagement that can be acted upon by institutions, while taking account of the uses of data by other project partners
- To maintain the ability to interpret ISSE data in the context of equivalent international measures by improving the survey to increase clarity and reduce any ambiguity in the wording of question items; and by reducing the number of questions by excluding items relating to data that are available elsewhere.

The revised question set maintains the usefulness of survey data for a range of stakeholders including individual institutions, similar institution-types, national bodies, and students, and facilitates analysis and interpretation of trend data gathered through multiple iterations of the survey.

The original question items were used consistently in the 2013 national pilot and in fieldwork for 2014 and 2015. The only exception is the final question; the final question from the pilot survey asked about students' views on the survey instrument itself and contributed to evaluation of the pilot, whereas the final question used thereafter asked about how students had heard of the survey.

Consistent feedback was received that the time needed to complete the survey was likely to have a limiting (negative) effect on participation rates. The length of the original survey was also perceived to contribute to the fact that a notable proportion of respondents who answered the first questions did not progress to the end of the survey (in each of the three national implementations to date). Nevertheless, it was viewed as important to maintain the same question set for three iterations of the survey in order to increase the size of the aggregate dataset and to contribute to increased understanding of the value of specific data to institutions and other partners. It was regarded as timely, therefore, to revise the instrument based on experiences after three years' fieldwork and utilisation of resulting data. In addition, a number of developments internationally affected the ability to review ISSE data alongside broadly similar data from other higher education systems. The original ISSE question set was based on the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE), which was itself closely related to the US National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The NSSE had been revised in 2013 and the AUSSE had effectively ceased after 2012 due to the introduction of an alternative mandatory survey.

The approach taken by the working group involved a comparison of individual question items, using original ISSE questions as the foundation. This approach took account of the benefits of considering trends within existing data and the increasing awareness and uses of question responses by institutions. The group sought to accommodate the "relative value" of indices whilst maintaining a comprehensive set of individual questions which informs a deep understanding of the student experience of higher education.

The group considered a range of factors in order to identify questions for potential removal from the survey. These included:

- questions that do not contribute to ISSE indicators
- questions that are unclear or ambiguous
- questions which elicit negative or confused reactions from students
- questions that require excessive time to respond to (for example, requiring computational skills to calculate time spent on average)
- questions for which data are available from other sources, such as library IT systems
- questions that were deleted in the revision of NSSE, and
- questions that do not contribute to (revised) NSSE indicators.

The group then reviewed the remaining questions for clarity and lack of ambiguity. Participating institutions were consulted on draft question sets and these were also tested with students, from target cohorts in a range of institutions, through focus groups and cognitive interviews. The question set presented in this report was then agreed by the specific working group in advance of 2016 fieldwork.

It is noteworthy that, while discussions began with current ISSE questions and indices, careful consideration of amendments led to rewording and deletion of some questions, most of which correspond to revisions introduced with the update of NSSE. Some question items were introduced to fully populate new indicators that are used in NSSE, enabling appropriate testing of validity and reliability. Testing the reliability of the revised instrument using data generated from 2016 fieldwork was undertaken by an independent third party and the report is published on **www.studentsurvey.ie**

One of the outcomes of adopting the revised question set is that it will be possible to compare data generated from the ISSE with equivalent data from similar surveys in use internationally, taking due account of cultural and contextual differences.

A.2.2
STRUCTURE OF THE REVISED SURVEY

The process to review the ISSE led to retention, amendment, removal and addition of question items. This, in turn, led to the introduction of new indices as illustrated in figure A.2.1

Figure A.2.1 Structure of revised ISSE

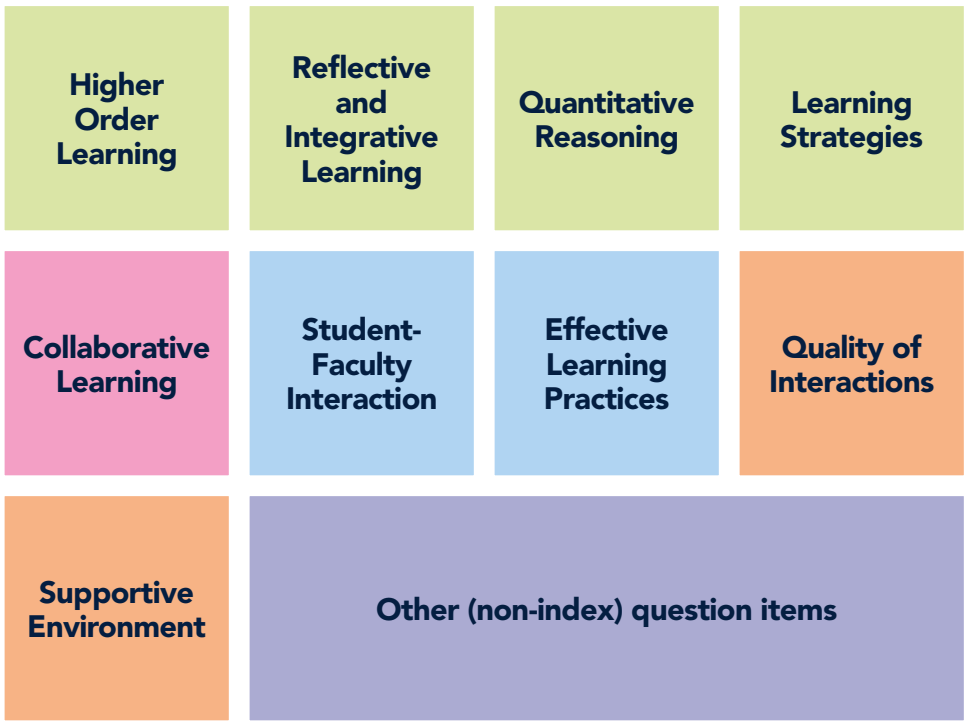


Figure A.2.2 Revision of the ISSE

Original ISSE index	Revised index	Commentary
Academic Challenge (AC)	Higher Order Learning (HO) Reflective and Integrative Learning (RI) Learning Strategies (LS) Quantitative Reasoning (QR)	New indices focus on specific dimensions of academic effort. HO: 4 of 4 revised items broadly match original questions. RI: 5 of 7 revised items relate to original items
Active Learning (AL)	Collaborative Learning (CL)	Emphasis changed to student-student collaboration. 2 of 4 revised items relate to original items
Student-Staff Interactions (SSI)	Student-Faculty Interaction (SF) Effective Teaching Practices (ET)	Additional index (ET) relating to effective teaching practices. SF: 4 of 4 revised items relate to original items

Original ISSE index	Revised index	Commentary
Enriching Educational Experiences (EEE)	Index not retained	Individual informative questions retained, some of which contribute to updated indicators
Supportive Learning Environment (SLE)	**Quality of Interactions (QI)** **Supportive Environment (SE)**	Extended to distinguish between interactions with key people and perceptions of the overall learning environment. QI: 4 of 5 revised items broadly match original items. SE: 6 of 8 revised items broadly match original items
Work Integrated Learning (WIL)	Index not retained	Individual informative questions retained. Other data is available from other sources
Higher Order Thinking (HOT)	**Higher Order Learning (HO)**	HO: 4 of 4 revised items broadly match original questions
General Learning Outcomes (LRN)	Index not retained	Individual informative questions retained
General Development Outcomes (DEV)	Index not retained	Individual informative questions retained
Career Readiness (CRE)	Index not retained	Individual informative questions retained
Overall Satisfaction (OVL)	Index not retained	Two of three original questions retained

Greater detail on the comparison of the full question sets used in each version of the instrument is available at **http://studentsurvey.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Question-items-ISSE-and-revised-ISSE-2016.pdf**

A.2.3 TARGET STUDENT COHORT

The target student cohort for the ISSE is first year and final year undergraduate students and taught postgraduate students i.e. all first-year and final-year undergraduate students pursuing programmes leading to qualifications included in the National Framework of Qualifications[11] (NFQ) at levels 6, 7 and 8, and students pursuing taught postgraduate programmes leading to qualifications included in the NFQ at levels 8 and 9. All modes of study are included (full-time, part-time, distance, e-learning or in-service). Students are invited to respond to an online survey during fieldwork which takes place during February and March. Each participating institution selects the most appropriate three week period for local fieldwork during this national window. The intention is to ask students about their experiences at a stage when first years have sufficient experience to respond in an informed manner and other students have completed sufficient time to reflect on their experiences while avoiding the significant demands on their time at the end of the academic year.

An extract from institutions' student records systems is used to provide certain limited contextual demographic data which are associated with student responses for high-level analysis. This approach means that students are not required to input these data when participating in the survey, but that these data could enable analysis of subgroups, for example by demographic and contextual factors such as gender, full-time or part-time, broad field of study. Data returned to institutions are cleaned to remove student identifiers, dates of birth, and any names that may have been included in free text responses.

11.www.nfq.ie

APPENDIX 3 **PARTICIPATION IN ISSE 2016**

The following institutions participated in ISSE 2016. Percentage figures represent the proportion of target student cohorts that responded to at least some survey questions.

Universities	
Dublin City University	32.0%
Maynooth University	21.9%
National University of Ireland Galway	27.9%
Trinity College Dublin	22.8%
University College Cork	11.7%
University College Dublin	13.4%
University of Limerick	13.4%

Institutes of Technology	
Athlone Institute of Technology	54.4%
Cork Institute of Technology	21.7%
Dublin Institute of Technology	21.6%
Dundalk Institute of Technology	13.2%
Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology	30.1%
Institute of Art, Design and Technology	13.2%
Institute of Technology Blanchardstown	17.9%
Institute of Technology Carlow	26.4%
Institute of Technology Sligo	21.7%
Institute of Technology Tallaght, Dublin	18.9%
Institute of Technology Tralee	42.0%
Letterkenny Institute of Technology	32.5%
Limerick Institute of Technology	31.3%
Waterford Institute of Technology	12.0%

Other institutions	
Church of Ireland College of Education	48.1%
Marino Institute of Education	29.8%
Mary Immaculate College, Limerick	49.4%
Mater Dei Institute of Education	46.9%
National College of Art and Design	45.5%
National College of Ireland	19.3%
Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland	26.7%
St. Angela's College, Sligo	23.9%
St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra	28.4%

NOTES

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