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Roisin Donnelly

Technological University Dublin, roisin.donnelly@dit.ie

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Teaching Postgraduate Research Methods using a Novel Problem-based Learning Approach

Roisin Donnelly

Learning and Teaching Centre
Dublin Institute of Technology
14 Upper Mount Street
Dublin 2
Ireland

Tel 00 3531 402 7886
Fax 00 3531 6767243
E.Mail roisin.donnelly@dit.ie

Author Biography

Received a Postgraduate Certificate in University Teaching and an M.Ed. in Higher Education from the University of Ulster. Has an M.Sc. in Computing and 10 years of experience working both as a lecturer and researcher in Universities in Northern Ireland and Sydney, Australia.

Has been more recently based in the Learning and Teaching Centre in the Dublin Institute of Technology, and is continuing her research through the Doctor of Education Degree from Queen's University Belfast.

Session Title

Teaching Postgraduate Research Methods using a Novel Problem-based Learning Approach

Preferred Format

Seminar

Intended Audience

Academic Staff/Educational Developers

Key Words

Postgraduate, Research, Problem-based Learning

Objectives

- to have an understanding of the idea behind designing and delivering a PG Research Methods Module using a Problem-based Learning Process in Higher Education.
- to discuss both the PBL approach used and the real life multi-disciplinary research problems from the accumulated Research Methods Problem Bank to date.

Abstract

This session describes both the reasons for and the process of designing and delivering a Research Methods Module using a Problem-based Learning (PBL) approach in a Postgraduate Diploma in Third Level Learning and Teaching at a higher education institute in Ireland. The students who undertake this part-time Module are cohorts of academic staff (Faculty Members) in Higher Education (HE). They are hitherto referred to as participants. This module is one of eight offered on the PG Diploma, all designed and delivered using Problem-based Learning. The entire PG

Diploma is voluntary, and only Faculty who are keen to implement novel pedagogical approaches in their own subject disciplines apply for a place on the modules.

The aim of this module is to provide a broad understanding of the research methodologies used in research in HE today, and present at postgraduate level, the theory for applying research methods and skills to all aspects of learning and teaching. This module also aims to prepare participants for planning a research proposal at Masters dissertation level. However, the key to the participants' success is by using the principles of PBL to share valuable information with their colleagues in a variety of other disciplines. The opportunity is being given to enhance group learning in a real life multi-disciplinary learning environment. This collaborative process is supported with tutor face-to-face and online facilitation sessions.

The question can be asked why use a PBL approach for this, rather than continue allowing participants to research in a traditional learning environment? Quite simply, the main idea is to provide them with a taste of what is possible in a group environment for research. Therefore, the role of PBL is for the motivational benefits it provides. The participants are involved in active learning throughout, working with real-life research problems in their professional practice and what they have to learn in their independent and collaborative study is seen as relevant and important to enhance this. Arguably, these factors are important for educational development to act to improve teaching and learning in higher education today.