



Encouraging and Facilitating Excellence in Teaching and Learning

Newsletter December 2020

Engaging with UL Staff Online

Building a community of practice around TEL at UL



LEARNING TECHNOLOGY FORUM

CTL are active members of the [Learning Technology Forum](#), a community of practice comprised by all those that support and/or have a close interest around blended and online learning in UL. Having supported the emergency pivot to remote teaching, learning and assessment earlier in the year, the focus shifted to planning for pedagogically informed blended and online learning for the Autumn semester. As part of this effort, CTL supported a large number of teaching staff on a one-to-one basis, and also focused on:

- Drafting [guidance documents and checklists](#), infographics and professional development on [assessment in blended and online learning](#) and [maximising student engagement and communication](#)
- Localising the national course [Getting Started with Online Teaching](#) (GSOT) and leading an internal delivery with a cohort of 40 participants.
- Customising the [ABC Learning Design](#) approach for UL, delivering curriculum development workshops using this framework in collaboration with learning technologists in the faculties.
- Supporting the professional development of [Panopto](#) in collaboration with ITD
- Working with the CERC to customise a PD offering to enable online training with doctors in the Health Services.
- Participating in the Effective Technology working group to inform the development of real and virtual learning environments and learning management systems.

The [LTF website](#) was established and curated, providing a “one-stop shop” to support faculty in their move to blended and online learning. Recent statistics of use are encouraging, with 4,326 visits during September and October.

Online Professional Development in Teaching, Learning and Scholarship

Five participants graduated from the MA in Teaching, Learning and Scholarship in summer 2020, with 8 of the 14 graduates of the Graduate Diploma in AY2019/20 progressing to the MA in Teaching, Learning and Scholarship in 2020/21, who are engaging in an exciting [blended and online delivery](#) of the programme in order to build the skills, competencies, insights and capacities required to bring the highest quality teaching and learning experiences to their students, while also helping them to manage and progress their own scholarly careers.

The regional [peer observation network](#) has been developed and adapted to the blended learning environment with 25 faculty from UL engaging in the inter-institutional network.

The [regional teaching excellence award](#) recipients (2019/20) were acknowledged by the three institutional Presidents at a virtual event in December and many nominees, from across the faculties, are engaging in the 2020/21 process.

Irish Conference on Engaging Pedagogy 2020 – Continuing the Conversation

Co-Chaired by UL and DCU, this event was adapted for the online environment with 200 colleagues registering for the event which took place on 11th December. Key themes included teaching large classes online, barriers to online learning, co-creation of the curricula and more with details available [here](#)

National and International Projects and Collaborations



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CTL continued to collaborate with internal, national and international colleagues in a range of projects over the past semester.

- Erasmus+ Key Action 2 – [‘SHaring Open educational practices Using Technology for Higher Education’ \(SHOUT4HE\)](#).
- [Student Evaluation and Learning Analytics \(StELA\)](#) National Forum project during the design of staff survey and focus groups with staff and students, in order to inform a policy on the use of learning analytics in UL.
- Completed our representation on the [National Forum Digital Education Advisory Group](#)
- [Development of a Strategy and Framework for a Digital Learner Support Hub’](#) SATLE 2019 (National Forum) project led by the [Peer Supported Learning Centre](#) and the [ICT Learning Centre](#) which has facilitated the move online of some of the supports offered by the 5 UL Learning Centres (LCs) to undergraduate students. This project has proved to be particularly useful in supporting students in the current pandemic and has strengthened the collaboration between the LCs and the faculties they support.
- **Re-imagining Assessment for both Students and Teachers**, is a national community of practice, a collaborative project led by CTL (UL) and TEU (DCU) and funded by SATLE19 (National Forum).
- Evaluation of [National Forum open courses](#), in addition to the creation and delivery of the national facilitator course for [GSOT](#)

Irish Universities Association Enhancing Digital Teaching & Learning (EDTL) project

The Enhancing Digital Teaching and Learning (EDTL) project, led by the Irish Universities Association (IUA), aims to enhance the digital learning experience of Irish university students by addressing the digital skills of all who teach in Irish universities. It is a three-year project involving 7 Irish Universities which commenced in January 2019, funded through the Irish Higher Education Authority (HEA) Innovation and Transformation Programme. Some autumn semester EDTL project activities at UL include:

- The establishment, coordination and management of a new [‘Quick Tips for Teaching Online’](#) blog series on behalf of the Learning Technology Forum (LTF). Throughout the autumn semester LTF members and guest contributors in UL have posted about a range of digital teaching and learning topics on the blog, which has served as an ongoing professional development initiative for staff who teach at UL.
- The UL project lead and associate intern led a development group comprising members of ULs Student Engagement & Success Unit and elected officers from UL Student Life to collaboratively develop a 1-page infographic, titled **‘Student Success with Online Assessment @ UL’**, for undergraduate students in each of the 4 faculties across UL. The development group worked in partnership with representatives from each faculty to develop a more personalised and meaningful infographic for each, which contains online assessment information specific to the student experience in that faculty.
- [Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences infographic](#)
- [Education & Health Sciences infographic](#)
- [Science & Engineering infographic](#)
- [Kemmy Business School infographic](#)

Engaging with UL Students Online

First Seven Weeks Programme

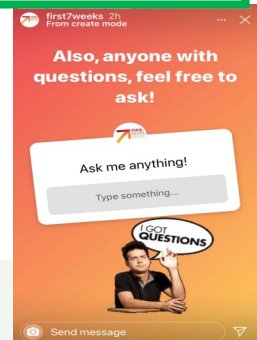
First Seven Weeks is designed to help first year students successfully adjust to life at UL. The programme is designed to focus students' attention on various issues that we know are important for settling in and thriving as a higher education student. This year the programme was extended to the first semester and was delivered online.

Since March 2020 students' lives were disrupted in many ways by COVID-19 - an emergency move to remote teaching, learning and assessment online learning, isolation from friends, financial and health concerns to name but a few. CTL was cognisant of all these concerns in welcoming our first-year students to the University and revised, adapted and extended the First Seven Weeks programme to meet the needs within this new context. The establishment of a virtual hub, for students, run by students for the incoming first years provided a safe environment where they could ask questions and seek advice on issues relevant to them. In addition, first-year students were provided with a five week orientation and transition based programme that was peer-led and run on SULIS.

The view out of my bedroom window is the most scenery I get these days. With work, assignments, and classic Irish weather a stroll outside has been rendered a luxury. But I'm adapting – as are we all. As many know, the majority of the University of Limerick's learning resources have made the leap online, and so has the First 7 Week's Programme.

Read the full piece [here](#)

Reflections from our
F7W Virtual Hub Guide



First-year Student Engagement

A gap analysis on the challenges for new UL students in the academic year 2020/21 identified a potentially curtailed learning and social experience, a reduction in peer interaction, and a physical limitation to some academic supports in light of Covid-19.

In response to these gaps, first-year undergraduate students were provided with a 5-week orientation and transition based programme (UL1001: Foundations for Success in UL).

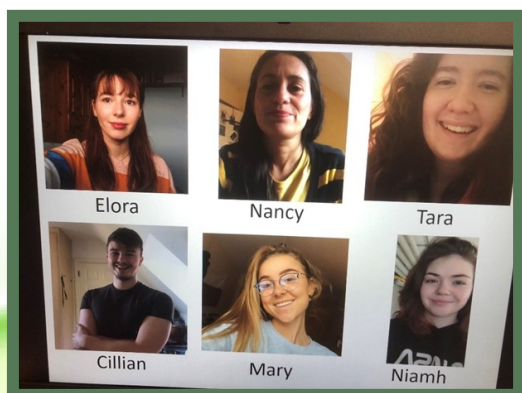
This was a peer-led offering for each undergraduate programme. It facilitated students meeting their classmates while being inducted into UL. The final week of this programme provided the SMART Consent workshop to all new students. The project was supported by the members of the Student Support/First Year Experience Working Group and operationalised by CTL staff, the Student Engagement and Success Unit, the Sexual Health and Wellbeing Group and Student Life.

Please see further information on the project [here](#)

Maths Learning Centre (MLC) Support During Covid-19

The [Maths Learning Centre](#) continued to provide mathematics support to students on its Sulis site during Semester 1. To date (08/12/20), 6,874 visits have been made to this site by UL students during Semester 1. These visits include use of our live interactive group support sessions, engaging with previously recorded support content, and since mid-October has also included the availability of 1-1 mathematics support appointments. Further information on the mathematics support provided to students is available at www.ulsites.ul.ie/mlc/

SOPHia Science Week Workshops 2020



Some of the facilitators who presented the SOPHia Science Week workshops 2020

The SOPHia Project aims to encourage female students to take up physics as a Leaving Certificate subject. The project is a collaboration between the Department of Physics and the Science Learning Centre, with external partners IT Carlow and Tait House Community Organisation. The SOPHia Project ran two virtual workshops to promote physics in November 2020 as part of the Limerick Festival of Science. Our undergraduate facilitators and staff had to totally redesign the workshop for online delivery. Some 2,800 students in total were booked in for the two workshops with over 50 primary schools and over 35 secondary schools taking part in the workshops. It was an excellent new departure for the project into the virtual world. For more information on the SOPHia Project go to www.sophiaphysics.ie

News

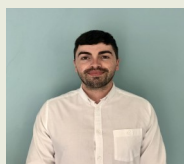
New Staff Members



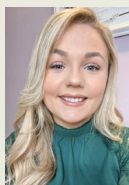
Transformative Pedagogy Lead, Dr Mike Wride holds a B.Sc. (Hons) Physiology and Biochemistry with Nutrition from Southampton University, UK (1990), a PhD in Physiology (specializing in Developmental Biology) from the University of Alberta, Canada (1996), a Post-graduate Certificate in University Teaching and Learning from Cardiff University, UK (2007) and a M.Ed. (Hons) in University Teaching and Learning from Trinity College Dublin (TCD, 2015). Mike is also a Fellow of Advance HE (formerly the Higher Education Academy, UK). Mike's teaching and research interests lie in the areas of international academic development, along with transdisciplinary and transformative approaches to teaching and learning.



UL Student Associate Intern, Alice Hynes is working on the [IUAs Enhancing Digital Teaching & Learning project](#) (IUADigEd/EDTL), progressing the core objectives of the project. She is in her final year of International Business. Read more about student interns for EDTL at [EDTL Interns – Enhancing Digital Teaching & Learning in Irish Universities](#)



Dylan Scanlon and Niamh Kennedy are working as **National Forum Student Associates** at the University of Limerick. They will be collaborating on activities such as the forthcoming Student Success Framework, the Teaching Hero Awards and other National Forum projects.



Dylan is working towards a PhD in the Department of Physical Education and Sport Sciences and Niamh is working towards a PhD in the School of Law.