MAgrSc Innovation Support Programme 2016-2018
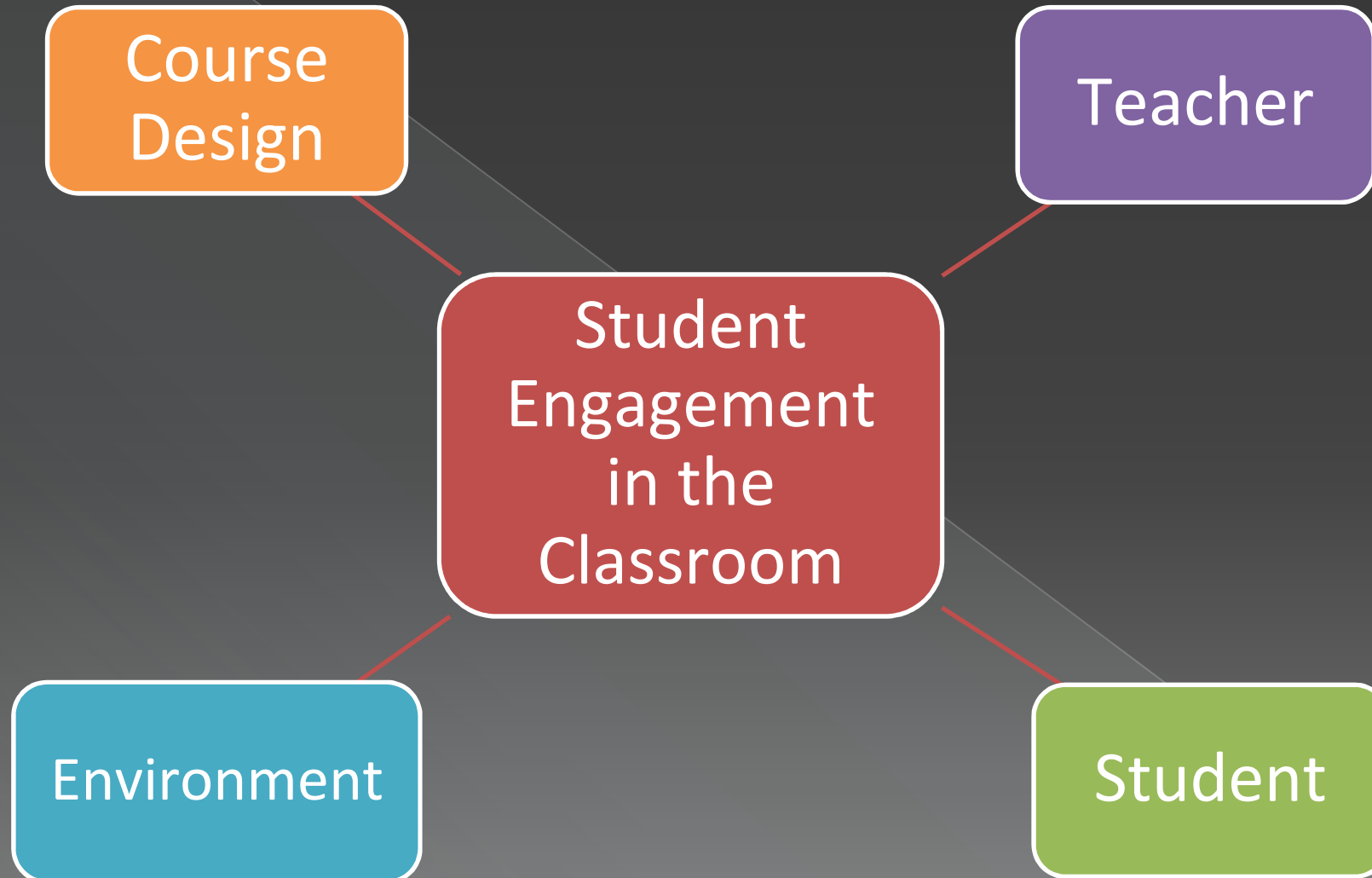
Study title:

"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)

Location: Kildalton Agricultural College

4 Pillars of Student Engagement

Course Design

Teacher

Student Engagement in the Classroom

Environment

Student

Research Methods

Focus Group;

- **2 Focus Groups**; Teachers & Students

Interviews;

- **6 in total**; Ag Teachers & Education experts

Observation;

- Guide developed to assess the influences on student engagement

Survey;

- Carried out at 6 Ag College Open Days

Study Findings

Preliminary Survey Findings

- Active Learning Strategies (ALS) heavily favoured by prospective students

- **77%** - ALS, **29%** preferred Individual (n=331)

Preliminary Interview Findings

"In terms of the teacher I think you need all four basically; The specialism, practical experience, networking and teacher training"

Preliminary Focus Group Findings

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 if 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"

Conclusion

- Better student engagement can enhance students learning **- Deeper Learning**

- Developing students **abilities** to learn by themselves rather than passive learning

- Find methods/approaches which improve **student engagement**