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THE FUTURE ROLE OF THE LEARNING, TEACHING & TECHNOLOGY CENTRE

Writing a history of the development of the LTTC over the past 10 years is a great deal easier than predicting the next 10 years. It is a common experience of many that predictions beyond about three years tend to be very wide of the mark. But having said that, I suggest the following will figure in the future activities of the LTTC.

Following the excellent example of the DIT LTTC, the completion of Postgraduate Certificates in Education by academic staff will become commonplace in higher education. Within DIT, the percentage of staff with qualifications in education will rise steadily.

The increased sophistication of staff in regard to pedagogy and assessment will create an enhanced desire for research into teaching and assessment methods. The LTTC will become a centre of educational research populated by doctoral and postdoctoral students. Some of these will be members of the DIT academic staff on temporary or partial secondment from their academic studies.

The trend towards inter-institutional co-operation will continue to grow so that the LTTC will be a member of one or more networks of similar centres offering its services on a regional or national basis. Collaboration on an international basis will also arise.

The continued development of technology will make it easier for individual academics to create e-learning materials and such materials will become increasingly available on a shared basis both nationally and internationally. One role of the LTTC will be the training of staff in the use of such technologies while a second role will be monitoring and facilitation of access to repositories of online learning resources, journals etc. In this regard, the role of the LTTC and of Library Services will move closer together.

Increased sophistication of student feedback mechanisms will ensure continual evaluation of the effectiveness of learning strategies and the usefulness of learning resources. This will lead to a greater involvement for LTTC staff in quality assurance mechanisms.

If even some of these predictions come true, they will create many demands on the LTTC to teach, to train, to research, as well as expand collaboration internally with Library Services and Quality Assurance and externally with other LTTCs and repositories of learning resources.

Busy days ahead!

Dr Frank McMahon
Director of Academic Affairs

http://www.dit.ie/lttc
14 Upper Mount Street, Dublin 2

January 2010

lttc
learning, teaching & technology centre

CELEBRATING A DECADE OF INNOVATION AND GOOD PRACTICE IN LEARNING AND TEACHING

LOOKING BACK OVER 10 YEARS

A Learning and Teaching Centre (LTC) was established in 1999 at DIT, 14 Upper Mount Street. The aim of the centre was to develop, support and facilitate good teaching and learning practices across the six faculties of DIT. Initially, three Learning Development officers, one Distance Learning Development Officer and one AV technician were appointed, followed subsequently by the appointment of an administrator. In 2000, the post of Head of Lifelong Learning was created with responsibility of overseeing the work of the LTC, in addition to the support of Lifelong Learning through part-time programme provision and the coordination of pre/post entry support of mature students in association with other central support services.

In 2002, following the recommendations of the Technical Working Group overseeing the implementation of the DIT Strategic Plan, a Learning Technology Team was established as a three-year project to work alongside the LTC. The support and development of eLearning at DIT was the primary focus of this five-person team, with a particular focus on the effective use of the DIT eLearning platform webcourses.dit.ie, and other emerging technologies. A permanent (relocated) SL2 post in the role of Head of Distance Learning was also appointed in 2002.

In January 2009, both elements were drawn together and a single Learning, Teaching & Technology Centre was established. The aim of the centre is to develop, support and facilitate good teaching & learning practices across the institute.

From workshops to accreditation: the first graduating class (2001).

One of the initial activities of the LTC was to provide DIT staff with the opportunity to upskill and to gain advanced qualifications. To this end, the Postgraduate Certificate, Diploma and MA in third level learning and teaching (now renamed the MA in Higher Education) were validated in 2000 and are offered through the Directorate of Academic Affairs. A second Masters, the MSc in Applied eLearning, was validated in 2006 in association with the Faculty of Applied Arts. From 2006, all academic staff appointed to the DIT, and without an equivalent qualification, are required to undertake the PG Certificate within 2 years of their starting date.

Over the past ten years, the centre has aimed to raise the professionalism, visibility, and status of teaching and learning in DIT. Working with new academic staff, as well as established staff who wish to develop their careers, deepen their teaching abilities and improve their students' learning experiences, the centre provides a rich seam of expertise, resources and information about higher education, learning and teaching, eLearning and academic professional development.

Postgraduate Programmes

For more information about any of our programmes, Tel: 01-402 7875

"Very supportive staff. Related to day to day work. Gives insights to tomorrow. Great to work with external lecturers on learning issues."

DIT was the first third-level institution in Ireland to offer a qualification in third-level learning and teaching. Today, all new academic staff joining the institute are required to have a formal qualification in teaching, or to undertake such a qualification within the first years of their academic life.

The LTTC offers leading-edge postgraduate programmes relevant to learning, teaching and eLearning. We believe we have begun the journey of providing a tradition of scholarly, diverse, exciting and rewarding learning environments across our postgraduate programmes. Essential to this is the provision of a high-quality experience for participants, which requires an environment that fosters critical inquiry as well as innovation and creativity, and we believe we deliver on this score.

Our current suite of programmes includes the Postgraduate Certificate in Third Level Learning and Teaching, the MA in Higher Education, and the MSc in Applied eLearning. Recently the MA in Higher Education and the MSc in Applied eLearning were restructured, and as a result over 30 students have enrolled for these two programmes in 2009 alone. Students are drawn to these qualifications for the opportunity they provide to explore innovative approaches to education and eLearning in contemporary education.

In addition, a 5 ECTs Accredited Professional Development Short Course on Teaching and Learning is offered to DIT staff and externally to lecturers, teachers and educational support staff in other educational institutions.

The strong reputation of the Postgraduate Certificate in Third Level Learning and Teaching gave rise to a demand for off-campus delivery of the programme. This programme is now offered at Athlone Institute of Technology (to lecturers from Athlone IT and Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology) and at Carlow Institute of Technology.

http://www.dit.ie/lttc/programmes/

Awards & Recognition

DIT Teaching Excellence Awards are made to recognise excellence in the teaching of individuals or teams of DIT staff, and are made at both a school and an institutional level. The awards are based on successful contributions to teaching and programme/module development, as demonstrated by, for example, increased student engagement, the development of innovative and effective learning methodologies and/or the redesign of curricula. Applications are made through the process of creating a teaching portfolio of excellence. This process is supported by the LTTC, by means of portfolio workshops and advice. This scheme has undergone continuous improvement to emphasize the importance attached to teaching by the institution. This year, a student nomination process was introduced, which provoked a very positive response from both staff and students. For additional information, please contact Martina Crehan (martina.crehan@dit.ie)

Research & Publications

A strong research and scholarly base has been built up over the past 10 years, and LTTC staff are now widely recognised for their contribution to practitioner-based research in teaching, learning, and eLearning. In addition to their contribution to conferences, journal articles, book chapters and books continue to be edited and published by LTTC staff members. The latest book, due in May 2010, features contributions from DIT staff along with those from colleagues in higher education institutions across the country and internationally: *Critical Design and Effective Tools for e-Learning in Higher Education: Theory into Practice.*

Teaching Fellowships

In 2009, money from the HEA Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF) was used to establish 12 teaching fellowships at DIT. These fellowships aim to support key faculty-based projects, supported by the LTTC, focusing on 'high impact' activities to increase student engagement or to address retention issues within the first year of study. For information contact miriam.brosnan@dit.ie

Workshops & Support

Workshops often provide the first point of contact between DIT academic staff and the Learning, Teaching and Technology Centre and many of the most exciting collaborations which LTTC staff have been involved in over the years have resulted from contacts initially made at training sessions. The types of training sessions have changed somewhat over the ten years of the LTTC. The workshop schedule in 1999/2000 included sessions such as 'Selecting Computer Assisted Learning', a title which seems a little lost in the Web 2.0 era. But sessions encouraging Group Work and Problem-based Learning, topics which are still very relevant today, were also evident in 1999.

In the academic year 2008-2009 the Centre ran 45 workshops including the Annual Showcase of Learning & Teaching Innovations (usually held January each year) and the DIT eLearning Summer School (held in June). A sample of the type of workshops offered include the following:

- LTTC Surgery (open consultancy sessions)
- Academic transition and the first year experience
- Widening Participation
- Introduction to ePortfolios
- Social networking and web 2.0
- Academic writing and the first year experience
- Teaching without talking
- Introduction to problem-based learning
- Supporting the School Review process
- Using technology to support assessment
- Large group teaching
- Supervising undergraduate theses
- Using mobile phones for education
- Using Twitter and Facebook for education

Almost 500 DIT staff attended formal events, and the Centre handled over 3,000 additional queries from staff and students related to the use of technology in teaching and learning.

All workshops provide staff with tools to support their everyday teaching; on offer is a range of activities, information and ideas to help lecturers enhance the learning experience of the DIT student body; whether it is to get fresh ideas to liven up the classroom or to consult and use a range of popular training methodologies and resources for teaching and learning, the LTTC has been a one-stop-shop for academic staff over the years. Given that quality teaching is increasingly much valued in HEIs, consulting with the LTTC has enabled a large number of staff in DIT to expand their teaching skills and capabilities. http://www.dit.ie/lttc/workshops/

"What impressed me very much was the overall organisation. You people have done such a good planning and homework, that it looked so smooth!! Every one of you were expert and enthusiastic and passionate about what you taught, which made a great difference."

Annual Events

The LTTC holds academic-related events for DIT staff throughout the academic year, and our calendar of monthly events is published and regularly updated on our website. http://www.dit.ie/lttc/

Annual Showcase of Learning and Teaching Innovations

A highlight in the academic calendar since May 2000 is the DIT Annual Showcase of Learning and Teaching Innovations. This one-day event highlights innovative practices in teaching and learning across the DIT. It also provides an opportunity for staff from across the institute's several sites to meet and exchange ideas in an informal and informative manner. Since 2006, this event has been combined with the eLearning Day, previously hosted as a separate event. Keynote speakers over the years have included Professor John Heywood, Fellow Emeritus, TCD (2010), Professor Manz Yorke, Lancaster University (2009), Professor Grainne Conole, Open University (2008), Professor Jim Boyle, Strathclyde University of Strathclyde (2007).

Introducing the Graduate Student Conference 2010

The climax of this year's MSc in Applied eLearning and MA in Higher Education will be the Graduate Conference. The purpose is to build a network of research-informed participants across the two programmes, as well as to give students within DIT and across Ireland the opportunity to share their research and interest to a group of like-minded individual. Details will be posted later in the academic year.

DIT Institutional Projects, Seminars and Events

LTTC-led campaigns in recent years have included the 'Focusing on Learning Assessment' campaign launched in September 2006 at DIT Bolton Street, with an Assessment event including a keynote from Professor Mantz Yorke, a debate entitled 'All examinations should be abolished' and case study discussions.

The 'Embracing diversity' campaign was launched in Sept 2007 by Professor Norton with presentations by Professor Aine Hyland, then Vice president of UCC, followed by Faculty based workshops and a day event linked to the launch of the National Access Office Action plan 2005-7 by Dr Mary-Liz Trant.

To promote discussion and debate about education among staff, since 2007 the LTTC has hosted a monthly seminar series under the title 'Perspectives on Education'. Topics discussed have included 'What is education for?', 'Enhancing a Learner-Centred Environment – are we (nearly) there yet?' and, in December 2009, 'What's the use of a Learning and Teaching Centre?' The discussion featured contributions from James Wisdom, graduates from LTC postgraduate programmes over the past ten years and others.

As part of the LIN SIF 1 project, in May 2008, we welcomed Prof Graham Gibbs who facilitated two sessions: a presentation 'Focusing on assessment to support learning' and, in association with EDIN, a second workshop exploring strategies 'Changing the Teaching of a Whole Institution'. In May 2009, we held a one day participative event in Grangegorman 'The first year curriculum – strategies to enhance retention'. During the day, group-based case study discussion sessions were combined with keynotes from Prof Mantz Yorke (institutional perspective), Eddie Conlon (academic perspective) and DITSU (student perspective).

As part of the Education in Employment SIF 1 project we have facilitated sessions aiming to encourage DIT/Industry partnerships strategies towards learning in the workplace. These have included 'Shared Perspectives on Learning in the Workplace' (April 2009) with presentations from the Irish Auctioneer and Valuers Institute, the Dublin Airport Authority and the DIT, and on 5 November 2009, 'Higher Education Institutions and Industry Engagement – Challenges and Opportunities' with presentations from Wyeth, the DIT and the IoTi Flexible Learning project. On 18/19 May 2009, Dr Carl Wieman, winner of the Nobel Prize for Physics in 2001 presented a series of lectures in the DIT outlining a 'new model for transforming teaching in higher education'. He has devoted much of his energies in recent years to improving the teaching of science in higher education and establishing the Carl Wieman Science Education Institute (CWSEI) based at the University of British Columbia.

Co-hosted events with national and international Associations/ professional bodies have included: ALT/SURF/ILTA Spring Seminar: 'Reflective learning, future thinking: digital repositories, e-portfolios, informal learning and ubiquitous computing' (2005), the DEANS eLearning seminar (2006), EdTech 2007, the Eighth Annual Irish Educational Technology Users' Conference, and a number of Educational Developers Irish Network (EDIN) events: most recently the December 2009 seminar led by James Wisdom of SEDA on sustaining educational development at institute and national level.

SIF Funding has also initiated a number of projects in DIT. The Teaching Fellowship projects were launched on 25 September 2009. These projects were awarded to support the enhancement of learning and/or curriculum development at programme, school or faculty level. SIF also funded new eLearning tools for the classroom, which instigated in the installation of Interactive Whiteboards in classrooms in many locations across DIT campus.

In addition, SIF Funding under the DRHEA Enhancement of Learning strand has been used to purchase

six sets of personal voting systems available for use in each faculty. A number of seed funded projects relating to Learning, Teaching and Assessment are annually funded. In 2008/09 projects under the following themes were supported: The First Year Experience, Modularisation & Curriculum Design, eLearning, Blended Learning and Flexible Learning, Assessment for Learning, Diversity of Experience and Widening Participation.

http://www.dit.ie/lttc/projects/