Civic Engagement: Strategic and Implementation perspectives within a Higher Education Institution

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Civic Engagement: Strategic and Implementation perspectives within a Higher Education Institution

Des Moore
Head of Civic Engagement, ITB

Abstract
This paper will give a brief overview of what Civic Engagement means in Higher Education in general with a particular focus on Knowledge Exchange, Service Learning, Community Based Research and Volunteering. Following this, emergent thinking on Civic Engagement in Ireland is presented. Given both the theoretical context and the strategic importance of ensuring Civic Engagement opportunities are offered in a Higher Education Institution some possible organisation arrangements regarding the structured development and implementation of Civic Engagement at strategic and implementation levels are proposed.

1 National Strategy for Higher Education - Report of the Strategy Group (NSHE) to 2030

The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 - Report of the Strategy Group\(^1\) defines Engagement as:

At its simplest, engagement means taking on civic responsibilities and cooperating with the needs of the community that sustains higher education – including business, the wider education system, and the community and voluntary sector

The report\(^2\) also states the following concerning engagement:

Engagement by higher education with wider society takes many forms. It includes engagement with business and industry, with the civic life of the community, with public policy and practice, with artistic, cultural and sporting life and with other educational providers in the community and region, and it includes an increasing emphasis on international engagement (see reference\(^3\) in report). The multidimensional nature of many of the social, economic and civic challenges means that they require multidisciplinary approaches, and higher education institutions are uniquely well placed to lead, develop and apply these, in partnership with others.

Also the NSHE\(^4\) states (Executive Summary)

Higher education institutions should have open engagement with their community and wider society and this should infuse every aspect of their mission. Outward-facing systems and structures should be embedded into institutional activity, so that there are inward and outward flows of knowledge, staff, students and ideas between each institution and its external community.

In the Summary of Recommendations Section the NSHE\(^5\) states:

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\(^5\)Ibid p79
Engagement with the wider community must become more firmly embedded in the mission of higher education institutions. To achieve this, higher education institutions will need to take the following actions:

- Encourage greater inward and outward mobility of staff and students between higher education institutions, business, industry, the professions and wider community.
- Respond positively to the continuing professional development needs of the wider community to develop and deliver appropriate modules and programmes in a flexible and responsive way.
- Recognise civic engagement of their students through programme accreditation, where appropriate.
- Put in place structures and procedures that welcome and encourage the involvement of the wider community in a range of activities, including programme design and revision.

2 Civic Engagement (CE) – Overview of Literature

Bringle et al. (2006, p258) cited in Bringle, R., Clayton, P. (2012: p104) describe CE in the following way:

Civic engagement is a subset of community involvement and is defined by both location as well as process (it occurs not only in but also with the community). According to this definition, civic engagement develops partnerships that possess integrity and that emphasise participatory, collaborative, and democratic processes (e.g. design, implementation, assessment) that provide benefits to all constituencies.

Furco (2003 ) cited in Boland (2008: pp20-21) present the following spectrum of activities associated with CE.

![Figure 1]

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6 CE is used as an abbreviation for Civic Engagement in this paper.
Gonzalez-Perez et al. (2007) cited in Boland\(^9\) (2008: p12) state by way of examples that Civic Engagement can include activities such as:

- Volunteering;
- Community based learning (or service learning);
- Participative and collaborative research;
- Educational initiatives.

2.1 Service Learning

Bringle and Hatcher\(^10\) (1996, p222) adapted in Bringle, R., Clayton, P\(^11\). (2012: p105) refer to the concept of service learning as part of civic engagement:

Service Learning as a component of civic engagement can be defined as a course or competency based credit bearing educational experience in which students (a) participate in mutually identified service activities that benefit the community and that (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline and an enhanced set of personal values and civic responsibility.

Boland\(^12\) (2008: p20) citing MacLabhrainn and McIlrath, refers to Service Learning as:

Service learning differs significantly from conventional work placements and internships and it is often defined in contradistinction to volunteering, with which it is sometimes conflated. Within the literature, repeated efforts are made to distinguish between them, such as…

Service learning is a specific pedagogical approach, it is not about voluntary contributions to the community for ‘charitable purposes’; it is about benefiting from such an experience through reflection and academic critique and providing recognition through academic credit and ultimately helping also to build capacity within community organisations. (MacLabhrainn and McIlrath, 2007, p. xxiii)

2.2 Community Based Research (CBR)

Community Based Research relates to research that is undertaken in collaboration with the community. The work could be an analysis of existing community related data to assist in greater understanding of community challenges.

Campus Engage\(^13\) defines CBR as:

…. a set of approaches to research and methodologies that are community centered, also known as participatory, action research, community-engaged scholarship, emancipatory research, to mention a few. Practices all focus on the effects of research on improving, understanding further, or investigating further social issues of concern. Sometimes these methodologies involve the full support and inclusion of the community in terms of research design, collecting and analysing data, and writing up and sharing of findings to help inform and change policy

\(^9\)Ibid, p12.


\(^13\)Campus Engage Ireland (http://www.campusengage.ie/community-community-based-research), Accessed 15/12/2014.)
and practice, across various disciplines for better outcomes. Below is one of many existing illustrative examples of the process involved in community-based research. This is based on the original designed by Community Academic Research Links, UCC.

For example at undergraduate level, students can use census data sub-sets at electoral area level to analyse community issues as part of a research methods module.

**Service Learning** and **Community Based Research** projects are conducted under the supervision of an academic staff member and normally there is academic credit gained by the student for the work done on such projects.

### 2.3 Volunteering
Volunteering can include individual members of staff and students volunteering to work with community groups and organisations. This can happen in a variety of ways, for example, assisting with the practical/operational aspects of community organisations or accepting a position on the board of directors of a voluntary organisation. The extent to which students can receive academic credit for volunteering related community work will be referred to later.

### 2.4 Knowledge Exchange
Knowledge Exchange can take place by means of events such as Learning Exchange activities which are designed to engage a broad range of networks including public, private and civic to exchange, ideas, learning and solutions which have the potential to impact on identified economic, social and community challenges such as growing the local social economy or using digital media platforms to more effectively engage citizens.

### 3 Campus Engage Ireland – Strategic Development and Capacity Building
In 2012, Campus Engage Ireland recommenced activity to support Higher Education Institutions in developing their Civic Engagement role.

#### 3.1 Charter for Civic Engagement and Associated Indicators
On 16th June 2014, a charter on CE was signed by/on behalf of 22 Higher Education Institution (HEI) Presidents in Ireland. Subsequently, a working group of Campus Engage Ireland developed a set of CE indicators based on the Campus Engage Ireland Charter which can be used to plan and review HEI CE activities.

In particular, the Campus Engage Ireland Charter Indicators could be used by HEIs to contribute to the Engagement planning section of the HEA Mission Based Performance Compact.

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CAMPUS ENGAGE
CHARTER FOR CIVIC AND
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

ONE
We, the Irish Higher Education Institutions, wish to
acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of our
higher education institutions over the years, pursuing
engagement with local communities, and society at
large, for the common good;

TWO
We will continue to promote civic and community
engagement through the mission and strategy of
our institutions wherever possible;

THREE
We will promote civic and community engagement
through a variety of community-based learning,
community-based research, public scholarship and
volunteering activities and seek to align these with
the overall teaching, research and outreach missions
of our institutions;

FOUR
We will continue to build a campus community
imbued with a civic culture through our use of
space, cultural activities, commitment to diversity,
coopération with partners, student civic engagement
and all relevant operational practices;

FIVE
We will pursue, through a variety of means, our
aspiration to open our campuses to local communities,
and our social, arts, cultural, academic and sports
activities well, where possible, promote local
community engagement and partnership;

SIX
We will contribute to the widening participation
and lifelong learning agendas by promoting
civic and community engagement, combating
disadvantage and furthering the social inclusion
mission of higher education;

SEVEN
We will partner with relevant stakeholders and
agencies to promote our institutions as hubs of
engagement activity in order to actively address
the local and regional development, regeneration
and research agendas;

EIGHT
Our campus and all our activities will be informed by
the sustainability agenda in recognition that a ‘green campus’
contributes to community well-being and economic development;

NINE
We will continue to promote the engagement of our
institutions with the wider society through two-way
knowledge exchanges, and actively communicate
the social relevance and impact of our research and
teaching activities as broadly as possible;

TEN
We will continue to advocate for appropriate
resources, both financial and human, to achieve
high impact civic and community engagement
activities to maintain and build on what we
have achieved to date.
4 Embedding Civic Engagement – A Systems Perspective of a HEI with an emphasis on the McKinsey 7S framework

Given the knowledge that exists relating to CE and the resources available from Campus Engage Ireland, how can a HEI develop and implement CE policy and strategy.

As HEIs seek to determine approaches to embedding CE within the culture of the organisations, it may be helpful to see this goal with a systems perspective of HEI organisation change. The key intent of this change, if necessary, would be to enable a structured approach to developing a HEI strategy on CE which would include:

1. Exploring the CE work that is already being done and assessing its alignment with the HEI’s mission;
2. Identifying any regional emphasis on CE;
3. Supporting faculty, administrators and students in the Service Learning, Volunteering, Community based Research and Knowledge Exchange;
4. How to make CE opportunities available to all the staff (faculty and administrators), students and external community of the HEI who want to participate.

One of the approaches which can help in adopting a systems approach to understanding organisations is the McKinsey 7S framework. The framework identifies seven elements (Staff, Shared Values, Style, Skills, Strategy, Structure, Systems) which need to be congruent to ensure stability and harmony within the organisation. There is a need for congruence between the 7S as each element is interdependent on the other 6.

In terms of embedding CE in the HEI, the framework might suggest the following questions (ref. Table 1) The 7 elements are:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key aspects</th>
<th>Examples of HEI implications for Civic Engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Staff</strong></td>
<td>The means through which talent is recognised, recruited, grown and developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have staff who are interested in and motivated to participate in CE activities been identified? Are financial resources available? Has the time required been factored into the academic programme timetables to enable the CE work to be done? Are appropriate staff development opportunities available throughout the year to enable CE activities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shared Values</strong></td>
<td>Is there clarity concerning what the organisation is trying to achieve? Is there clarity about what is important to and what characterizes the organisation? e.g. Highly employable graduates, Social Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are all stakeholders on whom the changes impact aligned to the values of the organisation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Style</strong></td>
<td>This refers to the culture of the HEI which is often reflected in informal modes of conduct.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How do the informal norms impact on specificity and acceptance of goals, task implementation and measurement and accountability for results? Is there sufficient commitment to collaboration among all Civic Engagement stakeholders within the HEI region?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skills</strong></td>
<td>This refers to the institutional and individual skills sets needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have the skill sets necessary for CE been identified with staff? Are programme boards sufficiently populated with Civic Engagement champions? Is there sufficient competence to develop Ce policy, strategy and implementation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategy</strong></td>
<td>The approach adopted to gain competitive advantage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is the curriculum of the HEI appropriate to its CE mission?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structure</strong></td>
<td>Are the authority relationships/decision makers (individuals/groups) clear?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are there decision making individuals or groups (with relevant decision making norms) clearly identified with terms of reference?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Systems</strong></td>
<td>Are the processes with the organisation fit for purpose?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are scheduling systems aligned? Are appropriate processes in place to manage community partner databases? Are HR systems aligned with the CE strategy of the HEI? Does the process of the college/school timetabling facilitate commitment to and participation with CE?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 Civic Engagement at a Policy and Strategic Level – helping to provide an environment in which Higher Education (HE) strategy can be implemented and some graduate attributes can be effectively developed

Civic Engagement needs to be managed at both a strategic and implementation level. At a strategic level, a strategic Civic Engagement team would lead the development of appropriate relationships with key stakeholders to the formation of a consultation group. This would yield a pool of advisors capable of offering diverse perspectives on CE and assisting the HEI to consider and decide how to be most valuable in terms of its CE policy. The ongoing development of CE Policy and strategy may also require developing new relationships with external stakeholders to optimise CE activity and impact.

Figure 3\textsuperscript{17} below identifies core elements of a HEI structure at a strategic level. The Strategic CE Leadership team would be formed to develop CE policy and strategy and to assess on an ongoing basis the efficacy of the policy and strategy in line with emergent needs in the domains of Teaching & Learning, Commercial/Industrial Engagement, Knowledge Exchange and Research. The leader of this team would report to a senior executive (e.g. Vice President Level) of the HEI while the team would be fully accountability on a functional basis to the schools/colleges of the HEI through the Civic Engagement Implementation Partner\textsuperscript{18} (CEIP). Key outputs from the CE Leadership team are illustrated in Figure 3. Furthermore to ensure full integration of CE within the curriculum, a member of the CE Strategic Leadership team would be an ex-officio member of Academic Council. Thus programme design and review and QA aspects impacting on CE could be championed.

The CE Leadership Team would engage on a consultative basis with a key group of stakeholders who would be motivated and have the relevant competencies and availability to assist in specifying and advise on appropriate aspects of CE. The Leadership would also be integrated with a team of Civic Engagement Implementation Partners who would be based at school/college level of the HEI. The next section of this paper specifies the role of the CEIP. Core outputs from the policy strategy team are illustrated in Figure 3.

\textsuperscript{17}This model has been developed based on work done as part of the TU4 Dublin Organisation Design consultation process with colleagues from DIT, ITT Dublin and ITB.

\textsuperscript{18}The role of the CEIP is outlined in the next section.
5.1 Implementing Civic Engagement Policy and Strategy within a college or cluster

The implementation of CE policy and strategy could effectively take place through a team of Civic Engagement Implementation Partners (CEIP). The exact role/duties of a CEIP would be specified by the CE policy/strategy team in consultation with colleges/schools. The specific people assigned to the role in each college would be appointed by the school/college.

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19 This role may be carried out by one or more people and probably best carried out by a member of faculty. However, it would the responsibility of the college/school to nominate one person from the CEIP function to participate on the network of CEIPs.
The key responsibilities of the CEIP role would be:

1. Full awareness of college programmes and constituent modules;
2. Capability to relate to academic colleagues and identify CE projects suitable for Community Based Research and Service Learning;
3. Introducing community partners to academic colleagues with a view to participating in Knowledge Exchange activities;
4. To support any elements of volunteering in the strategy by identifying relevant community and student groups/ societies;
5. To be an ex-officio member of Programme Boards;
6. To be an active participant in CEIP network (see dash line in Figure 4) proactively sharing CE opportunities and possible solutions;
7. To contribute as a member of the CEIP network to policy/ strategy development;
8. CE management and administration/ event management;
9. Community partner cohort engagement/ support and coaching

5.2 A Programme Level Possibility – integrating key stakeholders in programme design and implementation

The model shown in Figure 5 illustrates how CE could be embedded at a programme level.

Firstly, in the design of the programme, the core inputs are specified ranging from graduate attributes, professional standards, community needs. Knowledge Exchange is not included here as it is primarily delivered by faculty. The curriculum in taking account of agreed inputs needs to reflect the commitment of the HEI to the National Strategy for Higher Education as
referred to earlier (perhaps articulated through the HEI’s policy and strategy for CE). To assist/ support this, a specific CE element is proposed in the curriculum delivery process as outlined in the model shown in Figure 5.

What is essentially proposed is that the programme is monitor/ evaluated three distinct stages from design through on-going delivery.

5.3 Quality Assurance (QA)/ Curriculum and Graduate Attributes
Guidelines regarding the participation in Service Learning and/ or Community Based Research could be developed in consultation with the Programme Board members as shown in Figure 5. For example an elective module could be made available in all programmes to encourage CE through volunteering and recognise and reward the effort thorough ECTS credits. Guidelines on volunteering would be agreed regarding the relevant level of commitment to the volunteer work, the assessment process, and amount of terminal award ECTS credits associated with the volunteer effort.

The board could decide the extent to which CE modules would be introduced to the programme as an elective carrying award relevant ETCS. An example of such a module is contained in Appendix 1.

At the Curriculum stage, the Programme Board would ensure that the strategic aspects of CE were being implemented within the HEI College/ School. In particular the board would decide and monitor the, amount of module projects which would include Service Learning, Community Based Research and Volunteering.

At an outcomes level of the programme, the board would ensure the defined set of graduate attributes were being achieved and that the efficacy of the methods employed through the curriculum demonstrated the appropriate emphasis on Service Learning, Community Based Research and Volunteering to optimise the student learning and development experience.

**Implementation of Civic Engagement Policy and Strategy within HEI at Programme Level**

![Diagram showing the implementation of civic engagement policy and strategy within HEI at programme level](image)

**Figure 5**
6 Conclusion
This paper has sought to present an overview of CE, emergent thinking in Ireland as articulated through Campus Engage against a back-drop of the HE Strategy for Higher Education in Ireland to 2030.

A systems approach to any change is emphasised and the McKinsey & S frame was offered a one means of achieving this.

Finally approaches were suggested regarding the need to and a means of implementing CE at a policy/ strategic level and at an implementation level in schools/ colleges.

7 Appendix 1

7.1 A CE module offered across Programmes (pan-Programme), Colleges/ Schools.
CE, when applied to Service learning and Community Based Research can help to develop competencies such a leadership, project management and communication skills. A HEI with a multi-programme distributed across Colleges/ Schools is well poised to leverage the benefit of developing such skills in a multi-disciplinary environment thereby emulating a real life working environment likely to be experienced after graduation. For example, a pan-programme elective module in which of students from Engineering, IT, Social Care and Finance participate to analyse and solve a community problem may be more helpful in helping students understand different perspectives of a problem, enable greater understanding of client/ community partner needs and an accurate assessment of the solution’s efficacy.

The approach adopted in the following pages to designing a CE module, is based on firstly identifying the meta-competencies associated with a number of programmes and mapping these in a matrix (See Table 2). If a commonality exists in the meta-competency outcomes of a number of modules then this would provide a suitable student cohort to which the module could be offered.
Core ITB NFQ L8 Programmes Learning Outcomes as analysed in January 2014.

(This mapping is for indicative purposes only)

Table 1 maps 11 programmes offered to students at NFQ L8 with 6 meta-competencies listed in or derived from the learning outcomes of each programme:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meta competency</th>
<th>BN101 Bachelor of Business (Honours) [240 ECTS credits]</th>
<th>BN102 Bachelor of Business (Honours) in Information Technology [240 ECTS credits]</th>
<th>BN103 Bachelor of Business (Honours) in Accounting &amp; Finance [240 ECTS credits]</th>
<th>BN114 Bachelor of Business (Honours) in Management [240 ECTS credits]</th>
<th>BN121 Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Mechatronics [240 ECTS credits]</th>
<th>BN104 Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Computing [240 ECTS credits]</th>
<th>BN112 Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Creative Digital Media [240 ECTS credits]</th>
<th>BN113 Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Horticulture [240 ECTS credits]</th>
<th>BN107 Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Applied Social Studies in Social Care [240 ECTS credits]</th>
<th>BN115 Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Social and Community Development [240 ECTS credits]</th>
<th>BN118 Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Early Childhood Care and Education [240 ECTS credits]</th>
<th>BN111 Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Sports Management and Coaching [240 ECTS credits]</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working in partnership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategic perspective</td>
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<td>Self-reflection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication/interpersonal skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Problem formulation/solution</td>
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</table>

Table 2

Civic Engagement Module descriptor

The CE module seeks to give a structured opportunity for students to develop the competencies listed in Table 2 above through experiential learning in a Civic Engagement context.

7.2 Module Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of the module the student will be able to:

1. To develop meta competencies listed in Table 1 by assisting in the assessment of a challenge or problem which is of importance to a community and providing possible solution(s);
2. To develop knowledge of self, derived from structured reflection based on engagement with community/civic challenges;

3. Reflect on societal challenges and identify how their chosen field of study can contribute to assisting with community challenges;

4. To provide an opportunity for students to develop an awareness of civic responsibility in line with the 2030 HEA education strategy.

7.3 **Indicative Content**

1. Developing self-awareness and an understanding of team roles using theory and psychometric instruments;

2. Communication and influencing using instruments such as DiSC\(^{20}\);

3. A group of students will be assigned to a project. Having met to scope the project, students will assign roles to each other and hold each other mutually accountable for the tasks agreed. Students shall use industry relevant software to manage the project and submit reports based on the software to their appointed module supervisor. Maintain a reflective journal of self and team member interaction;

4. Developing consulting skills through identifying community challenges and taking a systems view of issues;

5. Engaging the community partner in solution(s) development;

6. Development of final solution;

7. Presentation and sign-off with community partner;

8. Assess feedback from community partner in relation to the student team engagement in the project.

Module Format and assessment (ECTS credits: 5)

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Record keeping</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Indicative assessment %</th>
<th>Takes place during weeks</th>
<th>In class/computer laboratory</th>
<th>Self-directed learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparatory Phase</td>
<td>• Introduction to Civic Engagement – identifying stakeholders – managing stakeholder relationships – building and maintaining mutual respect and credibility; • Applied teamwork; • Applied project management; • Communicating with stakeholders; • Introduction to systems theory and application; • Introduction to ethics, corporate governance and organisation structure.</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3-12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective journal submitted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Phase 1</td>
<td>• Students form into teams; • Team roles self-assessment conducted by students using a selected team roles instrument; • Initial project management process outlined using relevant industry software; • Students meet community partners; • Student team assign roles to each other based on a teamwork instrument; • Community challenge/ problem assessed and initial report issued to community partner for confirmation (c. 1500 words) in designated format.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5 6 7</td>
<td>4 18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Phase 2</td>
<td>• Student team researches community challenge/ problem; • Student team generates solutions and requests Community Partner to select one option; • Option as selected by Community Partner implemented.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8 9 10 11</td>
<td>6 18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting/ reflection Phase</td>
<td>• Students reflect on their experience (tsk and process aspects) and each student completes a 2000 word report on the project using a designated reporting template.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12 13 14</td>
<td>2 18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>