



Enhancing  
Digital Teaching  
and Learning  
Irish Universities Association

# THE ENHANCING DIGITAL TEACHING AND LEARNING PROJECT



JANUARY 2019 / SEPTEMBER 2022

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## FOREWORD

How to convey the impact of the Enhancing Digital Teaching and Learning (EDTL) project? We've tracked the numbers, created infographics, counted badges awarded, written reports, recorded videos. And we wanted to tell the stories of the projects and activities that happened across the 7 universities, over 3 years.

At first, we tried to tell them ourselves. But telling our own stories is challenging, we are too close, too familiar with the detail, our writing is too academic, and we don't have the time anyway.

So, we recruited a storyteller to our team. Maeve Devoy's job was to listen to our stories, interpret them – selecting the pieces that interested or made sense to her, and then tell them using her own distinctive voice.

Over several months, Maeve met with team members, listened to them, asked questions, and wrote our stories in her words.

They are not as we would have written them. Maeve has brought something new, highlighting her own interesting facts and lessons learned.

The result is the story of the EDTL project.

**Dr Sharon Flynn,**

IUA Enhancing Digital Teaching and  
Learning in Irish Universities

*Project Manager*

## THE EDTL STORY

When the EDTL story began, the digital world was changing and evolving every day, though the same could not be said for the digital literacy levels within Irish Higher Education.

There were academic graduates who did not know what digital skills employers expected from them. There were members of teaching staff who did not have the answer either. For these reasons, the EDTL project officially commenced in January 2019 with 3 main objectives:

### Objective #1

Enhance the digital skills of undergraduates - this was a response to the skills world, where it was necessary to recognise the changing world and the fact that people need digital skills to be successful

### Objective #2

Enhance the digital learning experience for all of the students, not just the students who were studying technology

### Objective #3

To achieve the first two objectives, it was clear that staff digital skills needed to be enhanced, including support services staff

*The preliminary idea was to consider all these findings and develop a digital resource package that could be rolled out across the seven universities.*

With these clear goals in mind, the search for a Project Manager led the steering committee to Dr Sharon Flynn, who took on the role in May 2019 and started assembling the rest of the EDTL Team. The first step was visiting each of the 7 universities that were involved:

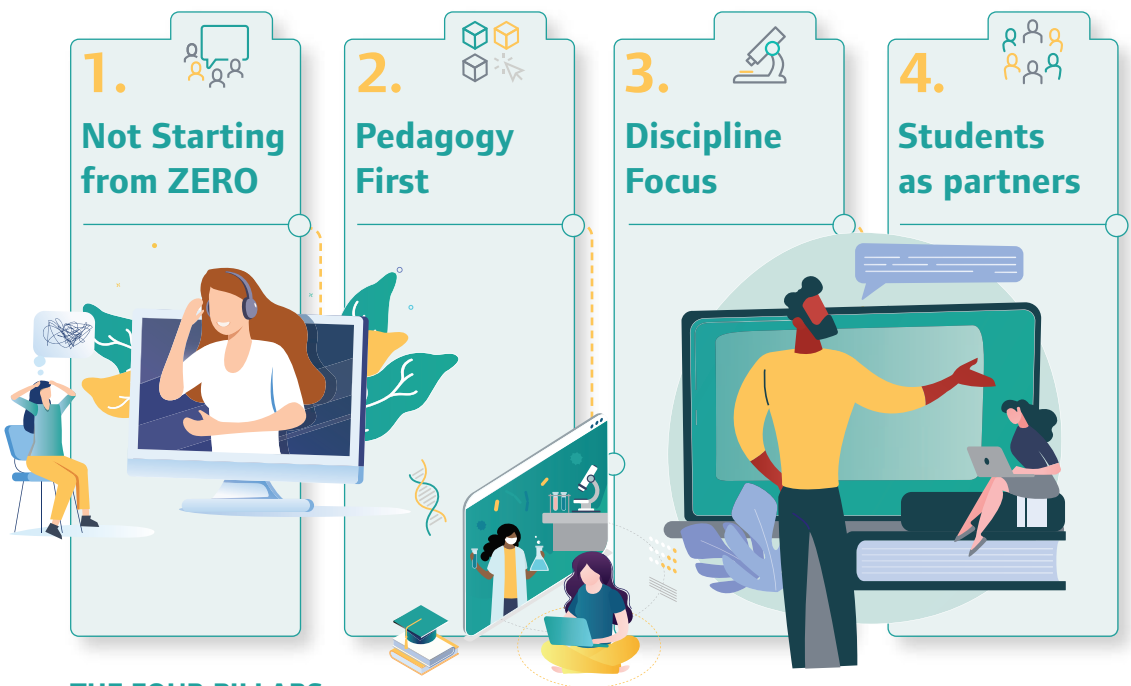
- Dublin City University
- Maynooth University
- Trinity College Dublin
- University College Cork
- University College Dublin
- University of Galway
- University of Limerick

These initial visits were focused on discovering the digital needs of each campus population, with particular attention paid to staff digital skills and continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities. It was important to have people in place, but at such an early stage, it was essential to listen and understand the digital issues and goals each university had.

The preliminary idea was to consider all these findings and develop a digital resource package that could be rolled out across the seven universities. However, it was not long before the Project Manager realised that “one size was not going to fit all”.

Having talked to all of the people on the ground - the steering committee, project sponsors and senior management, as well as the people involved in any sort of digital activity - it was clear that each of the universities had its own needs. There were some who needed more technical support, while others needed more digital teaching and learning support.

Either way, the EDTL Project needed to evolve with its own revelation.



### THE FOUR PILLARS

The Four Pillars emerged after the Project Manager recognised that the EDTL Project would have to navigate a path less travelled and find a formula to help guide each of the universities along its journey to enhancing its digital offering. Here is the foundation each pillar was built upon:

- 1- Not Starting from ZERO - recognising each campus was already working on their digital literacy and issues, as they had staff development courses and skills that they were already using.
- 2- Pedagogy First - wanting to focus on teaching needs and goals, and how technology could help them, rather than focusing on the latest software.
- 3- The European Digital Competence Framework – providing structure and aligning the project’s work with existing standards.
- 4- Discipline Focus – creating a more consistent digital experience for students, instead of focusing on technology champions.

### INTERESTING INSIGHT

Raising the digital literacy of all staff members was fundamental to the effectivity of the EDTL Project, which was seeking to reach “a breadth rather than a depth”.

A crucial factor in the process of building the EDTL Team was ensuring each institution highlighted its own digital requirements, along with the EDTL Project’s objectives. Then, it was possible for each university to choose the best configuration for its team.

This autonomy meant each university could:

- choose how to use the funding, whether it was one full-time member or two part-time members
- choose what academic school or department they came from.

A product of this approach was the assimilation of an incredibly diverse team, consisting of academics, learning technicians and staff from support services. Each member brought their past and present experiences, as well as their learning background, which undoubtedly benefitted the EDTL Project and played a significant role in the impact it had.

In June 2019, the EDTL Project Manager brought the entire team together for their very first monthly meeting. The gathering took place at the IUA office and provided an opportunity for each university to discuss its digital issues and hopes for the future. The initial focus was on staff digital literacy, as the

## THE EDTL STORY PART 1

underlying assumption was that the enhancement of staff skills would better the student experience – now it was time to test the theory.

With each of the universities following the Four Pillars, they were able to move in the same direction and begin planning their pilot projects. It was an exciting time.

It was also an enlightening period. The EDTL pilot projects were being developed. The universities had chosen the subject of their projects. And with that, the differences and similarities in their focus was clear to see.

Here are a few:

- DCU and Trinity focused on assessment
- UCD focused on working with staff in specific schools and enhancing digital teaching and learning

The Team's work was documented and mapped, making it possible to spot any gaps that might have existed. The team were imagining a cyclical approach to the project's success, where they would build upon the lessons that had been learnt each semester and continue to progress by cementing the foundation of the Four Pillars.

In November 2019, the IUA hosted a major event. It was a pivotal moment for the EDTL Team because the Pilot Projects were launched and the very first EDTL Student Intern was introduced. The EDTL Webinar series was promoted, while the findings of an extensive CPD review were revealed, detailing the professional development opportunities available to staff at each university. There was also an understanding that had begun to instil itself within the team: collaboration is key!

### INTERESTING TIP



The CPD review was treated as an EDTL yearly benchmark, ensuring the team were continually addressing and assessing staff digital needs.

Another significant element of the EDTL Project was to continually look toward the future and build a portfolio of useful resources that helped students and staff, as well as demonstrating a way forward for other institutions. For this reason, the EDTL Team were committed to aligning their goals with the National Forum, ensuring their work was consistently achieving the highest standard. It also ensured that participants could easily recognise the benefits of partaking in the project and accessing any EDTL resources.

The decision to award a digital badge to those who engaged with the EDTL Pilot Projects, was driven by this desire to guarantee value and longevity for the time invested. And to fully guarantee this, the badge was certified by the National Forum, meaning the participants' work would be recognised on a national level. Heading into 2020, the EDTL Team knew what they were doing, who was doing it and why – but there was no way of planning for what came next.

### THE EDTL APPROACH

In March 2020, the entire country closed its doors, including every university, lecture hall and classroom. It sent the higher education system into utter chaos, as every aspect of teaching and learning transitioned to a digital environment. The root of the mayhem was written clearly in the findings of the INDEX survey, which stated that 70% of teaching staff had never taught a live online class. This meant that the EDTL Team were called to the frontline, where they ensured the emergency pivot was as smooth as it could be.

The EDTL Project Manager, Sharon Flynn, was not based in a university. Instead, she was co-ordinating the team's response, while watching the academic struggle unfold, along with the continued Covid restrictions. The need to document the immediate impact of lockdown on staff and students became paramount, so Dr Flynn worked closely with IUA's Kate Wood and the EDTL Student Intern, Vish Gain, to create a small project: HE in Isolation.

The video series captured the experiences of staff and students, from navigating online group chats to

## EDTL Approach for Students: Planning for effective learning in third level

Advice from the EDTL student team (for students, by students)

### Stay organised

- Use an **online calendar** to keep track of assignment due dates and scheduled lectures.
- Check your student email and online learning environment regularly to ensure you are up to date with your course. Make sure you know what is taking place online and what is in-person, and plan accordingly.
- Create a **weekly plan to give structure** to your learning. This will ensure you don't fall behind, and know what your week looks like at a glance. Many college courses have full-time workloads, so expect to spend a good deal of time on college work even if you don't have many contact hours.

### Keep in touch

- A great way to learn is by **making study groups** with other students! Asking each other questions, explaining topics, having discussions and peer-teaching are all brilliant ways to learn, as well as great ways to make friends.
- Make contact with your lecturers over email or through their office hours. Lecturers are happy to hear from students with any questions you may have and the details for getting in touch can usually be found on the course introduction page or during the first lecture.

### Look after yourself

- Take breaks.** We all are somewhat aware that you need to refresh your brain after a certain amount of time. However, when we get lost in the flow, we often forget to take breaks. Try to stick to this and see how you feel; for every 30 minutes you study, take a short 10-15-minute break to recharge. Short study sessions are more effective and help you make the most of your study time.
- Eat and drink healthily and regularly. Nourish yourself properly is important. Don't forget to **drink enough water** (and not too much coffee or energy drinks) and stick to a reasonably healthy diet.
- Use textbooks or a stand to prep up your screen to eye-level to reduce neck strain. Download applications which filter out blue light on your devices to reduce eye strain.

### Utilise technology

- Learning technology is useful**, even when teaching is in-person. Research software that can help with accessibility or make you more productive, such as applications that temporarily block distracting websites, organise your notes, or help you revise.
- Online tools such as Google Docs allow you to **share useful notes and resources** with fellow students easily, saving your individual workload.
- Familiarise yourself with your university's virtual learning platform. There are many guides available online which will help you master whichever platform your university uses.

### Find your space

- Find out where there are facilities like electric sockets, strong wifi, quiet rooms, and study spaces on campus.
- Find a quiet, well-lit space to engage in online learning.
- Your college library will have study spaces and a range of useful services both online and in-person. Many libraries have laptops for student use. Many library books may only be available in physical form.

### Prepare for disruption

- Timetables may change** suddenly with restrictions, and it is important to keep up to date with what arrangements are for your lectures and tutorials.
- Have a discussion with household members about when you will need the internet for live lectures and ask them to stay off of bandwidth-intensive services during these times.
- Take note of your lecturers' contact details in case you need to get in touch regarding being unable to submit an assignment or attend a lecture.

### Communication is key

- If your course offers 'breakout' sessions to have relaxed conversation with fellow students, try and attend regularly to avoid feeling isolated in your course. **Peer connection** is often vital for learning.
- It can be tempting to always stay quiet in lectures but try and contribute when you get the opportunity. This is a great way to ensure you understand the material and **have any questions answered**. For online lectures you can use the **chat function** if you do not feel comfortable speaking.

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detailing their dos and don'ts – there was something useful for everyone in the 2–3 minute videos that were released over a six week period. The project succeeded in providing a relevant and relatable source of information for the academic world.

The overwhelming positive response to the digital content reinforced Dr Flynn's belief that it was time to begin planning for the coming academic year, which seemed less and less likely to commence with a sense of normality. Taking this concern to the Steering Panel, Dr Flynn proposed the development of a resource that would help staff prepare for the coming year, by compiling and signposting the team's digital discoveries.

The following six weeks were focused on discussion and collaboration, as the team devised the EDTL Approach and divided their vital insights into 5 different categories:

- Reflection on the Emergency Pivot
- Consider your Students
- Consider the Content & Activities
- Consider Communication & Engagement
- Consider Assessment & Feedback

The abundance of information available to staff was a key factor in the design and wording of the very first infographic that the EDTL Team created. Having witnessed the distress staff were under, intensified by the vast influx of digital guides and "how-to's", the EDTL Team understood the importance of providing accurate and accessible advice.

## INTERESTING INSIGHT

The EDTL Team continually compared their journey through Covid, to being thrown off a ship, in the middle ocean, where it was either sink or swim. Fortunately, they were all in it together, supporting each other and communicating their wins and their losses.

The process of developing the EDTL Approach was built upon brainstorming and sharing ideas - but with the addition of the first EDTL Student Intern, Vish Gain, it took on an entirely new perspective. Working alongside Vish as an academic partner – listening to his experiences and his concerns – the team quickly realised that it was far easier to enhance the student experience when the student voice was truly heard and applied to the development of the academic agenda.

## THE EDTL STORY PART 1

Considering this revelation, the EDTL Team started to curate a small collection of digital resources for each of the five categories, allowing staff to delve a little deeper into the areas they were still struggling with. The resources were mostly open sources, so they could be shared or copied. They were reviewed by the team, so they were as efficient and effective as possible. They were also uploaded out of necessity, so if it was not important, it would not be there, simply because the team wanted to save people's time, not waste it.

In June 2020, the EDTL Approach was launched at another IUA event. It took place online and the attendance was incredible. Staff really engaged with the project's developments, reminding the team of what they had set out to do and why.

Following this, the team aligned the EDTL Webinar series with the EDTL Approach and recorded a set of webinars that developed each of the themes. The EDTL Team even developed a second infographic for lab-based subjects, as it was an area that had not been properly addressed and the team were determined to take on any challenge they were faced with.

As the EDTL Project's portfolio was growing, so was the EDTL Community. There was a mailing list that continued to grow beyond the team's expectations, stirring great excitement across the board, as it was proof that those who were listening and learning alongside the team, were not solely based in the seven core universities.

It was very simply to get involved, as all academic staff had to do was sign up, then they would be informed of any upcoming events, webinars and new discoveries. The IUADigEd Community was promoted by the team and the EDTL social media platforms. It also was launched at the IUA event in June 2020, when it exploded in popularity, highlighting the need staff had for connecting with their peers and finding their digital footing.

In December 2020, a survey was carried out to evaluate the engagement of community members and the impact of the webinars and resources on digital teaching and learning, during the Covid-19 period.

All 650 members of the IUADigEd Community were invited to participate. Here is some of the feedback:

"I found the summer seminars very useful while planning online teaching. I gained some useful tips about engagement and communication with online learners."

"These webinars re-focused my pedagogic thought process especially in terms of the design of my online teaching."

"So much of the information was useful, even if reinforcing current practices. The academic integrity information was particularly interesting."

### INTERESTING INSIGHT



It was not just staff who joined the IUADigEd Community. There were a number of students who signed up too, citing similar reasons as staff, such as having a regular time and seeing the same names and faces.

Now that the EDTL Project was in full swing, and the online teaching environment had become somewhat the norm, the team were able to return to their initial prerogatives and begin planning their next move. Considering the information that the team had acquired and the understanding they had of staff digital literacy levels and learning opportunities, they were able to truly develop a range of resources that would meet their needs.

Let's take a look at the incredible work that followed...



THE  
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PROJECT

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**STAFF  
DEVELOPMENT**

## AN EDTL APPROACH TO 'FLIPPING' THE CLASSROOM

"It's about using your teaching time for guiding and consolidating learning, not using lectures for delivering content at students"

### What problems were being addressed?

- Digital pedagogical capacity building
- Promoting effective use of synchronous/live teaching time through structured asynchronous engagement
- Enhancing student engagement in large-group teaching

### Who was involved?

The EDTL Team at Trinity College Dublin has evolved across the project, including academic staff, professional services staff and a range of student interns. Kevin O'Connor, Dr Jonny Johnston, and Asst. Prof. Julie Byrne have been particularly involved in promoting and using flipped classroom approaches in the Trinity context.

*The flipped classroom approach in effect says that supervised/interaction time between learners and teachers is important and should be used effectively.*

### Why did you choose to address the challenges this way?

- Flipping adds a digital skin to an existing educational practice around 'pre-reading'/'pre-learning' – it's a digital enhancement of something many colleagues are already doing.
- Flipping takes the benefits of an interactive tutorial approach and scales them for larger-group lecture teaching.
- Our approach supports experiential learning around preparing content for 'flipping' to enhance digital academic practice.
- The approach taken is to promote teaching that enhances learning.

### How were the goals achieved?

The flipped classroom approach in effect says that supervised/interaction time between learners and teachers is important and should be used effectively. Rather than using lecture time to deliver content, consolidated by independent work, independent pre-work is consolidated under supervision during teaching time.

For flipping to work effectively, links need to be visible between materials provided (e.g. with the content to be 'flipped'); learners need clear and structured guidelines on how and why they are expected to engage with the flip; frequent and



iterative formative assessment of pre-work is required to promote that supervised consolidation during live teaching time. It is important to recognise that flipping should not increase student workload or involve pre-recording full lectures, as content flip – structured engagement and structured materials are key for effective use of flipping.

One of the early EDTL outputs was the development of an in-person professional development module for staff, known as the Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) module. Led by Asst. Prof. Julie Byrne working closely with learning technologists, Kevin O'Connor and David Hamill, the TEL module supported upskilling and afforded the opportunity to experiment experientially with flipped classroom approaches to 45 members of staff, embedding 'flippers' in Schools and Departments. Another EDTL output was a webinar led by Jonny and Kevin, directed to the DARIAH-EU consortium ('Digital Research Infrastructure for the Arts and Humanities'), exploring how flipping could be used to support professional learning and development work. The consistent guidance of the EDTL team relating to flipping was:

1. Keep the material to be flipped focused and realistic in size.
2. Think about why and how you expect learners to engage with material/content.

3. Be explicit in your expectations for content engagement – what should learners be focusing on during the pre-learning?
4. How will you incentivise engagement with the flip – why should students bother engaging with material if it's not used/explored during the live teaching time?

### INTERESTING INSIGHT



Not all flipped content needs to be video or multimedia based, although a lot of the literature on flipping does focus on video-content as a learning transfer tool. This can really drive the use of flipping with less upfront preparation time for the educator – and can be a real win for time-poor academics. A journal article, for example, can be easily 'flipped' and exploited as pre-reading during a live teaching session – students can be assigned a long piece of reading in advance of a session, set a series of interactive prompts to test engagement in advance of the session, and then provided with a series of prompt questions to work through in (small) groups during a teaching event – affording the lecturer the opportunity to really be aware of what the points of difficulty are for students in a specific content area.

# AN EDTL APPROACH TO SUPPORTING INTERNAL COLLABORATION

“Where we were starting from then, it’s not where we are now”

## What problems were being addressed?

- Digital pedagogical capacity building
- Digital practice enhancement
- Active collaboration online

## Who was involved?

The EDTL Team at Trinity College Dublin has evolved across the project, including academic staff, professional services staff and a range of student interns.

## Why did you choose to address the challenges this way?

- Build digital pedagogical capacity
- Support experiential learning around digital academic practice
- To consolidate points of connection across the college

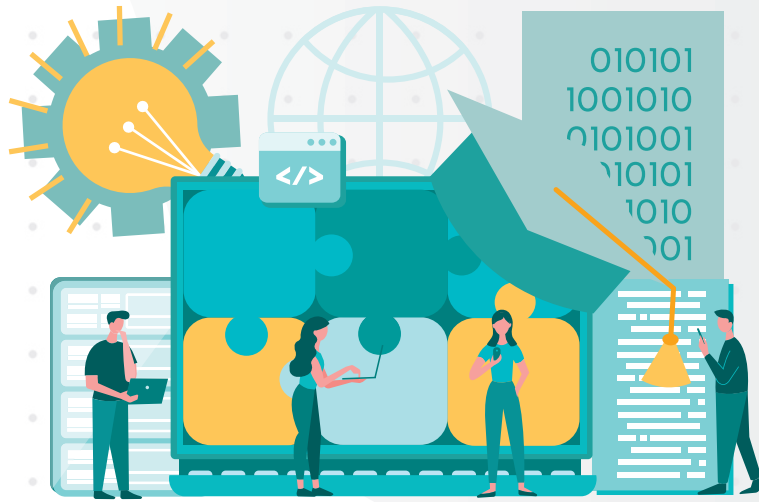
## How were the goals achieved?

One of the early EDTL outputs was the development of an in-person professional development module for staff, known as the Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) module. Led by Asst Prof. Julie Byrne and working closely with learning technologists, Kevin O’Connor and David Hamill, the module succeeded not just in supporting module attendees to enhance their digital practice, but also seeded enthusiastic and competent digital practitioners across the college community.

The TEL module aimed to provide staff with opportunities to experiment with a wide range of institutionally supported digital tools. It also aimed to encourage them to think critically and reflect on common challenges of digital teaching, e.g. how best to:

- Support collaborative engagement and enquiry online both between staff and students and between students themselves
- Approach social presencing in an online context

*Developing the TEL module included identifying the existing range of digital practices in use by academics and other professionals, what the most appropriate kinds of support were and how they could be made available to the College community*



- Connect with students in the online space and support community building
- Make use of Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) tools to enhance assessment and feedback
- Configure the VLE to support small group interactions

The TEL module also provided the Trinity EDTL Team with an opportunity to engage collaboratively with stakeholders across the college community. Developing the TEL module included identifying the existing range of digital practices in use by academics and other professionals, what the most appropriate kinds of support were and how they could be made available to the College community.

The module ran 3 times before Covid restrictions were put in place, with 15 participants in each iteration. It was scheduled for 2-hour blocks, every fortnight, and last ran during the Autumn semester 2019. Through the module, the EDTL Team impacted directly on 45 members of staff, laying the groundwork for and seeding the emergence of a diffuse network of staff across the College, who could be called upon to support digital pedagogical upskilling at scale, during the Covid pivot.

## INTERESTING INSIGHT

The TEL module afforded academic staff fresh opportunity to reflect critically on their existing practices and adapt their own teaching preferences and styles to the digital paradigm. The module brought together academic and other professional staff, emphasising the commonality of shared values around the importance of teaching and learning and the potential impact of digital teaching on student learning. The module enabled the emergence of a community of practice internal to the institution with good links to other, similar communities of practice across the sector, driving collaboration between academics and other professional staff and supporting the emergence of a broader national community of practice, supported through EDTL webinars during and subsequent to the national shift to remote learning in March 2020.

## QUICK TIPS FOR TEACHING ONLINE

“Staff had their hands full – they needed a quick solution to their teaching online needs”

### What problems were being addressed?

- The need to continue providing staff with digital teaching support
- The limited amount of time staff had to partake in any professional development

### Who was involved?

The EDTL Team at UL, based within the Centre for Transformative Learning (CTL), consisted of Project Lead, David Moloney, and student interns, Alice Hynes, Jasmine Ryan and Katie Martin. They worked with staff from the Learning Technology Forum (LTF).

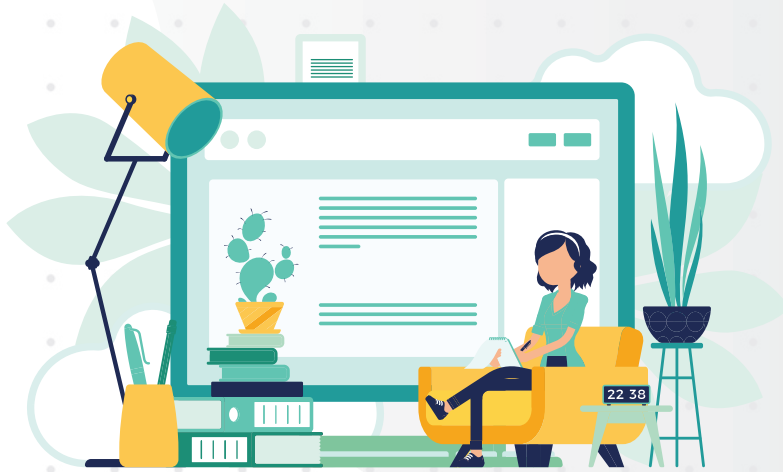
*LTF members collaborated to provide a range of professional development events and resources that were subsequently archived centrally on the LTF website.*

### Why did you choose to address the challenges this way?

- One of the key functions of the LTF is the promotion and provision of professional development and support for digital teaching and learning and associated technologies right across UL. To ensure the continuity of emergency remote teaching, learning and assessment (Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust, & Bond, 2020), LTF members collaborated to provide a range of professional development events and resources that were subsequently archived centrally on the LTF website. This website became a staple for UL staff who regularly visited it for clarity and guidance during uncertain times.
- The concise blog content on the LTF website would encourage staff to interact with the resource, accommodating a flexible, low-bandwidth, self-service professional development opportunity to aid them with learning to teach online during and beyond the quick migration to remote online teaching.

### How were the goals achieved?

When Summer 2020 came to an end, academic staff across the country were placed under crippling pressure, as it had become clear that the Covid restrictions were not being lifted and



teaching was going to remain online for the Autumn semester. With preparation for September 2020 progressively intensifying, the UL EDTL Team and the LTF recognised that staff demand for and capacity to attend synchronous online professional development workshops was diminishing, yet there was a clear and continuing need to offer staff support in a flexible, re-imagined format.

With this in mind, the UL EDTL Team conceptualised a concise and comprehensive solution to the problem: a new blog series focused on quick tips for digital educators, where the guiding principle was pedagogy-first.

The blog's aim was to provide an ongoing, informative and timely feed of quick, useful and practical tips for staff. And once the UL EDTL Project Lead, David Moloney, pitched it to UL's LTF, the name, Quick Tips For Teaching Online, was chosen and the UL EDTL Project Lead began developing the staff digital resource. The LTF boasts a broad membership from across UL, constituting a joined-up and collaborative community, whose key function is the promotion and provision of staff professional development and support for digital teaching and learning. This network would ensure the blog series reached the majority of UL's staff, enhancing their digital

abilities and optimising their opportunity to continue their professional development.

The UL EDTL Project Lead was provided with an account to edit the LTF website, where a new dedicated page was created for the blog. Initially, the UL EDTL Project Lead developed a blank schedule for the Autumn semester and invited members from within the LTF to self-assign themselves to given academic weeks throughout the forthcoming semester and to make post proposals. The posts were to vary from quick tips to quick activities and posts that would help enhance or consolidate a digital teaching and learning competence. The blog would also introduce staff to institutionally available tools and technologies, along with additional signposts and links to helpful resources.

*The name, Quick Tips For Teaching Online, was chosen and the UL EDTL Project Lead began developing the staff digital resource.*



**Here is the UL EDTL blogpost development process outlined:**



SCHEDULE



AUTHORS SELF SIGN-UP & MAKE POST PROPOSAL



CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE POST AUTHOR & I



POST GUIDELINES



PUBLISH ON BLOG



PROMOTION

The UL EDTL Project Lead played an integral role in the blog’s development. Here are some of the vital tasks involved:

- Corresponding with each post author on potential blog post topics
- Providing authors with a Post Outline Template, developed to help structure and guide their writing
- Acting as a soundboard for authors’ post proposals and ongoing drafts
- Assuming an editorial role: providing comment, critique and feedback on drafts where necessary
- Inputting the post on behalf of the post authors to the LTF blog site and publishing the final post

*In its inaugural year (Autumn '20-Spring '21), 20 posts were published to the blog. They were written by 15 different authors and focused on a diverse range of relevant topics.*



*The UL EDTL Team wanted to ensure that the authors had a cohesive guide to follow when creating their blog post, so the UL EDTL Project Lead developed a Post Outline Template showcasing, among other things, how much time the authoring process should take and what was involved in it.*

- Promotion and dissemination of new posts, via:
  - i) a promotional email sent from the LTF email account to the entire campus community
  - ii) the @UL\_LTF Twitter account.

In its inaugural year (Autumn '20-Spring '21), 20 posts were published to the blog. They were written by 15 different authors and focused on a diverse range of relevant topics.

The UL EDTL Team wanted to ensure that the authors had a cohesive guide to follow when creating their blog post, so the UL EDTL Project Lead developed a Post Outline Template showcasing, among other things, how much time the authoring process should take and what was involved in it.

The purpose of this was to aid prospective authors in making an informed decision on whether or not they could fit it into their busy schedule.

Here are the main guiding points:

- maximum wordcount (~700 words)
- estimated reading time (normally not more than 5 mins)
- accessibility (image alt-text and image captions)
- attribution information, etc.

**The Quick Tips for Teaching Online blog afforded many benefits to staff, including:**

- Posterity of posts
- Leveraging of diverse experience and expertise from across the university
- Opportunities for cross-institutional/interdisciplinary dialogue between authors, readers, and colleagues
- Anecdotally, changes in practice resulted from the reading of and engagement with the subject matter of blogposts

There were also some challenges:

- A freeze of the blog for a significant period of time, while a number of UL-based websites were migrated and updated
- Scheduling of posts between a diverse decentralised authorship
- Reliance on authors' good will, with little incentive to make posts beyond willingness to share practice
- Promotion of the series
- Largely unidirectional communication
- Maintenance of links in posts

## References

Hodges, C., Moore, S., Lockee, B., Trust, T., & Bond, A. (2020). The Difference between Emergency Remote Teaching and Online Learning. *EDUCAUSE Review*: <https://er.educause.edu/articles/2020/3/the-difference-between-emergency-remote-teaching-and-online-learning>

## TEACH-DIGI

“At such a critical time, launching a responsive, helpful and dynamic staff training initiative in digital education for our UCC staff was my priority”

– Clíodhna O’Callaghan, UCC EDTL Project Lead

### What problems were being addressed?

- Staff digital skills
- The emergency pivot to online learning

### Who was involved?

The UCC EDTL Team consisted of Project Lead, Clíodhna O’Callaghan, and student interns, Catherine Dawson, Alice O’Connor and Stephen O’Riordan. They were based in the Centre for Digital Education (CDE), where they collaborated with many UCC departments such as the Skills Centre, HR Training & Development, CIRTL (Centre for the Integration of Research, Teaching & Learning) and with the Students’ Union (SU).

### Why did you choose to address the challenges this way?

- The EDTL project branding was strong. The team adapted it to suit UCC. This enhanced the standing of the work and training by establishing a strong brand at the right time.
- The CDE website, Canvas Teaching with Technology course & SharePoint sites could host the digital resources ensuring consistency and integration.
- Providing a variety of digital content would appeal to more staff across the university.

### How were the goals achieved?

There is no way of enhancing students’ digital skills without elevating staff digital capabilities and awareness.

The UCC EDTL Team kept this understanding at the core of their thinking when they set out to develop an all-encompassing staff digital resource. Their goal was to build confidence, while bridging any divides caused by the digital jargon.

They knew the EDTL approach would provide the founding pillars for their work – but the resources and branding would speak specially to UCC staff. The belief was that staff and students would take ownership of the resource, if it represented the vibrancy of their academic life and the character of the campus population.

The UCC Project Lead, Clíodhna O’Callaghan, is a *Gaeilgeoir*. She spotted a very interesting play on words: the Irish term for digital is *digiteach* and the term for house is *teach*. With some clever wordplay, the UCC EDTL Team had a name for their staff digital resource – *Teach Digi*, meaning *house of digital*.

Another key element the UCC EDTL Team wanted to employ was collaboration with other UCC support services and academic departments. This would ensure *Teach Digi* was integrated into every crease of the UCC campus, while covering each of the digital issues challenging staff.

The first step was to establish an advisory group. The UCC EDTL Team invited a staff member from:

- Academia
- Human Resources
- IT Services
- Teaching and Learning
- The Skills Centre
- Inclusive Learning
- The Disability Support Service

A student was elected from the Student's Union, with the purpose of providing the student perspective and once again promising every angle of the staff digital needs were being addressed. When the advisory group met, they discussed the best available resources and devised a strategy for introducing *Teach Digi* to UCC and guaranteeing its success.

The main areas of focus were:

- Teaching online
- Communicating online
- Accessibility
- Engagement

The CDE website would host *Teach Digi*, as UCC staff were already familiar with the resource. The UCC EDTL Team worked with the CDE and designed the *Teach Digi* extension, which was primarily public-facing, except for certain resources specific to UCC staff, such as how to navigate the VLE and complete the *Teach Digi* online training courses.

When the branding was developed, as well as the online presence, the UCC EDTL Team were ready to launch *Teach Digi* – but everything changed with the introduction of the Covid restrictions and the emergency pivot to online learning. The UCC EDTL Team had to reorientate their introduction strategy and prioritise the problems posed by the pandemic, such as teaching and

communicating online, ensuring engagement and accessibility. Finally, the UCC EDTL Team launched *Teach Digi* in June 2020, with a catalogue of information that was tailored to the rapidly changing needs of staff. The variety of digital resources available – written descriptions, video tutorials, graphs and links – ensured *Teach Digi's* offerings catered to the users' busy lives and calendars, as they could choose the digital format that best suited their daily environment and their learning style.

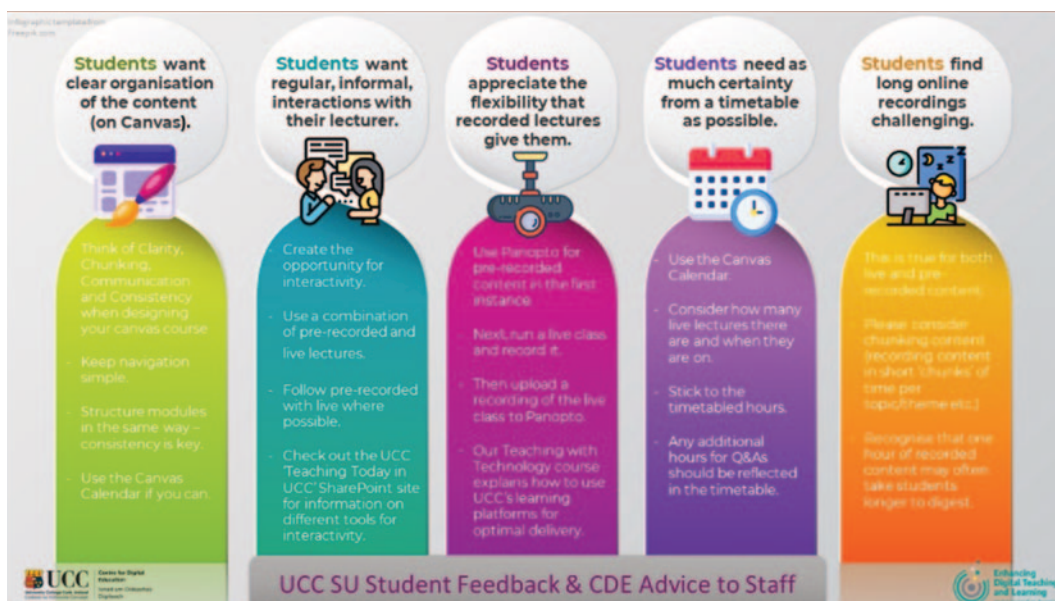
By Autumn 2020, *Teach Digi* had engaged most of UCC's academics and a large number of students. The EDTL approach underpinned the staff training and the overall design – but most importantly, the national level that the EDTL project was operating at, guaranteed the information was effective and relevant, therefore inspiring trust within each of *Teach Digi's* visitors.

The UCC EDTL Team were organising three Roundtable discussions per semester, where students and staff met online to answer and ask questions, and to listen to each other's experiences and perspectives. The sessions were recorded and posted online afterwards. And with attendance numbers reaching 60+, the events were hugely successful, simply because they achieved one of the UCC EDTL Team's main objectives, which was to break down the barrier's distorting UCC's digital development.

The team were consistently conscious of the transition students and staff had undertaken, as well as the amount of learning it entailed, so patience and understanding were at the core of every event. They were also aware of their own limits and regularly reminded themselves that they were not always going to have all of the answers - but they could certainly source them with a bit more time.

\*The biggest lessons were:

- Ask senior members of staff to participate in the promotions
- Highlight any partnerships with national agencies
- Collaborate with campus services
- Recognise students as partners
- Create an advisory group



### Ag Caint Podcast

*Teach Digi* was built upon a foundation of collaboration. It was one of the reasons why the staff digital resource was such a success. It was also the reason why the UCC EDTL Team were able to offer a unique and critical insight into the student experience, when they set out to create the *Ag Caint* podcast. The UCC EDTL Team took the feedback they received through *Teach Digi* and summarised the information into five pillars, which were illustrated in this infographic design:

The decision to create a podcast was twofold:

- The sharing of key learnings across disciplines in the university form both a staff and student perspective
- Raising the awareness of *Teach Digi*, EDTL and ultimately carving out access to digital education in a new and exciting way

The UCC EDTL Student Intern, Catherine Dawson, would learn the skills necessary to develop a podcast and present a podcast. She would also create a product to add to her digital portfolio. The initial plan was to create five podcasts – one based on each of the pillars. The UCC EDTL Student Intern, Catherine Dawson, would speak to another student about each of the pillars, just as the UCC EDTL Project Lead, Clíodhna O’Callaghan, would speak to a lecturer. This would provide them with further information and insight, such as what was and was not working, and what students will be able to build on in the future.

The goal was to help the student population navigate the toughest lockdown so far. And once again, the UCC EDTL Team were overwhelmingly successful, so much so that they decided to continue and grow the *Ag Caint* podcast by asking a lecturer and their student to join them in their discussion – an idea proposed by the team’s EDTL counterparts.

The podcast gave this learning dynamic a chance to:

- Talk about issues they felt were important/overlooked
- Reflect on digital learning today

The UCC EDTL Team wanted the podcast to be easily accessible. It was recorded on Microsoft Teams and posted on the VLE, as well as the CDE website. It is now available on Spotify, where its continued progress can be heard in each uploaded conversation.

### TOP TIP:

The UCC EDTL Team’s focus on listening to the feedback they received, not only provided them with the content for their podcast, but also ensured their work evolved and remained relevant.

# INCLUSIVE LEARNING AT UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

“The students found the inclusivity work so helpful that they wondered why it had not been done before”

## What problems were being addressed?

- Staff digital skills
- The accessibility of digital content
- The emergency pivot to online learning

## Who was involved?

The University of Galway EDTL Team consisted of the Project Lead, Kate Molloy, who was based in the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT), and the Student Intern, Lauren Muldowney. They worked with the University of Galway Inclusive Learning Team, academic staff, support services and the Student’s Union.

*The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education recognised the integral importance of academic inclusion and funded a strategic initiative at the University of Galway.*

## Why did you choose to address the challenges this way?

- Blackboard Ally was changing the digital face of academic inclusion
- Universal Design for Teaching and Learning (UDL) provided a comprehensive framework
- Webinars and courses would communicate the knowledge staff needed

## How were the goals achieved?

For every student to excel in their academic studies, they must be able to access their curriculum, regardless of their age, disability, gender, race or socio-economical background. The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education recognised the integral importance of academic inclusion and funded a strategic initiative at the University of Galway.

The EDTL Project Lead, Kate Molloy, also understood the challenges facing non-traditional students and recognised the impact that the EDTL project could have on the strategic implementation of more inclusive digital teaching and learning practices. And after conferring with the University of Galway Inclusive Learning Team, the University of Galway EDTL Team partnered on the initiative.

## STAFF DEVELOPMENT

**The key objectives of the Inclusive Learning project were:**

- Centre and amplify the student voice and establish an evidence base for postgraduate student perceptions and experiences of inclusion and exclusion in participating Colleges and Schools at the University of Galway
- Raise staff and student awareness about issues of inclusion and exclusion in teaching, learning and assessment practices at the University of Galway, with specific reference to postgraduate students (including students on research programmes)
- Provide practical supports and resources to promote and embed inclusive teaching practices at the University of Galway
- Develop a model for monitoring inclusion in relation to teaching and learning at the University of Galway
- Draw on the evidence of student experiences to address structural and attitudinal barriers to inclusion and influence University policy

After completing a comprehensive audit of all CPD offerings at the University of Galway in relation to the DigCompEdu framework, the University of Galway EDTL Team Lead inferred that more emphasis was needed on Area 5: Empowering Learners.

The University of Galway EDTL Team then focused in on Area 5 of the DigiCompEdu framework – Empowering Learners - as a constant point of reference. Here are the key elements they abided by:

- Accessibility & Inclusion
- Differentiation & Personalisation
- Actively Engaging Learners

Having researched Blackboard Ally prior to both projects, the University of Galway EDTL Project Lead was already aware of the difference the software was making internationally and presented the findings to the University of Galway Inclusive Learning Team, who agreed upon the benefits of integrating the inclusive software into the University of Galway. Once the software licence was purchased, the University of Galway EDTL Project Lead began to embed Blackboard Ally within the University of Galway's VLE.

*The invaluable perspective gained through the EDTL Project meetings that took place regularly, also promised the University of Galway EDTL Team were persistently sourcing the most relevant answers to staff questions.*

Interesting Discovery: Blackboard Ally is a tool that seamlessly integrates with Learning Management Systems (LMS) to provide insight into an institution's accessibility, while also enabling users to:

- Gain an understanding of their institution's accessibility performance
- Proactively tackle accessibility and target both instructors and content
- View accessibility trends and detailed graphs to monitor improvement

An Inclusive Learning conference was planned for March 2020, with the intention of informing staff on how to use Blackboard Ally – but the pandemic had other plans for the academic agenda. Luckily, the University of Galway EDTL Team hit the ground running. The team expedited the release of Blackboard Ally for all students and staff at the University of Galway, and it was rolled out in March 2020 to meet the needs of learners who were suddenly learning fully online. The University of Galway was the first Irish university to adopt Blackboard Ally.

Viewing the transition as the perfect time to take staff digital training back to beginners, the University of Galway EDTL Team adopted the Universal Design for Teaching and Learning (UDL) digital badge course for a local rollout. They also partnered with Blackboard to deliver a series of in-depth summer workshops on Blackboard Ally.



### Navigating The New Normal

After launching Blackboard Ally, the University of Galway EDTL Team Project Lead hosted a number of webinars, where the focus was answering staff questions and listening to their queries, as well as informing the approach to delivering the UDL course, but what was most important was the need to ensure that staff understood the need to actively promote Blackboard Ally in their teaching and promote it amongst their students, who were due to benefit from it most.

The constant collaboration between the University of Galway EDTL Team and the University of Galway Inclusive Learning Team, along with input from academic staff, support services and the Student's Union, ensured that activities continued to evolve, and alleviate some of the pressure staff were feeling at the time.

The invaluable perspective gained through the EDTL Project meetings that took place regularly, also ensured the University of Galway EDTL Team were persistently sourcing the most relevant answers to staff questions.

By Spring 2021, the positive feedback received by the University of Galway EDTL Team and the University of Galway Inclusive Learning Team, proved that it would be possible to host an online Inclusive Learning symposium. And that it would be possible to invite international keynote speakers, who might not have been able to partake under ordinary circumstances, as the online environment eradicated any of the concerns challenging in-person events.

The two-day event focused on raising awareness across issues of equality, diversity and inclusion in higher education. It highlighted the importance of centring the student voice, while showcasing and sharing inclusive pedagogies, practices and approaches.

Here are the attendance numbers:

500 + registered

250 + logged in

As for the future of academic accessibility within the University of Galway, the Inclusive Learning Project has drawn much needed attention to the diverse range of learning methods available to students, therefore transforming the way staff treat their course material and the way many students interact with their curriculum. It has invigorated academia, while shining a light on the difficulties students were facing when their basic requirements were not being met. And even though the problem has not yet been wholly solved, it is surely on the cusp of revolutionising the student experience, with the help of a few well-designed digital resources.

### INTERESTING INSIGHT:



Reworking the inclusivity of an institution's digital content is no easy task, especially considering the time each academic has to communicate their course material – but there are some deeper questions that lie at the foundation of such a transition. How can we create more inclusive digital learning environments beyond the accessibility of digital content? Some considerations include:

- How do we conduct ourselves?
- How do we communicate effectively with students?
- How do we ensure all students are represented in the curriculum?
- Are there other pedagogical considerations?

### INTERESTING TIP:



The opportunity to inform staff of Blackboard Ally, also offered an opportunity to reach students and create awareness, simply because students listen to their lecturers and make use of the resources their lecturers recommend.

# VIDEO PRODUCTION SKILLS DELIVERED ONLINE AT UCD

## What problems were being addressed?

- The need to equip academics with video production skills
- How to deliver a practical hands-on subject [video production] fully online

## Who was involved?

The UCD EDTL Project Lead, Mairead O'Reilly, who was based in the UCD College of Engineering and Architecture.

## Why did you choose to address the challenges this way?

- Face-to-face delivery was not an option due to Covid restrictions

## How were the goals achieved?

In November 2019, the UCD EDTL Project Lead, Mairead O'Reilly, ran a 'digital needs' analysis with academic staff in the UCD College of Engineering and Architecture. It identified a need to learn the video production skills required to design and develop Health & Safety and Instructional lab videos.

In response to the needs analysis, a pilot project was designed to deliver these skills through a series of face-to-face workshops. This was deferred in the context of Covid-19.

At this same time, Mairead was in the process of designing and developing a fully online video production module for PhD students. She embraced the challenge presented by Covid and leveraged the work in progress to roll out a streamlined, fully online Video Production Fundamentals short course for Academics.

## Features:

- The course included two student Tasks
- Hardware and software agnostic
- Learning materials were streamlined
- Participants engaged in active learning
- Meetings were strategically scheduled to coincide with the phases of the video production cycle
- Participants showcased their project 'tasks' to peers for discussion & feedback
- The final project 'task' resulted in completion of a three-minute instructional/research video

Course Structure: Video Production Skills	
Meeting 1	Introduction & Overview Introduction to mini project, Task 1 Submission of Task 1 video
Meeting 2	Pre-production & audio overview Group discussion on Task 1 Introduction to final project, Task 2
Meeting 3	Group feedback on Task 1 Production, demo of shot types and angles
Meeting 4	Post-production, video editing demo Discussion on Task 2 progress Submission of Task 2 video
Meeting 5	Video Showcase
Meeting 6	Wrap up and evaluate





There were five one-hour milestone meetings that were scheduled to coincide with the naturally occurring phases of the video production cycle.

The participants engaged in two project tasks, ultimately resulting in solo or group submissions of a short research or instructional video, which were showcased at the final online meeting.

Ten members of academic staff completed the course. Feedback was very positive with participants agreeing that:

- Content was clear and adequate
- Materials were easy to find
- The schedule and time commitment was as communicated
- Approaches to creating lab and course materials will change due to taking the course
- Participants would recommend the course to colleagues

Due to the success of the pilot, a new iteration of the course was requested. It took place in January 2021, with a further ten participants. Feedback incorporated into this new iteration, included a short representative sample video, optional tutorials on video and audio editing and difficult concepts were reviewed and expanded upon. The course duration was also extended to 2.5 weeks.

Participants who completed either course were eligible for the Getting Started with Personal and Professional Digital Capacity digital badge. This was awarded by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning.

The course also had a wider impact:

- A number of disciplines have invested in audio and video equipment to facilitate future projects
- The regular meetings associated with the courses, created a cross discipline community of practice that continues to meet and showcase projects, share tips and discuss ideas
- The participants are sharing the knowledge they gained with colleagues

### INTERESTING INSIGHT:



The purpose of project task 1 was multi-dimensional. The primary objective was to practice the skills required to complete the final video production task. The underlying objectives were to encourage curiosity about how the Video Production process is utilised to create a storyline of fixed duration, as well as to convey a clear message. Participants were thrown in at the deep end, with just enough guidance to complete the task, this acted as a key motivator in learning the skills needed.

### Participant Feedback:

*“We were thrown in at the deep end but it worked for me.”*

*“The short first exercise gave me confidence; I felt that was clever course structuring”*

# DIGITAL ASSESSMENT WORKSHOPS

“Presentation light  
and discussion heavy”

## What problems were being addressed?

- Staff and students’ digital literacy
- Embedding digital assessment across programmes and within schools

## Who was involved?

The EDTL Team at DCU consisted of Project Co-Leads, Suzanne Stone and Rob Lowney, who were based in the Teaching Enhancement Unit. They worked with the student interns, Laura Anne Scanlon and Sinéad Mooney.

*In the academic world, there is no way of escaping assessment – but there is always room for improvement, especially when technology has provided an abundance of options and possibilities.*

## Why did you choose to address the challenges this way?

- Workshops would provide space for theory, group work and practical exercises
- A series of workshops would establish consistency
- The option to choose specific workshops would ensure staff digital assessment needs were met

## How were the goals achieved?

In the academic world, there is no way of escaping assessment – but there is always room for improvement, especially when technology has provided an abundance of options and possibilities. It is the reason why the DCU EDTL Team decided to focus on the topic. At DCU, there had been a number of assessment workshops that ran when there was a demand for them.

They were one-off events and hosted in person. The DCU EDTL Team wanted to consolidate this work by creating a suite of workshops that would upskill staff by assessing and addressing their digital skills and needs.

The DCU EDTL Team wanted to create awareness around the multitude of digital assessment methods, while also encouraging staff to begin



thinking of how their assessments could develop students' digital skills. If they were successful, they would have effectively enhanced the digital skills of both staff and students.

The first step was compiling the 11 workshops that would be offered to staff. Here they are:

1. Introducing flexibility in technology-enhanced assessment
2. Transforming assessment with learning portfolios
3. Mobile-enabled formative assessment
4. Group work and group assessment
5. Peer review and peer assessment
6. Student feedback workshop
7. Fundamentals of technology-enhanced assessment
8. Loop and assessment: the basics
9. Loop and assessment: advanced
10. Creating consistency and transparency in technology-enhanced assessment
11. Learning design for blended learning

Once the DCU EDTL Team had designed their workshops, they contacted the School of Psychology and the Institute of Education.

They asked the staff to select three workshops that targeted their interests and needs. Then, the

team planned a preliminary meeting with the staff who registered and discussed their digital abilities, as well as their ideas for future assessments.

The workshops were generally two hours long. The DCU EDTL Team did not want to overload the attendees, so they introduced some theory and practical learning activities, before giving the group a chance to reflect on their experiences and how the workshop could elevate their digital skills, along with their students.

*The DCU EDTL Team wanted to create awareness around the multitude of digital assessment methods, while also encouraging staff to begin thinking of how their assessments could develop the students' digital skills.*

## STAFF DEVELOPMENT



It was important for the team to include the European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators (DigiCompEdu). They understood the commitment staff had to make and wanted to ensure the workshops were providing information that was useful. The DCU EDTL Team also wanted to establish a consistent level of skill amongst staff, which was hugely aided by the conversations they encouraged and the group work they organised. And by the end of the first series of assessment workshops, it was clear from the staff feedback that the team had achieved their goal, as when Covid hit and classes moved online, those

*There were requests for extra workshops, such as peer assessment.*

*The DCU EDTL Team met the staff needs and the course evolved alongside staff digital skills.*

who attended the workshops were ready to assess their students digitally.

Key points for continued success:

- Develop plans for attendees to implement the lessons learned
- Follow up on attendee's progress
- Gather case studies

Throughout Covid, the assessment workshops ran online. There were requests for extra workshops, such as peer assessment. The DCU EDTL Team met the staff needs and the course evolved alongside staff digital skills.

### INTERESTING TIP



The DCU EDTL Team wanted to include a form of self-assessment and after discovering that staff were struggling to complete the DigComp Self-Assessment, they decided to try something different and adapted an idea created by colleagues in the UK (Shri Footring and Scott Hibberson) called Digital Pursuit – a play on Trivial Pursuit, based on a Digital Pursuit. It gave the team an insight into the staffs' digital capabilities, while building the staffs' confidence and their unity as a group.

THE  
ENHANCING  
DIGITAL TEACHING  
AND LEARNING  
PROJECT

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**STUDENT  
PARTNERSHIP**



## EDTL STORY PART 2

# STUDENT PARTNERSHIP



From the beginning, the student experience was at the heart of the EDTL Project. The team initially believed that the best way to improve learning conditions for students, was to enhance staff digital skills – but as soon as the first EDTL Student Intern, Vish Gain, joined the team in November 2019, it became clear that students were more than capable of creating their own academic legacy. And that their voice was necessary to achieve such a goal.

When listening to the challenges and successes Vish had experienced, the team were finally faced with the real issues students were tackling, allowing them to reflect on their projects and apply this new perspective. It was a revolutionary moment for the team and the IUADigEd Community, as it changed the way they thought about teaching and learning.

With this new breakthrough, the EDTL Team were eager to implement a student intern scheme across each of the seven universities. A huge number of students applied for the first intern position, so the team were certain they would find the right candidates, especially considering that the entire country was still learning and working remotely.

To be considered, the students had to:

- Be enrolled as a current student in one of the Irish universities or a recent graduate (within the last 12 months) of an Irish university.
- Have a strong interest in the use of digital tools and technologies in teaching and learning

After an intern was hired for each of the universities, the EDTL Team expanded, along with the discoveries they continued to make. One of the most interesting developments was the diverse range of work the interns completed – from developing their own digital resources, to leading discussions and writing digital guides. The interns brought the student voice to the forefront of the EDTL Project, while working side-by-side with their academic counterparts.

There was a range of students employed – local students, Masters students, Doctoral Research Studies students, International students and Undergraduate students – ensuring the project team heard from all levels and angles of academia. The students were also from different disciplines, so each one had something different to add to the team.

Having learnt many lessons along the way, the following stories detail the development of the staff and student partnerships...

## STUDENT DIGITAL SKILLS FOCUS GROUPS

“It gave us the opportunity to discover whether or not the students felt digitally equipped for the future, beyond academia”

### What problems were being addressed?

- The need to gain a clear picture of any existing gaps in student digital skills and help with planning future digital skills support

### Who was involved?

The EDTL Team at DCU consisted of Project Co-Leads, Suzanne Stone and Rob Lowney, who were based in the Teaching Enhancement Unit. They worked with the student interns, Laura Anne Scanlon and Sinéad Mooney.

*The decision to host focus groups, three years in row, allowed the DCU EDTL team to get a clear picture of the digital skills that students needed, and how to address their future digital skills development.*

### Why did you choose to address the challenges this way?

- Focus groups allowed flexibility in terms of addressing questions relating to the digital skills
- The group responses would provide a broad understanding of the students’ digital skills

### How were the goals achieved?

Sometimes the biggest issue facing students’ digital literacy is the uncertainty regarding their digital skills. It can be quite easy to assume what they need to enhance their digital learning experience – but the DCU EDTL Team did not want to make any assumptions. They wanted answers and what better way to get them than asking the students.

The decision to host focus groups, three years in row, allowed the DCU EDTL team to get a clear picture of the digital skills that students needed, and how to address their future digital skills development. The data provided a snapshot of time, while the team were also able to ask specific questions and discover how the students felt about their digital capabilities and learning experience.

The choice to host the focus groups during the second semester of the academic year, was driven





by the idea that students would have settled into their courses and become aware of the areas in which they needed help or felt was important for their future success. By Spring 2020, the DCU EDTL Team was ready to begin their search for students and the emergency pivot to online learning did not get in their way – instead, it increased the need for the information the team was seeking.

Here are some of the questions the team asked:

- Can you tell me about the digital technologies that you use in your personal life, outside of the university?
- Are you aware of privacy issues/digital footprint? How did you find out about these? Second level? Home? University?
- Are you a digital content creator?
- Tell me about the technologies you use to support your learning, if any? Loop (virtual learning environment)? Others? How do these technologies support your learning?
- What types of digital technologies or tools would you like to see used as part of your programme?
- Tell me about any digital assessments on your programme, beyond simply submitting traditional assessments.
- Do you feel ready for the workplace in terms of

your digital skills? If not, what can the university do to help?

To incentivise students' registration, the DCU EDTL Team were able to offer a 15-euro voucher. They designed posters and hung them up around campus.

They also asked the Students' Union (SU) to promote the focus group, which greatly aided the team's endeavour by sourcing a variety of students, who not only answered their questions in detail, but raised their concerns and discussed the digital methods that had worked particularly well for their learning experience.

### INTERESTING TIP



The DCU EDTL Team needed to orientate the focus groups and decided to direct their questions into 4 sections:

- Technology in general
  - For learning
  - Specific to assessment
  - Skills you will need in your future career path
- ask everyone to answer on this, as each discipline has a different perspective

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

“Academic integrity is the commitment to, and demonstration of, ethical behaviour in an academic setting”

### What problems were being addressed?

■ Academic integrity is a priority for all stakeholders in Irish Higher Education; however, the issues relating to academic integrity may be understood, and experienced, differently by institutions, by staff, and by students.

### Who was involved?

The Maynooth University EDTL Team consisted of the Project Lead, Morag Munro, who was based in the office of the Dean of Teaching and Learning, and EDTL student interns, Chris Abraham, Aishling Gillen, Katharina Kurz, Robin Meyler, and Michaela Waters. They worked with Academic staff, the University Writing Centre the Library and the Maynooth Students’ Union (MSU).

*Increasing use of online assessments and exams, both during and following the Covid-19 pandemic, presented new challenges with respect to academic integrity.*

### Why did you choose to address the challenges this way?

- The establishment of an institutional culture of shared responsibility for, and commitment to, academic honesty is key to creating an environment that values, fosters and promotes academic integrity.
- Student-staff partnerships are one way in which dialogue about, and shared understanding of, issues surrounding academic integrity might be fostered.
- Academic Integrity Week provides an opportunity to situate local discussions about academic integrity in a wider National and International context.
- Shared student-staff workshops designed in collaboration between students and staff offer an opportunity to enable dialogue between students and staff, with a view to reconciling the difference between staff and students’ understanding of academic integrity.
- Involving students in the design and development of student support resources on topics relating to academic integrity brings the student voice to the fore, and can help to ensure that resources and supports are relevant to the student demographic.
- Leveraging student-facing social media channels has been an effective means to reach and engage with the student population.



- Creation of a shared virtual wall allows both staff and student perspectives on academic integrity greater visibility.

### How were the goals achieved?

Maynooth University's EDTL Team was established in order to ensure that activities carried out as part of the EDTL project at Maynooth were informed by the needs of students and staff from across the university. In their discussions, the team noted that the increasing use of online assessments and exams, both during and following the Covid-19 pandemic, presented new challenges with respect to academic integrity:

- Students were not always certain how to cite and reference correctly, which meant that, in some cases, they did not know they were plagiarising
- The increasing proliferation of Essay Mills, which offer their "professional services" in essay writing and assignment preparation, pose a further challenge, as students are often targeted through their social media

In order to address these challenges, the MU EDTL Team initiated a programme of work aimed at fostering a shared culture of responsibility for academic integrity at MU. Initial collaboration in this area included the creation of infographics, an Instagram campaign and 'train the trainer' workshops for Maynooth Students' Union representatives.

Following on from this, the MU EDTL Team devised a plan for Academic Integrity Week 2021, when they built on their work by utilising both online and on-campus spaces, as well as increasing their physical and digital presence. Their goal was to develop more awareness of, and to encourage conversation between students and staff around, academic integrity.

Initiatives included a digital academic integrity pledge space that both student and staff contributed to; an Instagram campaign where EDTL Interns shared resources and supports developed; and provision of student and staff workshops, co-designed and co-delivered by students and staff. The week culminated with a workshop where students and staff engaged in dialogue about academic integrity.

### INTERESTING INSIGHT



There was sense among students that the number of Essay Mills had increased, while staff were sometimes unaware of the targeted Essay Mill campaigns pressuring them. The Essay Mills falsely reference academic institutions and deceive students, who may be subject to blackmail once they have paid for the services.

## AN EDTL APPROACH TO FOSTERING OPEN DIALOGUE IN STAFF/ STUDENT PARTNERSHIP

‘It’s a balance – there’s expertise and lived experience on both sides’

### What problems were being addressed?

- Supporting student learning
- Active staff/student collaboration
- Experiential learning

### Who was involved?

The EDTL student partnership approach brought EDTL interns Ben Ryan and Hannah Arthurs together with Trinity’s educational development team, academic colleagues, and other professional staff. It also involved extensive collaboration with Trinity SU sabbatical officers and other student interns at Trinity (e.g. National Forum for Teaching & Learning interns).

*The Student Interns developed and peer reviewed resources intended both for staff and students from spring 2020 on through autumn 2022.*

### Why did you choose to address the challenges this way?

- Build student assessment literacy
- Support student development and amplify student voices
- Develop resources for staff and students around digital pedagogic practice

### How were the goals achieved?

Both Trinity EDTL Student Interns, Ben Ryan and Hannah Arthurs, worked closely with institutional leads, Dr Jonny Johnston, Dr Pauline Rooney, and Asst Prof Julie Byrne, to support the development of both staff and student-facing resources linked to digital teaching, learning and assessment.

The staff/student partnerships were highly successful in profiling and furthering Trinity’s commitment to working collaboratively in partnership with students, as outlined in the College Strategic Plan.

The Student Interns developed and peer reviewed resources intended both for staff and students from spring 2020 on through autumn 2022. These open-access resources included vox pops, podcast



episodes, student-generated resource documents supporting examination preparation, staff-facing resource documents and multimedia case studies, many of which remain available via Trinity's Gateway to Digital Assessment resource hub, and student-organised and facilitated webinars targeted to a national sectoral audience.

*The staff/student partnerships were highly successful in profiling and furthering Trinity's commitment to working collaboratively in partnership with students, as outlined in the College Strategic Plan.*

### INTERESTING INSIGHT

Both EDTL interns and Trinity EDTL team members agree that active partnership with students is extremely important, but that clear boundaries and expectations need to be articulated on both sides, early in partnership for it to be successful. This is particularly important where staff are changing their own understanding of what active collaboration with students looks like. Developing partnership approaches means acknowledging a shift in power dynamics and acknowledging mutual expertise: both staff and student partners have different working knowledge of institutional environments, and this can be exploited to produce resources beneficial to distinct 'end-users'. Coordinating the partnership is also a joint responsibility – asynchronous document mark-up (e.g. using comment/response in MS Word files) can support dialogue between partners, even when timetabling and diary clashes make it difficult to connect in live time.

# STAFF AND STUDENT PARTNERSHIP AT UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

“The equity was incredible”

## What problem was being addressed?

- The need to include the student perspective

## Who was involved?

The University of Galway EDTL Team consisted of the Project Lead, Kate Molloy, who was based in the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT), and the Student Intern, Lauren Muldowney.

## Why did you choose to address the challenges this way?

- An alternative point of view would be provided
- The student voice would be represented

## How were the goals achieved?

One of the most unique discoveries the EDTL Project uncovered was the value and the potential of staff and student partnerships. It was not a revelation the team expected – but it was an understanding that changed the way the EDTL Team conducted their research and implemented their findings, with their student interns by their side.

The partnership between the University of Galway EDTL Project Lead, Kate Molloy, and the student intern, Lauren Muldowney, is the perfect example of the difference that can be made to the student learning experience, simply by trusting students’

input. Considering the EDTL Project was focused on enhancing staff and students’ digital literacy, which would then improve the students’ academic life and future possibilities – it now seems incredulous to believe that students might not have played such an integral role in the digital transformation.

From the moment the University of Galway EDTL Student Intern, Lauren Muldowney, joined the team, she was interested and involved in every aspect of the work the EDTL Team were doing. Despite her significant workload studying medicine and entering her 4th year, Lauren was a proactive and efficient member of the team, with a crucial insight into the areas where students were struggling digitally and why the issues were continuing to occur.

The first project Lauren embarked upon was an interactive lesson for students new to learning online: Online Learning at University of Galway. It was published online in September 2020 and shared widely by the university. And after reaching over 7,000 views that month, it was clear that Lauren was more than capable of fulfilling a brief, as well as speaking to her peers. Lauren’s practical insight into the student experience produced an invaluable resource at a difficult time for all.



The University of Galway EDTL Project Lead, Kate Molloy, became aware of the fact when she proofed Lauren's work and not only recognised the standard, but the minimal amount of input it needed. It was an illuminating realisation, which led to Kate envisioning the work that was possible now that she had a trusted partner and a direct connection to the student population.

Over the next few months, the partnership increased productivity and efficiency, as the Project Lead entrusted the Student Intern with pivotal research, content creation and keynote presentations, enabling her to focus on developing other elements of the EDTL Project. The addition of the student voice and perspective was crucial to the success of the University of Galway EDTL Team. It was even a welcome and helpful inclusion during the Learning Technologies module that the Project Lead taught every week during the second semester of 2020. The staff who participated in the module were keen to hear Lauren's insights during weekly workshops. Here are some of the topics the University of Galway Student Intern discussed:

- Podcasting
- Video production
- Digital skills
- Open education
- Social media

- Software
- Relevant language

By the end of the internship, the University of Galway Student Intern's work was visible throughout the university, as well as the EDTL website, where the EDTL Approach for Online Exams – Advice for Students guide, authored by Lauren Muldowney, is still gathering views, just as it has been adopted by the University of Galway Examinations Office. There are also countless webinars and conference presentations with Lauren speaking confidently amongst the academic participants – a constant reminder of the impact the staff and student partnership had on the EDTL Project.

### INTERESTING INSIGHT

Student representatives are often invited to join academic discussions, but they are not given the opportunity to partake in the discussion. The EDTL Project employed student interns in each of the universities involved and gave them a platform to voice their ideas and concerns, which in turn revolutionised the team's output.

## STAFF AND STUDENT PARTNERSHIP II AT UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

“With a student intern, the project would have the momentum and perspective it needed to be completed”

### What problems were being addressed?

- Staff and student partnership
- The need to digitally transform medicinal manuals

### Who was involved?

Prof. John Kelly and the University of Galway  
EDTL Student Intern, Demi Traile.

### Why did you choose to address the challenges this way?

- A student intern would make the digitalisation of our workbook materials possible

*Having worked together on developing a research project earlier in the year, the academic partners had already developed a strong line of communication, as well as an understanding of each other's work process.*

### How were the goals achieved?

Over the space of five years, Prof. John Kelly compiled a set of manuals, detailing experimental material for medicine students. They were available as hardcopies or to print as pdfs – but they were not as accessible as they could be, especially with the variety of digital formats that exist these days, which is where this staff and student partnership came into play.

The University of Galway EDTL Student Intern, Demi Traile, was an outgoing second-year medical student. She had previous experience with Prof. Kelly's workbooks during her second year, so she was aware of the issues and the benefits that the workbooks represented.

Demi also had a wide circle of classmates that she could call upon to help inform the digital transformation – to speak on what would work and what would not work – meaning she would be able to guarantee the resource's success.

Having worked together on developing a research project earlier in the year, the academic partners had already developed a strong line of communication, as well as an understanding of each other's work process. This aided the digital transition and ensured the pair's productivity,





*It is a digital resource that makes it easy to create, share and reuse HTML5 content and applications – and this was the format chosen to convert and to roll out for the 2021-2022 academic year.*

while they spent the next several months converting the manuals to a more interactive medium.

First, the academic duo chose H5P to host the content. It is a digital resource that makes it easy to create, share and reuse HTML5 content and applications – and this was the format chosen to convert and to roll out for the 2021-2022 academic year. But after some research and primary uploads, the academic partners realised that the platform was not as interactive as they wanted.

The project took more time than the duo expected, but the University of Galway EDTL Student Intern, Demi Traile, ensured the language and the content was persistently relevant, therefore saving time and heightening accessibility.

Most importantly, she provided the momentum Prof. Kelly needed to commence and complete the project, as it would not have been possible to do so by himself.

During the initial stages of the partnership, the pair had to find a working balance, which was helped by adding structure and a clear objective. It is important for student partners to be given freedom to develop their skills. And at the same time, they must be offered the support they need to ask questions or seek help if they are uncertain of how to solve any issues.

### INTERESTING INSIGHT

It is difficult to get a project like this right the first time, so it is important to remember that fact – but once you have it started, you will be able to work with your team and the Learning Technologists to find the appropriate solution.

## STAFF AND STUDENT PARTNERSHIP AT TU DUBLIN

“The partnership was driven by knowledge of the help it would give students”

### What problems were being addressed?

- The need for students and staff to self-assess their own digital skills competencies with the use of a digital skills diagnostic tool
- The need for a comprehensive digital skills repository for students and staff

### Who was involved?

The SATLE 2 - the Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement Funding 2020 – project was led by Cormac McMahon. The TU EDTL Student Intern, Kyle Wright, worked closely with Maurice Mark Boland on the Digital Skills work package.

*The combined student population received a new and wide range of resources – but there were some issues facing the digital integration, which is why this staff and student partnership played such an integral role.*

### Why did you choose to address the challenges this way?

- The digital competency of staff and students needed to be gauged, so their needs could be met
- There was a clear need for a TU Dublin digital skills repository
- Being Ireland’s largest technological university, it was essential for students to have access to digital skills resources through the TU Dublin website

### How were the goals achieved?

TU Dublin’s unique story formally began on January 1st 2019, when three Institutes – Institute of Technology Blanchardstown, Dublin Institute of Technology and Institute of Technology Tallaght – merged and became a pioneer of technological higher education. The combined student population received a new and wide range of resources – but there were some issues facing the digital integration, which is why this staff and student partnership played such an integral role.

Since 2019, a digital transformation programme was initiated across TU Dublin to transform and unify digital and technology services for students and staff, as well as a new organisational redesign. This created a challenging digital environment for students to thrive in, so creating a comprehensive



student digital skills resource was a priority. And what better way of succeeding than having a student as a partner.

When the TU EDTL Intern, Kyle Wright, joined the SATLE2 project at TU, his role was to support and work closely with the Project Lead from the Digital Skills work package, Maurice Mark Boland. The partnership was focused on combining perspectives and creating the most effective digital experiences and resources for staff and students.

Here were the objectives of the staff and student partnership:

- Pilot a digital skills diagnostic tool to enable students and staff to self-access their digital skills capabilities
- Create a digital resource repository

### Diagnosing Digital Literacy

The benefit of this new digital beginning, as well as the partnership, was the opportunity to assess and address staff and students' digital needs, while also saving them time and improving their academic life. The duo spent weeks researching possible digital skills diagnostic tools and finally decided to begin the digital redevelopment with Jisc – the UK higher, further education and skills sectors' not-for-profit organisation for digital services and solutions.

### So, what exactly does Jisc do?

- Operate shared digital infrastructure and services
- Negotiate sector-wide deals with IT vendors and commercial publishers
- Provide trusted advice and practical assistance for universities, colleges and learning providers

Before implementing the discovery tool, Maurice and Kyle met with academic leads from Nottingham University, Plymouth University and GMIT, all of which had previously and successfully launched a digital skills campaign that utilised Jisc. The intention was to provide themselves with an efficient strategy for the weeks to come, as well as gain an insight into the possible ways of introducing the digital resource and ensuring their promotional campaign reached their audience.

When they returned with a plethora of ideas, the plan was to conduct a pilot launch during the spring of 2022. This pilot of the Jisc Discovery Tool was initially aimed at students and staff from two schools: the School of Languages, Law, and Social Sciences and the School of Computer Science. Later the pilot was expanded to include professional services staff within TU Dublin.

This initial pilot of the Jisc tool gave Maurice and Kyle the opportunity to evaluate the needs of students and staff in relation to their digital skills.

## STUDENT PARTNERSHIP

*This module is accessible to all students via their VLE homepage.*

It also highlighted ways in which the tool could be launched effectively to all students and staff for the new academic term.

The EDTL Student Intern played a vital role in the branding of the digital resource, as he understood the student perspective: the sort of language they did and did not like; what sort of resources and skills interested them and did not.

As a result, Wright developed a series of engaging posters and marketing material to promote the new digital service effectively to his fellow students.

He also understood the challenges that some students may face when they join a new University - from information overload to adjusting to new ways of learning. It was therefore important that the Jisc tool needed to be highly accessible to students.

To achieve high visibility and engagement for the Jisc service, Maurice and Kyle combined their expertise once again, and used them to embed and promote the digital skills diagnostic tool within the TU Dublin Student Success Portal module. This module is accessible to all students via their VLE homepage.

The Jisc tool will also be available via the TU Dublin 'Getting Online' guide for new students and the 'Online Refresh' guide for returning students, via the TU Dublin website.

### Developing a Digital Resource Repository

Previously, digital skill resources were not centrally accessible within TU Dublin. Many useful how-to guides, webinars and more informational content related to developing digital skill capabilities, were accessible through multiple communication channels, such as SharePoint and across multiple VLEs throughout the University. To address this, Maurice and Kyle worked closely with the TU Dublin Web Team to develop a custom searchable digital skills repository for use within the TU Dublin website.

The TU EDTL Student Intern, Kyle Wright, was just as committed as his academic partner, Maurice Boland, to determining the practicality and reliability of the 300+ digital resources that they were directing students to. And although it was extremely time consuming, it guaranteed the student's digital skills resource was as efficient as it was direct and succinct.

Following this, a digital skills repository known as the Digital Skills Learning Hub was created and placed within the TU Dublin website. It contains internal resources, such as free online courses, how-to guides, webinars, videos and more. It also contains resources that previously existed across different platforms, and the external digital resources that the staff and student partners had worked on grading and assessing.

### INTERESTING INSIGHT



The most interesting aspect of the staff and student partnership was the fact that they were both based in different campuses, which meant they were both familiar with the strengths and challenges that existed in their evolving TU Dublin digital environments. The opportunity to combine these perspectives and build upon them, was revolutionary for TU's digital inventory, just as it was for staff and students alike.

THE  
ENHANCING  
DIGITAL TEACHING  
AND LEARNING  
PROJECT

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**STUDENT  
DIGITAL  
SKILLS**



## EDTL STORY PART 3

# STUDENT DIGITAL SKILLS



One of the biggest epiphanies the EDTL Team had, was unearthing the difficulties students were having with technology and its inclusion in their academic lives. With staff raising their digital literacy levels, and students working alongside them as partners, it became more and more apparent that students were struggling with their digital skills too. And as soon as the team knew, they started to work together on solving the issue.

### So, where did it all begin?

When it comes to student digital skills, the conversation often begins with the definition - what exactly are the digital skills or the digital attributes that we are talking about? And depending on who you are talking to, the list of digital necessities will be chopped and changed – but what must remain the same is the importance of student digital literacy.

In 2019, the EDTL Steering Committee agreed and selected common supplemental questions to appear on the Irish National Digital Experience Survey (INDeX Survey). The process took several weeks, as the team collaborated on the best possible questions the universities could ask. And without the knowledge they had gained by the time the results were revealed, they chose questions that were tied to student digital skills for course-related activities and future employability.

### Here are the questions:

**Staff** – Do you have a clear understanding of the digital skills your students need to develop for success after graduation?

**Students** – Do you have a clear understanding of the digital skills you need to develop for employability after you graduate?

Here are the results:

STAFF	STUDENTS
15.50% Disagreed	16.29% Disagreed
41.28% Neutral	35.87% Neutral
42.93% Agreed	47.74% Agreed

Combining this information with their own findings, the EDTL Team got to work on devising their solution. Here are the stories...

# DEVELOPING A STUDENT DIGITAL SKILLS RESOURCE

“If you are creating something new, you have to know what the issues are”

## What problems were being addressed?

- The need to develop students’ digital skills
- The lack of student digital training and resources

## Who was involved?

The Maynooth University (MU) EDTL Team consisted of the Project Lead, Morag Munro, Student Digital Skills Officer, Andreas Boldt, and the student interns, Chris Abraham, Aishling Gillen, Katharina Kurz, Robin Meyler, and Michaela Waters. They worked with MU’s academic departments and supports services, as well as the Maynooth Students’ Union (MSU).

## Why did you choose to address the challenges this way?

- An online digital skills course would enhance students’ digital literacy
- A student digital skills survey would inform the digital resource
- The Bloomsbury Learning Exchanges’ (BLE) Digital Skills Awareness Course provided a preliminary structure

## How were the goals achieved?

Across the country, the move to online learning was highlighting the need to enhance students’ digital skills. At MU, a number of student support services provided digital resources, but students were struggling to navigate each of the websites, while staff were

struggling to specify the exact skills that students needed.

With this in mind, the MU EDTL Project Team, set out to understand the digital needs of students and how each of the academic departments were aiding the issue. Here are the questions that needed to be answered:

- What do future employers need?
- Can the university provide help with it?
- What is each academic department’s vision?
- What software do they use/not use?
- What software do they require?
- Is more staff digital training needed?

Once each of the faculties were contacted – such as the Careers Office, the Access Office, the Library and the Centre for Teaching and Learning – the MU EDTL Project Lead spent the next few weeks compiling and comparing the findings, as well as organising them into infographics that provided a comprehensive overview of the specific knowledge students needed. The MU EDTL Student Interns and Students’ Union represented the student voice and offered valuable insight into the issues facing students’ digital literacy.

Some of the most prominent problems were:

- Using Microsoft applications, such Word & Excel
- Formatting files





- Email etiquette
- Signposting for digital resources
- Digital wellbeing & safety
- Upskilling for future employment

When the research process was complete, the MU EDTL Team decided that the VLE was the best place to host an online student digital skills course. The students were familiar with the system, which would ensure they could easily access the new resource, something that was considered a priority for the course to succeed.

The MU EDTL Team requested and received permission to use the Bloomsbury Learning Exchanges' (BLE) Digital Skills Awareness Course as a foundation for their student resource, EDTL Digital Skills Course. The goal was to offer a general introduction to the 21 digital competencies listed in the EU DigiComp Framework for Citizens, which is divided into 5 categories:

- 1 - Information & data literacy
- 2 - Communication & collaboration
- 3 - Digital content creation
- 4 - Safety
- 5 - Problem solving

Each category consisted of various types of content – prose, videos, infographics and audio – promising students an accessible and interactive experience. The

essential links to other MU digital services were clearly signposted and explained, while a series of questions were added to the end of each section, to test the knowledge students had gained.

The EDTL Digital Skills Course was not obligatory, so the MU EDTL Team wanted to make sure that it was useful and user friendly. They also wanted to address every student – from 1st years to mature students – and debunk some of the most challenging topics by letting students know that it is possible to learn such skills.

Another issue the MU EDTL Team faced was finding a permanent place for the EDTL Digital Skills Course. After receiving such positive feedback from students, it is integral for the team to find a MU support service that can support the course. Then, they will be able to focus on promoting its benefits throughout campus and with the help of the SU.

### TOP TIP



When the online course is completed, ask a variety of students to test it before going live. This will allow time for any feedback to be considered, while guaranteeing the resource reaches its fullest potential and any mistakes are corrected.

## LevUL Up

“We cannot teach you everything with LevUL Up - but we can give you a stepping-stone to improving your knowledge!”

### What challenges were being addressed?

- Student digital skills and literacies development
- The lack of remote digital skills training for students
- The need to unify the digital skills and literacies support resources available to students

### Who was involved?

The EDTL Team at UL, based within the Centre for Transformative Learning (CTL) at UL, consisted of Project Lead, David Moloney, and student interns, Alice Hynes, Jasmine Ryan and Katie Martin. They worked with staff and students from the Glucksman Library, the Centre for Transformative Learning (CTL), the Information Technology Division (ITD) and the Educational Assistive Technology Centre (EATC) to develop the LevUL Up digital skills development programme for UL students.

*The following month, the emergency pivot to remote online learning brought students’ digital skills and literacy levels to the fore.*

### Why choose to address the challenge this way?

- The Glucksman Library already had a series of student digital skills workshops in place
- The results of the Irish National Digital Experience survey at UL indicated demand for more digital learning workshops and greater institutional emphasis on digital skills and literacies development
- To combine UL’s digital skills supports

### How was the goal accomplished?

In February 2020, the Glucksman Library hosted a series of seven digital skills workshops as part of a redeveloped “Take1Step” initiative. “Take1Step” (#t1step) was originally a regional collaboration between the Shannon Consortium (SC) partners, University of Limerick, Mary Immaculate College and Limerick Institute of Technology, funded by the National Forum under the Teaching Enhancement Fund 2015. The redeveloped Take1Step digital skills workshops in February 2020 were taught in-person on campus and offered on a drop-in basis. They were attended by 107 students.

The following month, the emergency pivot to remote online learning brought students’ digital skills and literacy levels to the fore. In addition to their existing workshops, the Library invited the Centre for



Transformative Learning (CTL) to contribute further workshops, extending and enhancing the offering.

The collaborative spirit induced by Covid-19 meant the subsequent Spring 2021 Take1Step series of digital skills workshops, coordinated and managed by the Library, was co-developed across a number of UL divisions – the Library, CTL, and Information Technology Division (ITD). It consisted of 13 live online workshops, which were repeated 3 times each, during a 3-week timeframe.

The workshops were delivered by both staff and students. They were recorded and made available to the campus community for viewing afterwards. The series attracted a combined total of ~2,600 registrations, primarily UL students. The UL EDTL Project Lead, David Moloney, and UL EDTL Student Intern, Alice Hynes, developed and facilitated 5 of the workshops in this Spring 2021 series.

**SPRING 2021**

Student Registration	Approximately 2,600
Staff Registration	1 in every 20 registrations

Following the success of the Spring 2021 series, the UL EDTL Project Lead, David Moloney, was invited to take over its coordination and management, on

behalf of the CTL. The new core team - David and the UL EDTL interns, Alice Hynes and Jasmine Ryan - were tasked with enhancing and running the Autumn 2021 offering.

The main issues facing them and their vision for UL's students were:

- Moving the digital skills series from the Library's LibGuides system to the CTL website
- Moving workshop booking and registration from the Library's LibCal system to another institutionally supported booking and registration system
- Rebranding the initiative to speak to UL students specifically
- Expanding the range of workshops offered to address more of the digital skills, literacies, and tools that students had requested in their feedback form responses
- Expanding the offering to provide a Digital Skills Awareness Course
- Referencing and mapping the initiative to the Digital Competence Framework for Citizens (DigComp)
- Reconciling the INDEx survey findings for UL

The name LevUL Up was chosen because it communicated the message and purpose of the initiative, which was to enhance, or level up, UL

# STUDENT DIGITAL SKILLS

students’ digital skillsets, learning experiences and future employability. Then, the programme for Autumn 2021 was devised and divided into two parts:

- A joinable Digital Skills Awareness Course on the institutional Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), Sulis
- A calendar of 19 live online workshops on a range of digital skills and literacies

## LevUL Up: Digital Skills Awareness Course

The Digital Skills Awareness Course developed for LevUL Up was adapted from the Bloomsbury Learning Exchanges’ (BLE) Digital Skills Awareness Course. It was treated as a guide for students to understand what technical skills were expected of them, as well as a source of information to help with the transition into academic life.

Once the BLE granted permission to use the course format, the UL EDTL Team set out to define what digital literacy meant to UL students, with the help of the library and ITD.

Then, the course was divided into 4 units, consisting of 27 topics:

<b>Unit 1:</b>	General Technologies (10 topics)
<b>Unit 2:</b>	Learning Technologies (7 topics)
<b>Unit 3:</b>	Access, Sharing & Safety (5 topics)
<b>Unit 4:</b>	Getting Organised (5 topics)

The process of contextualising the BLE course took several weeks. The emphasis on the student experience drove the UL EDTL Team’s commitment to detail, especially when they recognised the opportunity to unify some of the digital skills and literacies support available for UL students. The student intern involvement guaranteed the language was accessible and the information was practical and tactical – no stone was left unturned.

The UL EDTL Team even created a digital badge for the students who achieved 100% on all four end-of-

unit quizzes, hoping it would encourage students to complete the course. It was also a way for students to illustrate their proficiency – to say they are digitally capable.

So, how did the Digital Skills Awareness Course do? Digital Skills Awareness Course

	Enrolled	Awarded Digital badges
Autumn '21	570	9
Spring '22	564	15 (+6)

## LevUL Up: Live Online Workshops

Having already developed and presented live online workshops as part of the Spring 2021 series, the UL EDTL Team were able to use the knowledge gained to develop an expanded digital skills programme for LevUL Up. The collaboration between UL divisions continued to provide perspective from every corner of campus. It promised students a comprehensive and evolving set of workshops and webinars, which were recorded and published online afterwards.

Each of the workshops ran for 30 minutes – an hour at most – as the EDTL Team did not want to bombard their audience with information. Instead, they wanted to reach the UL student population by offering them useful and relatable resources that not only saved them time but helped them navigate the academic world and the possibilities ahead of them.

The workshops were interactive and conducted on Microsoft Teams. They were presented by knowledgeable instructors, who were based in the associated divisions - the CTL, the Library, and ITD. The student interns also presented some of the webinars, offering their perspectives – the lessons they learnt and the benefits of their digital awareness – and further developing their own digital capabilities.

The registration process was simple and accessible, just like the recordings that were published afterwards. The feedback forms were just as easy to complete. And although the number returned was not exceedingly high, the impact was indispensable.

The Digital Competence Framework for Citizens (DigComp) was used to align the programme’s content with European standards, allowing students to become familiar with the terminology and to identify areas and competencies in the framework that they would like to develop. It also gave students confidence in the work they were doing because the practical information and skills they were gaining at an institutional level was recognisable at a National and European level.

So how did the workshops go?

**Workshops**

	Take1 Step Spring '21	LevUL Up Autumn '21	LevUL Up Spring '22	Overall
Registered	~2650	~1700	~760	~5110
Attended %	54%	41%	47%	~47%

**And what were the workshops called?**

The Workshop Titles

1. Notetaking in a digital world
2. 7 Simple Steps To Stay Safe Online
3. Images For Your UL Assignments, Where To Find Them And How To Use Them
4. How To Spot Fake News
5. Making Great Posters Using Free Software
6. Microsoft Word For Assignments
7. Using Ponopto To Create A Video In Sulis
8. Using EndNote For Your Referencing
9. Excel Essentials
10. How To Record An Interview And Edit An Audio File Using Audacity
11. Designing Digital Presentations
12. Digital Wellbeing
13. Technology For Time Management
14. Make Microsoft Teams Work For You
15. Introduction To Student IT Services
16. Working With Online Dictionaries And Thesauruses
17. Understanding How Microsoft Word Can Proof Your Paper
18. Netiquette And Communicating Online
19. Digital Literacies And Wellbeing
20. Being Engaged And Establishing Your Social Presence Online
21. Working Together Online

**Reaching The Students: Social Media**

The use of social media was essential to the success of the digital skills awareness course and calendar of live online workshops, as the Instagram and Twitter accounts proved to be key communicative tools. The UL EDTL Team were able to interact with students they might not have reached before, while also informing them and their followers of the upcoming workshops and the resources available on the LevUL Up website.

Here are the numbers reached on Instagram:

**Over 4092**  
accounts were reached

**Over 12,366**  
impressions

**150**  
LevUL Up graphics were created

**Over 604**  
profile visits & 117 website taps

**Over 310**  
content interactions

**INTERESTING DISCOVERY** \*

The importance of building an online presence was recognised by the UL EDTL Student Intern, Jasmine Ryan, who posted colourful and informative content on a daily/every other day basis. The role of social media content creator also allowed Ryan to improve her own digital literacy and skills, as she had to use Apps and Software that she had never used before, therefore deepening her understanding of what students need to learn.

## DESIGNING INFOGRAPHICS FOR STUDENTS' DIGITAL NEEDS

"Staff had their hands full – they needed support for their remote teaching that was quick, useful, practical, and low-bandwidth"

### What problems were being addressed?

- The emergency pivot to online learning
- The lack of time students had to adjust

### Who was involved?

The EDTL Team at UL, based within the Centre for Transformative Learning (CTL) at UL, consisted of Project Lead, David Moloney, and student interns, Alice Hynes, Jasmine Ryan and Katie Martin.

### Why did you choose to address the challenges this way?

- Frequently asked questions could be answered succinctly
- Student digital resources needed to be united and signposted
- The vibrant icons and links would appeal to students

### How were the goals achieved?

In Spring 2021, a student digital resource pack (<https://www.ul.ie/ctl/students/student-success-online-learning-and-assessment>) was being developed at University of Limerick. The goal was to aid a smooth transition to online learning and ensure students were able to easily access the wide variety of digital resources available to them.

*In Spring 2021, a student digital resource pack was being developed at UL. The goal was to aid a smooth transition to online learning and ensure students were able to easily access the wide variety of digital resources available to them.*

The UL EDTL Team understood the challenges facing students, as well as the abundance of information flooding their academic lives, which is why the team recognised the benefit of creating a series of infographics for students. The UL EDTL Project Lead, David Moloney, designed the Student Success with Online Assessment infographic template, before speaking to the Assistant Deans of Academic Affairs (ADAAs), faculty Learning Technologists, Placement Coordinators, and faculty Librarians in each of UL's faculties, to gather the information that was essential to the success of every student and their online studies.



Here are some of the infographic priorities:

- Answering the UL digital basics, such as printing and resetting passwords
- Informing students of the technology they needed, such as Audacity and Microsoft Word and Excel
- Highlighting the ways students can access their modules
- Providing explainer videos
- Signposting and uniting student digital resources
- Outlining the correct behaviour within an online environment

*Each of the infographics shared the same layout, and quite often similar information, but they were specific to each of the students' needs within their respective faculties.*

Each of the infographics shared the same layout, and quite often similar information, but they were specific to each of the students' needs within their respective faculties.

They were easy to navigate, with clear and colourful icons and links for the students to follow. They were also easy to read, as the UL EDTL Intern, Alice Hynes, proofed each of the pieces, ensuring the language was relevant and accessible.

The infographics were reviewed and commented on by faculty members too. This guaranteed that all of the appropriate information was communicated. And that the digital resource was as effective as it could be.

### INTERESTING INSIGHT



The UL EDTL Team consistently referenced the EDTL Project website, simply because the information answered many of the questions UL students were asking. This saved the UL EDTL Team time, along with creating further awareness of the EDTL project.

## KNOW WHERE TO GO

“We wanted to enhance the student digital resources that already existed”

### What problem was being addressed?

- The need to collate and signpost UCC’s digital resources for all students

### Who was involved?

The UCC EDTL Team consisted of Project Lead, Clíodhna O’Callaghan, and student interns, Catherine Dawson, Alice O’Connor and Stephen O’Riordan. They were based in the Centre for Digital Education (CDE), where they collaborated with the UCC Skills Centre and the Students’ Union (SU).

### Why choose to address the challenge this way?

- A wide range of resources already existed in multiple places and were difficult for students to find and navigate.
- The Skills Centre website was public-facing, ensuring students could access the information without logging in
- The UCC EDTL Interns would assert their own experience and capture the student voice

### How was the goal accomplished?

After a full year of teaching and learning online, it became clear to the UCC EDTL Team that the university’s digital resources needed to be unified and clearly mapped. The student population was feeling overwhelmed by the amount of digital

content being shared with them, while also struggling to navigate the multiple sources.

The UCC EDTL Student Interns, Catherine Dawson and Alice O’Connor, brought the initiative to the forefront, with the support of the UCC EDTL Project Lead, Clíodhna O’Callaghan, who recognised the project as an opportunity for the interns to not only improve the student experience but to build their own digital portfolio. And considering the issue at hand was that “no one knew where to go”, the title for the project came easily: Know Where To Go.

The next step was gaining access to a public-facing platform, ensuring students that are having difficulty accessing their online accounts, will be able to utilise the resource. The UCC EDTL Team were based in the Centre for Digital Education (CDE), whose website was staff facing. Luckily, the UCC Skills Centre was excited to host Know Where To Go.

The collaboration meant the students would not be confused or bombarded by the addition of another website or VLE, as the UCC EDTL Team would simply be enhancing the digital resources that were already available. The UCC EDTL Interns began by researching the various digital education supports provided by the UCC services. Once, they had compiled a thorough and exacting list, they began to



divide the resources into different categories, which began to naturally resemble the stages of the academic year:

STAGE 1	The Basics
STAGE 2	Campus Specific
STAGE 3	Essential Software & Hardware
STAGE 4	Online Wellbeing & Research Skills
STAGE 5	Assessment Related Material
CONGRATULATIONS!	You did it!

The staged process was developed with the intention of providing a step-by-step guide to UCC campus life, both on-site and online. The collaboration with the UCC Skills Centre ensured Know Where To Go covered every corner of UCC, just as the feedback from the SU guaranteed the resource's language and branding spoke to the student population.

### INTERESTING DISCOVERY

When the UCC EDTL Interns were organising the digital resources into categories, they realised that they did not understand many of the digital terms used. They had to work closely with their Project Lead and build an entire vocabulary for Know Where To Go, so each and every link they provided, along with its purpose, could be clearly identified.

The UCC EDTL Student Interns also enhanced their own digital skills by building and designing Know Where To Go, as well as creating a series of animated videos on Powtoon – a digital application recognised by the Digital Competence Framework for Educators (DigiCompEdu). The focus of these videos was to contextualise each phase of the project and to motivate and congratulate the students along their digital journey. The UCC EDTL Team also wanted to

move away from the formality of previous digital endeavours, while injecting some colour and fun into the student experience. In Autumn 2021, the UCC EDTL Team launched Know Where To Go, after three months of planning and developing it on the UCC Skills Centre website. The SU promoted it on their social media platforms, while their representatives and the college lecturers helped spread the word around campus.

The feedback from students and staff was extremely positive, especially considering the return to on-site teaching and learning. Therefore, the launch of this resource was timely, responsive and helpful for all. The Know Where To Go links are frequently checked and updated, promising that the student population always know where to go.

### INTERESTING TIP

The UCC EDTL Student Intern, Catherine Dawson, spoke over the animations and helped achieve a sense of continuity and familiarity, deepening the resource's reach.

### INTERESTING OBSERVATION

The Know Where To Go project would not have been possible without the EDTL Project, the Student Interns and the time/resources they provided.

### INTERESTING LESSON

The UCC EDTL Team learnt that there needed to be more centralised digital resources and communications for students, so they can use their time more efficiently and to avoid being overwhelmed with the multiple supports and resources that are already available for students online.

## DIGI-TOWN

“We wanted to find a fun way to communicate with the students”

### What problems were being addressed?

- Supporting students in the extended pivot to online learning
- The light focus on student digital literacy in DCU EDTL activities to date

### Who was involved?

The EDTL Team at DCU consisted of Project Co-Leads, Suzanne Stone and Rob Lowney, who were based in the Teaching Enhancement Unit. They worked with the student interns, Laura Anne Scanlon and Sinéad Mooney.

### Why did you choose to address the challenges this way?

- To gain the student perspective
- To provide useful information to students
- To explore fun ways of communicating digitally with students

### How were the goals achieved?

By Spring 2021, the student population was exhausted by the amount of screen-time consuming their academic (and non-academic) lives. They were overwhelmed by the abundance of information they had to filter through on their electronic devices. The DCU EDTL Team recognised the students’ fatigue, along with their ongoing needs to develop digital literacy to both engage with extended emergency learning and for future employability.

Inspired by the students’ perseverance and determination, and the work other university EDTL teams had done, the DCU EDTL Team decided that it was time to find a way of further supporting students’ digital literacy development, without adding to the drudgery of the Zoom way of life. The student intern, Laura Anne Scanlon, had joined the team a few months previously, providing them with the insight and perspective they needed to begin to think about enhancing the future of DCU’s student digital literacy development.

When the intern joined the team, she worked with the DCU EDTL Project Co-Leads, to produce digital learning tips targeted at DCU students. Through a partnership with DCU Students’ Union, these were printed in the weekly student e-newsletter and posted on DCU’s VLE, Loop. The focus was on helping the students orientate themselves around useful digital tools and software to support their learning. The DCU EDTL Team were also committed to incorporating the lessons learnt from the EDTL project so far, such as:

- Bitesize information
- Colourful graphics
- Just-in-time resources

The DCU EDTL Student Intern, Laura Anne Scanlon, proofed the tips before they were published, ensuring

the information was relevant and relatable. The vital role the student voice played in targeting the student population, led to the DCU EDTL Team understanding the need to work with students informally:

- To find out their needs
- To discover their digital difficulties
- To discern how/when the information would best be delivered
- To guide them in developing digital literacy

With these objectives in mind, the DCU EDTL Team maintained their belief in creating a digital experience that was just as informative as it was informal. They decided to use Gathertown – a web conferencing platform, where users select their avatars and roam around the digital landscape, playing games and video chatting with their counterparts. The name DCU Digi-Town was chosen by the DCU EDTL Team for this live, student-focused activity. The team brought useful pieces of information and humour to each of the weekly lunchtime meetings with students. The students were encouraged to speak freely and express the digital difficulties they were having, while highlighting their progress and any areas that were lacking cohesion and relevancy.

DCU Digi-Town was supported by the Students' Union, the Library and the Student Support & Development unit. Together, they promoted DCU Digi-Town in the weekly student e-newsletter, on the VLE, through social media and other channels. Keeping up the fun and informal theme, they also raffled a One4All voucher among the weekly participants.

Here are some of the topics discussed:

How to use...

- Google Drive
- Google Slides
- Microsoft Excel
- The library's system
- Collaborative docs
- Create posters
- Design a presentation

Despite the low numbers in attendance during the

pilot, the DCU EDTL Team received a ream of positive feedback, along with the direction they needed to enhance their DCU Digi-Town offering in Autumn 2021. The agenda was still the same – but the restrictions had been eased, meaning it was possible to meet the students in person.

### INTERESTING QUESTIONS THAT WERE RAISED:

- How could the DCU EDTL Team align their meetings with the academic curriculum?
- How do they get lecturers to promote this digital opportunity?

Considering the students' workload and the uncertainty caused by Covid, the DCU EDTL Team believed it would be best to host DCU Digi-Town online and in-person, allowing the students to choose the option they were most comfortable with. The sessions were dispersed each week either online or in-person. There was also pizza available for the attendees on campus, along with the prospect of winning the infamous DCU Digi-Town raffle.

In Spring 2022, the DCU EDTL Team transformed the face of DCU Digi-Town once again. Now, it is an entirely online presence. The DCU EDTL student intern, Sinéad Mooney, set up an Instagram account, which is used to build the DCU Digi-Town brand and share insightful, practical, bitesize how-to guides. She produced graphics for each story and post and managed the Instagram content each week. Content was posted twice weekly and cross-promoted by other major DCU Instagram accounts.

### INTERESTING LESSON

There is a scope and demand for more student digital literacy resources and development opportunities. The DCU EDTL student interns were essential to the curation and promotion of digital learning tips and DCU Digi-Town. The partnership has led to development of another digital skills resource: Digi-Skills.ie, due for launch later in 2022.

# EXPLORING YOUR DIGITAL IDENTITY MODULE

## What problems are being addressed:

- The gaps in students' awareness and management of their digital identity
- An awareness of the necessary standards of behaviour expected in an online environment
- The gap in understanding of digital wellbeing and the balance between time online and time away from screens

## Who was involved?

The UCD EDTL Team consisted of Prof. Jason Last, Dean of Students, the Senior Project Manager, Marian O'Connor, the Project Lead and Digital Learning Librarian, Marta Bustillo, their colleagues, Educational Technologists, Mairead O'Reilly and Cesar Scrochi, and the UCD EDTL Student Intern, Eimer Magee. They worked with the UCD Library.

## Why did you choose to address the challenges this way?

- The UCD Library and the Digital Learning Librarian had the necessary skills and knowledge to develop the content for this module
- Students would be able to complete the module in their own time
- An engaging online module would facilitate interaction and self-reflection and allow for learning components to be re-used in a variety of contexts

## How were the goals achieved?

The goal was to enhance the students' digital skills, while also providing staff with a comprehensive resource they could direct their students to. The UCD EDTL Project Lead, Marta Bustillo, consulted with staff and students to identify needs and formulate a solution.

The Digital Competence Framework 2.0 (DigiComp 2.0) was a constant point of reference for the UCD EDTL Team, who wanted to ensure the knowledge provided would benefit the students beyond academia. They also wanted to clarify the value and grade of each category and segment, so students and academics could navigate the resource by distinguishing the information that was specific to their needs and level of comprehension. The Digital Learning Librarian developed UCD Library's Digital Literacy Framework, which focuses on five key sets of competencies:

### Understanding Digital Identities & Practices

- Understand the benefits and risks of the current digital environment.
- Participate ethically and safely in online spaces

### Think Critically & Evaluate Digital Information & Data

- Critically evaluate the quality of digital information and data
- Critically evaluate the quality of digital content creation tools and platforms

*The public facing project was hosted on the UCD Library website. It was created from a website template that was available to the library through LibGuides. The UCD Library Outreach Team designed the layout and the graphics.*



#### Find & Use Digital Information & Data

- Selecting appropriate sources of digital information and data
- Developing appropriate search strategies to find and use digital information and data.

#### Create & Communicate Digital Information

- Create and manage digital content
- Apply academic integrity and ethical research principles to the content created.

#### Collaborate & Share in Digital Spaces

- Critically evaluate the quality of digital information and data
- Critically evaluate the quality of digital content creation tools and platforms.

Ensuring the resource was accessible to students, with or without logging into the VLE, was another dominant factor for the UCD EDTL Team. This meant the project needed two digital strands: public facing and embedded in the VLE. The public facing project was hosted on the UCD Library website. It was created from a website template that was available to the Library through LibGuides. The UCD Library Outreach Team designed the layout and the graphics.

UCD EDTL Intern, Eimer Magee, brought the student voice to the forefront by emphasising the students' needs and ensuring the language used was relevant and relatable throughout the entire project. It was also important to continually test and improve the project model, so the UCD EDTL Student Intern consistently reviewed the progress made – edited any areas of confusion and questioned any graphics that were unclear.

Within the VLE, Exploring Your Digital Identity was divided into three units:

- 1 Monitoring Online Identity
- 2 Keeping Track of Academic Identity
- 3 Digital Wellbeing Identity

The team encountered some challenges, especially in embedding the learning components for the pilot module in the VLE, but through teamwork the issues were resolved and the module went live. The library and the College Liaison Librarians, who were assigned to each of the UCD schools, promoted the project – but it was not long before the UCD EDTL Project Lead realised the importance of academic support to foster student engagement. The students trusted their lecturers and saw the benefit in following up on their recommendation of trying the pilot module.

### INTERESTING DISCOVERY ✨

The Exploring Your Digital Identity pilot module benefitted from insights from the EDTL team, UCD academics, librarians in several Irish universities and members of the European Network of Open Education Librarians, ENOEL. The opportunity to discuss international approaches to supporting the development of digital competencies ensured that the project had an informed perspective on the design and delivery of open educational resources for digital literacy at UCD.

### INTERESTING TIP: ✨

If you have decided to create a resource for student digital skills, this Digital Literacy initiative can be used as the foundation!

## DIGITAL WORKPLACE READINESS

“Three-quarters of all students agreed that digital skills are important for their chosen career.

The UCD EDTL Team decided to explore their students’ digital needs by asking them and the UCD Internship Managers, as well as a group of employers, what they felt was necessary for success. The aim was to gather information that would enhance UCD’s digital resources, while also enhancing the students’ digital abilities and future employability.

The first group to be contacted by the UCD EDTL Senior Project Manager, Marian O’Connor, were the student internship managers in the UCD College of Science and the College of Engineering and Architecture.

*Those that had taken training in Word and PowerPoint were surprised at how some of the advanced features within the applications helped with their coursework and their only regret was that they hadn’t done the course earlier.*

The goal was to get their views on what digital skills employers were seeking. Here are the skills that this group felt were being requested most often by employers:

- Advanced Excel
- Python
- Computation Skills using R
- Building Information Modelling (BIM).

The UCD EDTL Team was interested to see if this reflected a broader view among contacts in engineering and architectural firms, so they decided to run a short survey which covered two key questions:

- What engineering-specific software applications are used by graduates in your organisation?
- What Programming Skills are used by engineering graduates?

The response rate - while not statistically significant - did reveal the varied needs of the respondents. Firstly, there was a strong interest in finding candidates that were effective problem solvers and able to apply transversal skills. Then, it was clear that the students’ digital fluency combined with their ability to learn and adapt, would determine the pace at which they settled into their new working environment and strived toward success. Proficiency in Microsoft applications were seen as standard.



*A group of students who undertook the Microsoft Online Skills training, were asked to take part in one of two focus groups.*

Next the UCD EDTL Team turned to the students: what digital skills did they feel they needed? A group of students who undertook the Microsoft Online Skills training, were asked to take part in one of two focus groups. And after a mix of undergraduate and graduate students across a range of disciplines took part, the following views were gathered:

- Microsoft Office Training was seen as beneficial, with most opting to enhance their skills in Microsoft Excel, both to help them in their coursework, but also for the purposes of personal financial management.
- Fewer participants had taken Microsoft Word and PowerPoint training, as they believed they were already proficient from day-to-day use or had an introduction during secondary school.
- Those that had taken training in Word and PowerPoint were surprised at how some of the advanced features within the applications

helped with their coursework and their only regret was that they hadn't done the course earlier.

- There wasn't a uniform requirement in coding and some participants opted to take modules in R, while others chose Python - this decision was influenced by their area of study or interest.

Students were willing to dip into platforms and learn specific skills as the need arose. They were aware of applications that supported referencing and project management, which they felt might be useful in supporting their studies.

In addition to exploring what digital skills students felt they needed, the UCD EDTL Team also looked at their preference for face-to-face or online delivery. Face-to-face training offered the opportunity to ask questions, but the digital delivery option offered flexibility in terms of being able to dip in and out when it suited.

Transforming through Digital Technology is theme two of the 'UCD Strategy 2020-2024: Rising to the Future'. These findings have informed discussions on how we can continue to support digital skills development and future employability among students.



# PROMOTING MICROSOFT OFFICE ONLINE TRAINING

## What problems were being addressed?

- The promotion of online Microsoft Office training
- The need to direct students to the resource

## Who was involved?

The UCD EDTL Team consisted of the Senior Project Manager, Marian O'Connor, and student intern, Aoibhinn Gilmartin. They worked with UCD IT Services, the Registry Communications Office, the Students' Union and the College Office teams.

## How was the problem addressed?

Traditionally, the UCD training in Microsoft applications was delivered on-campus and in-person. However, when the pandemic hit this needed to move online too. A decision was made to partner with a 3rd party performance-based assessment and test preparation tool, ensuring the Microsoft Office training smoothly transitioned to an online course. Interestingly, the biggest difficulty facing the UCD EDTL Team was creating awareness amongst students, who needed their digital skills more than ever.

*Students continued to access the system beyond the duration of the course, as well as using the knowledge gained to benefit their course work.*

The UCD EDTL Team knew the students were receiving an overwhelming amount of information daily. It was essential for the team to develop an effective and informative promotional campaign, which meant they needed to gain a thorough understanding of the 3rd party training platform and the benefits for students, who decided to take the course.

Once the UCD EDTL Team had a comprehensive knowledge of the online Microsoft Office Training, it was possible to frame their messaging and build their branding. Then, it was time to start spreading the word. Here are some of the key messages that the team chose to focus on:

- The range of courses available to students - Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Outlook
- Students could choose the level and version most appropriate to them
- There was a follow-along workbook and an assessment after every section, allowing students to self-assess and reflect on their learning
- Students could earn a digital badge and certificate, which could be added to their CV or LinkedIn profile, signifying their digital competency
- The training aligned with the European Digital Competence Framework for Citizens

The UCD EDTL Team created a series of short video tutorials that focused on the practical application of the course's curriculum, as well as demonstrating the positive effects it could have on their coursework, such as how features in Microsoft Word can make the task of referencing easier, or how to include animations in your course presentations and indeed how Excel formulas can speed up data analysis.





The next consideration was the communication channel to use. The networks available through the College Office and the Registry Communications Office proved to be crucial tools, as they were able to promote the Microsoft Office training through the programme office channels and the Student Information System. It was also possible to target new incoming students within the Introduction to UCD Orientation module, ensuring the UCD EDTL Team's message resounded at every level of the student population.

The UCD Student Union provided invaluable support by promoting the course on its social media platforms. The UCD EDTL Team sent out a series of informative emails, matching the social media campaigns and the banners posted across the campus and the central websites, once again continuing to extend their reach and create awareness.

*A key insight gained from the focus group is that students had some basic knowledge of the application before commencing the course*

The positive response to the course was evident in the number of students who enrolled. The UCD EDTL Team observed through focus groups an enhanced awareness of the students' digital self-awareness and capabilities. Students continued to access the system beyond the duration of the course, as well as using the knowledge gained to benefit their course work.

Arising from this campaign were two questions that we were interested in finding answers to, and were subsequently explored in a focus group with students who had taken the course:

1. Should the course be outside of term time when students have more time on their hands?
2. Does the online format deter students because of the amount of screen time they are already prescribed?

There was no clear consensus on the answers to those questions, with some students preferring the flexibility offered by an online course and others preferring face-to-face delivery and the option of being able to ask questions and troubleshoot issues.

A key insight gained from the focus group is that students had some basic knowledge of the application before commencing the course - however it was only the tip of the iceberg. By engaging with the material, it had a benefit to their course work both in terms of time saving and confidence in using the application.

# HOW TO TARGET FALSE INFORMATION SOURCES ONLINE

## What problems were being addressed?

- The abundance of false information available on the web
- The need for students to reference newsworthy websites

## Who was involved?

The Maynooth University (MU) EDTL Team consisted of the Project Lead, Morag Munro, who was based in the office of the Dean of Teaching and Learning, and EDTL student intern, Robin Meyler.

## Why did you choose to address the challenges this way?

- Students may respond better to video tutorials and colourful infographics
- Many students interact with social media

## How were the goals achieved?

After summer 2020, the MU EDTL Team became aware of an issue staff were having with the factuality of the online sources their students were referencing. The problem posed a threat to the academic integrity of their students' work, as well as highlighting the abundance of false information available to students. It was clear that students needed to be advised on how to recognise the reliability of online sources, while staff needed to clearly document and communicate the resources they wanted

their students to work from. The MU EDTL Intern, Robin Meyler, set out to bridge this divide and began by creating infographics and videos that were posted on Maynooth Students' Union (MSU) social media accounts.

The RADAR Framework – a tool to evaluate the quality, credibility and relevance of any source of information – was one of the most important resources that was detailed in this social media campaign. Here are the pillars of The RADAR Framework:

- R - Relevance
- A - Authority
- D - Date
- A - Appearance
- R - Reason

Another application the MU EDTL Team encouraged students to incorporate into their studies was NewsGuard: a browser extension that displays red and green rating icons next to links on search engines, social media feeds and other platforms. It promised students the opportunity to assess the sources that they intended on using, therefore ensuring the integrity of their work.

During Academic Integrity Week 2021, the MU EDTL Team focused on encouraging conversations around academic integrity. They also created awareness around the issue of false information, as well as The RADAR Framework and the NewsGuard extension, by talking to staff and students, explaining the benefits and answering any questions.

The series of videos and infographics were also shared amongst MU academics, who were able to pass the information onto their students and help them avoid any further confusion. The content was also uploaded to the EDTL project website, where it was then available to the entire nation.

## INTERESTING INSIGHT

The information students needed was already available on leaflets – but the MU EDTL Student Intern, Robin, understood that the student population was overwhelmed with information. If the MU EDTL Team wanted to tackle the issue, they were going to have to reach students by utilising the platforms they interacted with.

# AUTHOR'S NOTE

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When I first joined the EDTL Team, it was difficult to know where to begin. There were so many strands to the project, so many completed resources and others in development, breakthroughs and lessons learnt, that I knew it was going to take some time before I found my footing. But what I did understand before anything else, was the team's commitment to collaboration and communication, which I believe is the heart of the project.

Having spent weeks interviewing each of the team members, witnessing their joy and laughter as they relived their EDTL memories and moments, I knew it was necessary to convey the impact the EDTL network had played in guaranteeing the project's success. Luckily, it was written in the blueprint of the team's legacy and methods.

From student partnership to unity across universities, the EDTL Team truly went where no academic had ever gone before. And now that there is a comprehensive guide to enhancing the academic lives of students all over Ireland, there is only more to learn and discover, as students and staff work side by side.

So, what is next in the Enhancing Digital Teaching and Learning story? I cannot be sure – but I can be certain of the minds the project has inspired, which means there is an abundance of ideas blossoming, waiting to be heard...



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The Enhancing Digital Teaching and Learning  
(EDTL) project is funded under:

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