

# MAgrsc Innovation Support Programme 2016-2018

**Study title:** “Identification and evaluation of innovative teaching approaches which enhance agricultural students engagement in classroom settings”

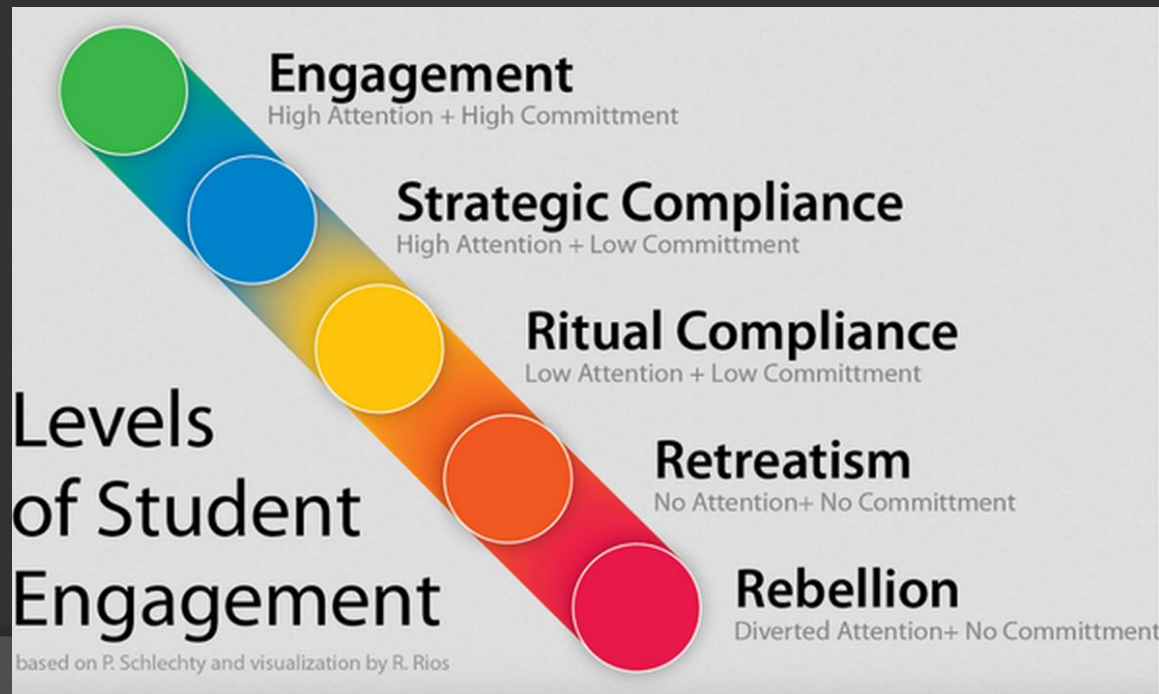
**Student:** Kevin Cunningham

**Supervisors:** Dr. Monica Gorman – UCD &  
James Maher – Teagasc CDSU

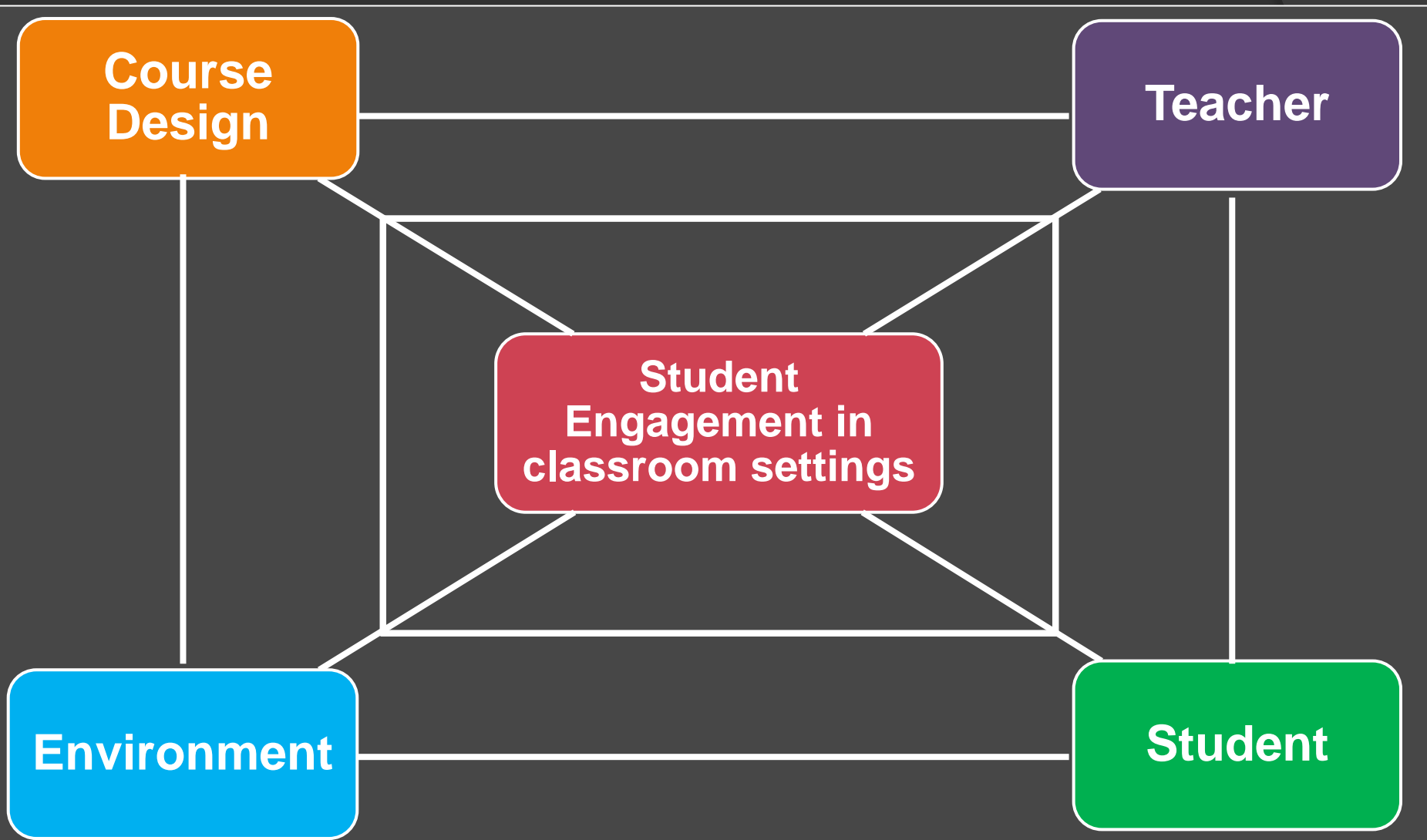
**Office location:** Kildalton Agricultural College

# Research Questions

- ◉ What **influences** student engagement?
- ◉ What are the **benefits** of student engagement?
- ◉ What **recommendations** can be made to improve student engagement?



# 4 Pillars of Student Engagement



# 4 Pillars of Student Engagement

**Course Design**

## ● Course Design;

- Graduate Attributes
  - Competence/ Skills development
- Structure of Course;
  - Modules
  - Assessment - Aligned
  - Organisation

## ● Environment;

- Physical
- Emotional
- Virtual Learning Environment
- External (College life – Social, clubs and break-out areas)

**Environment**

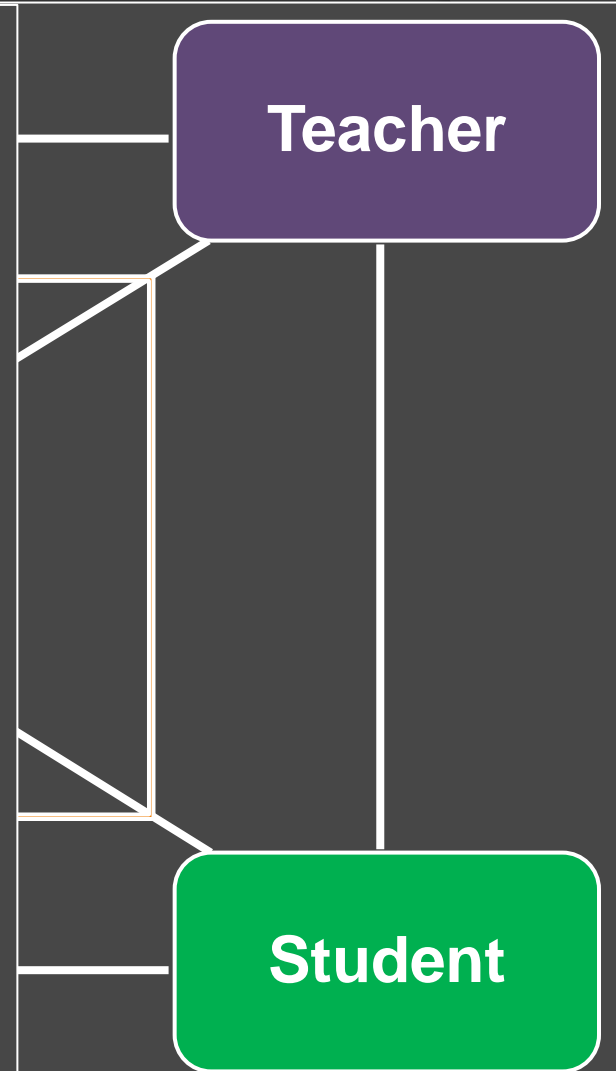
# 4 Pillars of Student Engagement

## ○ Teacher;

- Methods/ Approaches
- Specialism
- Practical Experience
- Training
- Networking/ Communication

## ○ Student;

- Motivation
- Areas of Interest
- Variety of activities
- Age/Life Experience



# Methodology



## Focus Groups;

- 2 Focus Groups; Teachers & Students



## Interviews;

- 6 in total; Ag Teachers & Education experts



## Observation;

- **Complete;** Guide developed and used to assess the influences on student engagement (n = 66)



## Survey;

- Carried out at 6 Ag College Open Days

# Key Findings - Focus Group

## Course Design

*“Do you teach the student how to go and learn and evaluate it or do you teach them a load of stuff that is out of date in five years’ time? Is it not more important that you go and give someone skills to do it?”*

## Teacher

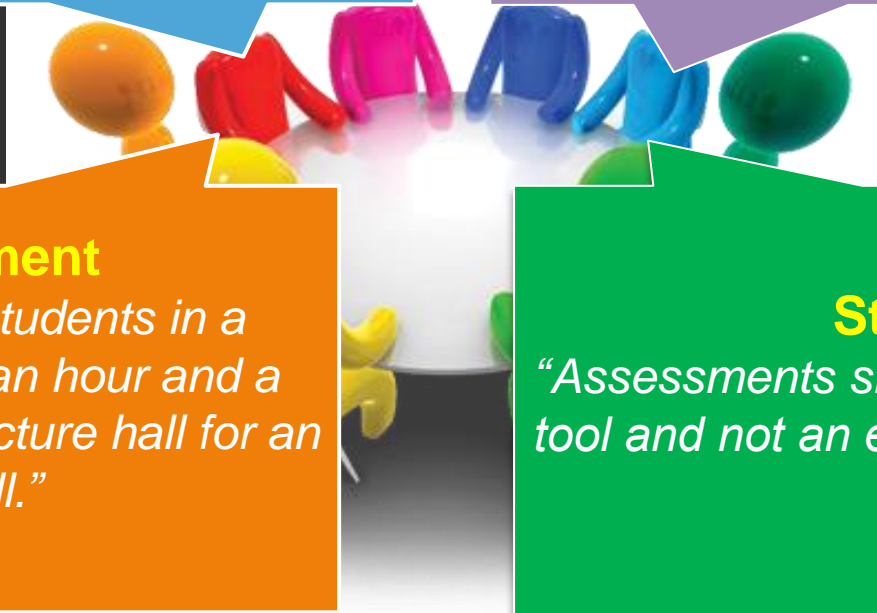
*“Practical adherence to learning outcomes; They are very rigid so .... You need to go with what you need to get from that learning outcome”*

## Environment

*“You can work with students in a small classroom for an hour and a half, whereas the Lecture hall for an hour and a half is hell.”*

## Student

*“Assessments should be a learning tool and not an end goal”*



# Preliminary Key Findings - Interviews



## Programme Director & Educational Developer at Leading Irish University

**Course Design;** *“I think that this is the major one because if you really think through the curriculum design, everything else follows from that philosophy and design”*



# Preliminary Key Findings - Interviews



## Programme Director & Educational Developer at Leading Irish University

**In Reference to Graduates Attributes;**  
*"They are not a dog's dinner of independent republics"*



## Associate Professor & Educational Researcher at Leading European University

"Identify a limited set of key tasks for a farmer and use these to develop the curriculum. Each part of the course could then focus on one of these key tasks"

# Key Findings - Interviews



## Educational Developer at Leading Irish University

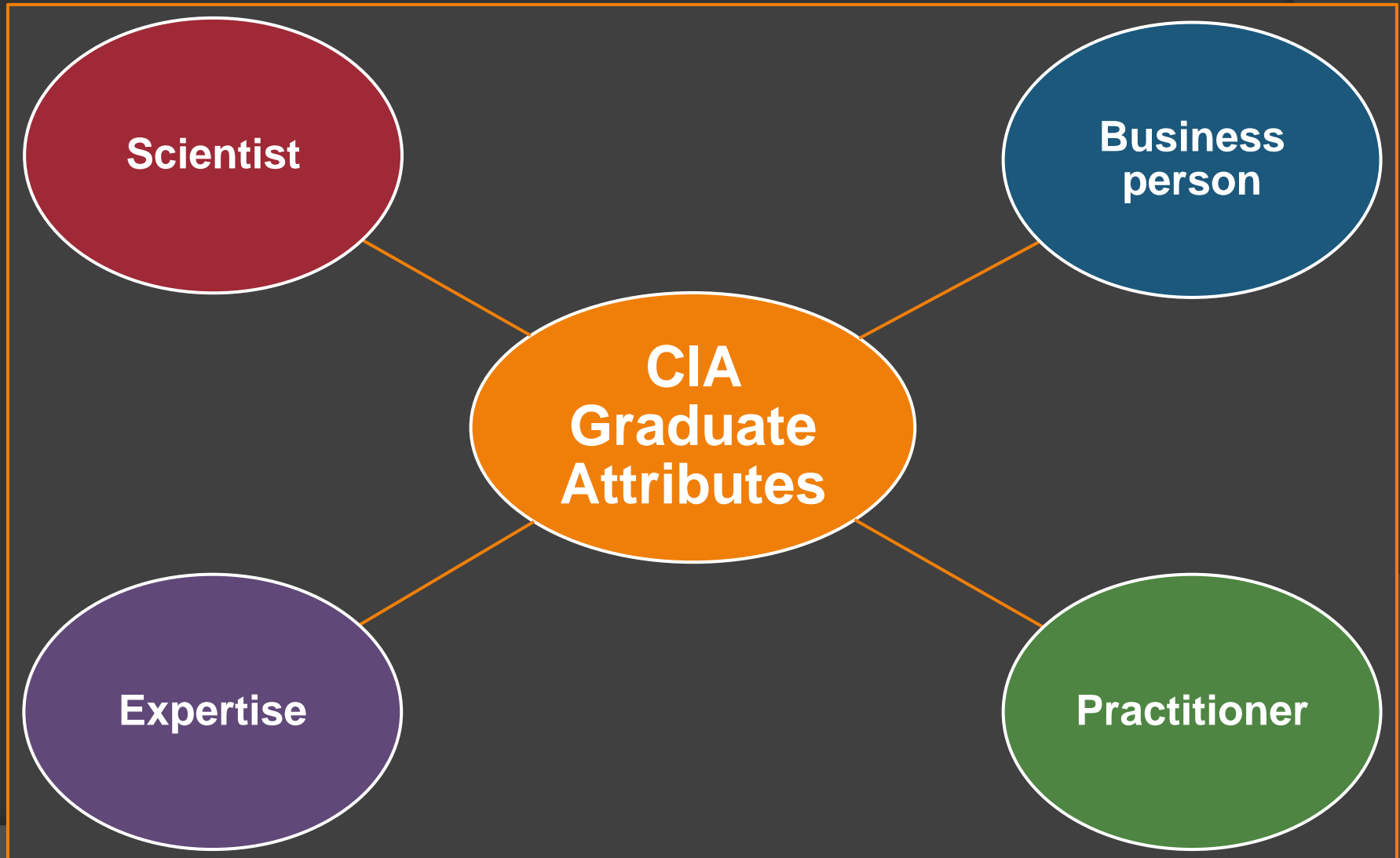
“We should start with what the student needs to be able to do on completion of the course and design the course around that.... Course design is incredibly important and it is something we can work with”



## Director of School, Programme Designer & Educational Developer at Leading Irish University

“You can come up with a list of approaches, an easy list in some ways, that make the classroom more active or engaged but from my experience I think some of the bigger problems come from the design of the programme for a number of reasons”

# Focus on 3 - 4 Graduate Attributes



# Key Findings – Observation – (n=66)

## ◎ Preliminary analysis of observations;

- Overall Average mark – 28 /50
- Scores ranged from 15 – 37 /50

The 5 Sections assessed for student engagement in the classroom	Average rating out of 10	Range of scores
Teacher Delivery	7.2	3.5 - 8.0
Teaching methods	6.1	3.0 - 8.5
Course Design	5.9	2.6 - 8.0
Environment	5.4	4.0 - 6.0
Student	4.9	2.0 - 8.0

# Thesis Structure / Chapters

- ◎ **Chapter 1** - Introduction
- ◎ **Chapter 2** - Literature Review
- ◎ **Chapter 3** - Methodology
- ◎ **Chapter 4** - Research Findings and Analysis
- ◎ **Chapter 5** - Discussion & Conclusion

# Conclusions to date

## ◎ Course Design is key;

- Graduate Attributes – Skills/ Competencies
- Structure – Programme based education
- Assessment – Aligned with required skills/ Competencies

## ◎ Teacher training; Needs to be addressed

## ◎ Teaching approaches – How, why & when

- Presentation techniques
- Use of PowerPoint
- Active Learning Strategies

**Communication Strategies**

# Steps to completion

- ◎ **Collect data;** Interviews & Student Focus Group
- ◎ **Analysis of data;** Interviews, Observation & Focus Group
- ◎ Draw **recommendations** based on the data
- ◎ **Literature review**
- ◎ **Write up**



**Thank You**  
== For Your Attention ==