

**Student Transformative Learning Record (STLR)  
Activity for Academic Year**

**2020/2021**

**in the**

**School of Business TU Dublin (Blanchardstown)**

**REPORT**

**July 2021**



**STUDENT  
TRANSFORMATIVE  
LEARNING RECORD**

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## Executive Summary

This report provides a review of the Student Transformative Learning (STLR) initiative within the School of Business for academic year 2020/21. The results of this review show:

- Student engagement reached 66% for the academic year 2020/21
- Staff feedback is positive and encouraging and staff have retained engagement with STLR during the pandemic.
- 64 events and 47 continuous assessments were STLR-tagged.
- Quality framework underpinning STLR was presented to Registrars and Quality officers across TU Dublin. Very positive feedback was received from all.
- Dr. Larry McNutt, Registrar on the Blanchardstown campus endorsed the Transformative Learning transcript by approving his digital signature to be placed on all transcripts.
- TU Dublin's first Transformative Learning Transcripts were released to students on the 7<sup>th</sup> July 2020
- STLR was named under draft framework of education model
- Actual expenditure is below budget.
- Covid-19 did have an effect on activity levels.

The proposed next steps are presented at the end of this report.

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This document will provide a summary of the initial findings during academic year 2020/21 in the School of Business and compare these findings to academic year 2019/2020. The following sections are included in this report:

- Summary Findings & Comparisons
- Student Engagement with STLR
- Engagement: Programme Perspectives
- Staff Engagement
- Competencies Tagged
- STLR Recognition
- Quality assurances and Registrars Approval
- Transformative Learning Transcripts released to Students
- Progress on development of Moodle plugin to support STLR roll out across TU Dublin
- STLR across TU Dublin
- Effect of COVID-19
- Qualitative Feedback
- Higher Education Authority Reporting
- Actual expenditure to date
- STLR initiative going forward
- Concluding Comments

It should be noted that staff and student engagement is defined as:

- Student engagement – students who have availed of a transformative learning opportunity
- Staff engagement – staff who have provided, organised or facilitated a transformative learning opportunity for students.

## 2. SUMMARY FINDINGS AND COMPARISONS

### 2.1 Key statistics for academic year 2020/2021 and 2019/2021

	2020/2021	2019/2020
<b>Total # of students</b>	1,104	795
<b>Overall student engagement</b>	66% (734 student)	77% (599 students)
<b>STLR tagged events</b>	64	44
<b>STLR tagged continuous assessments</b>	47	44
<b>Programme providing the most STLR tagged opportunities</b>	International Business & Sports Management & Coaching	Accounting & Finance
<b>Programme providing the least STLR tagged opportunities</b>	Bachelor of Business Part Time	Business & IT and Digital Marketing
<b>Highest student engagement per programme</b>	Digital Cert 100% (n=14) Accounting & Finance 82% (n=108)	91% student engagement on the Accounting & Finance programme (# of students in ACFN = 94)
<b>Lowest student engagement per programme</b>	14% student engagement on the Bachelor of Business Part Time programme (# of students in BBS P/T = 110) SMCO had the lowest full time programme engagement levels at 66%.	6% student engagement on the Bachelor of Business Part Time programme (# of students in BBS P/T = 86) BSIT had the lowest full time programme engagement levels with 67% (# of students = 97)
<b>Competency most tagged</b>	Research & Innovation Competency Building	Research & Innovation Competency Building
<b>Competency least tagged</b>	Civic Knowledge Skills & Experience	Global Culture Competency
<b>Staff engagement <i>(It is important to note there are many staff within and outside the School of Business who are supporting STLR but who may not have directly STLR tagged an event or CA).</i></b>	31 (School of Business, Professional Staff, & Staff on other campuses)	31 (School of Business and Professional Staff)

Table 1: Key Statistics for full year 2020/21 with 2019/2020 comparative figures

### 3. STUDENT ENGAGEMENT WITH STLR

#### 3.1 Student Engagement in 2020/21

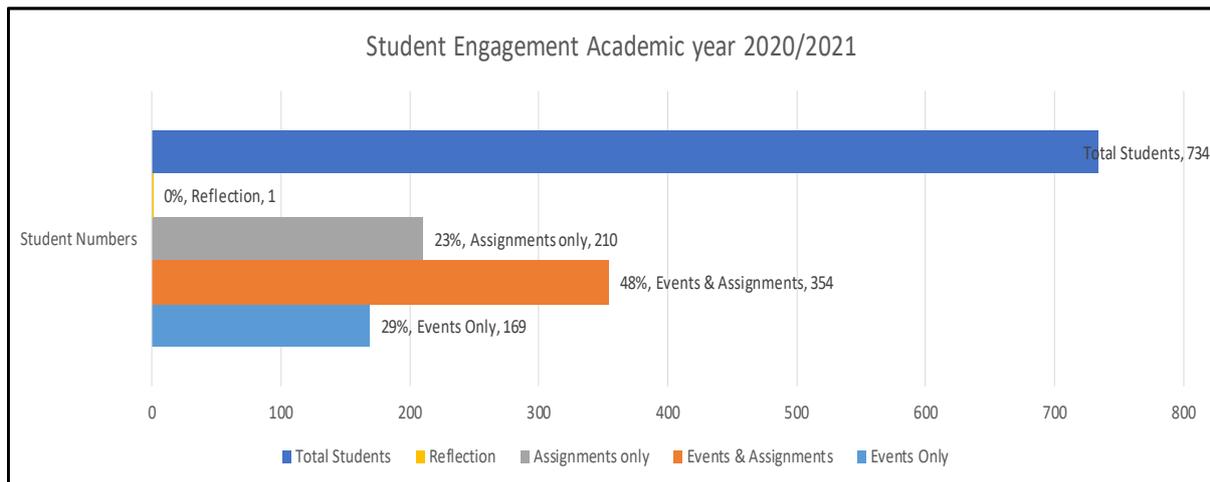
Overall student engagement in STLR within the School of Business was **66% (n=734) students, in comparison to 75% (n=599) in the previous academic year.**

Students engaged in STLR by:

1. Attending a STLR tagged event
2. Completing a STLR tagged continuous assessment which was graded against a STLR rubric.
3. Submitting a student reflection

Students may have engaged in both a STLR tagged event and continuous assessment or a STLR tagged event only or a STLR tagged continuous assessment only. Figure 1 illustrates engagement levels across events, continuous assessment and reflection for Academic year 2020/21 and Academic year 2019/20.

#### Academic year 2020/2021



#### Academic year 2019/2020

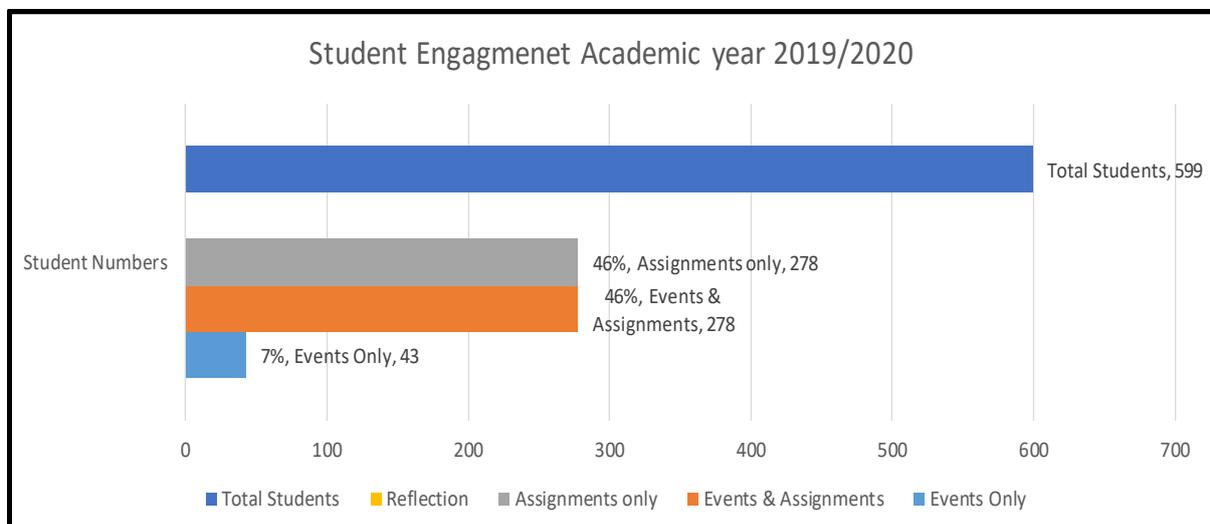


Figure 1: Number of students who engaged in a STLR tagged event and/or continuous assessment.

## 4. ENGAGEMENT: PROGRAMME PERSPECTIVES

### 4.1 Engagement: Programme perspective academic year 2020/21

For the purpose of analysis, the number of STLR Tagged Events and Continuous Assessment opportunities available to students was disaggregated by programme in the School of Business. The following figure shows the level of engagement in STLR by different programmes across the School of Business.

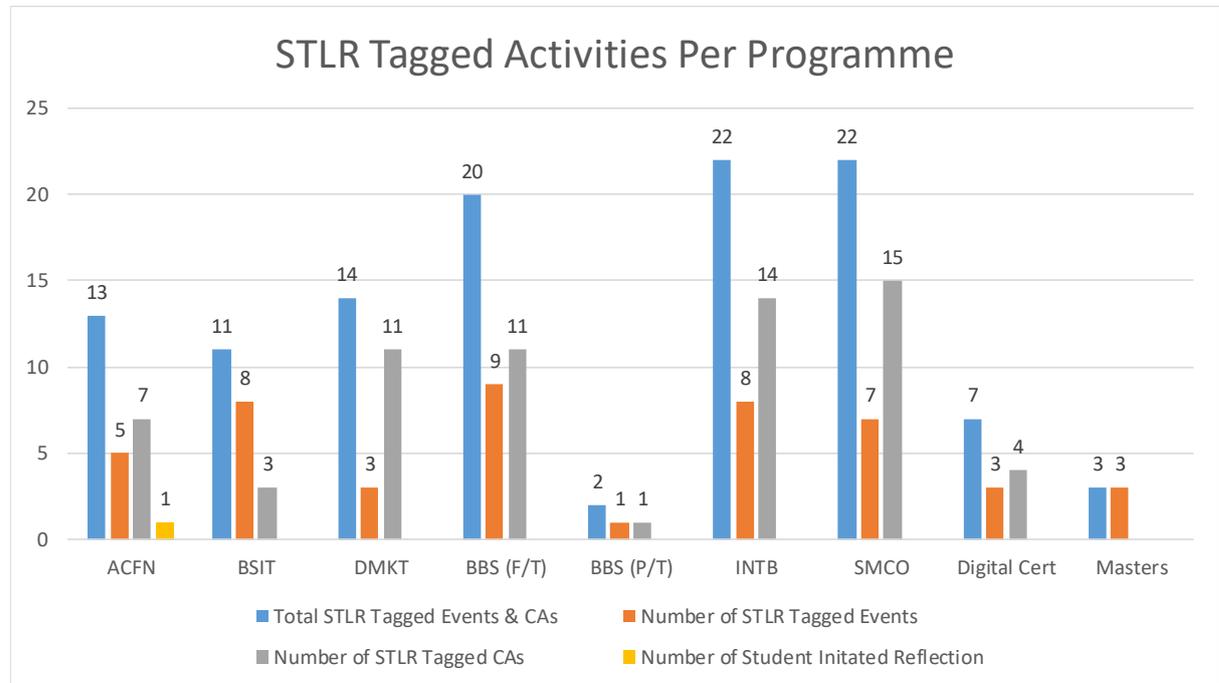


Figure 2: STLR tagged events and continuous assessments per programme

The following figure illustrates the student engagement by programme. It should be noted that even though a programme may offer many STLR-tagged opportunities, it may not be reflected in student engagement.

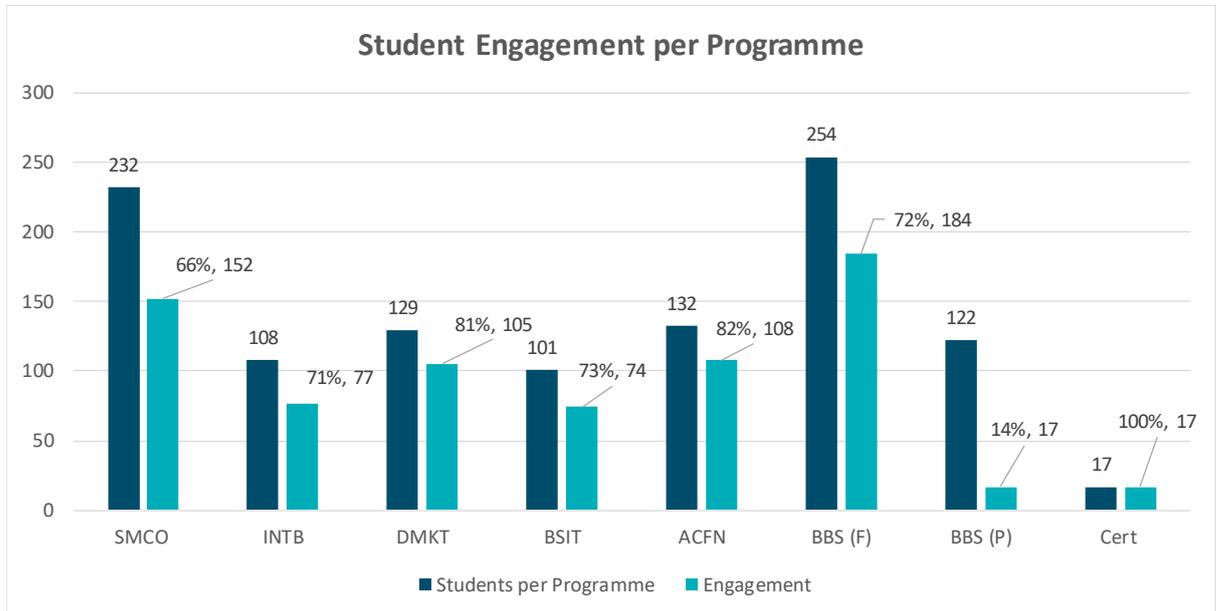
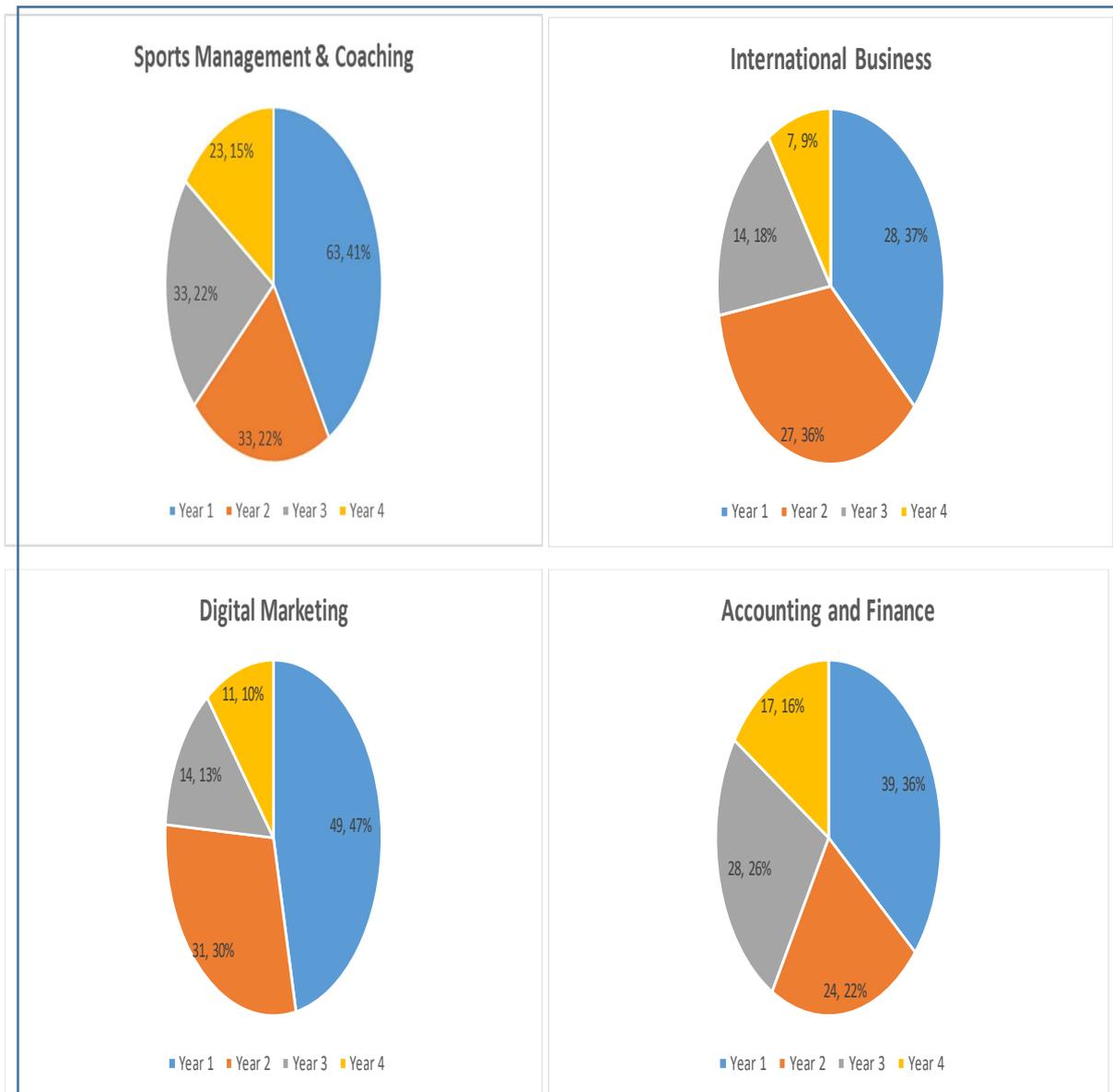


Figure 3: Student engagement by programme

The following figure presents a breakdown per year within each programme for the academic year 2020/21.



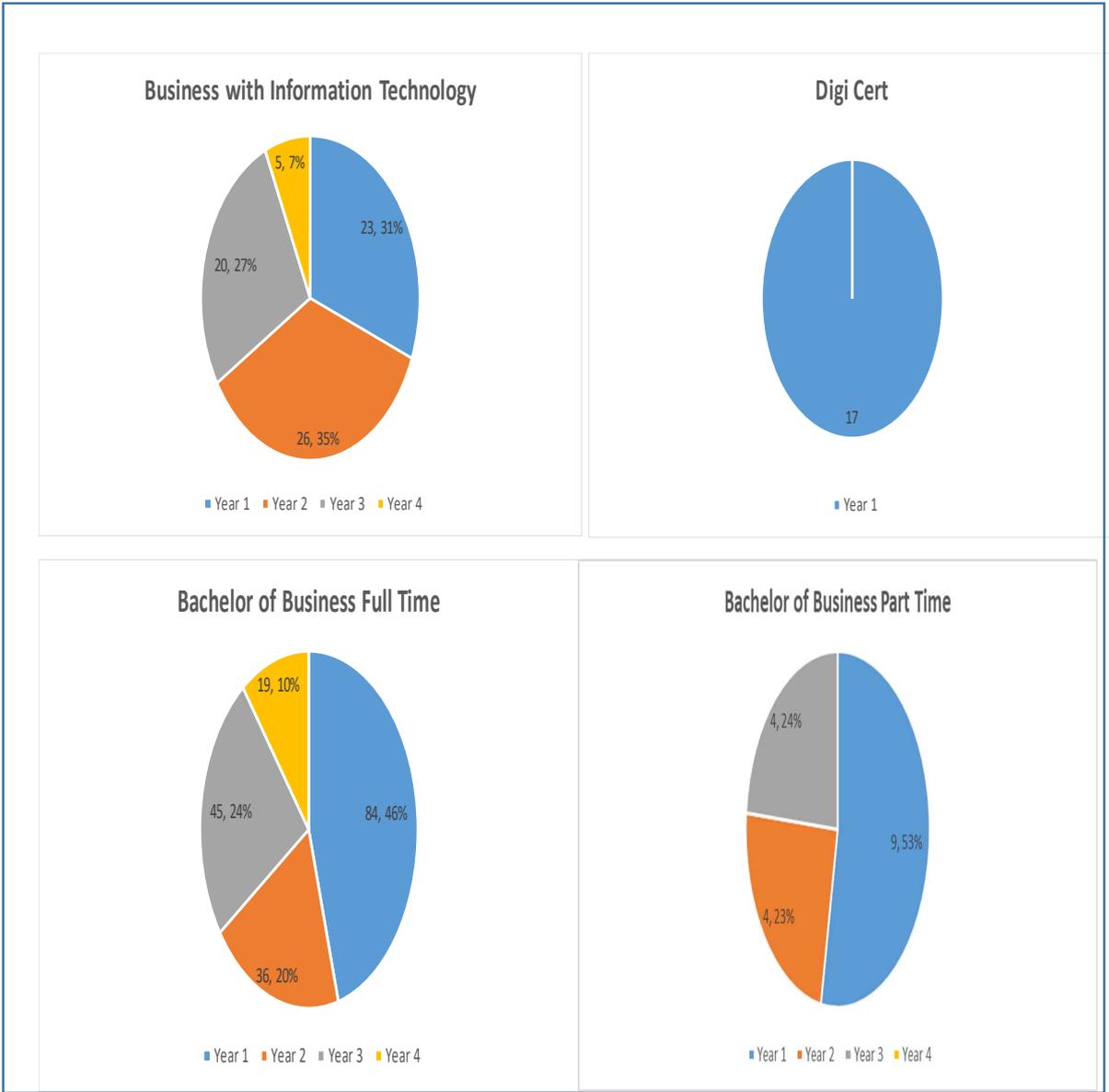


Figure 4: Student engagement by programme and by year

Overall, first year engagement is leading which is important for the success of the project over the longer time frame. This is mainly due to common continuous assessments across programmes being STLR tagged. If students are “exposed” to STLR in year 1 it would be anticipated by year 4 they will be more proficient at reflective practice which in turn will increase their transformative learning experience in TU Dublin.

## 5. STAFF ENGAGEMENT

### 5.1 Staff engagement for academic year 2020/21

The following figure represents the staff engagement for the full academic year 2020/2021 in comparison to 2019/2020.

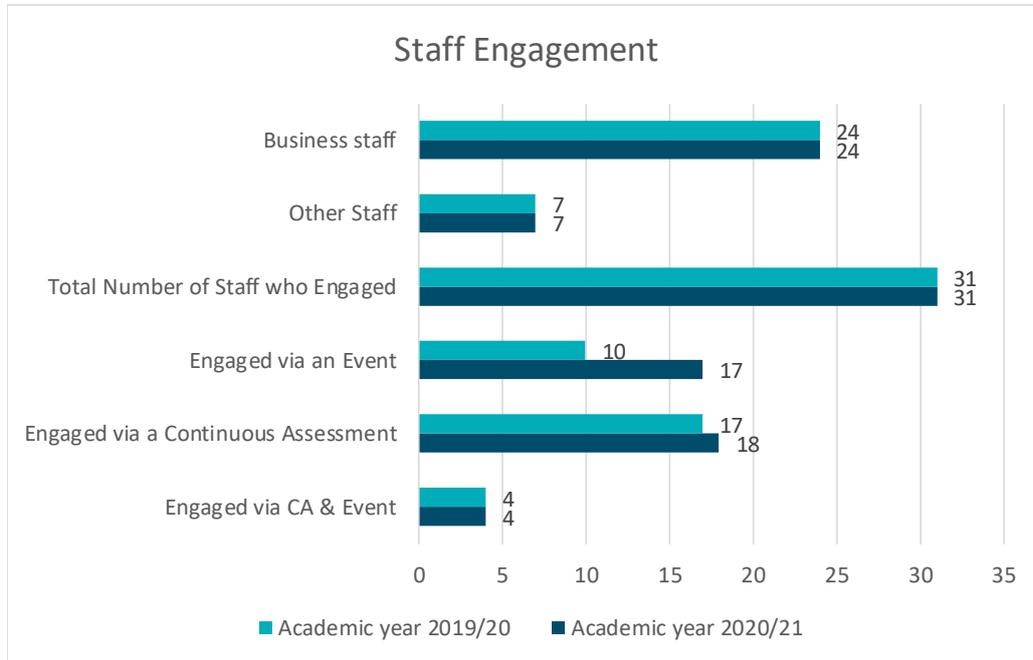


Figure 5: Staff engagement with STLR during 2020/21 compared to 2019/2020

Overall staff engagement has remained static during the COVID pandemic. However, it was noted by the STLR there are a small number of staff who had STLR tagged assignments or events during the previous academic year who did not STLR tag their activity this academic year. The staff survey distributed at the end of academic year sought to capture some feedback on this occurrence. If deemed necessary, the STLR team has proposed to hold a focus group with some staff members to learn why they did not engage this academic year.

## 6. COMPETENCIES TAGGED

STLR tracks and records the student's growth across five competencies:

1. Civic Knowledge Skills and Experience
2. Leadership and Teamwork
3. Global Culture Competence
4. Health & Wellbeing Development
5. Research & Innovation Competency Building

### 6.1 Competencies tagged during academic year 2020/2021

The following figure below illustrates the number of times each competency was tagged during the academic year.

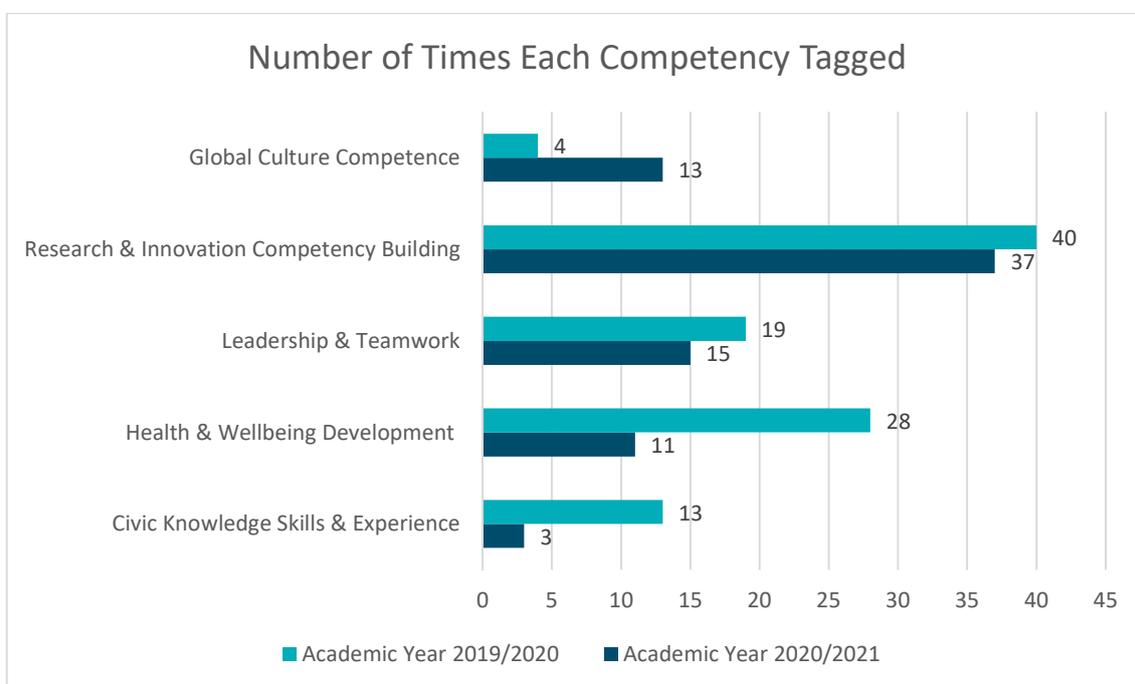


Figure 6: Number of times each competency was tagged during academic year 2020/21 and 2019/20

It is important to note here that were events run and were tagged under a competency but had no attendees from the School of Business, these tags are not shown here. Only activities where achievements were awarded counts for a competency recorded here. As the initiative expands this will be monitored and reported as it would yield an important piece of information, for example why are students not attending a global culture competency tagged event?

Global Culture Competence and Civic Knowledge Skills and Experience is the least tagged competency. Emphasis on STLR tagging global classes and remote delivery has led to an increase in STLR tagged activities in the Global Culture competency. Tags under the Civic Knowledge Skills and Experience competency has decreased having been affected by the pandemic as many on campus volunteering activities would not have taken place. Tags under Health and Wellbeing Development competency were lower during 2020/21 than in 2019/21. Many of the health and wellbeing events were moved online however participation in the online events were not to the same level.

## 7. STLR ACHIEVEMENTS

Students can receive Exposure, Integration or Transformation STLR recognition and Figure 7 below shows recognitions awarded during each semester.

### 7.1 STLR achievements awarded during the academic year 2020/21 and 2019/20

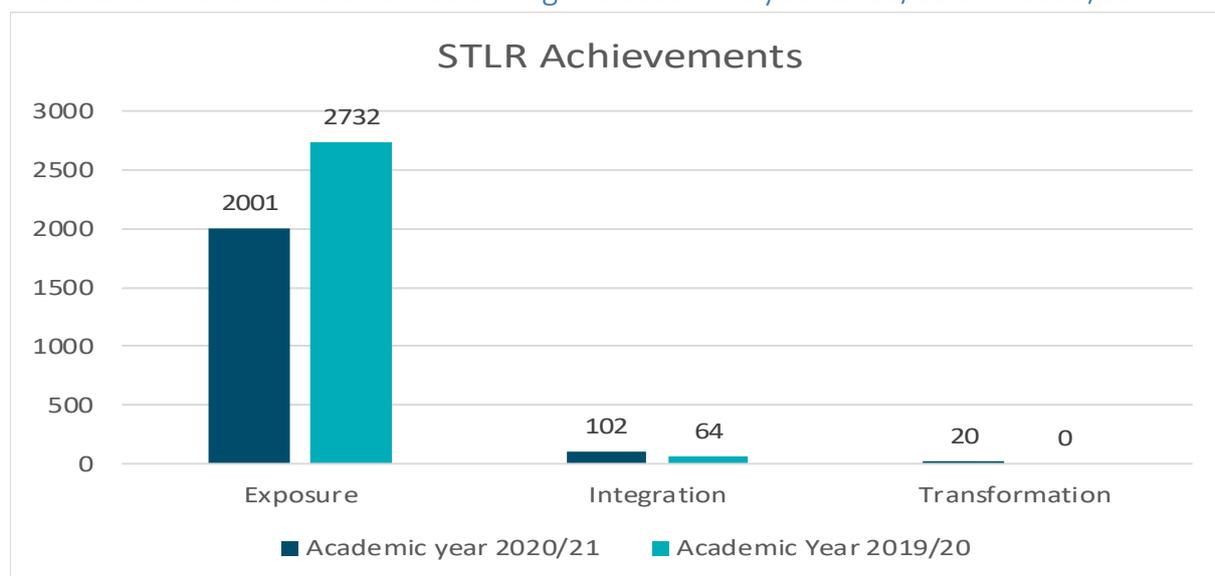


Figure 7: STLR achievements awarded during academic year 2020/21 and 2019/20

## 8. QUALITY ASSURANCE & REGISTRARS APPROVAL

During the semester the STLR team presented the quality manual to all three Registrars and quality officers across the three campuses. This presentation outlined the quality assurance measures underpinning the STLR initiative. Please see Appendix 1 for a copy of the quality manual. The Registrars welcomed the initiative and Dr. Larry McNutt (Registrar on the Blanchardstown Campus) was satisfied with the quality controls in place to approve his signature to go on the first TU Dublin's transformative learning transcript. Feedback from the attendees were welcome and will be used to enhance the initiative going forward. Overall, support was acknowledged from all the attendees. This was a milestone for the initiative.

## 9. TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING TRANSCRIPTS RELEASED TO STUDENTS

On Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> July 2021 TU Dublin's First Transformative Learning transcripts were released to students. This was after a quality process was undertaken to ensure all achievements were accurate. Before transcripts were released the achievements were collated and presented to the Registrar for review. The achievements were also viewed by the quality officer on the Blanchardstown campus. As a note of approval the Registrar signed off on the achievements, please see document in Appendix 2 for summary of achievements presented to the Registrar and Quality officer, and Appendix 3 for Registrar's approval.

## 10. PROGRESS ON DEVELOPMENT OF MOODLE PLUG-IN TO SUPPORT STLR ROLL OUT ACROSS TU DUBLIN

STLR will be a pan university programme for all students within TU Dublin. As a result, the STLR dashboard must be independent of any learning management system. The end goal is for the STLR plugins to be a standalone API, allowing any learning management system to run the STLR dashboard.

Any future developments must bear this end goal in mind, and any development decisions must be in the interests of reaching a standalone version.

The following figure illustrates a suggested development timeline. Many phases are dependent on external factors, such as TU Dublin’s education model, TU Dublin Strategic Plan and organisational design.

Phase	Indicative Timeline	Phase Description
Phase 1	May 2021 – September 2021	Migration of STLR plugins to Tallaght Campus LMS along with necessary upgrades
Phase 2a	September 2021– September 2022	Shared Competency Datastore & synchronisation of activities between all STLR dashboards
Phase 2b		Publish STLR dashboard code
Phase 2c		Standalone API developed and implemented to enable STLR be used by every student TU Dublin by Aug 2022

Table 2: Timeline for Moodle plugin development across TU Dublin

## 11. STLR ACROSS TU DUBLIN

Although this report primarily reports statistics from School of Business Blanchardstown Campus, STLR is active across the University, for example, Department of Informatics Blanchardstown Campus, Department of Computer Science City Centre and throughout Tallaght campus. Access to apprenticeships programme and Professional Diploma in Transversal Skills have all expressed interest in bringing STLR on-board in the next academic year.

Although academic staff wants STLR included in their programme roll out throughout the Blanchardstown campus has been met with resistance by management. However, it is hoped when we come out of the pandemic there will be progress made.

STLR is being adopted by the Department of Accounting, Finance and Professional Studies in Tallaght from September 2021. The migration of the STLR plugins to Tallaght’s Moodle is taking place during the summer to allow the STLR dashboard to go live in September 2021.

A major barrier to city campus adopting STLR is the different LMS that is currently operating on that campus. They are currently using Brightspace, and the STLR dashboard is essentially Moodle plugins. Although many city campus staff are championing STLR and integrate it within their activities, the

students are not seeing the real value as they will not receive a STLR export or transcript. It is hoped by September 2022 the STLR plugins will be enabled on the Brightspace LMS to allow students and staff to participate effectively with STLR.

STLR was included in a draft TU Dublin Education Model Framework that was passed by the academic board. This was a major endorsement for the initiative.

## 12. EFFECT OF COVID-19

COVID-19 influenced the potential activity levels during the academic year and the progress of rolling out STLR throughout TU Dublin. In summary,

- Planned events were cancelled and were not adaptable to go online.
- Eportfolio action plan that was postponed.
- Focused on-campus student marketing campaign were postponed
- COVID-19 had a direct hit on volunteering activities being STLR tagged
- Planned industry engagement was postponed
- Impact on non-pay budget

However, COVID-19 notwithstanding, staff who had planned to STLR tag their continuous assessments continued to do so which ensured students were receiving the STLR achievements.

We experience decreased student engagement levels and this would have been as a direct effect of COVID.

## 13. QUALITATIVE FEEDBACK

At the end of the academic year the following surveys were compiled and distributed:

- Staff survey – all staff within the School of Business was surveyed as well professional staff
- Student survey – all students within the School of Business was surveyed

At the time of writing this report (July 2021) the surveys had not been completed. Material presented in the following section represents preliminary feedback from responses received to date.

### **Student survey:**

- 77% of survey participants would recommend STLR, while 19% doesn't know enough about it to recommend it while 4% (1 participant) would not recommend STLR
- Lack of time and workload were noted as factor in discouraging engagement, *"lack of time, too many things online, would rather in person"*
- 17% of students surveyed does not intend to engage in STLR next year
- *Students were asked "what ways do you believe STLR was helpful/unhelpful in securing your job":*
  - Highlighting to an employer how beneficial you can be to the organisation and also highlight your qualities
  - Extra components on your cv that makes you stand out more compared to others
  - I believe STLR was helpful in learning more about myself and seeing areas i can improve
  - Gives Recognition for the skills someone might have

- Students were asked “If STLR improved your employability skills, can you tell us which skills were improved by STLR?”
  - Public speaking has significantly improved
  - Confidence, Organisation skills
  - It made me more aware of what a perfect interview is by saying things and not saying things. It shifted the way my CV should look.
  - Teamwork, problem solving skills and able to follow instructions
  - Can't tell yet
- Students were asked “Did STLR help you, if so how”
  - Made me better as a person and i realized things i can improve on
  - Not yet but within the follow two years I hope so
  - Helped me improve my confidence
  - Previous to engaging with the STLR program, I hated speaking in front of a big group. However, peer mentoring assisted the development of my public speaking skills along with many others
  - Made me more confident.
  - Communication skills
- Students want more events, more STLR tagged opportunities, & more acknowledgement of STLR events.

### Staff Survey

- Staff commented they would welcome refresher training needed and tips on better engaging students for the submission stage
- 28% of staff are either not at all aware or slightly aware of transformative learning and critical reflection theories.
- One to one training sessions with the STLR team were the most popular choice of training going forward.
- The new STLR dashboard received 3.6 rating (out of 5)
- Some feedback received:
  - Very easy to set up your event to be STLR tagged and very easy to award competencies to those who have attended. The short videos on the dashboard are very useful for refresher purposes. I also particularly like that you can get students to scan the QR code but you can also update the attendee list for those who were unable to scan the code (some students experienced difficulty with this).
  - Slow and unclear
  - Limited usage due to low number of events
  - It's easier to use than the previous method
- Staff were asked “*If you engaged in one semester and not in another semester would you mind sharing with us why you did not engage in the other semesters*”
  - *Changed role and did not engage*
  - *Students decided they didn't want the extra layer of complexity during covid.*

- *I have STLR tagged a module from Semester 1 and I didn't lecture in this topic in Semester 2. I have financial based modules in Semester 2 so not as easy to STLR tag.*
- 54% of respondents believe STLR tagging brought a better learning experience to students, while 31% were “maybe – unsure”. One respondent citing maybe-unsure followed up with “*Have not had opportunity to discuss with students*”
- *Staff were asked “Briefly what is your view on the attractiveness and benefits of STLR to staff”, some feedback received is:*
  - *If it is good for our students, it is good for our staff and University.*
  - *Not sure of benefits for staff but students enjoy it. TU needs to put a significant budget into it to increase employer awareness of what it means to have STLR accreditation. Staff/Students can only do so much.*
  - *I think STLR is not only beneficial to students but it is also very beneficial to lecturers as it makes us consider competencies and soft skills and how we can incorporate testing these in assessments.*
  - *Students more enthusiastic and engaged*
- *Overall feedback received were as follows:*
  - *Keep doing what you're doing and make things as easy as possible*
  - *Achieving academic recognition for STLR a major milestone this year.*
  - *Keep up the great work - STLR is a fantastic initiative for the college and is of great benefit to students.*
  - *STLR is going from strength to strength and that is down to the STLR team - well done.*

## 14. HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY REPORTING

During academic year an interim report was submitted to the HEA via the President’s office. The report was a summary of all TMG reports collated to date. This funding runs from January 2019 and had a proposed project end date of December 2021. However, a no-cost extension was requested to allow the Moodle plugins to be developed and implemented in September 2022. The new proposed project end date is September 2022.

## 15. ACTUAL EXPENDITURE TO DATE

Actual expenditure to date is below budgeted expenditure. Please see the following figure as at the 17<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

Item	12 Months Budget including I.T. (once off)	10 Months Actuals - Sept 20 to June 21	Actual plus projections	Variance
Pay	124,364	103,637	124,364	-
Non Pay	74,740	1,275	13,732	(61,008)
IT	5,000	5,631	6,465	1,465
<b>Total</b>	<b>204,104</b>	<b>110,543</b>	<b>144,561</b>	<b>(59,543)</b>

Figure 8: Actual expenditure to date

The reason for the large under spend in non-pay expenditure is due to postponed focused activities not taking place due to COVID 19.

## 16. STLR INITIATIVE GOING FORWARD

The next steps in the initiative will be focused around the following areas.

### 16.1 People

Engaging with staff and student is always the most effective method to promote STLR. As STLR goes beyond the School of Business emphasis will be placed on guiding staff and students. This is particularly important during COVID-19 pandemic.

### 16.2 Process

Emphasis will be placed on the process of STLR tagging activities across TU Dublin. Training will be provided at the beginning of the semester, and one to one sessions are showing increased importance to engage staff throughout the academic year.

Steering group has developed a STLR terms of reference which will be implemented in the next academic year. This will ensure representation across the University will help steer STLR in the right direction for increased pan university engagement.

### 16.3 Technology

The development of the STLR dashboard across TU Dublin will aid the initiative in achieving success in the next academic year. Technology management will be an important part of this development, and a pan university approach will be required to ensure effective implementation across all learning management system's in TU Dublin.

### 16.4 Marketing

Marketing and communications of STLR in TU Dublin and beyond TU Dublin into community and stakeholders will be prioritized in the next academic year. Establishing, developing and maintaining STLR and the transformative learning brand as a Unique Selling Point will be paramount. Focus will be placed on marketing analytics for all stakeholders: students, staff, management, professional staff, community and industry.

### 16.5 Sustainability & Scalability

As the initiative grows sustainability and scalability will be considered in every decision going forward. A number of important factors that will affect the future of STLR is TU Dublin's educational model, resource model for STLR and organisational design. Every process within the initiative will be examined to ensure it is sustainable and scalable as STLR expands across TU Dublin.

### 16.6 Quality

Having development, a quality framework for STLR it is important this framework is communicated to all stakeholders to ensure the rigor of the initiative is understood by all stakeholders.

## 17. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Stakeholder feedback continues to be positive and encouraging. COVID-19 pandemic has had an effect on participation, however credit must be given to staff who have continued to be innovative to include STLR during remote delivery.

The next academic year is an important year as all processes within the initiative will be tested for the sustainability and scalability to ensure success of the STLR across TU Dublin.