Staff focus groups on educational data

Group facilitators: _____

[Read to the group at the start of the focus group]

Learning analytics involves the collection of educational data, such as grades or number of accesses to online resources, to help us understand how students learn and engage in their studies. This data could be used by lecturers to improve course design and feedback, by student support services, or to develop an early alert system for those who may be at-risk of failing a course or dropping out. For example, analysis of Moodle data might indicate levels of student engagement on a course or module. If data analysis detects that a student's engagement has declined, it may alert their lecturer/tutor to make contact and offer support. A learning analytics service ensures all students are included, and issues can be identified early. For course leaders/programme directors, learning analytics can allow users to review the progress of a group of students for the purposes of reviewing/redesigning the course/programme if problems are detected. In addition, learning analytics can collect and analyse data about teaching practice (e.g., number of learning materials uploaded, interactions with students in forums, feedback for students) to enable self-reflection for teaching staff.

As academic and support staff will be one of the primary users of learning analytics, it is important that your opinions and expectations are accommodated into the design and implementation of any developed services. In the following interview, I will ask you a number of questions to understand your expectations regarding a learning analytics service and the use of student educational data by TU Dublin. The interview will be recorded with audio devices for the purpose of subsequent analysis. It is important that we can link all comments that each person says (i.e. we can link a comment you make early in the session with a comment you make later in the session). Therefore your names will be used during the focus group discussions. However, when transcribing the audio recording to written text, all identifying information will be removed, and comments will be attributed to Person A, Person B etc. You will get a copy of this transcript to confirm it accurately reflects the discussion we had. Any uses of this data for publications will be strictly anonymous.

The audio recording we collect from you today will be stored securely on a college computer until it is converted to written transcript. It will then be destroyed (in approximately four weeks time). The anonymised written transcript will be kept for one year after the project ends.
The findings from this discussion will inform how future services are developed to ensure they reflect, and meet, student expectations and needs. It will also inform training staff and students may need to engage with learning dashboards.
Before we start, are there any questions that you would like to ask?

Themes	Questions	Prompts
Purpose	Learning analytics benefits from a range of education data including academic data, personal data, and engagement data collected from online or physical learning environments. What do you think would be legitimate purposes for the college to use such data?	a. Should it be used to improve service quality, such as resource allocation, b. teaching quality, curriculum design, etc.? c. Should it be used to improve the educational experience in a course/programme (e.g., d. identifying problems within a learning activity)? e. Should it be used to improve an individual student's educational experience, e.g., f. identifying points of difficulty or points of disengagement? g. Should it be used to inform you about your teaching practice?
Teaching needs	What kinds of information would be particularly useful to you in improving **students' educational experience**.	a. Academic data (e.g., assessments, educational history) b. Engagement data (e.g, log-ins, clicks, library visits, video watching activities, attendance, forum discussions) c. Personal data (e.g., background data, sensitive data) d. Student survey responses e. Utilisation of college services and facilities f. How would you like it to be presented to you?
Teaching needs	What kinds of information would be particularly useful to you in your p**rofessional development**?	a. Data about students (see prompts in the previous question) b. Data about your teaching practice and how it influences the engagement and achievement of your students? c. How would you like it to be presented to you? d. Is programme level data as useful as module level data - what data is useful at programme level?
Teaching needs	**[Dashboard Handout]** Here are some examples of ways the college could use learning analytics to enhance learning and teaching. Which of these do you think	Useful for: a. To improve the relationships between students and teaching staff and professional services teams. b. To improve the overall learning experience and well-being of students c. To identify a student's weaknesses in learning and suggest ways to improve upon this d. To alert teaching staff early if students are at-risk of failing a course or if they could

	would be useful (multiple choices)? Please pick one to share why it is useful or not useful after the poll. (or One thing you like; one thing you don't like)	improve their learning e. Identify the optimum pathway for students to achieve their learning goals f. Present students with a complete profile of their learning in each and every course g. Present teaching staff or tutors with a complete learning profile of their students h. Present teaching staff or tutors with a profile of their teaching practice and how it influences the engagement and achievement of their students. i. To notify professional services staff of changes in behaviour or patterns of disengagement that may indicate students require additional support.
Training	What training would be useful to enable you engage with student data?	Should staff get training on: a. How to interpret visual data from a dashboard? b. Data protection an ethical uses of combining data from different sources, analysis of the data, and the labelling of students (e.g. at risk) as a results of data analytics? c. Uses of data and the questions it can answer (What would you like to be able to do? What would be useful at staff meetings / course board meeting) d. Interpreting statistics or other numeric measurements derived from students personal data? e. Limitations of learning analytics, and the dangers of inferring a label (such as at-risk) based just on a digital footprint, which can never be the complete story. f. Interpreting Model predictions (regression, decision trees) and accuracy g. Combining your own data sources and doing some analysis. i. How to access data ii. Open spreadsheet data; csv data; merge sources - primary key iii. Transforming data: dates; inserting keys like module codes & programme codes
Concerns	Are there any concerns you would have in incorporating learning analytics into your job?	a. Ethical and privacy concerns b. The accuracy of analytics results c. Capability and capacity d. Usefulness e. Pedagogical approaches f. Interaction with students
Intervention	How do you think staff should approach the	a. Should they have an obligation to act if students are identified as being at-risk of failing or underperforming in a module?

	analysis results of student data? Module level or programme level data?	b. Should any specific kind of training be given to teaching staff to understand the analysis of student data and to accommodate the results into the feedback for students? c. Should interventions be automated?

Not used from SHEILA template:

Teaching needs	Do you see any challenges in offering teaching and learning support to your students?	a. Offering support according to different needs of learners b. Providing actionable feedback for every student c. Providing support for skill and knowledge development d. Developing a supportive learning or teaching community
Teaching needs	Do you see any ways learning analytics could be used to address these challenges by taking advantage of student data or data about your teaching practice?	*Explain: Background data include previous educational attainment, demographic information etc. Educational data include data collected from any physical or virtual learning activity. a. Would there be any risks in any of these uses? b. Would you have any concern about the skills and time required from you? c. Under what circumstances would you be willing to invest your time in incorporating d. learning analytics into teaching? e. Under what circumstances would you NOT be willing to invest your time in incorporating learning analytics into teaching?