

Centre for Law and the Environment UCC

Report on student feedback from the Digital Badge in Climate Law & Governance for Engaged Citizenship 2020/21

Prepared by:

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1. Introduction:

This report is part of the project *Teaching Environmental Law for Policy Innovation and Impact* which ran at the Centre for Law and the Environment UCC in 2020/21.

A key element of this project was the design and development of a new online Digital Badge programme in *Climate Law and Governance for Engaged Citizenship*. This programme, which was delivered by Prof Áine Ryall and Cara O'Mahony, in collaboration with [UCC Skills Centre](#), was aimed at first year undergraduate students across the University.

On announcing the new programme, we received 63 expressions of interest from students. This strong level of interest confirms that students are keen to deepen their knowledge and understanding of climate law and governance. To ensure that we could deliver an effective interactive experience in the online seminars, we capped registration at 20 students. Places were allocated on a first come, first served basis. As it turned out, 22 students ultimately registered for the programme, with 20 students submitting the course assessment. All 20 students who submitted the course assessment were awarded the Digital Badge having met the required standard. We were delighted with this level of success among our students.

The new programme was used as a testing ground for novel forms of assessment and assessment design. We also explored the use of a wide variety of resources to support class discussion.

We offered students a choice of assessment format: a 1,500 word report or a 10-minute video.

Upon completion of the programme, feedback was sought from students. A detailed questionnaire was used for this purpose. Approval was obtained from the UCC Social Research Ethics Committee in advance of administering the student survey.

This report summarises the main findings from the student feedback on the Digital Badge programme. Fourteen (14) students completed the survey.

2. Findings:

(a) Assessment

Students who answered the question about the assessment generally regarded it very positively. They liked that there was a variety of topics offered and that there was a choice of assessment format. They enjoyed the opportunity to share their views.

Some students indicated that the 10-minute video was too long to equate to the 1,500-word essay. One student would welcome a group project in order to engage more closely with other students taking the course. Another felt that the assessment could have been more inclusive for STEM students by focusing on climate strategies. Another student enjoyed that the assessment was research-based and that it encouraged them to learn more about the set topics.

Students were certainly open to the idea of creating a blog, article or podcast to increase their engagement in climate solutions. Students also value being able to share this form of knowledge creation with other students. Students would be open to receiving training for the creation of videos and podcasts. The majority of students felt that they were already comfortable with video creation, but felt that others might not be. One student suggested a Panopto training course might be

helpful. It was also suggested that there be more training on referencing as not everyone was accustomed to academic writing.

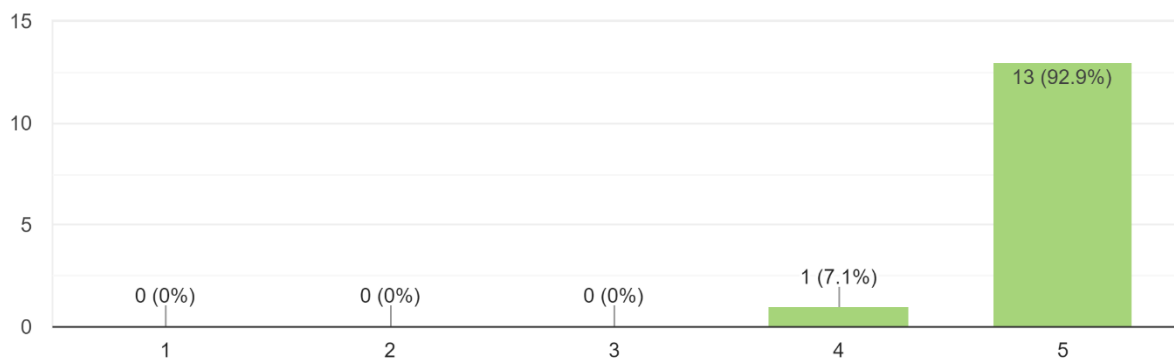
(b) Resources

The resources provided were regarded very highly overall. Multiple students commented on how accessible the readings and other resources were. Some students highlighted them as an aspect of the course that they enjoyed the most. A minority of students felt that they could be made more accessible to other disciplines beyond Law.

Students felt that the resources helped their understanding of the Oireachtas and the nature of the Climate Bill, with one student commenting that they would not easily comprehend this on their own. Students enjoyed that there were podcasts included in the set materials as an alternative to reading. One student suggested that perhaps a general introduction to Law before the course might assist students from a non-Law background. It was also suggested that perhaps additional time could be taken to explain the readings in case there were students who did not understand them. Another student also suggested more summary type readings as they found the language hard to understand at times.

On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate the resources provided (e.g. readings, class material, Canvas page etc)?

14 responses



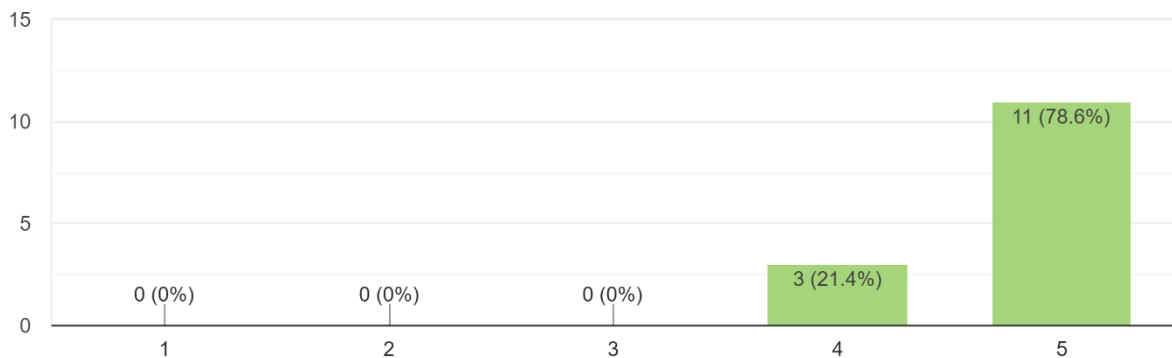
(c) General Feedback:

Overall, students regarded their experience of engaging with this course very highly. Students seemed to particularly like the class discussion and learning through a relaxed setting. Students felt that they gained perspective from hearing other students' opinions and that this broadened their understanding of various issues. Students felt that carrying out their own research deepened their understanding of various topics. Students felt that encouraging even more discussion, through for example the use of break out rooms, would facilitate more interaction. However, students felt that the small number of students taking the programme was the best way of encouraging interaction.

It was recommended that the course could have been run for a week longer (the seminars ran over a 3-week period); some felt it was too short and a final week could have brought more focus and conclusions. It was also suggested that grouping the students to take sides in debating a topic would encourage more critical commentary. Weekly quizzes and online interactive resources were also suggested as ways to increase interaction.

On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate this short course overall?

14 responses



3. Recommendations:

Regarding assessment, students appear very open to novel forms of assessment. Students feel positive about creating outputs that have wider societal uses as part of their assessment. They welcome alternatives to the traditional essay as a form

of assessment. While this may involve more resource creation, students of this generation seem to be very open to it and may not be put off by it if they feel engaged in the process.

Students also appeared to be open to forms of continuous assessment such as reflective learning journals and weekly quizzes. These forms of assessment encourage student engagement in the learning process throughout the programme.

Students seemed to be very happy with the resources utilised in this short course. They welcomed alternatives to reading texts and referenced the videos and podcasts as a good way of engaging with subject matter. More diversity in resources deployed in environmental law modules could make the learning experience more engaging and less overwhelming as they have the option to listen to and / or watch content.

4. Conclusions:

Overall, students who took this short course had a positive experience. Students who completed the survey rightly pointed out ways in which engagement could be improved upon even further but, overall, the approach to course delivery was well received.

Their experience with the assessment has given us a good insight into their views on alternative forms of assessment and students generally seem very open to the possibility of moving away from the traditional essay. Allowing for deeper engagement with the subject matter through creative processes should allow for deeper learning.

The students also engaged very well with the resources which were developed and deployed in this short course. In light of the impact of the pandemic, students appreciated that the podcasts and videos allowed them time away from the screen or less reading time. I believe this will remain true outside of the pandemic going forward. Students learn in a variety of formats and ensuring their engagement will need continuous revision and development of learning resources.