

Strategic Innovation Fund: Outputs & Outcomes

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Introduction: The Strategic Innovation Fund

Policy context & rationale

On reviewing Irish higher education in 2004, the OECD found a ‘tertiary education system at a crossroads’.¹ In their report, *Review of Higher Education in Ireland*, they paid tribute to the extraordinary expansion of undergraduate student numbers since the introduction of free secondary education in 1967, acknowledging the extent to which ‘Ireland’s remarkable economic growth averaging over 9% per annum from 1997 to 2000 inclusive’ was ‘fuelled by the expansion in the output of high quality graduates in the labour market’.² They also recognised the strengths of Ireland’s binary system of higher education, and in particular the responsiveness of the institutes of technology to regional skills needs; and they remarked upon the enhancement of higher education institutions’ research capacity since the late 1990s. However, reporting at a time when the Irish economy was flat-lining, a decline in the birth-rate was forecast, and international market-trends increased the strategic imperative for Ireland ‘to move from being a technology-importing, low-cost economy to an innovation-based, technology-generating society’, the OECD presented a suite of recommendations for the modernisation and development of a higher education sector on the front-line of the country’s socio-economic re-positioning within the global landscape.³ Institutional reform, widening participation, the expansion of postgraduate education, research capacity-building, and the enhancement of teaching and learning were all identified as strategic priorities for Irish higher education in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

It was in response to the OECD’s call for a ‘quantum leap’ in investment in higher education, and to their recommendation that there should be ‘a Strategic Investment Fund for National Priorities along the lines of the PRTL [Programme for Research in Third-Level Institutions]’, that the Irish Government established the Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF) to advance these strategic priorities.⁴ Announced in April 2005 by the Minister for Education and Science, Mary Hanafin, T.D., in a major policy statement on higher education, the SIF provided a mechanism for the support of innovation and strategic change across the higher education sector.⁵ As a multi-annual fund of €510 million to be allocated on a competitive basis throughout the course of the Government’s National Development Plan (NDP), (2007–2013), the SIF was conceived as a means by which institutions could develop their capabilities in a

¹ Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Review of Higher Education in Ireland* (Paris: OECD, 2004), 18.

² *Ibid.*, 8.

³ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁵ Mary Hanafin, T.D., Minister for Education and Science, ‘Implementing the OECD Report’, address on the occasion of the launch of the European University Association’s *Review of Quality Assurance in Irish Universities* sectoral report, 25th April 2005.

range of areas of critical importance to their core missions.⁶ Specifically the programme had the following main objectives:

- to enhance the delivery of education and research;
- to prepare for the expansion and development of postgraduate education;
- to support innovation and quality improvement in teaching and learning; and
- to support access, retention and progression.⁷

The SIF enabled Irish higher education institutions to address structural and developmental deficits in order to promote modernisation and reform; to increase their capacity and responsiveness to the needs of the wider economy and society; and to rise collectively to the challenges posed by an increasingly competitive global market-place for higher education. The SIF was also devised as a source of targeted investment in teaching and learning, addressing a perceived imbalance in this area *vis-à-vis* research investment. Indeed the SIF provided the first significant competitive funding available to the institutes of technology to support innovation in teaching and learning and the promotion of equity of access to higher education.⁸

Roll-out of the SIF

Two four-year cycles of the SIF were initiated in 2006 and 2008, with funding allocations to higher education institutions determined through competitive processes overseen by independent, international expert panels. As well as calling for proposals that would advance the strategic objectives of the programme—and the modernisation and reform of the sector—these competitive processes incentivised inter-institutional collaboration and the alignment of institutional strategies with national priorities.⁹ Moreover, through the requirement for institutions to provide matched-funding of at least 50%—to be sourced either from private funding or from the re-allocation of core funding—the SIF also leveraged the strategic allocation of existing resources to effect sustainable change.

Institutional engagement with the competitions under both SIF Cycle 1 and SIF Cycle 2 was strong: the total value of the proposals submitted under Cycle 1 was in excess of €100 million, and that of proposals submitted under Cycle 2 was in excess of €200 million. A total of €42,280,000 was awarded under Cycle 1 and of €101,330,000

⁶ See Government of Ireland, *National Development Plan 2007–2013: Transforming Ireland: A Better Quality of Life for All* (Dublin: Government of Ireland, 2006), 205–6.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 205.

⁸ Since 2000, the HEA's Targeted and Strategic Initiatives had, through a top-slice of the core recurrent grant, provided Irish universities with modest but very effective investment in centres of excellence for teaching and learning and academic professional development, and in the promotion of equity of access to higher education. However, prior to the SIF, there had been no such targeted Exchequer investment in the institute of technology sector.

⁹ In the competitive process for both cycles of the SIF, 25% of the marks were allocated to inter-institutional collaboration and 25% to the alignment of the proposal with institutional strategies and national priorities.

under Cycle 2, as detailed in the table below.¹⁰ All universities and institutes of technology participated in the SIF.

Thematic area of projects funded	SIF 1	SIF 2	Total
Institutional restructuring	€13m	€13m	€26m
Teaching and learning	€9m	€40m	€49m
Graduate education & research	€10m	€21m	€31m
Widening access	€6m	€12m	€18m
Lifelong learning and up-skilling	€4m	€16m	€20m
Total	€42m	€102m	€144m

Underpinned by a broad interpretation of innovation, the SIF projects that were awarded funding were new within the Irish higher education landscape, with its diversity of institutions each with their own missions and developmental histories. They were designed to support the academic and administrative restructuring of institutions as well as the enhancement of management information and performance evaluation systems. They aimed to ensure that institutions fulfilled their civic responsibilities to a wide range of community partners as well as to the increasing diversity of prospective higher education students of all ages, backgrounds, and levels of prior academic attainment; and they sought to enhance teaching quality through investment in the technological infrastructure to support online learning as well as through the promotion of engagement with pedagogical innovation. In support of the OECD’s recommendation that the number of doctoral students in universities should be doubled by 2010¹¹—and the Irish Government’s subsequent call in the *Strategy for Science, Technology, and Innovation* (2006) for the doubling of the number of Ph.D. graduates by 2013—SIF projects underpinned the development of graduate schools, as well as the roll-out of inter-institutional structured doctoral programmes.¹² In addition to supporting institutions to meet regional and national needs, the SIF provided the key mechanism for ensuring that, in an increasingly competitive international arena, Irish higher education would punch its weight.

Management of the SIF

Given the innovative nature of the SIF as a funding mechanism and the clear strategic advantages that accrued to the sector as a result of SIF investment, it is particularly unfortunate that, since late 2008, the global economic downturn and the severe deterioration in Irish public finances precipitated significant reductions in the allocation of SIF funds and the premature curtailment of the programme. Not only

¹⁰ Originally a total of €129,406,000 was awarded under SIF Cycle 2, inclusive of the funding for management information systems (MIS) projects which was subsequently withdrawn.

¹¹ OECD, *Review of Higher Education in Ireland*, 65.

¹² Government of Ireland, *Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation 2006–2013* (Dublin: Government of Ireland, 2006), 14.

did these reductions limit the scope of some SIF projects, but the accompanying unpredictability regarding the level of funding available and the flow of funds forced SIF consortia to operate in a difficult climate of uncertainty.¹³ Moreover ironically the deterioration in available resources was accompanied by a significant increase in the bureaucratic burden associated with the SIF, with the necessity for increased accountability resulting in an escalation in institutions' reporting obligations.

As a result of these reductions, the total funds allocated to institutions under the SIF during its lifespan of 2006–2012 were as detailed in the table below.

SIF Cycle	2006	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total
SIF 1	€15.0m	€6.7m	€10.3m	€6.6m	€1.3m	€0.15m	€40.05m
SIF 2	€0.0m	€9.3m	€16.7m	€12.3m	€12.6m	€1.1m ¹⁴	€52.0m
SIF 1 & 2	€15.0m	€16.0m	€27.0m	€18.9m	€13.9m	€1.25m	€92.05m

The effect of these reductions on Cycle 1 projects was mitigated by their earlier start-date in 2006, with 95% of the original SIF Cycle 1 award of €42,280,000 being paid out to institutions overall. However the effect on Cycle 2 projects, which commenced in late 2008, was particularly deleterious, with only 51% of the original award of €101,330,000 materialising. Overall only 18% of the multi-annual fund of €510 million that was originally earmarked for allocation to institutions on a competitive basis throughout the course of the NDP (2007–2013) was provided through the SIF.

The HEA's strategic management of the SIF, which this severe decline in resources necessitated, was informed by two evaluations of the programme that took place in 2010: an HEA-commissioned interim evaluation undertaken by Dr. Gordon K. Davies, the report of which was published in February 2010; and an audit conducted by the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG), on which a report was issued in September 2010.¹⁵ These reports recommended the consolidation and mainstreaming of the key achievements of the SIF across the higher education sector, towards which the HEA moved through an internal review of the SIF that was cognisant of Davies's ranking of the projects. All funding for SIF projects as stand-alone projects concluded at the end of 2011.

Approximately €2.5 million of the 2011 SIF budget was allocated strategically to a small number of SIF consortia, identified by the HEA in consultation with the Department of Education and Skills (DES) as of potential strategic national

¹³ The progress of SIF projects was also impeded by the implementation of the 'Employment Control Framework' as the mechanism by which the moratorium on recruitment in the public sector, which commenced in spring of 2009, has been applied to the higher education institutions.

¹⁴ €500k of the 2012 SIF allocation was used to support the establishment of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning.

¹⁵ See Gordon K. Davies, *Report of the SIF Evaluation* (Dublin: HEA, 2010), (http://www.heai.ie/sites/default/files/final_25_jan.pdf); Comptroller and Auditor General, *Special Report: Department of Education and Skills* (September 2010), (http://audgen.gov.ie/documents/vfmreports/74_Education_Sector_ReportRev.pdf).

importance. These targeted allocations to key SIF projects in the areas of teaching and learning, engagement, and equity of access to higher education were made in order to foster the formation of regional and national platforms in strategic priority areas, and to support the implementation of the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*, thus optimising the benefit of SIF investment for the sector.¹⁶ Building on this strategic investment, the small budget allocated to the SIF in 2012, along with unspent SIF funds accrued, was used by the HEA to support the establishment of hubs for enterprise engagement, civic engagement, and entrepreneurship, and to provide start-up funding for the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning—the key system-level infrastructure for the support of the implementation of the *National Strategy* in respect of the teaching mission of higher education that was launched by the Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairí Quinn, T.D., on 22nd November 2012.

Key achievements of the SIF

As this report demonstrates, despite the adverse economic circumstances in which much SIF activity has been undertaken, the achievements of SIF consortia—supported by a relatively modest level of investment—have been impressive. Paradoxically the deterioration in the public resources available to the SIF has been accompanied by the growing importance of some of the core objectives for which it was developed. This is particularly the case in relation to the up-skilling, flexible learning, and access objectives of the programme, which have become an increasingly vital part of the higher education sector’s contribution to national economic renewal; and innovation in teaching and learning is vital to underpin progress on all of these fronts. That, notwithstanding the difficulties faced by institutions in such a challenging fiscal climate, permanent change has been leveraged in these core areas of activity is testimony to institutions’ high level of commitment to the objectives of their SIF projects. Moreover the wide range of direct and indirect benefits to the economy that have been reaped from the SIF illustrate institutions’ responsiveness to the needs of wider society, the enhancement of which was a key aim of the programme.

In terms of programme outcomes, the SIF has contributed to very significant advances in Irish higher education across a wide range of areas, and has supported the emergence of a number of truly national resources, funded through the SIF, which enhance the collective identity and quality of the system as a whole. SIF projects led by the Irish Universities Association (IUA) in full economic costing, performance evaluation, and research data analytics have significantly enhanced universities’ strategic management and decision-making capacity, supporting the institutional restructuring and modernisation that the SIF has enabled. In addition, the establishment of the IUA’s RIAN online portal ensures that universities’ research

¹⁶ See Department of Education and Skills, *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* (Dublin: DES, 2011), (<http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/National-Strategy-for-Higher-Education-2030.pdf>.)

outputs are now freely available worldwide.¹⁷ The reform and mainstreaming of the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) and the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) has widened access to Irish universities for undergraduates,¹⁸ while the IUA's Fourth-Level Ireland Network has advanced the development of graduate education across the sector.¹⁹

Similarly the Institutes of Technology Ireland (IOTI)'s SIF 1-funded 'Delivering Systemic Change' project enhanced the business intelligence capability of the sector as well as supporting the establishment of the Learning Innovation Network (LIN)—the flagship teaching and learning initiative of the institutes of technology.²⁰ Under SIF 2, the IOTI's 'Addressing the Needs of the Knowledge Economy' project enhanced the sector's capacity for research and innovation, as well as for the delivery of programmes on a flexible basis. The BlueBrick.ie online portal, which is a key output of the 'Supported Flexible Learning' strand of the project, provides a web-based one-stop-shop for courses offered on a part-time or flexible basis in the institutes of technology which has supported the delivery of the HEA's Springboard and ICT Skills Programme across Irish higher education.²¹

While paying tribute to the sectoral projects undertaken by the IUA and IOTI, the *Report of the SIF Evaluation* also acknowledged the effectiveness of 'projects in which institutes of technology and universities have worked well together'.²² Amongst these, the teaching and learning, graduate education, and access initiatives of the Shannon Consortium and the Dublin Region Higher Education Alliance (DRHEA) are of particular note, exemplifying the deepening of cooperation on a regional basis which has emerged through the SIF.²³ Likewise the National Academy for Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning (NAIRTL) has gained international renown for its innovative work, which has helped to ensure that Ireland continues to lead in the implementation of international initiatives, such as the Bologna Process and the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).²⁴

Indeed it is arguably in the enhancement of teaching and learning that the achievements of SIF consortia have been most notable. The SIF has supported a wide range of collaborative projects aimed at developing and disseminating innovation in teaching and learning, and has contributed to greatly enhanced teaching quality and capability across the sector. SIF projects have advanced the recognition of work-

¹⁷ See www.rian.ie.

¹⁸ See <http://www.accesscollege.ie/hear/> and <http://www.accesscollege.ie/dare/>.

¹⁹ See www.4thlevelireland.ie.

²⁰ See <http://www.lin.ie/>. On the LIN see Muiris O'Connor and Abigail Chantler, 'The LIN Project within the Context of the Strategic Innovation Fund' in *Designing Together: Effective Strategies for Creating a Collaborative Curriculum to Support Academic Professional Development*, Noel Fitzpatrick and Jen Harvey (eds), (Dublin: DIT, 2011), 16–30 (25), http://www.lin.ie/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/FINAL_Designing_Together_June2011.pdf.

²¹ See www.BlueBrick.ie.

²² Davies, *Report of the SIF Evaluation*, 21.

²³ See <http://www3.ul.ie/shannonconsortium/> and <http://www.drhea.ie/>.

²⁴ See <http://www.nairtl.ie/>. On Ireland's leadership of the Bologna Process see Edwin Mernagh, *Taking Stock: Ten Years of the Bologna Process in Ireland* (Dublin: HEA, 2010).

based learning and prior learning, and—through projects focused on the deployment of assistive technologies, student mental health, and the transition into and out of higher education—they have enhanced access to, retention in, and progression through higher education for an increasingly diverse student body.²⁵ At graduate level, the development of inter-institutional transferable-skills training programmes under the SIF has provided the cornerstone for the establishment of graduate schools and the roll-out of structured Ph.D.s across the sector.

The advancement of the engagement mission of higher education institutions has also been a key achievement of the SIF. The enhancement of institutions' engagement with enterprise, the development of employment–academic and university–community partnerships, the increase in programme provision on a flexible basis, and the promotion of service-learning, community-based learning, student-volunteering, and active citizenship in Irish higher education are among the many achievements of SIF projects.²⁶

Legacy of the SIF

While the SIF was conceived at a time when Ireland was still living what *Le Monde* described as 'un "american dream" à l'européenne', the exigency of the work that the SIF supported across the broad spectrum of activity undertaken within higher education has been set in relief by the global financial crisis that ensued.²⁷ The OECD's recognition in 2004 of the need to increase Irish higher education institutions' responsiveness to the needs of the wider economy and society was prescient, the imperative having increased exponentially throughout the life-span of the SIF. In accordance with the expectation that SIF projects 'should engender real, beneficial and long-term change', many of the achievements of the SIF have been mainstreamed.²⁸ Moreover the innovation supported by the SIF provides the bedrock for the programme of comprehensive reform on which Ireland's higher education sector has now embarked under the leadership of the HEA.²⁹ Arguably it is the SIF that has ensured that, even in the wake of the worst financial crisis in the history of the Irish State, we can be confidently visionary in our planning for future generations.

Much of the work that is currently underway to implement the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* builds on the achievements of the SIF. The institutional reform that the SIF facilitated, through which a proliferation of small academic departments have been replaced with flourishing schools and faculties; academic

²⁵ The establishment of the online mental health and well-being portal, www.mymindmatters.ie, is a key output of a SIF 2-funded, NUI Galway-led project.

²⁶ Civic engagement in Irish higher education has been greatly advanced through the SIF 1-funded, NUI Galway-led 'Civic Engagement, Student Volunteering and Active Citizenship' project through which the national Campus Engage network (www.campusengage.ie) has been established.

²⁷ Fintan O'Toole, *Ship of Fools: How Stupidity and Corruption Sank the Celtic Tiger* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), 12.

²⁸ HEA, 'SIF 2 Call for Proposals', paragraph 3.7.

²⁹ See <http://www.heai.ie/content/implementation-national-strategy>.

and administrative processes have been restructured; management and governance structures streamlined; and roles and responsibilities clarified, will underpin the system-level restructuring and consolidation that is now in train.³⁰

The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning will build on the achievements of the SIF in enhancing teaching quality and capability in Irish higher education. This system-level infrastructure will have a vital role to play in supporting the provision of an excellent student learning experience across the sector, especially through the enhancement of the quality and accessibility of academic professional development, through the provision of teaching and learning resources for the sector, and through the advancement of the scholarship of teaching and learning. Through the establishment of fellowships and awards for research and excellence in teaching and learning, and the consolidation of a national digital platform for teaching and learning resources, the National Forum will make a very tangible and significant contribution to the advancement of the teaching mission in Irish higher education as envisioned in the *National Strategy*, fostering a vibrant community of grass-roots' activity on priority themes.

Building on the work of the NAIRTL and the IUA's Irish Universities Study, the Irish National Student Survey (INSS) has been developed and piloted by the HEA in partnership with higher education institutions, student-representatives, and sectoral representative bodies. As envisaged in the *National Strategy*, the INSS will provide high-quality and consistent qualitative data on student satisfaction and student engagement across the higher education sector.³¹

The great advances in the engagement mission of Irish higher education that the SIF has supported are being developed further through the establishment of three engagement hubs—for enterprise engagement, civic engagement, and entrepreneurship—by the SIF-funded REAP, Campus Engage, and ACE consortia respectively.³² Stimulating collaborative, inter-institutional working at a national level, these hubs are supporting and encouraging all higher education institutions to strategically advance their engagement activities in order to enhance the distinctiveness of their missions within local, regional and national contexts. Underpinning the practical implementation of the recommendations of the *National Strategy*, they will foster institutions' engagement in the widest sense—with businesses, employers, and community partners—across a diversified but cohesive higher education sector. In addition, the potential, highlighted by the REAP consortium, of business–academic partnerships to facilitate the provision of education and training for employees, and the engagement of employers in programme provision, design and review, will be harnessed by the HEA through the development and implementation of a strategy for enterprise engagement for the higher education sector.

³⁰ Davies, *Report of the SIF Evaluation*, 9.

³¹ See DES, *National Strategy*, 61, and <http://studentsurvey.ie/wordpress/>.

³² See <http://reap.ie/>, www.campusengage.ie, and https://ww2.dkit.ie/research/innovation_and_enterprise/ace.

However perhaps the most important and lasting legacy of the SIF, which is fundamental to all of these initiatives, and key to the emergence of the more efficient higher education sector that the current economic exigency necessitates, will be the broadening and deepening of collaboration within the Irish higher education sector that has been one of the hallmarks of the programme. Building on a trend first supported by the PRTL, the emphasis on inter-institutional collaboration in the SIF heralded a sea change in institutions' *modus operandi*, transforming the higher education sector from a loose assemblage of disparate entities competing for shrinking resources into a more consolidated organic entity comprising teams of institutions facing common challenges together. As well as leading to the emergence of a number of truly national resources, the SIF has facilitated the consolidation of partnerships at regional level, providing a blueprint for the regional clusters that will be a key feature of the future higher education landscape.

At a practical level, such collaboration will ensure that the system-level efficiencies, the rationalisation of course provision and the joint-development and delivery of new programmes is optimised.³³ Pooling resources, sharing ideas, establishing networks, and preventing wasteful duplication are all critical to ensure that Ireland's higher education institutions thrive in the competitive, global environment of the twenty-first century. Moreover the great benefits reaped by Irish higher education from the wealth of collaborative initiatives that have blossomed in the sector over the past decade bear testimony to the immense value of forging alliances, or forming partnerships, and of sharing expertise. The true value of cooperation with others is unquantifiable—it is fundamental to all human endeavour, it breaks down barriers and prejudices, it enhances quality, and it increases the societal, as well as the economic return on public investment. It is this that the SIF has demonstrated incontrovertibly.

Abigail Chantler & Muiris O'Connor
August 2013

³³ As the first financial shared services model to be utilised within Irish higher education, the Shannon Consortium's Procurement Network exemplifies the system-level efficiencies achieved through the SIF. The Procurement Network has employed 'best practice' procurement tools to assist partners in maximising in an environmentally sustainable way expenditure on goods and services, and is also illustrative of the value of the wider institutional restructuring processes that the SIF has facilitated.

SIF Cycle 1

AIT: Ascent Regional Assessment and Resource Centre

<http://www.ait.ie/ascent/>

Contact: Ms. Patricia Kearney, Disability Support Service Coordinator, AIT
Email: pkearney@ait.ie

Partners: GMIT, ITS, LYIT, NUIG

The purpose of the Ascent Regional Assessment and Resource Centre project was to promote and facilitate greater access to, and retention and progression within, higher education for students with specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, and ADHD. The Ascent consortium provided psychological assessment services for students in the five partner higher education institutions, and assistive technology training for students and staff in second-level, further, and higher education. Research in assistive technology and learning-support interventions was also undertaken in order to develop strategies to promote students' independence of learning, improved performance, and increased functional independence.

Outputs

- Development of community of practice in respect of screening and assessments of students, and learning and disability support services across BMW region;
- Recruitment of project Assistive Technology Coordinator;
- Provision of AT software to students and lecturers;
- Delivery of assistive and inclusive learning technology training to staff;
- Development of common screening system across partners and a needs assessment toolkit of resources;
- Development of specific strategies, such as one day AT workshops and disability awareness seminars, to increase understanding of the needs of students with disabilities/specific learning difficulties in education within the wider community;
- Development of project website;
- Dissemination of project outputs at international conferences;
- Publication of the following research reports:
 - *Policy and Practice in the use of Assistive Technology for Students with a Specific Learning Difficulty;*
 - *Usage of 'Quickscan' Tool as a Pre-Indicator for Screening;*
 - *A Study on Learning Support Services used by Students with Specific Learning Difficulty in Third-Level;*
 - *Research into the Effectiveness of the use of Assistive Technology to Support Students with Specific Learning Difficulty in Third-Level.*

Outcomes

- Greater equity of access to higher education for students with learning difficulties or disabilities;
- Improved retention of such students in higher education;
- Enhanced awareness of the needs of students with disabilities.
- Assimilation of assistive technology element of project into AIT/LYIT Reach (Regional Assistive Technology Connection to Higher Education).

CIT: Education in Employment (EiE)

<http://eine.ie/>

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Partners: AIT, DIT, DKIT, GMIT, ITS, LYIT, NUIG, UCC

The Education in Employment (EiE) project focused on the learning needs of those already in the workplace through its four distinct but linked strands—‘Work-based Learning’, ‘Recognition of Prior Learning’, ‘Progression of Craftspersons’, and ‘Ethnic Minorities in the Workplace’. The project promoted a ‘learner-led’ model of education in which the employer and the higher education institution are part of a negotiated learning pathway. One of the main objectives of the project was to provide those in the workforce who wish to attain a higher education qualification with the opportunity to do so in a flexible cost-effective manner. A further objective was to provide workplace learners with opportunities to utilise their experiential learning and move to the next level of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

The project established collaborative workplace–education partnerships to identify workforce up-skilling needs and to develop programmes to meet these needs. It supported the development of new strategic alliances between institutions, enhancing their quality and effectiveness. In addition, successful interactions between the education sector and work-places were developed and strengthened throughout the project.

Outputs

- Publication of a range of reports available on the project website including:
 - Irene Sheridan (ed.), *Framework for Progression of Craftspersons* (Cork: CIT Press, 2008);
 - Margaret Linehan (ed.), *Work-Based Learning: Graduating Through the Workplace* (Cork: CIT Press, 2008);
 - Margaret Linehan and Eileen Hogan (eds.), *Migrants and Higher Education in Ireland* (Cork: CIT Press, 2008);

- Irene Sheridan and Margaret Linehan (eds.), *Recognition of Prior Learning: A Focus on Practice* (Cork: CIT Press, 2009).
- Creation of the project website;
- Production of peer-reviewed journal papers;
- Conference presentations;
- Symposia and workshops hosted;
- Development of learning partnerships between higher education institutions and employers.

Outcomes

- Greater accessibility of higher education programmes offered in partner HEIs to learners in the workplace;
- Delivery of new progression routes for craftpersons;
- Enhanced relevance of higher education programmes offered in partner HEIs to learners in the workplace;
- Enhanced capacity and capability for work-based learning and the recognition of prior learning in partner institutions;
- The establishment of institution-wide RPL policies in all partner institutions;
- The promotion of flexible-learning pathways in higher education;
- Sharing of expertise and staff development opportunities across all partner institutions.

At its conclusion, the EiE project was merged into the CIT-led, SIF 2-funded Roadmap for Employment–Academic Partnership (REAP) initiative.

GMIT: GET Ahead—Internship Development for the Region

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Partners: AIT, DKIT

This project supported the collaborative development of a generic internship module by GMIT, AIT, and DKIT in partnership with students and a broad spectrum of over 150 employers. This module was piloted through the following programmes:

- AIT: M.Sc. in Applied Polymer Technology (NFQ level 9);
- DKIT: B.A. (Hons.) in Public Relations (NFQ level 8);
- GMIT: B.Sc. in Chemical and Pharmaceutical Science (NFQ level 7).

Outputs

- Production, in consultation with employers, of a ‘Work-Placement Manual’ for students and employers comprising

- Organisational guidelines and code of conduct;
 - Student guidelines and code of conduct;
 - Student evaluation form;
 - Learning journal;
 - Guidelines for writing reports;
 - Assessment methodologies.
- Distribution of 'Work-Placement Manual' to students and employers at the commencement of placements;
 - Workshops hosted to enable students and supervisors to prepare for placements;
 - Development of generic module descriptors for placement modules;
 - Creation of a database for managing internships;
 - An accredited module on 'Preparation for the World of Work' was devised for inclusion in the academic programmes of the partner institutions.

Outcomes

- Improved rate of student retention on GMIT's B.Sc. in Chemical and Pharmaceutical Science (NFQ level 7);
- The development of strong cooperative links between the partner higher education institutions and the private, public, and community sectors in the regions;
- The development of the concept of 'real-world learning' in the programmes of the partner institutions.

IOTI: Delivering Systemic Change

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Partners: All institutes of technology

The overall objective of the project was to deliver systemic change within the institutes of technology, and to realign the sector to improve service-delivery to students, industry, and other stakeholders within a rapidly changing and complex environment.

Strand 1: Sectoral Capacity Assessment and Evaluation

https://dspace.ndlr.ie/bitstream/10633/5557/2/IOT_Final%20Deliverable_31%20Oct%202007.pdf

The aim of Strand 1 of the project was to assess and evaluate capacity in the sector, to identify gaps, and make recommendations to develop and mobilise talent and capacity within the sector in order to exploit future opportunities.

Outputs

- Research carried out to assess the challenges facing institutions in the external environment relative to major policy developments in higher education;
- The publication of a report, *The Institute of Technology Sector—Developing and Mobilising Talent and Management Capacity to Exploit Future Opportunities* (2007).

Outcomes

- Greater understanding of the developmental needs of the institutes of technology (in terms of management capacity, teaching and learning capability, organisational restructuring, and leadership capabilities);
- Creation of an evidence-base to underpin the work of the other strands of the project.

Strand 2: Learning Innovation Network (LIN)

<http://www.lin.ie>

The Learning Innovation Network (LIN) is the flagship teaching and learning initiative of the institute of technology sector which aims to disseminate and promote 'best practice' and innovation in teaching and learning at sectoral level. The specific aims of the project were to scope the parameters of an agreed Academic Development Programme (ADP), to provide a centrally coordinated repository service and portal, and to develop a model for national awards for excellence in teaching and learning.

Outputs

- A comprehensive survey of teaching and learning activities in the institute of technology sector was undertaken in 2007. This led to the establishment of a modular framework for APD within the sector, through engagement with which staff can develop a range of agreed core competences. Following HETAC accreditation guidelines, the framework facilitates the acquisition of Special Purpose Awards at level 9 of the NFQ (each worth 10 ECTS), and their combination into a Postgraduate Diploma in Learning, Teaching and Assessment (worth 60 ECTS).
- Building on local expertise in a number of institutes of technology, accredited APD modules were developed in 'Learning and Teaching in Higher Education', 'Assessment and Evaluation', 'Mentoring', 'Enquiry-Based Learning', 'Formative Assessment and Feedback', 'Technology Enhanced Learning', 'Engaging in Educational Research Practice', 'Personal Development Planning,

Reflection Action and Review, Action Research for Educators and Creating and Supporting an Inclusive Curriculum.

- Mapping a number of non-LIN modules to the LIN Framework enhancing the flexibility of the APD framework (see <http://www.lin.ie/diploma/test/>).
- Up to June 2013 there have been 429 LIN special purpose certificates awarded and there are a number of graduates from the Postgraduate Diploma. These numbers are set to increase in the coming academic years.
- Five LIN conferences for the teaching and learning community have been hosted, and the sixth will be held on October 17th 2013 (see <http://www.lin.ie/conference/conference-2013/>). A range of international experts have addressed these conferences, including Lord David Puttnam;
- In excess of 40 workshops on a wide range of topics, such as 'Assistive Technologies for Students with Dyslexia', 'Introduction to Podcasting', 'Linking Assessments to Learning Outcomes', and 'Mind Mapping, Accelerated Learning and Thinking', have been hosted;
- Development of a set of reliable good practice benchmarks in teaching and learning: the LIN Core Values (see <http://www.lin.ie/diploma/>).
- The creation of the LIN website at www.lin.ie.
- Publication of 17 editions of the LIN newsletter, which preceded the LIN blog (<http://www.lin.ie/>).
- Development of a collaborative model for sectoral awards in teaching and learning, which was implemented in 2008.
- Establishment of the 'LIN Portal'.
- Publications, including conference proceedings (2010) and abstracts (2011, 2012); a final project report (November 2012); and Noel Fitzpatrick and Jen Harvey (eds), *Designing Together: Effective Strategies for Creating a Collaborative Curriculum to Support Academic Professional Development* (DIT, 2011). (See <http://www.lin.ie/publications/>.)

Outcomes

- An innovative framework for the provision of accredited APD has been rolled-out across 14 higher education institutions.
- A flexible pathway for APD, and a mapping process for enhancing flexibility, have been established.
- An annual teaching and learning conference for the higher education community has been established.
- Sustained collaboration since 2007 has raised the profile of teaching and learning in higher education;
- The sharing, dissemination, and adoption of 'best practice' and innovation in teaching and learning throughout the sector.
- Enhancement of the student-learning experience in the institutes of technology.

Strand 3: Empowering Staff through the Institute Planning Process

<http://www.itb.ie/estip>

The objective of this strand was to build more effective team and institutional planning processes throughout the sector taking into account the fast and rapidly changing environment within which institutes deliver a service to students and other stakeholders.

Outputs

- Production of an Empowering Staff through Institute Planning (ESTIP) Handbook;
- Production of a comprehensive reference manual to support the handbook;
- Production of an explanatory Powerpoint presentation;
- Production of a training specification;
- Implementation of training in the institutes.

Outcomes

- Enhancement of strategic planning in the institutes of technology;
- Enhancement of the PMDS process and team-planning in the institutes;
- Greater engagement of staff in the strategic planning process.

Strand 4: Sectoral Leadership and Management Development

This strand of the project was concerned with the development of competency profiles and training programmes for leaders and managers in higher education. The first phase of the project resulted in a report on competency profiles for managers in the sector, and the second phase resulted in the development of a suite of training programmes for managerial staff based on the agreed competency profiles.

The final report on managerial competency profiles, produced by Empower Solutions, was published in April 2008 and made available on-line as well as in the human resources offices of the institutes. Carr Communications and PriceWaterhouseCoopers were appointed to design training programmes for the development of these competencies, to which end they undertook a 'training needs analysis' exercise in the autumn of 2008. Based on the results of this exercise, the Archimedes training programme was rolled-out, comprising two-day training programmes in leadership and management-development, as well as electives in marketing, public relations and communications; influencing and negotiation skills; and human resources. A coaching-skills programme was also developed and is now coordinated by the IOTI in conjunction with Carr Communications.

Outputs

- Publication of report: *The Use of a Management Competency Framework to Enhance the Development of Managers Within the Sector* (April 2008);
- 17 iterations of the 2-day 'Providing Leadership' programme, and 14 iterations of the 'Management Development' programme were run with over 300 participants from across the sector;
- 23 iterations of the electives were run with over 200 participants;
- 6 iterations of the coaching programme were run with over 50 participants, and the programme has been mainstreamed;
- Hosting of conference: 'Leading Through a Time of Change and Transition' (15th October 2010);
- Establishment of Archimedes Steering Committee.

Outcomes

- Sharing of expertise and collaboration on inter-institutional basis;
- Unlocking of organisational capacity, networking skills, marketing skills, and peer-learning;
- Archimedes Steering Committee has been sustained post-SIF as an advisory body for the sector's training needs.

Strand 5: Business Intelligence

This project sought to achieve operational efficiencies in the management information of the sector, and to develop the capacity to extract management information from key systems to facilitate the on-going measurement and optimal utilisation of the most important services offered by the sector.

To this end the IOTI developed a student information portal (Luminus), but its implementation was suspended due to sustainability issues. The project therefore focused on improving the business-intelligence capability of the sector to support more effective decision-making through data-analysis.

Outputs

- Publication of a strategic plan, a business-intelligence plan, and a range of reports (e.g. on enrolment rates, retention and progression rates, and efficiency savings and funding);
- Delivery of training in management information;
- Production of a roadmap for business-intelligence exploitation and implementation.

Outcomes

- Enhancement of management-information capability enabling institutes to strategically exploit the information held in their systems;

- Standardisation of reports available across the sector;
- Greater efficiency in use of resources.

IT Sligo: Institutes of Technology Research Alliance

<http://itsligo.ie/research-innovation/research-welcome/institutes-of-technology-ireland-research-alliance/>

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Partners: All institutes of technology, NUIG, NUIM

The purpose of this inter-institutional alliance was to enhance the provision of research and graduate education in the institute of technology sector. Specifically, its objectives were to develop an accredited skills programme, to hold annual colloquia in research practice, and to organise annual industry fora.

Outputs

- The development of an accredited programme in generic and transferable research skills for staff and students comprising 6 modules:
 - 1) Research Methods;
 - 2) Data Handling and Analysis;
 - 3) Research Management;
 - 4) Creativity and Entrepreneurship;
 - 5) Personal Development for Researchers;
 - 6) Communications for Researchers.
- The development of the following NFQ level 9 Special Purpose Awards (each worth 10 ECTS):
 - Certificate in Creativity and Entrepreneurship;
 - Certificate in Communications for Researchers;
 - Certificate in Research Methods;
 - Certificate in Data Handling and Analysis;
 - Certificate in Personal Development for Researchers;
 - Certificate in Research Management.
- The Certificate in Research Practice was piloted over a six-month period commencing in June 2010 with 22 participants in AIT;
- Two annual research colloquia and a research–industry forum were hosted.

Outcomes

- Enhancement of the quality of graduate education in the institute of technology sector;
- Enhancement of the skills-base of staff and graduate research students;
- Enhancement of the basis for the commercialisation of research outcomes and the employability of researchers in the broader economy.

At its conclusion the project was merged into the SIF 2-funded IOTI Research Coordination and Support Office with a view to mainstreaming the research skills programme across the institute of technology sector.

IT Tallaght: Collaborative Network for Teaching Innovation and Inclusive Education (CONTINUE)

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Partners: ITB, ITC, IADT

The CONTINUE project was a collaborative initiative led by IT Tallaght which aimed to improve student support and retention by empowering staff to engage in innovation in teaching and learning. This aim was pursued under the following five themes, through which partner institutes progressed the strategic priorities outlined in their institutional plans:

1. Learner and Staff Supports (ITTD);
2. Learning Styles (ITB);
3. Emotional Intelligence (ITC);
4. Problem-Based Learning (ITB & ITC);
5. Assistive Technologies (IADT).

Project outputs and outcomes from each of the above themes are detailed below.

1. Learner and Staff Supports

Outputs

ITTD

- Establishment of ITTD's Centre for Learning and Teaching, which offers supplemental instruction to students through a maths drop-in support clinic, an academic writing clinic, and academic writing resources provided via Moodle;
- Staff development programmes offered;
- Problem-Based Learning Day & Learning and Teaching Innovation Day hosted;

- Learning innovation projects funded;
- 'Introduction to ICT for new students' course and handbook developed;
- Publication of report: 'Some Indicators of Progression for First-Year Students on Higher Certificate Programmes in the School of Engineering in ITT Dublin';
- Installation of a range of learning technologies including Camtasia, iMindmap, and Mahara e-portfolio.

ITB

- Drop-in clinics offered in mathematics (for computing & engineering first-year students); programming in C and Java (for computing & engineering first-year students); languages; and accounting (for business first-year students);
- Learning resources developed to support these drop-in clinics.

ITC

- Staff training needs surveyed and CPD programme designed and delivered including workshops and an accredited programme in third-level teaching and learning;
- Supplementary Teaching Scheme established.

Outcomes

ITTD

- Curriculum renewal;
- Greater engagement with new technologies to enhance learning;
- Enhanced flexibility of provision of learning opportunities;
- Reduction in the number of queries submitted to the Computer Service Helpdesk.

ITB

- Enhanced student engagement in learning;
- Improved learning resources.

ITC

- CPD programme is mainstreamed;
- A range of teaching and learning resources developed are now available online.
- Supplementary Teaching Scheme is mainstreamed.

2. Learning Styles

Outputs

- First-year students in ITTD screened for 'learning style', on which they were issued with a report;
- Profiling of students' learning styles across disciplines in ITC;
- Delivery across consortium of staff training on learning styles & teaching practice;
- Online availability in ITB of workshops on inclusive teaching practice;
- Adaptation of modules across academic departments in ITB;

- Launch in ITB of online tool by which students can assess their learning style (www.howilearn.ie);
- Online resources for students and staff developed in ITC, including VARK and Felder questionnaire and Mind-mapping tool;
- In ITC, website developed to host teaching and learning resources;
- ITC developed *Guide to Learning Styles for Learners*;
- The creation of a Learning Styles Moodle page on ITB's Moodle server;
- Production of an ITB Study Skills Manual;
- Hosting by ITB of showcase events, including a Kaleidoscope of Learning exhibition.

Outcomes

- Enhanced student awareness in ITTD of learning styles and how to enhance performance;
- In ITB learning styles awareness training is mainstreamed as part of the induction programme for all new staff;
- In ITB there are enhanced online resources in learning styles for all staff and students;
- Follow-on projects are now up and running in AIT and GMIT.

3. Emotional Intelligence

Outputs

- Establishment of the Centre for the Development of Emotional–Social Intelligence (CDESI) providing professional consultancy, academic expertise, mentoring and support to HEIs in respect of the design and delivery of undergraduate and postgraduate psychology programmes;
- Design and delivery of CDESI Special Purpose Award in Emotional Intelligence (NFQ level 8) in ITC;
- 10 ECTS NFQ level 9 module in Emotional Intelligence accredited and rolled-out;
- 18 staff from across consortium accredited in Emotional Intelligence;
- 10 staff accredited in EI Competency Coaching Skills;
- 10 staff participated in Teaching with EI workshop;
- 2 staff completed MHS MSCEIT EI accreditation course;
- Research project on first-year students' EI undertaken;
- Portal developed to provide resources on EI;
- ITB have devised a revised NFQ with explicit reference to learning outcomes related to EI.

Outcomes

- Enhanced awareness of importance of emotional intelligence amongst staff and students across consortium;

- In-house availability of EI resources across consortium.

4. Problem-Based Learning

Outputs

- A range of training workshops and resources were developed and delivered including a web-resource (www.continuepbl.ie);
- The second Problem and Enquiry-Based Learning (PEBL) symposium was hosted by the consortium (February 2009);
- Establishment of cross-disciplinary PBL training initiatives;
- PBL day held in ITTD;
- Research visits to HEIs were conducted by ITB staff to explore integration of PBL into engineering curricula;
- Delivery of PBL modules in computer science and engineering in ITB;
- Certificate in Enquiry Based Learning (NFQ level 9) piloted in ITB;
- Establishment of network of PBL practitioners across the institute of technology sector.

Outcomes

- Greater awareness of PBL across the institute of technology sector;
- Development of continuepbl.ie as web resource in PBL for academics in science and engineering;
- Strong integration of PBL into engineering curricula in ITB, as well as into modules on computing and business.

5. Assistive Technologies

Outputs

- AT audit carried out across consortium;
- During induction week in September 2009 each partner institution hosted a multimedia stand to raise awareness of assistive technologies, and distributed promotional material and information;
- The CONTINUE AT project website is under construction (ning.com), and will be developed further by IADT and ITB;
- Installation of a range of assistive technology software on desktops across the partner institutions including TextHelp Read and Write Gold 9;
- Hosting of staff training and awareness seminars hosted;
- Booklets and pamphlets distributed;
- Students with disabilities screened;
- Establishment of database of available assistive technologies.

Outcomes

- A range of assistive technology software is now available on desktops across the partner institutions, each partner having obtained a network site licence for TextHelp Read and Write Gold 9;
- Enhanced awareness of learning needs of diverse student cohort;
- Enhanced awareness of assistive technologies;
- Concept of the 'Virtual Access Office' (Ning.com) established across the consortium.

IUA: Fourth-Level Ireland Network

www.4thlevelireland.ie

Partners: All universities

The IUA's Fourth-Level Ireland Network project sought to establish a network of Deans of Graduate Studies and senior administrative staff with responsibility for graduate education to progress coherently the development of graduate education in Ireland through a number of mechanisms, including the delivery of inter-institutional programmes; the development of a web portal for access to information on all Irish Ph.D. programmes; the establishment of a national credit transfer system for graduate courses; the development of generic training learning outcomes for graduate education; and the hosting of a number of events and conferences through which all stakeholders can share and embed 'best practice'.

Outputs

- Preparation of an Inter-Institutional Collaborative Agreement on module delivery, student mobility and credit exchange in collaborative graduate programmes;
- Hosting of three national conferences on graduate education;
- Publication of an IUA Ph.D. Skills statement;
- Publication, in collaboration with IUQB, of revised *National Guidelines for the Organisation of Ph.D. Programmes in Irish Higher Education*;
- Development of the Fourth-Level Ireland website (www.4thlevelireland.ie);
- Production of an Irish universities' graduate education recruitment brochure in English, Mandarin & Spanish (see <http://www.i-studentadvisor.com/iua/>).

Outcomes

- Greatly enhanced communication between key staff in all seven universities with functional responsibility for graduate education;
- The establishment of an agreed basis for inter-institutional collaborative graduate programmes;

- Dissemination of information about the development of graduate education and best practice in Ph.D. education in Ireland;
- Advancement of graduate skills development opportunities;
- Enhanced sectoral awareness of issues integral to the quality enhancement of the graduate student experience;
- Facilitation of discussion by stakeholders on graduate education through the Network;
- Enhanced provision of information to prospective graduate students via Fourth-Level Ireland website.

IUA: Irish Universities Study

<http://www.iua.ie/research-innovation/research-publications/>

<http://www.ucd.ie/geary/research/education/>

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Partners: All universities

Undertaken by UCD’s Geary Institute on behalf of the IUA, the Irish Universities Study developed a web-based survey system through which information from undergraduates, postgraduates, and contractual researchers in universities was gathered.³⁴ As well as capturing basic demographic information about each of these groups, the surveys—which included tailored, routed questions for sub-groups such as students with disabilities and students with children—included questions on a wide range of areas including students’ academic experiences, their health and well-being, and the university services and supports available to them. The system generates the survey results on an institutional as well as a sectoral basis, and provides the soft infrastructure for the roll-out of a national student survey.

Outputs

- A series of publications in which the results of the surveys are analysed:
 - Report on ‘Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Students in Irish Universities’;
 - Report on ‘International Students in the Irish Universities’;
 - ‘Undergraduate Research Experience: Benefits and Good Practice’;
 - Report on ‘Students: the Impact of Gender’;
 - Report on ‘Ph.D. Students in Irish Universities’;

³⁴ The system was developed by the Geary Institute in collaboration with Tilburg University and the RAND Corporation. The Irish Universities Study project was originally entitled ‘Student Feedback’ but was renamed to reflect the breadth of its scope.

- 'Decomposing Gender Differences in College Student Earnings Expectations'
(<http://www.ucd.ie/geary/static/publications/workingpapers/gearywp201038.pdf>).

Outcomes

- The transfer of expertise in survey design from RAND Corporation and Tilburg University to UCD Geary Institute;
- The soft infrastructure, and means of survey dissemination, for a national student survey was developed.

IUA: Making Irish Universities Internationally Attractive

Partners: All universities

Through this project a joint IUA–Chinese Scholarship Council (CSC) scheme was established through which the attendance of 54 Chinese Ph.D. students in Irish universities over a three-year period was facilitated. The scheme served as a vehicle for strengthening links between Irish universities and selected, prestigious Chinese universities, and fostered the development of an Irish 'portfolio' for the Chinese Ph.D. market. The scholarships were jointly funded by the Irish universities and the CSC, with the Irish universities waiving tuition fees and the CSC meeting students' travel and subsistence costs. The scholarships were administered by the IUA and the Irish Embassy in China.

Outputs

- Award of 54 IUA–CSC scholarships to Chinese Ph.D. students over three years, facilitating their attendance at an Irish university, typically for a one-year period;
- The publication of an Irish universities graduate education brochure both electronically and in hard-copy.

Outcomes

- Greater Chinese awareness of, and interest in, Ireland as a destination for graduate study and postdoctoral research;
- Strengthening of links between prestigious Chinese and Irish higher education institutions;
- Creation of a prototype for joint scholarship schemes in other countries (the IUA is exploring the possibility of an MOU with the Brazilian higher education funding agency (CAPES) based on the model used with the CSC);
- The scholarship scheme has provided a platform for the brokering of institutional agreements with the CSC.

IUA: Open Access to Research Output

www.rian.ie

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Partners: All universities

This project aimed to establish 'open access' repositories in all of the universities, thus ensuring that their content (published books and papers; research theses) will be freely available worldwide; and to set up a national portal as a basis for displaying all published Irish research on the web.

Outputs

- Functioning open access repositories have been established in all of the universities;
- A national portal (www.rian.ie) is now established providing access to over 12,500 documents (e.g. peer-reviewed articles & theses);
- A management plan for the portal, and an agreement for the induction of new partners, has been agreed by the IUA Librarians' Group.

Outcomes

- Publicly funded Irish research is now freely available worldwide;
- Increased international visibility of Irish research, enhancing the reputation of institutions and individuals.
- Increased dissemination and citation of Irish research;
- Advancement of open access to research at a European level (the RIAN portal was discussed as an exemplar at an EU workshop on 'Open Access and Preservation' (Brussels, 25th–26th November 2010)).
- Requests for membership of the portal from other Irish HEIs.

IUA: Strategic Planning and Decision Support

Partners: All universities

The objective of this project, which concluded at the end of 2008, was to agree a common set of data definitions and key performance indicators (KPIs) to provide university management with comprehensive and integrated information for decision support, strategy development and the benchmarking of performance at disciplinary and institutional levels across the sector and internationally, thereby facilitating university reform.

Further to undertaking a comprehensive review of the performance management systems for higher education utilised across ten countries, the IUA hosted a series of

workshops for representatives from the universities and for sectoral stakeholders at which KPIs in the following areas were collated:

- Estates / facilities;
- Library and information services;
- Research, innovation and commercialisation;
- Staff / HR;
- Teaching and learning;
- Student lifecycle;
- Finance;
- ICT / MIS;
- Planning and institutional research.

From the emergent draft list of c.200 indicators, 42 'headline indicators' were selected and defined to form a framework of focused KPIs to be implemented across the sector.

Outputs

- Mazars, *Strategic Planning and Decision Support Project: Project Summary Report & Appendices* (Dublin: IUA, December 2008). This comprises the following:
 - Summary Report
 - Appendix A: Report 1: *Report on International Best Practice*
 - Appendix B: Report 2: *List of Potential Indicators*
 - Appendix C: Report 3: *KPI Development Framework*
 - Appendix D: Report 4: *Methodology for Prioritising Indicators* (including an initial suggested shortlist of indicators)
 - Appendix E: Report 5: *Performance Indicator Data Definitions*
 - Appendix F: *Definition of Commonly Used Terms*
 - Appendix G: *National and Policy Objectives*

IUA: Towards a Full Economic Cost Model

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Partners: All universities

The objective of this project was to scope a full economic costing (FEC) model that would estimate the full costs of teaching, research and other activities in universities; and to assess the feasibility of applying the model across the university sector, with a view to enhancing institutions' capacity for effective management and strategic decision-making.

Outputs

- The establishment of an agreed conceptual framework for a FEC system for Irish universities;
- The development of an implementation plan for this FEC system.

Outcomes

- Commitment to the implementation of the agreed FEC model across the 7 Irish universities;
- Closer collaboration between universities;
- Greater commitment on the part of universities to accountability and transparency;
- Success in obtaining an award under SIF 2 for the design and implementation of the FEC model.

IUA: Towards a Higher Education Leadership Academy

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Partners: All universities

This project aimed to develop a strategic framework for leadership and management development in the university sector that is cognisant of the shared vision for the future of higher education in Ireland.

Outputs

- A scoping exercise was conducted across the seven universities to evaluate current provision in human resource leadership development;
- A pilot leadership programme was delivered at a two-day event in Dublin in September 2008 and was attended by 15 leaders from the 7 universities. The pilot programme comprised the following modules:
 - Designing and implementing strategy;
 - Culture and leadership;
 - People management;
 - Management via teams.
- Programme materials developed for each of the above modules;
- Evaluation of pilot leadership programme undertaken.

Outcomes

- Enhanced leadership capacity in the universities;
- Enhanced awareness of importance of leadership development;

- Strengthening of resource-base for leadership training;
- Creation of a vision for the establishment of a leadership academy.

IUA: Widening the Base for High-Quality Student Recruitment: Improving Access Mechanisms for Socio-Economic Disadvantaged and Disabled Students

Partners: All universities

This one-year SIF 1 project concluded in December 2008, but its work is being continued through the SIF-2 funded 'Equity of Access' project (see below). Led by the IUA, this project involved all of the universities and DIT, and sought to address the strategic and operational challenges associated with increasing the numbers of students from under-represented groups entering higher education. Specifically, the project reformed and mainstreamed two supplementary admissions routes: the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR; <http://www.accesscollege.ie/hear/>) and the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE; <http://www.accesscollege.ie/dare/>), which offer access to higher education courses on reduced points for students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and for those with a disability respectively.

Outputs

- The development of a new assessment methodology for applicants with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD), incorporating input from the Psychological Society of Ireland, the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and the Dyslexia Association of Ireland (DAI);
- The implementation of quality control mechanisms throughout the application process;
- Improved data collection and analysis from HEAR & DARE;
- Promotion of both schemes to guidance counsellors, parents and students;
- Increased integration of HEAR & DARE into the CAO application process.

Outcomes

- Enhanced access to higher education for students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and for those with disabilities.

LIT: Work-Based Learning

Contact: Ms. Mona Khan, SIF Project Coordinator, LIT
Email: mona.khan@lit.ie

Partners: None

The aim of LIT's project was to develop and provide work-based learning programmes in partnership with industry.

Outputs

- Development and roll-out of WBL courses in quantity surveying, construction management, civil engineering, and information technology in LIT;
- Validation and roll-out of a Higher Certificate in Investigation Techniques and IT Security (NFQ level 6), the outcomes of which are linked to a Garda Siochana in-house course;
- Delivery of a WBL module in electrical technology to 16 Vistakon employees in 2008;
- Online delivery from September 2009 of final year of Ordinary degree in electronic engineering;
- WBL course in retail developed;
- Development of a generic module for WBL IT courses that can be applied across all disciplines;
- Sharing of experience of development of WBL courses at national HE conferences.

Outcomes

- WBL courses in Quantity Surveying, Construction Management, and Civil Engineering offered in LIT's School of the Built Environment since September 2008.
- Higher Certificate in Investigation Techniques and IT Security offered since September 2010.
- Greater sectoral awareness of WBL.
- Strengthening of links between LIT and local companies, including Vistakon, Analog, and Europax;
- Enhanced expertise within LIT in respect of VLEs and the delivery of distance learning programmes.

NUIG: Access and Lifelong Learning (Access 21)

Contact: Ms. Imelda Byrne, Access Officer, NUIG.
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Partners: AIT, DKIT, GMIT, LYIT, NUIM

This NUIG-led SIF 1 project formally concluded at the end of 2009, although the initiatives of which it is comprised have been sustained in some of the partner institutions. As an inter-institutional educational initiative, the Access21 project aimed to widen access to, and participation in, higher education, and to promote lifelong learning, in the BMW regions and Co. Clare within the context of national access policy. It provided entry-level access courses, distance learning degree

programmes, part-time accredited courses at NFQ levels 6, 7, and 8, and accredited undergraduate diploma courses at 14 outreach centres located in local communities across the BMW region which have traditionally been under-served by the higher education sector. The target groups for participation in these courses were socio-economically disadvantaged students (SED), members of the traveller community, ethnic minorities, disabled students, mature students, and students experiencing geographic disadvantage.

Outputs

- 453 participants from targeted under-represented groups completed an access / foundation course in one of the 14 outreach centres during the period 2006–2010;
- 370 students progressed from the outreach centres to participate in NFQ level 7 and 8 programmes in one of the seven partner institutions;
- 45 students participated in a distance-learning degree in Family and Community Studies offered by NUIG, graduating in October 2010;
- 37 students completed an NFQ level 7 / level 8 undergraduate diploma at the outreach centres.

Outcomes

- Widened access to higher education in areas in which, historically, there have been barriers;
- Creation of good working relationships between higher education institutions and local education providers in communities throughout the BMW & Co. Clare regions;
- Further to the conclusion of SIF funding NUIG continued to lead and support Access21 initiatives;
- A modified version of the Access21 model, piloted under the SIF, is being offered by NUIG at Ballinasloe, Clifden, Ennis, Longford, and Tullamore from 2009–2012;
- In 2009–2010 Access21 became a mainstream programme in LYIT, with outreach centres maintained in St. Johnston’s, Clonmany, and Dungloe.

NUIG: Blackboard: Learning Technologies From Pilot to Mainstream

Contact: Mr. Seán Farrell, Director of Information Solutions and Services, NUIG
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Partners: TCD, UCC

The aim of this project was to upgrade NUI Galway’s virtual learning environment (VLE), previously operating on a small-scale pilot basis, for university-wide use; and to integrate into the VLE a range of learning technologies. The project also entailed

the promotion of teaching and learning technologies through a programme of collaborative training and events.

Outputs

- The upgrading of NUIG's VLE, which is now available to all registered students and staff on the payroll on a 24-hour basis, on-campus and remotely;
- A range of teaching and learning technologies are now fully available within VLE: Turnitin plagiarism detection system, Questionmark online examination system, SMS, National Digital Learning Repository (NDLR), and Echo360 Lecture Capture (in four lecture theatres). Other technologies, such as Learning Objects for wikis, blogs and podcasts, were piloted within the VLE;
- Training materials and e-resources for self-support developed;
- Programme of workshops on the VLE delivered in 2010;
- A Learning Technologies blog has been implemented, and the three partner HEIs have formed a working group to share training and resources;
- Sharing of ideas, knowledge, and experience through the Irish Blackboard Users Group.

Outcomes

- The VLE is now part of the mainstream operational services within NUIG, and is used by 80% of instructors and almost all students;
- The enhancement of the student learning experience in NUIG, as reflected in increased satisfaction expressed in student survey results;
- The development of a community of practitioners in teaching and learning, leading to the sharing of experience and the dissemination of 'best practice';
- The administrative burden of managing classes in NUIG has been eased;
- Enhanced sectoral expertise in utilisation of technology solutions for postgraduate education.

NUIG: Building Capacity for Fourth-Level

Contact: Dr. Pat Morgan, Dean of Graduate Studies, NUIG
Email: dean.gradstud@nuigalway.ie

Partners: TCD, UCC

This project put in place a new collaborative, inter-institutional framework for graduate education to build capacity for the delivery of specialist graduate-level programmes.

Outputs

- Establishment of inter-institutional framework for graduate education across partner institutions;

- Support for the delivery of inter-institutional graduate programmes;
- Co-supervision of graduates across institutions.

Outcomes

- Expansion of graduate education across partner institutions;
- Enhancement of quality of graduate education;
- Increase in capacity for delivery of graduate education;
- Strengthening of research culture in partner institutions;
- Enhancement of supervisory capacity in partner institutions;
- Enhanced inter-institutional cooperation.

NUIG: Civic Engagement, Student Volunteering and Active Citizenship

www.campusengage.ie

Contact: Ms. Ann Lyons, Coordinator, Campus Engage, NUIG.
Email: ann.lyons@nuigalway.ie

Partners: DCU, NUIM, UCD & UL

This project aimed to strengthen the relationship between higher education institutions and wider society through the promotion of civic engagement activities in higher education. It sought to enhance students' civic awareness and participation, and to foster the sharing of knowledge and resources between academic and civic communities through the creation of university–community partnerships. The project entailed the development of a national network, Campus Engage, for the promotion of service learning and community-based learning, student volunteering and active citizenship within Irish higher education.

Outputs

- The creation of the Campus Engage Network for the Promotion of Civic Engagement in Irish Higher Education managed by a Board of Representatives from the partner institutions.
- Development of the Campus Engage website providing access to case studies on civic engagement activities, as well as to relevant reports and conference proceedings (<http://www.campusengage.ie/>).
- Sponsorship of the student volunteer initiative, 'We Volunteer'—a photographic exhibition featuring student volunteers that marks the EU Year of Volunteering 2011 (<http://www.campusengage.ie/site/view/292/>).
- An international conference on civic engagement and active citizenship was hosted 4th–5th June 2009: 'Higher Education and Civic Engagement Partnerships: Create, Challenge, Change', Croke Park Conference Centre, Dublin (<http://www.conference.campusengage.ie/site/view/65/>).

- 12th–13th November 2010: ‘Building a Voice for Student Volunteering in Ireland’ conference was hosted in Portlaoise.
- Joint publication, *Mapping Civic Engagement Within Higher Education in Ireland*, prepared in partnership with the AISHE.
- Publication of the Campus Engage newsletter, ENGAGE (<http://www.campusengage.ie/site/view/269/>).
- Hosting of National Training Programme featuring international guest speakers and visiting scholars.
- DCU developed a set of guidelines for embedding community-based learning in its curricula; instituted a President’s Award for Teaching and Learning that recognises civic engagement; established a volunteer programme; and inaugurated its Volunteer Expo in 2009, with 43 exhibitors participating in the 2010 Expo. DCU also created a range of flexible pathways between FETAC and degree modules to widen participation.
- UCD established a volunteer programme, ROVE, in partnership with community-based organisations in the Dublin area; inaugurated a President’s Award for Volunteering in 2010; and introduced a service learning module into the B.Comm degree course.
- In NUIG the number of students receiving the ALIVE certificate for volunteering increased year-on-year during the project. NUIG also hosts an annual Volunteer Fair in September, and offers 25 service learning modules across a range of disciplines. NUIG is a partner in a TEMPUS project on service learning that commenced in January 2010.
- NUIM has developed a partnership with the Kildare Volunteer Centre to create volunteering opportunities for students, and successfully applied for a Fulbright Scholarship devoted to civic engagement;
- UL have developed student volunteering opportunities for cooperative education placements in partnership with organisations in Limerick. UL have also initiated a President’s Volunteer Award and developed an online volunteering portal.
- Campus Engage has developed a postgraduate module on civic engagement that was piloted on NUIG’s CELT Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching and Learning and has since been mainstreamed.
- The Campus Engage Board issued a call for seed-funding proposals for grants of up to €5,000 in May 2010 in order to support new and innovative civic engagement activities in HEIs. 17 awards to 13 HEIs were made (<http://www.campusengage.ie/site/view/189/>).
- A survey of civic engagement activities in Irish higher education was conducted as the basis for a report (<http://www.campusengage.ie/site/view/337/>).

Outcomes

- Increased student participation in volunteering and service learning through capacity-building in partner institutions for curricula and extra-curricula volunteering and service learning activities.
- Capacity-building in civic engagement in non-partner HEIs.

- Enhanced awareness throughout the HE sector of the importance and value of civic engagement.

NUIG: Dean of Graduate Studies

<http://www.nuigalway.ie/graduatestudies>

Contact: Dr. Pat Morgan, Dean of Graduate Studies, NUIG
Email: dean.gradstud@nuigalway.ie

Partners: TCD, UCC

This project facilitated the establishment in NUI Galway in March 2008 of the post of Dean of Graduate Studies and of a Graduate Studies Office to coordinate and develop graduate education in NUI Galway in line with national policy. At institutional level, this facilitated the reform of graduate education through the creation of graduate schools, the roll-out of structured Ph.D. programmes, the reform of supervisory arrangements for doctoral students, the provision of discipline-specific and generic skills training for graduates, the revision of graduate orientation programmes, and the establishment of a virtual learning platform forum for graduates. These reforms were introduced as part of the sector-wide transformation of graduate education coordinated by the IUA through the SIF 1-funded 'Fourth-Level Ireland' project. The 'Dean of Graduate Studies' project enabled NUIG to participate fully in the Network of Deans of Graduate Studies through which the IUA's initiative was developed and implemented.

Outputs

- NUIG Graduate Studies website created as central information repository for staff and students;
- NUIG published revised 'University Guidelines for Research Degree Programmes' (http://www.nuigalway.ie/graduatestudies/Current_Students_2/guidelines.html);
- Establishment of structured Ph.D. programmes in each of NUIG's five Colleges & publication of a procedures guide to facilitate the development of additional structured Ph.D.s;
- Publication of a range of guides for graduate research students including:
 - 'Research Student Guide' for incoming graduate students;
 - 'Communicating Research: Understanding the Knowledge Transfer Opportunities', (http://www.nuigalway.ie/graduatestudies/communicating_research.html), (published in collaboration with TCD and UCC);
 - 'In at the Deep End: Learning to Teach in Higher Education';

- NUIG’s policy on research integrity has been updated, and NUIG joined 20 other institutions internationally to develop an online module on research integrity with the graduate education company Epigeum;
- Development of online system for Ph.D. examination, facilitating thesis submission and issuing of report on the examination;
- Development of online resources on ‘Information Literacy and Research Methods in the Life Sciences’;
- NUIG led the development of an inter-institutional M.Sc. in BioInnovation in partnership with UCC, UL, DCU, RCSI, Stanford University, the Karolinska Institute, Sweden, medical device companies, entrepreneurs and clinicians. (<http://www.nuigalway.ie/bioinnovate/>);
- Electronic publication of Ph.D. theses;
- Introduction of annual exit surveys of postgraduates.

Outcomes

- Increase in number of NUIG staff involved in supervision of research students;
- Increase in development of discipline-specific advanced modules in NUIG;
- Increase in the number of research students in NUIG (from 775 in 2006 to 1056 in 2011);
- Increase in number of doctoral graduates;
- Enhanced national and international inter-institutional collaboration in delivery of graduate programmes;
- Enhanced graduate student experience in NUIG;
- Greater employability of NUIG postgraduates.

NUIG: Feasibility Study to Develop Irish Language and Irish-Medium Education

Contact: Peadar Mac an Iomaire, Príomhfheidhmeannach, NUIG
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Partners: NUIM, LYIT

The objective of this project was to provide NUIG with a report that would outline the basis on which it could foster the sustainable development of Irish-medium university education through the development of the five-year strategic plan of Academh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeilge (NUIG) for the period 2009–2014.

Outputs

- A feasibility study outlining an indicative programme for the sustainable development of Irish-medium university education under the auspices of Academh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeilge (NUIG);
- A report outlining the feasibility of providing a one-year residential (Erasmus-type) programme in the Gaeltacht for undergraduate students of Irish which

will form the basis for discussion with the DES and HEIs on the establishment and funding of such a programme;

- The development of a four-year, NFQ level 8 joint degree programme (B.A. Riarachán Gnó) by NUIG and LYIT.

Outcomes

- The outcomes of the project are reflected in the 2009–2014 strategic plan for Academh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeilge, which includes the following targets:
 - a commitment to providing academic programmes in Irish to meet the needs of the secondary school sector;
 - a commitment to providing a one-year residential (Erasmus-type) programme in the Gaeltacht for undergraduate students of Irish;
 - a commitment to providing a range of postgraduate programmes to meet the needs of Gaeltacht and Irish speakers.

The realisation of these goals depends on the outcome of on-going discussions between NUIG, the DES, the HEA, and the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs regarding the budgetary arrangements for the funding of Irish-medium higher education.

- Increased access to Irish-medium higher education through the provision of the NUIG & LYIT B.A. course, which is predicted to have in the region of 40–60 students per annum.
- Another anticipated outcome of the project is the development of a broader Irish-medium teaching programme in Irish at NUIG, to include Irish-medium undergraduate programmes in arts education, science education, language planning and the performance arts.

NUIG: Restructuring Academic Units

Contact: Mr. Michael Kavanagh, Academic Secretary, Office of the Registrar and Deputy-President, NUIG
Email: michael.kavanagh@nuigalway.ie

Partners: TCD, UCC

This project supported the academic restructuring of NUIG from 7 faculties and 52 departments into 5 colleges and 16 schools. This restructuring process was designed to underpin the rationalisation of existing programmes as well as the development of new programmes; to foster the development of critical mass; and to support the development of graduate schools.

Outputs

- Introduction of new academic structures;

- Development of a strong strategic planning culture throughout the University;
- Review of governance structures of research institutes undertaken;
- Review of roles of deans of colleges and of the Council of Deans undertaken;
- Transfer of academic staff from research institutes to associated schools and colleges expedited;
- Review of undergraduate programme provision commenced to ensure optimal use of resources;
- Review of College Workload Models commenced;
- Development of college, school and support-unit operational plans.

Outcomes

- The development of new programmes, including structured Ph.D. programmes;
- Greater support for interdisciplinary initiatives, and for sharing of modules across programmes;
- Stronger alignment of academic appointments with teaching and research strategies of schools and colleges;
- Stronger alignment of research strategies with programme provision;
- Embedding of research institutes into academic structure of the University;
- Enhanced management and leadership capacity of senior managerial staff;
- Embedding of a full-economic cost (FEC) model within institutional administration;
- Greater efficiency in resource-management.

NUIG: Restructuring Infrastructure

Contact: Mr. John Gibney, Director of Physical Resources, Buildings Office, NUIG.
Email: john.gibney@nuigalway.ie

Partners: TCD, UCC

Creation of Accurate Estates Database

This project involved the dimensional surveying of all space within NUIG's buildings and the creation of Autocad drawings of this space; the development of an estates management system (Pemac) to hold all estates data; and the establishment of procedures to ensure that data and drawings held remain up-to-date and accurate through reporting on space-type, allocation, utilisation, condition, valuations, and other pertinent information.

Outputs

- NUIG's space database was fully updated with accurate information in respect of room dimensions, occupancy, space-type, etc;
- Up-to-date Autocad drawings of each university building were uploaded to a central server and are regularly updated.

Outcomes

- Full space reports based on varying criteria are now available from the estates management database;
- The more up-to-date and accurate information that is now available from the estates management system will enhance the planning and decision-making of the university.

Support for the Planned Rationalisation of Academic and Academic-Support Unit Space Allocations

This project aimed to develop and cost a project implementation plan for the rationalisation of academic and academic-support unit space allocations in NUIG utilising accurate estates data.

Outputs

- Report in which NUIG's space utilisation is compared with norms in the U.K. and Australia.

Outcomes

- Availability of a database to underpin operational and strategic space management and allocation decisions.

NUIM: Enhancing Participation and Extending the Regional Role of the University

Contact: Dr. Una Crowley, SIF Project Coordinator, Office of the Deputy President, NUIM.
Email: una.m.crowley@nuim.ie

Partners: All institutes of technology

This project led to the development of strategic alliances between NUIM and five institutes of technology—DKIT, IT Carlow, WIT, AIT, and IT Tallaght—enhancing inter-institutional cooperation in the areas of lifelong learning, staff development, teaching and learning, and access. Through this cooperation, these strategic alliances aim to enhance the impact of the institutions in the regions they serve. To this end,

five multi-lateral thematic working groups were established to facilitate the sharing of expertise through meetings and workshops.

Outputs

- The lifelong learning working group published a study skills booklet, *The Adult Learner*, and a report, *A Study of Student Support Services in Six Third-Level Institutions*;
- The staff development and teaching and learning working groups developed a guide to lesson plans, including a framework for lesson planning;
- Participation of staff from across the alliance in NUIM's Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education (PGDHE) & the establishment of a network of these participants to share ideas and information on an ongoing basis;
- The staff development and teaching and learning working groups hosted a study day, 'Higher Education Development: Boundaries and Bridges' (November 2008), exploring the benefits and costs of collaboration in development;
- The postgraduate training working group explored common areas of expertise, including regulations for Ph.D.s and Master's by research, modularisation, and credit transfer systems.

Outcomes

- A framework for cooperation between NUIM and the five participating institutes of technology has been established, with specific areas for cooperation having been identified by the thematic working groups;
- Sharing of information and ideas on innovation in teaching and learning on an on-going basis by staff in the participating institutions who are alumni of NUIM's PGDHE;
- Enhanced resources for adult learners in partner HEIs throughout the alliance;
- Enhanced focus on traveller education throughout the alliance through the continued meetings of the access working group.

NUIM: Faculty-Aligned Teaching and Learning Innovation

Contact: Dr. Una Crowley, SIF Project Coordinator, Office of the Deputy President, NUIM.
Email: una.m.crowley@nuim.ie

Partners: None

Within the context of the preparation of NUIM's *Teaching and Learning Strategy*, published in 2009, this project aimed to foster collaborative approaches to the delivery of innovative and high-quality teaching across NUIM's new faculty structure, and thereby to enhance the student learning experience.

Outputs

- Publication of NUIM's *Teaching and Learning Strategy 2009–2011*;
- September 2009: network of 27 Teaching and Learning Fellows was established to champion innovation in teaching and learning across NUIM and to support the transition to a learning-outcomes based approach to teaching provision;
- Establishment of a Mathematics Support Centre (MSC) for students;
- Peer-tutoring in writing delivered across arts departments;
- SMART Sympodium 1 (an interactive electronic lecturn) was installed in lecture theatres;
- Delivery of training to NUIM staff in the development of podcasts and video tutorials;
- Development, delivery and mainstreaming of two accredited programmes in teaching and learning—the *Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education* and the *Professional Certificate in Teaching and Learning*.
- Digitisation of core course reading materials.

Outcomes

- More than 70% of modules have learning outcomes inputted into the academic database;
- Improved retention rate of first-year undergraduate students;
- Greater efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of teaching in NUIM thus mitigating the impact of worsening staff–student ratios;
- Greater accessibility of learning resources;
- Enhancement of quality of teaching and learning in NUIM;
- Greater inter-departmental collaboration in NUIM.

NUIM: Graduate Education and Research

Contact: Dr. G. Honor Fagan, Dean of Graduate Studies, Office of Graduate Studies, NUIM
Email: honor.fagan@nuim.ie

Partners: None

This project supported the development of NUIM's Graduate Studies Office; the development of structured doctoral programmes; and the strengthening of the continuity between third and fourth-level study in NUIM.

Outputs

- Production of internal policy documents;
- Delivery of generic skills training programmes in all faculties;
- Roll-out of 26 structured Ph.D. programmes;

- Increase in number of taught Masters' programmes on offer in NUIM;
- Development of two professional doctoral programmes (in psychology and education);
- Introduction of 10 inter-institutional Ph.D. programmes;
- Contribution to the development of national policy documents pertaining to doctoral education;
- Development of new governance structures for the delivery of graduate education in NUIM;
- Development of new website for NUIM graduate students;
- Introduction of bursaries and scholarships for graduate students.

Outcomes

- Increase in recruitment of graduate students in NUIM;
- NUIM's participation in inter-institutional graduate programmes;
- Enrichment of personnel resources in the Graduate Studies Office;
- Increase in number and quality of taught graduate programmes and doctoral programmes provided;
- Enhancement of quality of doctoral programmes;
- Enhancement of the graduate student experience in NUIM;
- Increase in number of graduations of research students.

NUIM: Restructuring and Modernisation

IT-Based Self-Service Initiatives (ITbSSI)

Contact: Mr. Brian Carolan, Director, Computer Centre, NUIM
 Email: brian.carolan@nuim.ie

Partners: DCU

This was a collaborative initiative between NUIM and DCU to rationalise key business processes and to implement self-service transactions, including e-payslips, student registration, personalised timetables, and examination results, with a view to achieving the more efficient and cost-effective provision of services for staff and students in the two participating universities. The project has resulted in the implementation of technology-driven initiatives that have facilitated the redeployment of resources and enhanced the quality of services.

Outputs

- Full roll-out to all staff of the e-payslips service;
- Full roll-out to all students of online, personalised academic and examination timetables;
- Implementation of self-service registration for all incoming students;

- Delivery of student accounts transaction module, enabling students to view their own account balance, fees outstanding and fees paid;
- Installation of software to support a university-wide student experience survey (completed in May 2010);
- Installation of a management information system to support the transition to learning outcomes in respect of all modules.
- DCU built a solid portal platform that is a basis for the delivery of additional personalised and self-service transactions.

Outcomes

- Enhanced IT capacity in NUIM and DCU in respect of the provision of services to staff and students;
- Efficiency savings accrued through lower transaction costs;
- Increased student satisfaction with service provision;
- NUIM is learning from DCU's expertise in the area of IT self-service provision on an on-going basis.

Leadership Training Programmes

Contact: Ms. Lynne Budden, Staff Development Officer, NUIM.
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Partners: None

This project aimed to establish a leadership development programme for heads of academic and administrative departments, and for directors of research institutes in order to strengthen NUIM's leadership cadre and to enable the University to meet the challenges presented by restructuring and global competition for higher education.

Outputs

- Establishment of a discussion forum ('Heads Together') for heads and directors to facilitate the sharing of information and practice;
- Introduction of a structured induction process for new heads and directors;
- Provision of CPD for heads and directors including, in October/November 2008, a programme delivered by an internationally renowned expert in higher education leadership and management, Professor Andrew Kakabadse (Cranfield College, U.K.);
- E-learning communication resource established for heads and directors;
- 'Leadership Know-How' toolkit piloted;
- Strategic leadership briefings hosted to enable senior university officers to advise heads and directors on critical strategic issues.

Outcomes

- Improved strategic decision-making and capacity for change-management in a competitive global environment;
- Enhanced operational capability in respect of goal-setting, resource-management, and motivation of staff;
- Mainstreaming of leadership support and development initiatives into the University Calendar.

TCD: Continuing Academic and Administrative Restructuring

Contact: Professor Linda Hogan, Vice-Provost / Chief Academic Officer, TCD.
Email: vp-cao@tcd.ie

Partners: UCC, NUIG

The overall aim of this project was to support the implementation of TCD's academic and administrative restructuring programme, as well as to share the College's experience of managing large-scale change in the higher education environment with other institutions.

Assessment Stage of e-Strategy

The purpose of this strand of the project was to prepare the ground for the commencement of a College-wide e-strategy project in TCD.

Outputs

- Identification of priorities and methodologies for the implementation of systems, such as financial information and student information systems.

Outcomes

- Initiation of process to assess the systems-needs of TCD as a restructured institution as a precursor to the implementation of a College-wide e-strategy.

Change Management Forum

The Change Management Forum was conceived to facilitate the exchange of experience, knowledge and expertise between partner institutions in respect of institutional restructuring to foster the adoption of common approaches to the resolution of specific issues.

Outputs

- Establishment of change management teams within each partner institution, and of a framework for inter-institutional collaboration on institutional restructuring;
- The development of comprehensive guidelines and procedures for the devolution of decision-making, budgets, and resources;
- The introduction of a revised committee and governance structure in TCD;
- March 2008: hosting of two workshops, 'Change Management and People' and 'The Edinburgh Experience'.

Outcomes

- Embedding of academic restructuring in TCD, and the development of appropriate management and governance arrangements;
- Enhancement of support-services for staff and students;
- Development of expertise in change management processes;
- Adoption of common approaches across partner institutions to institutional restructuring leading to greater consistency in the areas of graduate education, finances, and human resources;
- Greater consistency in academic governance structures across universities, facilitated through engagement with IUA structures.

Specialist Management and Development Support for Schools

The purpose of this strand was to develop financial, human resource, and information management in the newly formed schools; and to release academic staff from routine administration to advance the College's strategic priorities for teaching and research.

Outputs

- Appointment of financial and human resource specialists to provide support to schools;
- Restructuring of academic areas completed, and administrative and support services reorganised.

Outcomes

- New school structure supported in terms of academic and specialist administration;
- Academic staff relieved of routine administrative duties to pursue teaching and research activities;
- The provision of better support-structures for students and staff;
- Devolution of central decision-making and greater impetus for innovation at local level.

TCD: Restructuring of the Graduate Education Office

Contact: Professor Linda Hogan, Vice-Provost / Chief Academic Officer, TCD.
Email: vp-cao@tcd.ie

Partners: UCC, NUIG

The purpose of the 'Restructuring of the Graduate Education Office' project was to reorganise Trinity College's Graduate Education Office in order to provide improved support for academic departments and schools; to improve the quality of the graduate student experience; and to develop programme and module outcomes for TCD's postgraduate programme.

Outputs

- Revised organisational structure of TCD's Graduate Studies Office that is aligned with the College's new governance structures.
- Implementation of an online application system, the Postgraduate Application Centre, for taught and research postgraduate courses.
- Development of a framework for the delivery of an inter-institutional Ph.D. programme, 'Texts, Contexts, Cultures'.
- Delivery of a joint, structured Ph.D. programme by TCD & NUIG on 'Child and Youth Research'.
- Development of learning outcomes for postgraduate courses—work that was continued through the SIF 2-funded, DRHEA's 'Enhancement of Learning' project.
- Delivery of shared generic skills modules by partner institutions.

Outcomes

- Enhanced collaboration with partner institutions, as well as with other national networks for the enhancement of graduate education, including the IUA's Fourth-Level Network and the DRHEA's 'Graduate Education' consortium.
- The provision of more effective services for students and staff in TCD.
- Improved level of knowledge and expertise across staff in TCD's Graduate Studies Office.
- A more streamlined application system for postgraduate courses has increased the capacity of the office to deal with more applications.
- Enhanced data availability on taught postgraduate and research programmes.

UCC: Change Management

Data Warehouse

Contact: Mr. Barry O'Sullivan, Project Manager, Computer Centre, UCC.

Email: b.osullivan@ucc.ie

Partners: TCD, NUIG

This project supported the implementation of a data-warehouse and business-intelligence tool to support the standardisation and streamlining of management information within UCC, and to support the provision of data on key performance indicators (KPIs).

Outputs

- Implementation of business intelligence infrastructure that includes hardware, a database server, and software based on a Microstrategy tool-set;
- Development of a range of modules within the data warehouse system, including a Buildings and Estates Module, a Library Module, a Student Module, an HR Module, and a Research Data Module.

Outcomes

- The data-warehouse is now the primary mechanism for the delivery of statistical reports to the University;
- Streamlining of preparation of data reports in UCC;
- Provision to key UCC staff of a valuable resource for management information to support strategic decision-making, as well as day-to-day operations;
- Enhanced availability of information and data to users across UCC;
- Standardisation of data and metrics, and improvement in quality and accuracy of data collection and reporting.

Management Information Systems

Contact: Mr. Denis Sheehan, Project Manager, Finance Office, UCC.
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Partners: TCD, NUIG

The purpose of this project was to replace legacy financial accounting and management reporting systems with a modern integrated system covering all financial processes. The infrastructure of the existing systems was complex, resulting in duplication of effort and unnecessary manual labour in the processing and reporting of financial transactions. The resultant focus of the Finance Office on the processing of transactions militated against the provision of the business-support required by the University. The replacement of this system was to enhance the provision of management information and of costing capability to ensure greater efficiency and to assist the University in the implementation of the e-Government strategy. Processes within the scope of the project included:

- Financial accounting, reporting and compliance;

- Management accounting, reporting and analysis;
- Accounts payable (including on-line employee expenses);
- Procurement (including on-line requisitioning);
- Research project accounting;
- Capital project accounting.

Outputs

- The introduction of a fully configured accounting system that supports all of the financial activity of UCC and its subsidiary companies;
- The introduction of the Agresso financial management system (<http://www.ucc.ie/en/agresso/>) to support a wide range of accounting processes;
- The integration of the Agresso system with other software packages (for human resources and student fees) to eliminate need for movement of information between systems and duplication of record-keeping;
- UCC presentations at Agresso user-group meetings, annual conference, and special interest group meetings;
- Hosting of site visits from other institutions on Agresso.

Outcomes

- UCC's Finance Office is now focused on 'adding value' to UCC as a business that is responsive to change;
- Financial information is processed efficiently and accurately;
- The administrative burden of the University's financial operations has been reduced;
- Procurement processes have been significantly enhanced with full electronic procurement capability with major suppliers established.

Team and Process Mapping

Partners: TCD, NUIG

This project supported the administrative and academic restructuring of UCC.

Outputs

- Academic and administrative restructuring of UCC;
- A training-needs analysis for UCC's senior management team was undertaken;
- A restructuring task-force was established comprising senior University officers;
- International site-visits were undertaken to benchmark UCC's restructuring process.

Outcomes

- More effective governance and operations within UCC;
- Enhancement of communication and collaboration within UCC and with partner institutions in respect of governance and decision-making, business-process mapping, strategic research analysis, and employee relations;
- Enhancement of management skills within UCC.

UCC: Enabling Fourth-Level Ireland

Contact: Professor Alan Kelly, Dean of Graduate Studies, UCC.
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Generic Skills Training

Partners: TCD, NUIG

This project aimed to advance the implementation of the structured Ph.D. model developed for Irish higher education through the development and roll-out, on a collaborative, inter-institutional basis, of modules for generic and discipline-specific skills training for postgraduate research students.

Outputs

- Development of the following six modules for postgraduate research students:
 - Research Methods in the Life Sciences;
 - Teaching and Learning;
 - Commercialisation and Technology-Transfer;
 - Research Ethics;
 - Statistics and Data Analysis;
 - Information Literacy;
- Development and delivery of innovative curricula in each of these areas;
- Piloting of modules in 2008, and mainstreaming of modules thereafter;
- Development of teaching materials for the delivery of these modules, including an online literacy training site at www.informationliteracy.ie;
- Production of publications to support postgraduate students, including:
 - *Communicating Research: Understanding the Knowledge-Transfer Opportunities* (<http://www.nuigalway.ie/graduatestudies/documents/ktbooklet.pdf>)
 - *In At the Deep End: Postgraduate Students' Experiences of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*;
 - A chapter in an Elsevier e-book on research ethics for graduate students.

Outcomes

- Advancement of the development of structured Ph.D.s in the three partner institutions;
- Development of resources for graduate education;
- Development of innovative strategies for delivery of inter-institutional graduate training programmes;
- Development of mechanisms for evaluation of inter-institutional graduate programmes;
- Enhancement of graduate learning experience.

Restructuring of Graduate Studies Office

Partners: TCD, NUIG

This project supported the restructuring of the graduate studies offices in the partner institutions to support the enhancement of the graduate student experience.

Outputs

- Establishment of UCC's Graduate Studies Office;
- Appointment of the Head of the Graduate Studies Office as a key strategic manager to oversee the reform of service-delivery;
- Development of web-based resources to support students and staff;
- Development of quick guides to policies and procedures for students and supervisors, of a student newsletter (e.g. *The Write-Up*), and of postgraduate student handbooks and materials for new students;
- Hosting of events on graduate education, including staff workshops and briefing sessions, student induction sessions, and Doctoral Research Showcase in 2010;
- Modularisation of all postgraduate programmes.

Outcomes

- Improvement in information provision to graduates;
- The delivery of a more user-friendly service to graduates;
- Greater efficiency and transparency in the processing of applications to the Graduate Studies Office;
- Greater involvement in national developments in graduate education;
- Enhancement of the UCC graduate student experience.

UCC: National Academy for Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning (NAIRTL)

<http://www.nairtl.ie/>

Contact: Vice-President for Teaching and Learning, UCC.
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Partners: NUIG, TCD, CIT, WIT

The National Academy for Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning (NAIRTL) promotes innovation, supports development, and sustains good practice that links research with teaching and learning across the higher education sector. National collaborative working groups have advanced many of the NAIRTL's objectives including the development of a national framework for the professional development of supervisors of postgraduate students and the implementation of Bologna Action Lines.

Through investigation, developing good practice and dissemination, NAIRTL promotes, supports and rewards the integration of research, teaching and learning. More than 70 events including conferences, seminars and workshops have been organised in HEIs nationally through which good practice in integrating research, teaching and learning has been developed and shared. The National Academy has designed, produced and widely disseminated a range of resources, including eleven publications, which serve to enhance the capacity of teachers to integrate research and teaching. As a result, undergraduate and postgraduate students nationally are now benefiting from an enhancement in teaching quality.

NAIRTL has disbursed more than 160 grants to individuals and groups from over 17 HEIs for projects that are serving to enhance the student-learning experience. The outputs of these projects include the creation of communities of practice, course materials, interactive software, educational programmes, workshops, websites, handbooks, e-learning courses, public lectures, conference papers, training programmes, seminars, and journal papers, all of which enhance teaching and learning in higher education.

Furthermore NAIRTL has developed and successfully implemented National Awards for Excellence in Teaching, which recognise and reward teachers who have been successful in uniting their dual roles as teacher and researcher. These Awards have made an important contribution to raising the profile of teaching in Irish higher education.

Outputs

- The NAIRTL National Grants Initiative has supported more than 160 innovative projects in the integration of research, teaching, and learning;

- Outputs of the projects supported by the NAIRTL National Grants Initiative include publications, conference papers, poster presentations, online learning resources, programmes and modules, and academic professional development activities (workshops, seminars and symposia);
- Establishment of National Awards for Excellence in Teaching in 2008, and delivery of the Awards on an annual basis thereafter;
- Establishment of a Supervisor Support Working Group and of a Bologna Working Group;
- Provision of academic professional development opportunities, such as conferences, seminars and workshops, to the Irish higher education community;
- Development of a curriculum framework for the development of academic supervisory skills;
- Hosting of symposia and workshops on the Bologna Process;
- Establishment of NAIRTL website;
- International distribution of NAIRTL publications;
- Development of Continuing Academic Practice Education (CAPE) initiative— a mechanism for formally recording and recognising the CPD activities undertaken by academic staff nationwide through the award of credits in academic practice.

Outcomes

- Enhancement of the student learning experience at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, with positive impact on student satisfaction and retention;
- Greater integration of teaching and research;
- Adoption of new approaches to teaching, such as peer-assisted learning, and development of online learning;
- Improved learning outcomes (e.g. development of generic competences by students);
- Capacity-building of institutions for teaching and research through the sharing of expertise and resources; the development and accreditation of new modules and CPD programmes; and the development of international partnerships and networks through participation in NAIRTL initiatives;
- Efficiency savings through collaborative endeavour;
- Raised awareness of the importance of teaching in higher education, and of its parity of esteem with research;
- Advancement of the implementation of the Bologna Process.

UCD: HR Institutional Leadership

Contact: Ms. Iseult Ó Síocháin, SIF Programme Manager, UCD Office of the Registrar and Deputy President
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Partners: None

This project sought to improve leadership capacity within UCD in order to embed and sustain the sweeping changes that have occurred in recent years, and to enhance the implementation of UCD's strategy. The project facilitated the delivery of a comprehensive Leadership Development Programme, designed and delivered in collaboration with Cranfield University, for senior managers and approximately 150 other staff across UCD. Following on from the success of the Programme, a number of additional initiatives were also rolled-out across UCD.

Outputs

- Roll-out of the Leadership Development Programme;
- Coaching provided for the senior management of the institution;
- Establishment of an Academic Mentoring Committee in each of UCD's five Colleges;
- Internal Coaching Panel established, which delivered 300+ hours of individual coaching;
- Four annual Heads of School Development Programmes successfully run;
- 360 and emotional intelligence feedback for Academic Leaders introduced on a pilot basis;
- Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) profiling established as an internal service;
- Delivery of team-building sessions that utilise MBTI profiling;
- Establishment of dedicated website to support the Academic Mentoring Initiative.

Outcomes

- Leadership has higher profile in UCD: President now champions coaching for management;
- More requests for strategic planning sessions at school / unit-level;
- More requests for individual coaching for performance, career, and general management purposes;
- Head of School Development Programme is well-established as conduit through which to communicate with Head of School community.

UCD: Stimulating Innovative Teaching

<http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/>

Contact: Ms. Sinead O'Donovan, SIF Programme Manager, UCD Office of the Registrar and Deputy President
Email: sinead.odonovan@ucd.ie

Partners: None

This project aimed to provide a framework for the development of research-informed teaching practice and innovation to enhance teaching quality and to underpin the development of institutional policy and strategy in teaching and learning.

Outputs

- UCD Fellowships in Teaching and Academic Development were established in May 2007 to support the development of academic leadership and educational solutions to strategic challenges at institutional level. (See <http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/fellows/>.) Eighteen teaching fellows have been appointed to date across a broad spectrum of disciplines, producing numerous publications and conference / seminar presentations.
- Conferences hosted:
 - Teaching & Learning Conference, UCD, December 2007;
 - International Conference on Engaging Pedagogy (ICEP), UCD, 3rd September 2009 (<http://icep.ie/>);
 - Conference on Research–Teaching Linkages (October 2009);
 - DRHEA Practice Exchange Programme: ‘Celebrating Excellence in Teaching and Learning in the DHREA’ (May 2010).
- Measures to enhance first-year experience:
 - Establishment of a standardised survey for first-year students on entry;
 - Development of a more academically-focused orientation programme for incoming students;
 - Development and delivery of study-skills module;
 - Production of electives guides for students & staff: *Choosing Your Electives: A Brief Guide for Undergraduate Students & Facilitating the Learning of Non-Programme Elective Students: For Staff*.
- Greater student volunteering across UCD:
 - Promotion of Centre for Service Learning, Community Engagement & Volunteering (CSLCEV) during 2009 Freshers’ Week;
 - Partnership between Dún Laoghaire–Rathdown Volunteer Centre and UCD students on M.Sc. in Management Consultancy facilitated by CSLCEV;
 - Participation of CSLCEV in Dún Laoghaire–Rathdown Social Inclusion Week (12th–17th October 2009)
 - CSLCEV gave talk, ‘Working in the Community and Voluntary Sector’ as part of ‘Careers Week’ (October 2009);
 - ROVE (Recognition of Voluntary Engagement) Award presentation ceremony took place in April 2009, at which 40 students recognised for voluntary activities.

Outcomes

- Development of a strong and vibrant institutional teaching and learning community in UCD, spearheaded by the Teaching Fellows;

- Innovative teaching approaches have been implemented across 35% of Schools in UCD;
- Policy & practice at institutional level has been informed by evidence-based research in teaching and learning in two priority areas: the first-year experience and student engagement;
- Greater student engagement and volunteering across UCD.

UCD: Transforming Student Learning

Contact: Ms. Iseult Ó Síocháin, SIF Programme Manager, UCD Office of the Registrar and Deputy President
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Partners: None

The 'Transforming Student Learning' project aimed to embed enquiry and problem-based learning (EPBL), information literacy and critical thinking (ILCT) skills into the curriculum, with the support of blended learning and electronic-resource delivery.

Outputs

- Thirty-eight new EPBL modules were developed and continue to be delivered across numerous programmes, with combined student capacity of 1900;
- 7 new interdisciplinary general elective modules were developed and continue to be delivered with combined student capacity of 1300;
- Publication of a text-book on EPBL: Terry Barrett and Sarah Moore (eds.), *New Approaches to Problem-Based Learning: Revitalising Your Practice in Higher Education* (New York: Routledge, 2010) including chapters from UCD contributors.
- Development and delivery of accredited modules in PBL as part of UCD's Graduate Diploma in University Teaching: 'Designing and Developing Curriculum for HE' (15 ECTS); 'Problem-Based Learning in HE' (15 ECTS); and Module & Programme Design (7.5 ECTS). Three cohorts of students (40 academic staff in total) from UCD & the DRHEA have completed the PBL module over the past 3 years;
- Numerous PBL APD workshops were held for staff designing and teaching PBL modules;
- Publication of *A Practitioner's Guide to Enquiry and Problem-Based Learning* (2010), based on case studies derived from the project.
- 2009: UCD hosted the FACiLiTATE conference, as well as contributing to the Network's Steering Committee membership.

Outcomes

- Embedding and mainstreaming of EPBL and ILCT across UCD programmes, thereby nurturing the acquisition of key graduate competencies;

- New modules developed have been characterised by innovative curriculum design with a learner-centred focus;
- Introduction of general elective modules as part of realisation of UCD's vision of liberal education. The curriculum design of these modules has been innovative, supporting student engagement and the development of key transferable skills.
- Enhanced provision of APD and teaching resources for UCD & DRHEA staff has enhanced teaching quality across UCD;
- Emergence of new collaborations, including involvement of librarians in module design and delivery; the contribution of educational technologists to design and presentation of problems utilising rich-media; and the increased involvement of tutors in module delivery;
- Transformation of an old computer lab into a PBL group-work teaching space, to be randomly assigned as part of UCD's teaching space allocation in order to encourage academic staff to include group-work in their programme delivery;
- Dissemination of project outcomes through UCD T&L website has incentivised innovation in teaching.

UCD: Widening Participation: New Era

Contact: Ms. Fiona Sweeney, UCD Access Centre, UCD.
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Partners: None

This project entailed a retrospective evaluation of UCD's New ERA Access Initiative, which aims to encourage and facilitate increased participation in higher education by students who, for a variety of economic or social reasons are under-represented in university (see <http://www.ucd.ie/geary/research/education/>). The effectiveness of the programme was evaluated across three domains:

1. increased access from disadvantaged schools;
2. retention rates;
3. overall examination performance.

The evaluation resulted in the publication of a report by the Geary Institute, *Evaluating the Impact of the UCD New ERA Widening Participation Initiative* (2009), which concluded that the programme is more effective for students achieving a high-points score in the Leaving Certificate examination. It also found clear benefits for students who use academic supports after initially failing an examination, and recommended the implementation of an 'early warning system' to alert the university to those students at risk of failing or withdrawing.

In response to the findings of the report, the project facilitated the establishment of UCD's New ERA Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) Scheme. This provides new entrants

who achieved fewer than 400 points in the Leaving Certificate examination with a New ERA peer tutor (an older New ERA student) whom they meet weekly in small groups based on their discipline.

Outputs

- Publication of *Evaluating the Impact of the UCD New ERA Widening Participation Initiative* (Geary Institute, 2009);
- 3rd December 2009: UCD hosted 1-day conference to launch *Evaluating the Impact of the UCD New ERA Widening Participation Initiative* report.
- Establishment of the Peer-Assisted Learning (PAL) project, initially to support new entrants attaining fewer than 400 points in the Leaving Certificate examination, and subsequently extended to other students. 60 stage-1 students received support through PAL.
- Training of staff and students as PAL leaders, and the development of a resource pack for this purpose.
- Publication of the Peer-Assisted Learning Review 2010–2011.

Outcomes

- Establishment of the Peer-Assisted Learning (PAL) project was an outcome of the publication of the Evaluation report;
- UCD is a member of the UK's PASS(PAL) National Network (managed by the University of Manchester);
- Greater confidence and self-motivation amongst students participating in the PAL scheme (as learners and as leaders);
- Improved organisational planning and time-management among PAL leaders.

UCD: Widening Participation: Part-Time Provision

Contact: Ms. Iseult Ó Síocháin, SIF Programme Manager, UCD Office of the Registrar and Deputy President
Email: iseult.osiochain@ucd.ie

Partners: None

The initial objective of this project was to undertake a 'Part-Time Modular Feasibility Study' within UCD. The purpose of this study was to gather evidence on options for part-time study by adult learners with a view to increasing the number of mature students participating in undergraduate study in UCD. The recommendations from this project subsequently informed the review of progression pathways undertaken as part of the DRHEA's Widening Participation project, to which UCD committed the remainder of its funding from this project. The progression pathways review maps the progression opportunities for adult learners within the Dublin region with a view to providing students with a complete picture of the access, transfer, and

progression routes available, as well as identifying areas of good practice and opportunities for further development.

Outputs

- Mapping of part-time provision, access routes, barriers to widening access, and innovative practice across DRHEA;
- Access routes established in DRHEA institutions;
- Outputs of research were disseminated at UCD event on 9th June 2011 with almost 400 attendees.

Outcomes

- Collaboration across DRHEA to attracting and retaining adult learners;
- Model for defining and describing access routes established.

UL: Expansion and Development of Postgraduate Education

Contact: Graduate School, University of Limerick
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Partners: None

This project aimed to expand and develop postgraduate education through the newly established UL Graduate School. It entailed physical and soft infrastructural development (including software development for application forms and for the effective management of the postgraduate research student population); the development and delivery of structured Ph.D.s. and of generic and transferable skills modules; and the development of regulations to support structured Ph.D.s.

Outputs

- Development of UL's graduate school website, and of promotional material for postgraduate programmes;
- Development of online application and enrolment processing for all postgraduates in UL;
- Provision of generic skills training for postgraduates;
- Agreement between UL and partner institutions in China on fee structure for international students;
- Development of postgraduate regulations within UL, and of external processes to facilitate joint awards;
- Development of UL's postgraduate careers service.

Outcomes

- 20% increase in taught postgraduate applications to UL since 2006;

- Development of links with graduate schools external to the Shannon Consortium;
- Improved monitoring of the progression of research postgraduates incorporated into the University's student records system;
- Greater employability of research postgraduates;
- Involvement of UL Graduate School in the development of national postgraduate policy.

UL: Individualised Digital Education Advisory System

Contact: Professor Eamonn Murphy, Project Leader, UL
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Partners: LIT, ITT, CIT, DKIT, NUIG

The purpose of the Individualised Digital Advisory System (IDEAS) project was to help prospective higher education students to identify modules and programmes relevant to their needs through the development of online support systems.

Outputs

- Development of an online portal enabling prospective students to search and apply for higher education programmes and comprising:
 - a searchable repository of programmes available across the higher education sector;
 - an application and student-profile management systems;
 - a personalised guidance system through which course recommendations are made to students' on the basis of their profiles.
- The IDEAS portal provided the infrastructure for the BlueBrick.ie portal established by the IOTI under the SIF 2-funded 'Supported Flexible Learning' project.

Outcomes

- Through the establishment of the BlueBrick.ie portal in 2009, the IDEAS portal was customised and deployed to promote and widen access to programmes offered on a flexible basis across the institute of technology sector.
- The IDEAS consortium undertook a feasibility study to ascertain the potential for the BlueBrick portal to be extended to cover the university sector;
- The IDEAS consortium obtained a grant from Enterprise Ireland to undertake a market-research and validation exercise to investigate additional commercial applications of the IDEAS technology.

UL: Shannon Consortium Strand 1—Supporting Access and Lifelong Learning

<http://www3.ul.ie/shannonconsortium/>

Partners: ITT, LIT, MIC

The overarching aim of Strand 1 of the Shannon Consortium's SIF 1-funded work has been to support access to higher education from under-represented groups.

Strand 1 A (i) Mature Student Peer-Mentoring Programme

This project aims to help mature first-year, full-time undergraduates with their transition into higher education by linking them with other mature students and a mentor to create a social network. The programme, which was rolled out in all of the partner institutions in the Shannon Consortium, thereby aims to improve the retention and progression rates of mature students in the region.

Outputs

- Mentor coordinator recruited;
- Mentor training programme developed & mentors trained;
- Mentees registered;
- Promotional material developed;
- Peer-mentor guide and mentor diary developed;
- Article on peer-mentoring published in UL student newspaper;
- UL paper on mature students' experience of mentoring delivered at European First-Year Experience Conference;
- President's award ceremony for mentors hosted in LIT.

Outcomes

- Development of 'best practice' model for mature student peer-mentoring;
- Development of new 'Headstart' IT programme;
- Establishment of a channel for feedback from mature students on their transition into HE;
- Regional mentor network developed as conduit through which to share good practice;
- Database for storage of information on mentors and mentees established;
- Awareness of peer-mentoring raised.

Strand 1 A (ii) Student Ambassador Programme

The Student Ambassador Programme seeks to raise the aspirations of second-level students in respect of progression to higher education, and to support them in their transition to university, through mentoring of prospective students by current students from socio-economically under-represented backgrounds, as well as through visits by these student 'Ambassadors' to schools. The pilot programme was

successfully rolled out in UL in 2008, and then mainstreamed across the partner institutions in the Shannon Consortium in 2009 and 2010.

Outputs

- Student Ambassador coordinator recruited;
- Ambassador training programme developed;
- Development of promotional material;
- DVD developed for use in visits to schools;
- Student Ambassadors address pupils in schools and at Paul Partnership Second-Level Development Day;
- UL hosted award ceremony for Shannon Consortium Ambassadors;
- Mentor hand-book and diary created;
- Peer-mentoring programme for first-year students rolled out in UL.

Outcomes

- Enhancement of support for prospective students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Strand 1 A (iii): Family–School–Community Educational Partnership Project

The FSCEP project was an ethnographic educational research intervention which sought to help children in DEIS schools and schools in CLÁR areas by proactively supporting schools, families and communities to develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours to work together in partnership to meet their children's learning needs. A range of stakeholders, including voluntary and statutory agencies, teachers, children, families, community members, as well as five primary schools, were involved in the project, which was led by the Transforming Education through Dialogue (TED) Project, Curriculum Development Unit, Mary Immaculate College. The project informed the development of the OSCAILT network—a partnership initiative between the DES, MIC and 22 DEIS band 1 schools.

Outputs

- Appointment of a Partnership Development Coordinator for duration of project, and two, part-time Project Officers (in Limerick city and West Clare) for first two years of project;
- Participation of 5 schools in the project (3 in Limerick city and 2 in West Clare);
- Delivery of a range of cross-curriculum activities (in literacy, numeracy, sports, arts, and environmental and intergenerational learning) within each school community;
- Delivery of the 'Maths for Fun' programme;
- Development of research tools, and communication and management processes, to facilitate the engagement of all stakeholders in the enhancement of the learning environment in schools;

- Development of strategic partnerships between stakeholders (e.g. schools, families, and community organisations);
- Data collection and analysis on project outcomes, published in final project report;
- External evaluation of project undertaken;
- MIC team hosted 'Celebrating Partnership' days for participants, annual workshops, and an annual showcase of children's performances
- Summer camps held for children in participating schools;
- Dissemination of project outcomes through presentations at conferences and seminars, and publications.

Outcomes

- Enhancement of pupils' skills;
- Increased motivation of students in the classroom;
- Enhancement of parents' understanding of the learning process;
- Increased parental involvement in schools and in children's learning outside of school;
- Increased resources, equipment and materials in all schools, including books, musical instruments, gardening equipment, and puppets;
- Improved stakeholder relationships;
- Enhancement of profile of participating schools in their local communities;
- Adoption of innovative approaches to teaching and learning within schools;
- Enhanced self-esteem of participants in programme;
- Sharing of good practice emergent from project via a website, newsletters, 'Celebrating Partnership' days, meetings, seminars, exhibitions and performances by children.

Strand 1 A (iv) Traveller Initiatives

Through this project, the Shannon Consortium engaged with traveller children through a range of educational outreach initiatives, including homework clubs, tutoring, and mentoring, to enhance their educational development. Access routes into higher education for members of the traveller and refugee communities were also developed. As a sub-project within the programme, the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance at UL established a Certificate in Music and Dance, delivered to travellers, mature students, and students from lower socio-economic backgrounds through a flexible, blended learning approach.

Outputs

- Strategic Framework for Traveller Education produced;
- Contribution made to Limerick County Interagency Strategic Plan 2011–2015;
- Delivery of a range of activities for traveller children through homework clubs;
- Delivery of credit-earning courses for traveller adults in UL in educational experience, conflict resolution, community relations, and leadership training;

- Creation of a five-member group to advise UL on access for travellers;
- Creation of women's groups;
- Design and delivery of a Certificate in Music and Dance with blended learning by the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance in UL, building on their wide-ranging community outreach programmes.

Outcomes

- Rapport built up between Shannon Consortium institutions and traveller community in Limerick city and vicinity;
- Improved relations between travellers and local agencies;
- Improved primary school attendance by traveller children in region;
- HEI membership on steering committee of Limerick County Interagency Group for Traveller Services formalised;
- Establishment of progression mechanisms in 14 schools (9 primary & 5 post-primary);
- Improved access mechanisms into higher education for travellers;
- Greater cultural awareness among teachers of learning needs of travellers;
- Up-skilling of traveller adults;
- Implementation of new classroom structures that successfully engage traveller children.

Strand 1: B: Downtown Centre

<http://www.downtowncentre.ie/>

Contact: Ms. Rhona McCormack, Project Manager, Downtown Centre, UL
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The Downtown Centre is an access, guidance, support and information centre for adults who are seeking to progress into, or return to, higher education. It is a collaborative initiative of the Shannon Consortium partners, based in Limerick city, which provides support services and programmes which aim to increase access for adults to higher education, particularly within the mid-west region. Among the services provided are a one-year access programme to higher education; an educational guidance service which offers information, advice and guidance on any aspect of applying to higher education; and 'Return to Learning' skills seminars and information evenings. The services offered by the Downtown Centre are designed to encourage adult learners to consider higher education as an attainable goal, and to create new pathways into higher education for these, and other under-represented learner cohorts.

Outputs

- Development and joint delivery of a Certificate in General Studies as a recognised foundation programme for entrance to Shannon Consortium institution courses. Over the 3-year duration of the project, 114 students

- commenced this course through the Downtown Centre, 71 of whom graduated, and 66 of whom progressed into higher education on completion.
- Over the 3-year duration of the project, 700 clients attended the Downtown Centre Guidance Service, the majority of whom received one-to-one guidance.
 - Delivery of 55 'Return to Learning' workshops, attended by a total of 711 individuals over three years.
 - The Downtown Centre funded a six-week 'Making Choices Making Changes' programme coordinated by Limerick Women's Network. A total of 24 women participated in this personal development programme over two years.
 - Publication of journal articles, and presentations at conferences, on project;
 - June 2010: international conference on Regeneration and Education hosted by UL;
 - Participation in AONTAS Adult Learners' Festival 2008, 2009 & 2010, and in other outreach and promotional activities;
 - Hosting of a seminar on RPL policies in Shannon Consortium for staff in higher education institutions and external agencies in the region.

Outcomes

- Increase in number of students progressing to Shannon Consortium institutions via an alternative entry route;
- Greater confidence among adult learners returning to higher education;
- Improved information and advisory services for prospective adult students;
- Enhanced awareness of opportunities for adults in higher education in the region;
- Downtown Centre has become an approved provider of pre-entry, higher education guidance under the European Globalisation Fund (EGF);
- Memoranda of Agreement between Shannon Consortium partners and VECs are in place for delivery of a FETAC level 5 Certificate in General Studies in Limerick and Ennis;
- Enhancement of links between higher education institutions in Limerick and local community and statutory organisations;
- Downtown Centre Educational Guidance Service is an active member of the Limerick City Adult Guidance Partnership (LAGP);
- Downtown Centre works in partnership with Regional Learning Centres in Ennis and Killarney;
- Foundations laid for development of regional strategy on access to higher education;
- February 2010: Downtown Centre was awarded the AONTAS local Munster Award at the STAR (Showcasing Teamwork, Awarding Recognition) Awards Ceremony for Adult Learning Projects in Dublin.

Strand 1: C: Innovative Interventions to Increase Inclusion and Acceptance of People with Disabilities

This project aimed to increase the participation rates of students with disabilities in higher education through the use of assistive technologies; to improve the employability and support services for graduates with disabilities; and to develop best practice in providing supported employment and training for graduates with a disability using the network of collaborating institutions as employers. The core activity of the project centred on the development of an Assistive Technology Assessment Centre (ATAC), to be sustained through shared-service agreements with partner institutions and potentially other HEIs, as well as a Regional Documentation Centre for the Consortium. A sub-project entitled 'Workstart' was piloted in UL during the first year of the project, the purpose of which was to establish a training and development programme for graduates with disabilities.

Outputs

- The AT database and lab in the ATAC centre in UL was set up and advertised locally and regionally;
- Delivery of staff AT training programmes;
- Attendance at partner institution open days and 'Better Options' events;
- Services of ATAC contracted to partner HEIs;
- Students trained in AT;
- Presentations, training, loaning services, and support on AT given by ATAC coordinator to local and national disability groups and charities, and in primary and secondary schools in the region;
- Establishment and expansion of a Regional Documentation Centre with the acquisition of alternative format software (Dophin's EasyConverter and Duxbury's Braille Translation software) facilitating talking tactile maps for the visually impaired, and closed captioning on videos for the hearing impaired.
- Over 3 years, 9 books converted to alternative formats;
- Multi-disciplinary 'Workstart' team established and work-placements provided in institutions for 2 graduates with disabilities. Disability awareness training provided for co-workers of graduates.
- Disability-proofed recruitment processes developed by IT Tralee, LIT, and UL to promote the employment of graduates with disabilities;
- Compilation of a 'Workstart' manual—a set of guidelines on the implementation of workstart programmes by HEIs.

Outcomes

- All Shannon Consortium institutions have staff members trained in AT;
- Over 40 students trained in assistive technologies;
- Enhancement of facilities and materials for students with disabilities;
- January 2009: the ATAC became a member of TRY-IT.ie—a national loan database in assistive technology;

- Greater awareness of disabilities, and improved provision for employees with disabilities, in partner institutions.

UL: Shannon Consortium Strand 2—A Regional Approach to Outstanding Teaching, Learning and Learner Support

Partners: LIT, ITT

This strand, designed to promote excellence in teaching and learning at undergraduate and postgraduate level across Shannon region, comprised six inter-related projects.

Strand 2 A: Regional Writing Centre

[http://www2.ul.ie/web/WWW/Services/Centre for Teaching %26 Learning/The Writing Centre/ABOUT THE WRITING CENTRE](http://www2.ul.ie/web/WWW/Services/Centre%20for%20Teaching%20Learning/TheWritingCentre/ABOUT%20THE%20WRITING%20CENTRE)

Contact: Mr. Lawrence Cleary and Dr. Íde O’Sullivan, Research Officers, UL
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Drawing on ‘best practice’ in higher education in America, the U.K., and Australia, and housed by UL, the Writing Centre—the first of its kind in Ireland—provides a coordinated and systematic approach to the teaching and support of academic writing in the region. The Writing Centre has developed and facilitated writing activities for students and faculty, creating and sustaining a discourse on writing and its importance, and supporting interdisciplinary action-research projects to foster a writing-based curricula across disciplines. These activities aim to improve student retention rates, to support lifelong learning, and to increase the publication output of postgraduates and staff.

Outputs

- The establishment of the Regional Writing Centre, UL;
- Audit of writing support and survey of staff and student attitudes to academic writing across Shannon Consortium undertaken, resulting in the publication of a *Summary Report for Shannon Consortium Writing Needs* (Statistical Consulting Unit, UL, 2008);
- Publication by Writing Centre staff of action-research contributing to the body of scholarship on academic writing and the teaching of writing;
- The delivery of 75 writing-enhancement programmes, attended by a total of 11,111 participants from across the region;
- The creation and delivery of core writing modules to more than 700 students (in ‘Academic Literacies’, ‘Peer-Tutoring in Academic Writing’, ‘Thesis Writing’, ‘Access Introduction to University Programme’, ‘Specialist Diploma: Research Planning and Preparation’, and ‘Specialist Diploma: Scholarly Presentation and Dialogue in Research and Academic Writing’);

- Design and delivery of a writing skills module in UL's Access Office's Transition to University course, which seeks to foster students' assimilation into academic culture through exploration of oral and written debate on contentious issues;
- APD provision in writing for publication.

Outcomes

- Enhancement of the transferable skills of students across disciplines;
- Enhancement of pedagogical practice across the region;
- Improvements in student retention across the region;
- Improvements in teacher satisfaction ratings;
- Enhanced support for literacy skills, and enhanced writing-development teaching strategies and competencies.

Strand 2 B: Regional Learning Styles, Diagnostics and Peer-Support

Contact: Dr. Niamh Rushe, Manager, Centre for Educational Development (CED), IT Tralee
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Using the Brent and Silverman model of learning styles as a diagnostic tool, this project entailed the statistical analysis of the learning-style preferences of first-year students across partner HEIs in orientation week over a three-year period, as well as those of secondary-level students. The results of the analyses were widely circulated and informed the provision of CPD.

Outputs

- Establishment of an online learning-styles diagnostic tool;
- Reports on students' learning styles for 3 academic years are now available, including year-or-year comparison of learning styles in the 2009 report;
- Follow-up group and individual sessions for staff and students provided.

Outcomes

- Enhanced awareness of learning styles among students and staff;
- Provision of evidence-base for further research on learning styles and enhancement of teaching within Irish education.

Strand 2 C: Regional Centre for Excellence in Mathematics Teaching and Learning

Contact: Professor John O'Donoghue, Professor of Mathematics Education, UL
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The purpose of this project was to establish a regional centre of excellence in mathematics teaching and learning, with a presence in each partner institution, in

order to improve the mathematical proficiency of students in secondary and tertiary education and to provide high-quality pedagogical materials for teachers of mathematics via the web and in print.

Outputs

- Establishment of a centre within UL, with a designated staff member in each partner HEI;
- Development of CEMTL website, and web and print resources for teachers and students, including a resource pack for teaching geometry in the Junior Certificate, resources to aid the transition from secondary to higher education, resources for mature students, and training booklets and a programme in GeoGebra—mathematics software for learning and teaching;
- Development and delivery of peer-assisted learning programme in IT Tralee;
- APD provision:
 - Development and delivery of workshops for mathematics teachers (at secondary and tertiary levels) throughout the region;
 - Five lectures on ‘Everyday Maths’ offered at UL for pre-service and in-service teachers;;
 - Provision of training in GeoGebra software for mathematics teachers.

Outcomes

- Expertise, experience, capacity and resources in mathematics learner support in partner institutions;
- An inter-institutional collaborative framework to support mathematics education;
- Enhanced support for students negotiating the transition between secondary and tertiary education;
- Platform for the SIF 2-funded NCE-MSTL established.

Strand 2 D: Regional Centre for Science Teaching and Learning

Contact: Dr. George McClelland, Centre for Science, Director, UL.
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Aiming to provide learner-support for science students in the region, the Regional Centre for Science Teaching and Learning aims to provide training for teachers and support for students in the sciences in partner institutions, utilising innovative pedagogies such as peer-assisted learning; and to expand the mentor teacher training programmes across the Shannon Consortium.

Outputs

- Provision of learner support to students across the Shannon Consortium;
- Delivery of staff training programmes;

- Development and implementation of a renewed Mentor Teacher Programme;
- June 2009: Science Teacher Mentoring Summer School held in UL and attended by 8 teachers;
- Organisation and delivery of Primary Science Evenings in the Tipperary Institute, Thurles, and in the Limerick Education Centre, attended by a total of 44 primary teachers;
- Design and delivery throughout 2008 and 2009 of programme of support and innovation for teachers and student-teachers of primary science;
- Teacher training in student-centred learner support made available to all partners.

Outcomes

- Improved proficiency of science teachers;
- Quality-enhancement of the student learning experience in partner institutions and schools throughout the region;
- Platform for the SIF 2-funded NCE-MSTL established.

Strand 2 E: Regional Centre for Language Learning

The Regional Language Centre aimed to enhance students' experience of language-learning by providing dedicated support across the Shannon Consortium.

Outputs

- Provision of individual advisory sessions for students with specifically trained staff;
- Provision of learning skills workshops;
- Provision of student-led discussion groups and language-exchange meetings with international students;
- Provision of bi-annual training sessions on new technologies in language-learning;
- March 2008: hosting of language learning and technology symposium for language staff in Shannon Consortium;
- Creation of a bank of support material in 6 languages;
- 24/7 access to language learning resources with the launch of the Regional Virtual Learning Environment, open to all language students and staff in the Consortium;
- Production of research papers and publications on work of the Centre;
- Creation of a language-teaching staff network.

Outcomes

- Enhanced support for students of languages;
- Enhancement of the learning experience of students of languages;
- Creation of language-learning communities;

- Increased retention of first-year students.

Strand 2 F: Enhancing Teaching Excellence in Higher Education

Contact: Dr. Mary Fitzpatrick, Regional Teaching and Learning Advocate, UL.
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This project aimed to develop a regional award process for the valorisation of teaching excellence in higher education in the region in order to incentivise and reward high-quality teaching practice; to encourage the participation of staff in APD; and to enhance internal institutional approaches to identifying, supporting, and recognising effective teachers who provide an outstanding learning experience.

Outputs

- Establishment of a regional award for teaching excellence;
- Appointment of Teaching and Learning Advocates to provide on-going feedback and guidance to applicants to regional teaching awards across the Shannon Consortium;
- 28th April 2007: UL hosted the inaugural regional teaching awards ceremony;
- Staff development:
 - Overall a total of 410 faculty members across the Consortium engaged in portfolio development and reflection;
 - Overall a total of 561 faculty attended 14 regional teaching-enhancement workshops / seminars on topics such as peer-assisted learning, teaching effectiveness, reflective practice and portfolio development, problem-based learning, feedback, and assessment;
 - Hosting of 'Conversations in the Consortium' series of discussion fora for the presentation and exchange of ideas between partner institutions in each semester;
 - Development and delivery of a new NFQ level 9 Specialist Diploma in Teaching, Learning and Scholarship offered in UL on a flexible basis to doctoral students and early-career academics;
 - Development and delivery of a module on 'Practice and Reflection' (10 ECTS) in LIT;
 - Hosting of two half-day workshops in UL in April 2010: 'Motivating Students Through Feedback' and 'Using Positive Psychology of Teaching', with 23 participants in attendance from across the Shannon Consortium;
 - Hosting of a two-day workshop on 'Problem-Based Learning' in UL in April 2010, attended by 15 faculty members from across the Shannon Consortium;
- Establishment of a peer-observation network.

Outcomes

- Increase in discourse on teaching, learning and reflection across the Shannon Consortium;

- Enhancement of teaching quality across Consortium;
- Greater innovation in teaching across Consortium;
- Greater professionalisation of teaching across Consortium;
- Enhanced APD provision across Consortium;
- ‘Best practice’ in partner institutions has been emulated in other HEIs.

UL: Shannon Consortium Strand 3—A Regional Graduate Development Training Network

Contact: Mr. John Breen, Dean, Graduate School, UL
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Partners: LIT, ITT

This project aimed to coordinate research degree training in generic, transferable, and professional skills across the Shannon Consortium, in parallel with the development of postgraduate education in UL through the ‘Expansion and Development of Postgraduate Education’ project.

Outputs

- Expansion of the services provided by UL’s Graduate School;
- Development of generic skills training for graduate students;
- Agreement of a shared-service model by all partners in the Consortium for the delivery of transferable skills training.

Outcomes

- Enhanced cooperation across Shannon Consortium institutions in provision of graduate education;
- Development of UL’s Graduate School;
- Enhancement of the quality of graduate education across the Shannon Consortium.

SIF Cycle 2

AIT: Regional Access to Assistive Technology in Higher Education (REACH)

<http://www.ait.ie/disability/reach/>

Contact: Ms. Patricia Kearney, Disability Support Service Coordinator, Disability Support Service, AIT
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Partners: LYIT

The Reach initiative promotes access to higher education for students with disabilities and specific learning difficulties (SpLD) through the utilisation and promotion of assistive technology (AT). It thereby aims to in to enhance equity of access, participation, retention and progression, through the transfer of expertise and resources from higher education to second-level and further education.

The project aims to widen participation and access to lifelong learning by extending the benefits of using AT in higher education through the provision of teacher and student-training, advice and support, in order to enable students in second-level and further education to reach their true potential. Project objectives align with those of the SIF 1 Ascent project and the Leonardo da Vinci-funded 'GATEWAY' project, which promoted:

- Early access to AT & training to facilitate progression to higher education;
- Catering for diverse learning styles and needs;
- Integrated approach to AT and learning;
- Development of policy and practice based on learner-needs rather than on a category of difference;
- Development of an educational approach to research.

Outputs

- Provision of staff training in assistive technologies devised to support students with note-taking, writing, reading, spelling and grammar, and organisation and time-management;
- Development of resources to support students with learning difficulties;
- Training of students in the use of assistive technologies;
- Provision of assistive technologies to secondary-school pupils.
- Provision of AT training workshops to enable second-level and further education teachers and SNAs to test and trial the latest assistive technologies;
- Hosted regional AT seminars, exhibitions and workshops for parents, teachers, resource-teachers, occupational therapists and disability organisations;

- Publication of research report, *Assistive Technology Outreach Services to Post-Primary and Further Education: An Overview of the Assistive Technology Facilities, Training and Support Provided Nationally by Third-Level Institutions* (June 2011).

Outcomes

The Reach training programme enhances learning for students with disabilities/SpLD in second-level, the further education teaching profession, and the wider community by:

- Creating opportunities for continuing professional development in teaching and learning to promote equity of access to education;
- Mainstreaming of literacy support and mind-mapping software (TextHelp RWG and Inspiration) in higher education institutions;
- Promoting AT as a learning-tool which enhances independent learning for students by increasing their functional independence;
- Facilitating up-skilling of key groups, namely teachers, resource-teachers, SNAs, students and parents, in AT through the provision of on-going training;
- Increasing use of AT in second-level/further education through assistive technology workshops;
- Increasing student-transfer and progression from second-level and further education to higher education;
- Enhancing the integration of students with disabilities into higher education;
- Increasing knowledge of the role of assistive and inclusive technologies in education;
- Heightening awareness of challenges facing students with specific learning difficulties;
- Demonstrating how inclusive and assistive technology purposely designed for students with disabilities, such as mind-mapping, can benefit everyone;
- Enhancing the matching of AT equipment and software to students;
- Providing AT summer-camps and one-day training work-shops for teachers, parents and students at second-level;

The outcomes of the project have been sustained through its integration into the UL/UCC-led South–West Regional Access Alliance (SWRAA).

CIT: Roadmap for Employment–Academic Partnerships (REAP)

<http://reap.ie/>

Contact: Dr. Irene Sheridan, Head, CIT Extended Campus, CIT.
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Partners: AIT, DIT, ITS, ITTD, NUIG, UCC & WIT.

The 'Roadmap for Employment–Academic Partnership' (REAP) project aims to research, develop, and validate a model and roadmap for higher education–employer partnership. Project activities have ranged across a series of work-place–academic interactions, including the provision of specialist targeted courses, undergraduate work-placements, and professional postgraduate programmes. A key output of the project is a customer relationship management (CRM) tool for tracking and managing higher education institutions' external engagement activities. This provides a mechanism for the rationalisation and integration of complementary engagement activities, as a single framework to facilitate them.

Outputs

- Hosting of a range of corporate partnership networking events in partner institutions;
- Development of work-place focussed and flexibly delivered customised learning solutions for employers;
- Attendance at and hosting of conferences and workshops (e.g. on recognition of prior learning (RPL), the integration of education and industry, regional innovation, and entrepreneurship);
- Development and piloting of e-portfolios for Ph.D. students on structured doctoral programmes;
- Development and delivery of work-based learning postgraduate programme in AIT;
- Production of a toolkit for the provision of work-placements in higher education;
- 18th November 2011: launch of CIT Extended Campus, providing a platform for knowledge-exchange between CIT and external stakeholders;
- Development of a customer-relationship management (CRM) system for engagement in higher education;
- Research undertaken on development of professional doctorates in Ireland, leading to report, 'Professional Doctoral Education in Ireland: Launching the Debate';
- Accreditation of Bord Gáis Networks Technical Training Centre by DIT;
- Establishment of Synergy Global business incubation centre in ITTD;
- Papers presented at 8 international conferences;
- Hosted work-shops on researcher mobility and industry–academic interactions, leading to the production of a draft report;
- Development of a pilot portal for industry-related student-projects to showcase potential of increased engagement with higher education;
- Support for the development of an Enterprise Ireland-funded Postgraduate Diploma in Business in Innovation Practice (Technovation) programme in WIT, including piloting of PebblePad as e-portfolio system for student learning through work;
- Support for the MetricIreland initiative for the medical technology sector, involving 5 founding higher education institutes in Ireland—AIT, GMIT, ITS, NUIG, and UL (www.metricireland.ie);

- Publications:
 - Niamh Corcoran and Michelle Bradley (eds.), *Engaging with Higher Education—Employer Perspectives* (Cork: REAP, 2009);
 - Terry Maguire, Robert Murphy, and David Kirk, *Meeting the Needs of the Modern Workplace through Employment—Academic Partnership* (Cork: REAP, 2009);
 - Margaret Linehan (ed.), *Learning Needs Analysis in Selected Employment Sectors* (Cork: CIT Press, 2009);
 - Irene Sheridan and Margaret Linehan (eds.), *Partnerships for Progress: Higher Education Institutions and External Engagement—Conference Proceedings 2010* (Cork: CIT Press, 2010);
 - Irene Sheridan and Margaret Linehan (eds.), *Work-Placement in Third-Level Programmes* (Cork: CIT Press, 2011);
 - Irene Sheridan and John P. Murphy, *Customised Learning Development: An Exploration of Practice* (Cork: CIT Press, 2012).
 - Joan Buckley and Lyndsey El Amoud, *Beyond Big Business: Opportunities and Challenges for Irish HEIs in Engaging with Family Businesses and Community & Voluntary Groups through the Student Work-Placement Process* (REAP project website).

Outcomes

- Enhanced engagement between higher education and enterprise;
- Enhanced responsiveness of higher education institutions to the skills needs of employers;
- Enhanced work-readiness of graduates;
- Enhancement of the capacity of institutions to evaluate their external engagement activities;
- REAP project was identified as a model of good practice by EU DG Education and Culture.

DIT: Strategic Management and Change

Contact: Ms. Marie Kennedy, Senior Manager, Office of the President, DIT.
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Partners: WIT, CIT

This SIF project supported these three HEIs to build their capacity and capability to advance their strategic priorities. It enabled DIT to initiate a major programme of development and change to enhance its effectiveness and enrich its educational provision in order to meet the demands of Ireland’s ‘knowledge society’; and it enabled partner institutions to address common organisational development issues. The project aimed to support the consortium to respond to the rapidly evolving higher education landscape, particularly in terms of changing demographics and

competition; the implementation of the new HEA-funding model; and organisational restructuring and development.

DIT

Outputs

- Recruitment of Schools Liaison Officer;
- Establishment of integrated admissions processes for all students;
- Development of First-Year Experience Strategy;
- Recruitment of a Mature Students Officer;
- Implementation of a Widening Participation Strategy with cross-institute participation;
- Development of marketing material and specific initiatives (open evenings; career clinics) for non-standard entry groups;
- Development of an on-line application process for all non-CAO students;
- Streamlining of selection procedures for non-CAO students;
- Development, in collaboration with partners, of a unit cost model to ensure effective management and alignment of resources with the HEA's RGAM;
- Development of models for internal resource allocation at the level of schools and modules;
- Improvement and updating of the Student Records System (SRS);
- Delivery of training to senior management, and workshops to academic and administrative staff, on RGAM, unit costing, and internal resource planning;
- Establishment of single DIT registrations unit, and of on-line registration for all students;
- Establishment of a centralised Student Service Centre (for admissions, registrations, fees, examinations, and campus life);
- Establishment of Fees and Income Office;
- Development of e-requisitioning and e-expenses processes;
- Establishment of central procurement contracts with other HEIs;
- Mapping of business processes to aid change management;
- Appointment of Dean of Apprenticeship;
- Restructuring of DIT's 6 faculties and 4 colleges ;
- Establishment of enhanced strategic planning framework;
- Production of DIT Strategic Resource Plan;
- Development of a website for strategic planning;
- Hosting of fora on change management for staff.

Outcomes

- Mainstreaming of Schools Liaison Officer position;
- Increase in CAO applications;
- Mainstreaming of Mature Students Officer;
- Increase in number of applications from mature students;
- A standardised approach to unit costing has become integral to DIT's financial processes;

- Reconfiguration of DIT schools within the 4 colleges to reflect logical groupings of disciplines in order to ensure efficient delivery of teaching, research, and related activities;
- Increase in awareness of change management amongst DIT staff.

CIT

Outputs

- Extensive marketing initiative undertaken;
- Modularisation approach adopted;
- Development of a resource planner tool in collaboration with partners;
- Development of a Strategic Resource Allocation Model;
- Delivery of training on resource planning for senior staff;
- Appointment of Head of Strategy and Policy in CIT.

Outcomes

- Increase in applications from all student cohorts;
- Enhanced strategic planning, resource allocation, and decision-making processes.

WIT

Outputs

- Increase in number of school visits undertaken, in attendance at external career exhibitions, and in number of campus visits and tours by local and regional secondary schools;
- Development of more 'student-focused' open days;
- Updating of application process for mature students;
- Introduction of a summer school for mature students;
- Development of a resource model to assist in decision-making and of a tool for the review of resource usage;
- Enhancement of the Student Records System (SRS);
- Facilitation of internal fora for managers on the development of a resource allocation model;
- Delivery of management training programme, and assessment of on-going training needs undertaken;

Outcomes

- Increase in number of mature student applicants;
- Enhanced strategic planning, resource allocation, and decision-making processes.

DKIT: Accelerating Campus Entrepreneurship (ACE)

<https://www.dkit.ie/ace>

Contact: Ms. Irene McCausland, External Services Manager, DKIT.
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Partners: ITB, CIT, ITS, NUIG

The 'Accelerating Campus Entrepreneurship' (ACE) initiative aims to embed entrepreneurship education into non-business programmes in order to create entrepreneurial graduates by effecting organisational change within and between higher education institutions. It aims to deliver this through:

- Pedagogies, teaching & curriculum development;
- Cross-faculty, multi-disciplinary development;
- Embedding technology entrepreneurship into engineering education, leveraging extra-curricula activities of incubation centres & technology transfer offices;
- Educational organisation and culture-change.

Outputs

Achievement of measurable indicators

Deliverable	Target	Achieved
Staff involved in working on programme development and delivery	40	158
Non-Business students engaged in entrepreneurship accredited training	100	318
Other students involved in related activities over the ACE programme's lifetime	500	11,838
Academics and non-academics involved in entrepreneurship staff development programmes	60	123
Student Enterprise Internships	5	17
Entrepreneur in Residence programme*	0*	4
Student business projects exploring commercialisation opportunities through incubation centres/technology transfer offices	20	349
New student ventures established in the last three years through the incubation centres/technology transfer offices	10	66
Conference papers developed and presented based on data emanating from the ACE initiative	5	13

* Due to budget restrictions, it was agreed that the Entrepreneur in Residence programme would not be funded by SIF and so the target was removed. Nevertheless some institutes found alternative sources of funding and were able to make appointments.

Publication outputs

- 26th November 2009: launch of ACE report, *Entrepreneurship Education in Ireland: Towards Creating the Entrepreneurial Graduate*;
- Publication of *ACE Case Studies in Entrepreneurship*, launched in spring of 2011;
- Publication of *Evaluation of the ACE Initiative* (April 2012);
- Collaboration with HETAC on development of *Draft Guidelines and Key Criteria for the Review of Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education (EEE)*, (2012).

Additional outputs

- Development of project website and electronic newsletter;
- Appointment of ACE champions and academic enterprise champions in ACE partner institutions to lead the advancement of the entrepreneurship agenda;
- Development and roll-out of the Student Enterprise Internship programme;
- Development of a Train the Trainers programme to provide academic and research staff with an understanding of the main elements of teaching and facilitating entrepreneurial learning;
- Development of undergraduate and postgraduate programme modules at NFQ levels 6–9 in entrepreneurship across disciplines, including an M.Sc. in Technology Entrepreneurship, and a B.Sc. in Engineering Entrepreneurship in DKIT, and of a B.Sc. (Hons.) Programme in Entrepreneurship in ITB;
- Development by DKIT of a 5-week podcast course in ‘Entrepreneurship in the Health and Social Care Sector’;
- Roll-out of a wide range of Student Enterprise Intern events and activities across partner HEIs, including workshops, seminars, lectures, and competitions;
- Cross-institutional staff training events held (involving 123 staff members), and staff enabled to attend Babson Programme in USA;
- Collation of data for a longitudinal study on students’ attitudes towards entrepreneurship education and its benefits after exposure to ACE initiatives;
- Student business projects supported through the Student Innovation Fund in DKIT;

- 46 students attended the Bright Ideas Programme at the Regional Development Centre DKIT (2010–2012).

Outcomes

- Enhancement of students' entrepreneurial skills;
- Cross-disciplinary & cross-institutional collaboration for the provision of entrepreneurship education;
- Strengthening of links between academia and industry, and between academic departments and institutions' technology transfer offices and business incubation centres;
- Increased awareness of value of entrepreneurship;
- Increased dissemination of research activity in area of entrepreneurship.

DRHEA: Enhancement of Learning

<http://www.drhea.ie/enhancement.php>

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Partners: DCU, DIT, IADT, ITB, ITTD, NUIM, UCD, TCD

The aim of this project was to enhance the quality of teaching and learning across the DRHEA through innovation and reform at institutional level, and through collaborative initiatives and the sharing of 'best practice' across the consortium. In particular it focused on the provision of academic professional development, enabling e-learning and blended learning, curriculum reform (focusing on learning outcomes and flexibility of provision), and teaching quality enhancement (focusing on engagement and retention).

Outputs

- The establishment of the Dublin Centre for Academic Development (DCAD)—a virtual centre for the sharing of expertise in educational practice and pedagogy, and for the sharing of training across the consortium;
- Establishment of e-Learning Network of Excellence;
- Hosting of DCAD symposia and study days;
- Establishment of Higher Education Research Centre (HERC) & of HERC Seminar Series;
- Creation of DCAD LinkedIn Database of Expertise;
- DCAD Fellowships established in DCU, DIT, UCD & NUIM;
- The establishment of a Senior Education Forum to provide senior management across the consortium with an opportunity to engage

collectively with issues of strategic importance and to identify collaborative solutions;

- Creation of the DRHEA website & publication of the 'Enhancement of Learning' newsletter;
- Establishment of Undergraduate Research Seminar Series (launched March 2010) & Undergraduate Research Conference. The multi-disciplinary Seminar Series aims to highlight the role of research in society and each seminar is held in a different DRHEA institution;
- Hosting of annual Dublin e-Learning Summer School;
- e-Learning Network Audit undertaken;
- Hosting by DCU of 'Realising Bologna: Connecting Policy and Practice' conference, 7th–8th June 2011, comprising workshops led by DRHEA partners.

Outcomes

- Collaboration between higher education institutions in the Dublin region;
- Advancement of implementation of the Bologna Process, with curricula reform leading to enhanced focus on learning outcomes and assessment;
- Increased efficiency and additional capacity through pooling of resources;
- Enhanced academic training and development across consortium;
- Enhancement of student learning experience through teaching quality enhancement, curricula reform, and use of state-of-the-art learning technologies.

DRHEA: Graduate Education

<http://www.drhea.ie/graduate.php>

Contact: Dr. Emer Cunningham, Project Manager, Graduate Studies, UCD
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Partners: UCD, DCU, DIT, ITTD, NUIM, TCD

The aim of this project was to reposition the Dublin region as an international centre for graduate (and especially doctoral) education through collaboration between the partners in the consortium. It sought to deliver a cost-effective approach to inter-institutional graduate programmes, encompassing advanced taught modules across 6 disciplines, as a platform for research.

Outputs

- Creation of administrative infrastructure within and across the institutions to facilitate graduate student mobility and credit exchange;
- Development and dissemination of Ph.D. module descriptors;

- Pilot delivery of advanced modules and masterclasses to Ph.D. students in six disciplinary areas: physics; chemistry; engineering; biomedical sciences; politics, sociology, and public policy; and economics;
- Pilot generic skills training across DRHEA;
- European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) agreed for DRHEA graduate modules at NFQ levels 9 and 10;
- Provision of a range of master classes involving international experts;
- Provision of short-term release from duties for staff to develop and implement graduate programmes ;
- Creation of a framework for joint strategic planning across cognate departments/schools in DRHEA;
- Hosting of DRHEA 'Future Voices' competition for Ph.D. students to demonstrate how their research will enable national economic recovery.

Outcomes

- Enhanced collaboration between higher education institutions in the Dublin region;
- Delivery of a cost-effective and scalable approach to inter-institutional graduate programmes;
- Enhancement of graduate education across DRHEA institutions.

DRHEA: Internationalisation

<http://www.drhea.ie/internationalisation.php>

Partners: DIT, UCD, NUIM, TCD, ITTD, DCU

The DRHEA's 'Internationalisation' project commenced in 2008 and was terminated in the middle of 2010 further to being ranked 5 in the *Report of the SIF Evaluation*. The objective of the project was to promote the Dublin region as a centre of excellence in international higher education under the 'Destination Dublin' brand, and, in so doing, to make it a destination of choice for prospective international students at NFQ levels 8–10. It was intended that this would bring financial and cultural benefits to Dublin's higher education institutions, and to the region more broadly, through the influx of international students; and that these students would also provide a new talent pool from which prospective postgraduates could be drawn. These aims were to be achieved through enhanced marketing of the region and its constituent higher education institutions, through the development of partnerships between institutions and organisations such as Dublin City Council and Dublin Tourism, and through the development of a high-profile scholarship programme. The DRHEA consortium also envisaged making significant efficiency savings through the delivery of shared services to students, joint marketing of the region, and the establishment of joint overseas offices and a joint scholarship programme.

Outputs

- Bilateral and multilateral promotional activities in selected international markets were undertaken.
- Agreement with Dublin City Council to launch and brand 'The Lord Mayor of Dublin's International Scholarship'. (Whilst no scholarships were awarded under this scheme, it was formally launched in the summer of 2009 and DCC has agreed to work with individual institutions if funding becomes available.)
- Agreement with DCC for the Lord Mayor to host an annual .
- 'Welcome receptions' for international students were hosted by the Lord Mayor and DCC in 2009 and 2010, and it is proposed that these will continue.
- A survey of international students in target markets in Asia was undertaken on behalf of the DRHEA by Studylink (an Australian group) and the results were presented to an invited audience in 2009.

Outcomes

- Further to joint marketing activities, three DRHEA partner HEIs were retained on Kazakhstan's prestigious Boloshak Scholarship programme resulting in a significant increase in applications from students from the country to study in Ireland for entry in September 2010. The broader context of Ireland's retention on this list was that 30 percent of institutions worldwide were removed from it.
- Three DRHEA partners were approved for inclusion in the government scholarship programme of Azerbaijan in 2010, and this has resulted in an increase in applications from students from the region to study in Ireland for entry in September 2011.
- Sharing of market intelligence between DRHEA partners.

The DRHEA note that, further to the launch of the Irish Government's international education strategy, in which the promotion of the Education Ireland brand is proposed, there remains a need for the promotion and support of the 'Destination Dublin' brand.

DRHEA: Widening Participation

http://www.drhea.ie/widening_participation.php

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Partners: UCD, DCU, DIT, IADT, ITB, ITTD, NUIM, TCD

This project sought to meet the needs of adult learners, to cater for the learning needs of diverse ethnic communities, and to increase participation rates in higher education amongst disadvantaged groups in the Dublin region through the formation

of a Higher Learning Network; the expansion of community-based learning programmes; and the development of strategies to help students with literacy and language difficulties.

Outputs

- Development of a collaborative network of higher education institutions;
- Expansion of service / community-based learning and research network to include 13 HEIs;
- Development of strategies to deal with students with literacy and language difficulties, including those for whom English is a second language;
- Publication of a report, *Participation in Third-Level Education: Issues for Non-Native Speakers of English*;
- Development of a module: 'The Development of Communicative Competence and Literacy Skills';
- Development of a tool to assess prospective mature students' literacy skills.

Outcomes

- Increased participation of adults, ethnic groups and disadvantaged learners in higher education;
- A functioning alliance of 13 higher education institutions in the Dublin region;
- DIT was awarded third prize in the 2011 Talloires Network MacJannet Prize for Global Citizenship;
- Greater awareness of needs of adults, ethnic groups, and disadvantaged learners seeking access to higher education.

GMIT: Student Leadership Programme: Student-Led Learning & Curriculum Reform

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Partners: AIT, NUIG

The Student Leadership Programme comprised two strands: 'Student-Led Learning' and 'Curriculum Reform', in which AIT and NUIG were partners respectively. The Programme sought to enhance the quality of learning, teaching, and curriculum reform in GMIT and partner institutions through the engagement of students and staff. In particular it sought to enhance the first-year experience through the delivery of a peer-assisted learning programme, and to advance the modularisation and curriculum reform of courses, with increased focus on the integration of generic skills and learning outcomes.

Overall the Student Leadership Programme has provided a range of opportunities for student and staff engagement and has informed change, particularly in respect of

how to approach the design and implementation of programmes and to support students in their learning.

Outputs

- Design and delivery of a first-year experience programme including:
 - a peer-assisted learning (PAL) programme delivered to first year students across all major disciplines in GMIT and AIT
 - a 'Learning to Learn' module for all first-year students in GMIT and selected programmes in AIT.
- Delivery of PAL training to staff in GMIT and AIT.
- Design of a PAL Leadership Module (5 ECTS), and of a PAL Leader Journal to support assessment delivery.
- Development of a PAL leadership training manual and DVD, and of PAL Leader Classroom Strategy Technique Cards.
- Design of a two-day PAL Leadership Training Programme aimed at senior year students.
- Organisation and hosting of a range of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Staff Development Workshops in GMIT, AIT and NUIG.
- Organisation and rollout of the Learning Innovation Network (LIN) modules to support staff development with curriculum design and student engagement.
- Three-year action research study on PAL programme undertaken in GMIT and AIT.
- Delivery of national and international conference papers on the PAL programme, the first-year experience, and student engagement with higher education.
- Roll-out of a Learning, Teaching & Assessment Planning Survey in NUIG, GMIT and AIT, and sharing of the insights gained.
- Development and rollout out a Student Learning Experience Survey in GMIT (based on NSSE) which informed Institutional Review reports.
- Development of Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy 2010-2015 for GMIT.
- Design and delivery of multidisciplinary 'Civic Engagement' module (5 ECTS) in GMIT through collaborations with NUIG, CKI (see <http://www.campusengage.ie/download/file/1359/>).
- Design of a Civic Engagement Learning Toolkit, comprising workshop and tutorial materials in service-learning practice.
- Design and delivery of a Student Representative Training programme in GMIT.
- Acquisition of Module Manager software by a consortium of HEIs (GMIT, ITS, LIT and AIT).
- Design and development of a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) information website www.myexperience.ie and online application facility and guidebook.
- Provision of staff training in online programme development.

- Hosting by GMIT of an education conference (27th November 2010): ‘Perspectives on a Moving Target: Is Change the New Constant in Higher Education?’ (see www.gmitconference.ie).
- Hosting of higher education conferences by NUIG’s CELT in the areas of creativity in teaching and learning and curriculum reform.
- Development by NUIG of a dedicated Bologna Process area on the CELT website (see http://www.nuigalway.ie/celt/teaching_and_learning/bologna.html).
- Refurbishment of classrooms in GMIT (with Smartboard technology, and a webinar system) and investment in technology-enhanced learning tools (such as Clickers, Bloggies) to improve student-engagement.
- Set-up of a lecture-capture system utilising video-technology to enable online learning across campuses and the region, and to enhance engagement with secondary schools across a range of learning-experiences.

Outcomes

- Increased collaboration between higher education institutes across the sector.
- Enhancement of teaching, learning and assessment in GMIT, AIT, and NUIG.
- The first-year experience programme is embedded, forming part of the Institute Student Services portfolio, and is supported by an institute academic coordinator.
- Roll-out of the PAL programme in NUIG School of Business, IT Sligo School of Science and IADT.
- Advancement of implementation of the Bologna Process, with curriculum reform leading to enhanced focus on learning outcomes and assessment in NUIG and GMIT.
- Increased efficiency and additional capacity through pooling of resources.
- Enhanced academic training and development in GMIT and partner institutes.
- Project outputs laid the foundation for the development of a Centre for Educational Development in GMIT.
- Development of an Institute Retention Policy.
- Enhancement of the student-learning experience through teaching quality enhancement, curriculum reform, and use of learning technologies.
- Increased collaboration with the Students Union on a range of student led learning initiatives.
- RPL project outputs have resulted in further collaboration with partner higher education institutions in the Connacht–Ulster Alliance (GMIT, IT Sligo and LYIT) to further progress the online assessment tool, website and staff training development plans.
- Educational research project, ‘Supporting the First-Year Experience in Higher Education: Impact on Student Engagement, Academic Practice and Institutional Policy’, is being undertaken in GMIT (for completion by the end of 2013). This study explores the impact of SIF-funded first-year experience

initiatives undertaken in GMIT and NUIG on the student experience, on changes in academic practice, and on institutional change.

IOTI: Addressing the Needs of the Knowledge Economy

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Partners: All institutes of technology

This project comprised two strands designed to address the key requirements for the growth and development of Ireland's 'knowledge economy': the 'Research Support and Coordination Office' and 'Flexible Learning'.

Research Support and Coordination Office

<http://www.ioti.ie/about-us/research-support-office>

Through this project, which formally concluded in August 2011, a Research Support and Coordination Office has been established in the IOTI to support the growth of research capacity in the institute of technology sector; and a roadmap and strategic framework for this growth has been established. The specific objectives of the project were:

- To build an interface between the institute of technology sector and its principal stakeholder groups;
- To support the development of a culture and infrastructure to foster the development of research and innovation in the sector;
- To support the development of enhanced linkages between research, innovation, incubation, and teaching and learning;
- To ensure the effective governance and management of the IOTI Research Support and Coordination Office.

An independent evaluation of the project was commissioned and, on the basis of the resultant report, a five-year plan for the office for 2011–2015 was launched in June 2011. The IOTI Office of Research, Development & Innovation will be funded throughout this period by the institutes of technology.

Outputs

- The establishment of an IOTI Research, Development and Innovation Office for the institute of technology sector providing:
 - Support services for researchers, including mentoring for participation in FP7 & IRCSET programmes;

- Support services for institutes, including comparative benchmarking of individual institutes' performance, as well as international benchmarking;
- Development of international benchmarking;
- Development & dissemination of IOTI policy position on research & innovation in the sector;
- IOTI membership of the European Network of the Universities of Applied Sciences (UASNET), of which the IOTI holds the Chair to 2012.
- Publications:
 - *IOT Research & Innovation Handbook* (2009);
 - *IOT Research & Innovation Yearbook* (2009);
 - *Profile and Directory of Research, Development & Innovation* (2011);
 - *Industry–Academia Case Studies* (2010 & 2011) detailing over 40 examples of industry–academic engagement.
- Events:
 - Yearbook launch 2009;
 - IoT Research showcase and industry–academic brokerage event (2011);
 - Hosting of 2 meetings of the European Network of the Universities of Applied Sciences (UASNET) in Ireland (November 2009 & June 2011).

Outcomes

- Enhanced research & innovation capacity of institute of technology sector, and progress towards the achievement of critical mass in key areas of research strength;
- Improved knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of research in the institute of technology sector;
- Enhanced profile of research and innovation in the institute of technology sector;
- Improved performance of researchers from the institutes of technology in IRCSET and FP7 funding programmes, and the formation of new national and international academic–industry partnerships;
- Enhanced engagement of institute of technology sector with European programmes, networks and institutions, including the European Network of the Universities of Applied Sciences (UASNET); the Fraunhofer Institute, Germany; and the IRIS research institute, Spain;
- Improved communication and representation to external stakeholders of policy position of institute of technology sector.

Supported Flexible Learning

<http://www.bluebrick.ie/>

The purpose of the Supported Flexible Learning project was to enhance flexible learning provision in the institutes of technology by increasing the sector's capacity

for its delivery; and to promote flexible learning opportunities across the sector through the establishment of a branded admissions portal.

It has enabled the institutes of technology to enhance their capacity to deliver e-learning (through the reform of internal systems and processes as well as through the development of supports for staff and students), and thereby to build on their strong track-record in the delivery of part-time education within a twenty-first-century global context. While much of this reform has been at institutional level, the collective endeavour of the institutes has ensured that the development of e-learning and flexible-learning has been transcendent of institutional boundaries.

Building on the technological infrastructure created through the SIF 1-funded, University of Limerick-led 'Individualised Digitalised Educational Advisory System (IDEAS) project, the IOTI established BlueBrick.ie—a web-based admissions portal which enables prospective students to search and apply for a range of courses offered on a flexible basis in the institutes of technology. That, in addition, the BlueBrick portal has been used to host the HEA's Springboard and ICT Skills Programmes is testimony to the progress made in the expansion of flexible programme provision across the higher education sector in recent years. It also provides the foundation for the establishment of a comprehensive portal for part-time and flexible learning in higher education in Ireland. Thus the outcomes of the Supported Flexible Learning project have far exceeded its original objectives.

Outputs

- Establishment of the BlueBrick online portal for part-time and flexible learning opportunities in Irish higher education;
- Provision of workshops for staff in the institutes of technology on flexible learning, teaching and assessment technologies and approaches;
- Reform of internal systems and processes in the institutes of technology to advance the flexible learning agenda;
- Staff development and training in the flexible delivery of courses in the institutes (e.g. in e-learning technologies and innovative pedagogies);
- Provision of supports for students in engaging with flexible learning.

Outcomes

- Increased flexibility of programme provision and responsiveness to emerging skills needs across the institutes of technology;
- The roll-out of the HEA's Springboard labour-market activation programme (in 2011 and 2012) and of the HEA's ICT Skills Programme (in 2012) via BlueBrick, extending the reach of the portal to include courses provided by universities and private higher education providers;
- Enhancement of the quality of the student-learning experience in the institutes of technology;

- Development of the capacity (in terms of internal systems, technical infrastructure, and staff capabilities) of the institutes of technology to deliver courses on a flexible basis;
- Development of the technological infrastructure to support the establishment of a comprehensive portal for part-time and flexible learning in Irish higher education.

ITB: ERA: Transitions

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Partners: DKIT, ITTD, ITC

This project, which focused on facilitating students' transition from secondary to tertiary education, and from tertiary education into the workplace, was terminated in the HEA's post-SIF Evaluation review of the programme. It aimed to develop innovative 'transition into third level' and 'transition to work' programmes in the academic and student support sectors of the institutes in the consortium through the pooling of ideas and resources. The project provided workshops, drop-in clinics, and other support mechanisms for students, which will continue to be provided where possible.

Outputs

Transition into HE

- Changes have been made to the student induction experience in partner institutes;
- In ITC a first-year curriculum module on academic skills was piloted in the Department of Health and Science;
- Motivational activities were organised throughout the academic year across departments and participating institutions (e.g. visiting speakers from companies);
- First-year focus groups were held in ITB to gauge student expectations;
- In ITB and ITTD incoming students' learning styles were screened by the National Learning Centre and a report was given to each student. The information was shared with course coordinators to improve the delivery of teaching;
- Exam preparation workshops were held in ITB & ITTD;
- DKIT's School of Business organised an Introduction to Accountancy Summer School for new entrants to the Bachelor of Business in Management and Administration;
- DKIT rolled-out a peer-assisted learning (PAL) scheme;
- Drop-in clinics were delivered across a range of departments in the partner institutes covering a range of topics such as:

- Mathematics for first-year students in computing and engineering;
- Programming in C and Java for first-year computing and engineering students;
- Languages;
- Accounting for first-year business students.

Transition into work

- Hosting of workshops in preparation for work across disciplinary areas in ITB;
- DKIT developed an Employer Booklet & Final-Year Career Pack;
- Hosting of collaborative career workshops by career guidance offices in the partner institutes;
- Pooling of knowledge, resources, and time of career guidance officers;
- Each partner institute investigated the key transferable skills required by employers in a specific discipline.

Outcomes

- Integration of 'transition to third-level' modules into curricula;
- Increase in students' levels and depth of engagement with their courses; enhanced assessment by students of their own learning needs; and increased determination by students to complete their programme of study;
- Improved retention rates in engineering programmes;
- Enhanced learner engagement in first-year classes incorporating induction activities;
- Enhanced socialisation of students from diverse backgrounds;
- Establishment of a successful format for career-focused workshops;
- Enhanced embedding of non-standard learners into their institute life.

ITC: ERA: Consolidating Services for Increased Capacity

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Partners: ITB, ITTD, DKIT

This project provided support for activities which promote balanced regional, economic, and social development by researching the skills needs of the regions in which the partner institutions are located. It aimed to support institutions to meet labour-market needs through the development of flexible-learning opportunities and of shared best practice in respect of the provision of student-centred learning.

Outputs

- Installation of a module manager system in ITC;

- Review of learner lifecycle undertaken in ITC;
- Survey of skills needs of light engineering companies undertaken by ITC;
- Review of student registration process in ITTD undertaken;
- Expansion of ITTD's Oracle Data Warehouse;
- Course Builder website introduced in DKIT, and staff training provided;
- Hosting of Speaker Series in DKIT on the Graduate 2020.

Outcomes

- Identification of skills deficits of graduates;
- Greater awareness of the skills needs of graduates among staff;
- Enhanced data-gathering systems;
- Greater inter-institutional collaboration, e.g. in procurement of module manager system.

ITC: ERA: Repositioning Assessment for Learning (REPAL)

Contact: Ms. Anne Carpenter, Coordinator, Teaching and Learning Centre, ITC
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Partners: DKIT, ITB, ITTD

This project, which was terminated in the HEA's post-SIF Evaluation review of the programme in mid-2010, aimed to enhance student learning through innovation in assessment, and to help the partners in the consortium (ITC, DKIT, ITB & ITTD) to respond to emerging issues in respect of assessment practices, such as aligning learning outcomes with assessments, providing feedback to learners, assessing international students, and utilising technology in assessments. It sought to develop exemplary models of assessment that promote learner engagement through collaboration and feedback, and to provide institutes with resources to address challenges in respect of assessment and teaching and learning.

Outputs

- The funding and implementation of 21 'action research projects' across the partner institutes. Examples of these projects include:
 - Using technology to empower students' learning and assessment in large classes;
 - Use of peer and self-assessment in Pedagogy and Curriculum module;
 - PBL group assessment and evaluation for Irish and international students;
 - Using flip-video cameras as a tool for motivating and assessing practical classes.
- Development in conjunction with LIN of a NFQ level 9 Formative Assessment and Feedback Certificate. This was designed, validated, and piloted in ITC,

where it was completed by 11 staff, and is now available for delivery across the institute of technology sector;

- ‘Repositioning Learner Assessment in Higher Education’ conference co-hosted with HETAC (14th May 2010);
- Hosting of staff development workshops and training events;
- Development of resources on assessment for students and staff;
- Enhancement of DKIT’s MA in Learning and Teaching programme with content on innovative assessment practices and e-learning;
- Input into HETAC Assessment Guidelines and Standards.

Outcomes

- Improvements in assessment practices;
- Improved student performance and satisfaction;
- Improved teaching quality;
- Increased awareness of HETAC Assessment Guidelines and Standards.

IUA: Access to Irish National Bibliometric Data

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Partners: All universities & DIT

The project is delivering a suite of resources for strategic research analysis and reporting to support cross-institutional research and fourth-level collaboration, as well as planning and decision-making at local and national levels. In the most cost-effective, efficient and reliable way, it is providing hard data on Irish universities’ research activities—data that is crucial for decision-making purposes. It has facilitated the purchase of the latest Thompson Reuters’ datasets and analytical tools, including the National Citation Report (Ireland), University Science Indicators (ISI), and Global Comparisons data, which facilitates the comparison of Irish research performance with that of over 200 countries, as well as the InCities web-based research evaluation tool. These internationally-recognised, high-quality bibliometric datasets and tools provide the resources to support university and national research strategising and benchmarking activities.

Outputs

- Acquisition of Thompson Reuters’ datasets and analytical tools;
- Delivery of bibliometric data to Forfás’s National Research Prioritisation Exercise;
- Development of a standardised methodology across all partner institutions for the delivery of data to the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG);
- The development of a new mechanism (API) for the import of Thomson Reuters’ datasets into institutional Research Information Systems;

Outcomes

- Enhanced decision-making, quality-control and benchmarking capacity in Irish universities, and at a national level;
- Enhancement of the value of institutional Research Information Systems;
- Dissemination of data reports across all Irish universities through project partnership and through liaison with existing bodies, such as the all-Island RISE (Research Information Systems Exchange) Group and the IUA Librarians Working Group on Institutional Repositories;
- The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) and Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) are fully engaged with the project, which is scalable to include additional higher education institutions, State agencies, and funding councils;
- Analysis, correction and validation of InCities data has strengthened its value as a dataset and tool for strategic decision-making.

IUA: Equity of Access

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Partners: All universities & DIT

This project builds on the IUA's SIF 1-funded 'Widening the Base for High-Quality Student Recruitment' project, through which the IUA sought to address the strategic and operational challenges associated with increasing the numbers of students from under-represented groups entering higher education. Specifically, the project reformed and mainstreamed two supplementary admissions routes: the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR; <http://www.accesscollege.ie/hear/>) and the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE; <http://www.accesscollege.ie/dare/>), which offer access to higher education courses on reduced points for students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and for those with a disability respectively.

The SIF 2 project constructed and implemented nationally-agreed indicators of educational disadvantage in order to help to direct pre-entry, admission, and post-entry activities for new students and communities that are marginalised within the context of accessing higher education. It also sought to raise awareness about the benefits for society of a more equitable system of admission to higher education.

Outputs

- Increase in applications through HEAR & DARE;
- Increase in eligibility of applicants to HEAR & DARE;
- Establishment of HEAR Advisory Boards;
- Introduction of external screening of HEAR applications;
- Shadowing of data management in UL by CAO;

- Deprivation Index Coding of all DARE applicants;
- Implementation of SharePoint for internal communications;
- Establishment of more streamlined structures for management of HEAR & DARE;
- Provision of Transition Reports to students with sensory disabilities on entry to HE.

Outcomes

- Addressing deficit in entry to HE from DEIS schools;
- Greater efficiency in management of HEAR & DARE;
- Improved management information for HEAR & DARE;
- Easing of transition into HE for students with sensory disabilities;
- Involvement of CAO in data management.

IUA: Full Economic Costing

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Partners: All universities

Building on the conceptual framework for a full economic costing system developed under SIF 1, this project entailed the design and implementation of a FEC model across all Irish universities. The purpose of the system is to facilitate the allocation of all of the expenditure incurred by an institution to its primary activities (under the categories teaching, research, and other) in order to determine their full cost. This is intended to inform an institution's strategic management and decision-making, to provide greater transparency in relation to university expenditure for external stakeholders, and to inform research sustainability through the development of an accurate overhead rate for research activities.

Outputs

- The development and implementation of a FEC model across all Irish universities;
- The production of institutional and sectoral output reports;
- The agreement of a sectoral average cost of teaching per student in each subject price group, and of sectoral and institutional indirect cost rates for research.

These project outputs are presented with the caveat that there have been concerns about the integrity of some of the data inputs into the FEC and the impact of this on its preliminary outputs.

Outcomes

- Greater harmonisation of data definitions across universities;
- Greater collaboration and information sharing at a sectoral level;
- Greater awareness of the true cost of institutions' core activities;
- Improved management information;
- Enhanced accountability and transparency.

With enhanced data collection over time, potential outcomes of the FEC include:

- Monetary savings from the elimination of inefficiencies;
- Improved distribution and prioritisation of resources;
- Enhanced performance that results from improved benchmarking;
- Improvements to the Recurrent Grant Allocation Model (RGAM) to more accurately reflect the cost of teaching and research.

IUA: Sectoral Human Resource Capacity Building

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Partners: All universities

This project enhanced the capacity of the university sector to manage and plan human resource development more effectively and strategically.

Outputs

- Submission to the DES of a comprehensive list of entry grades and associated pay scales for the universities;
- Agreement with HEA on Departures and University Corporations Frameworks;
- Annual IUA HR conferences.;
- Development of a structured system of career development and associated remuneration architecture for university researchers (in collaboration with the VPs of Research, Registrars and Finance Officers);
- The rollout of workload models.

Outcomes

- Enhanced implementation of the Public Service Agreement (PSA);
- Coordinated response to the Employment Control Framework;
- Collective engagement on HR aspects of Report of the Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure Programmes;
- Collective engagement on HR aspects of the proposals put forward in the "Universities Action Plan for Sustainable Economic Renewal";

- The rollout of workload models has been recognised as a key element in improving efficiency and increasing transparency and the network are exploring instituting more formalized systems of workload management;
- Development of strong collaborative relationships with various government agencies and departments;
- Provision for the following has been identified under the PSA and the associated implementation plans:
 - Workload allocation systems;
 - An additional hour per week whose utilisation is to be directed by management;
 - Increments linked to performance;
 - A revised performance management system.
- Significant administrative streamlining for both the DES and HEA through the creation of a single point of contact for sectoral issues;
- Refinement of the Employment Control Framework II was critical to ensuring the continued effective functioning of the universities, especially in the research area;
- Closer collaboration between institutions (and with sub-groups critical to the HR functions) across a wide range of HR issues leading to a greater consistency and harmonisation;
- Greater information sharing and dissemination;
- Increased understanding within institutions of the challenging HR agenda;
- The HR Directors group have been endorsed as a formal standing committee of the IUA Council;
- Agreed commitment to the shared services agenda;
- Implementation of Garda vetting of prospective employees in university sector;
- Extensive discussion of industrial relations issues to ensure that a coordinated approach is taken to addressing these across the universities.

IUA: Towards an Integrated Knowledge Transfer Platform

Partners: All universities

This project investigated the feasibility of developing an integrated, web-based platform to showcase Irish research globally and, in addition, built a prototype for this platform (expertiseireland.com). The platform was conceived as a portal of Irish researchers which would highlight the quality of Irish research and thereby help to attract the best researchers to Ireland. It was also conceived as a means of facilitating networking between academics, and between industry and academia; of integrating the existing research support systems of the universities to provide a comprehensive national database on knowledge experts in Ireland; and of assessing and benchmarking the research output of Irish universities.

Outputs

- The feasibility of developing an integrated, web-based platform to showcase Irish research was investigated and a report published;
- A blueprint for a national platform to promote research expertise and capabilities in Ireland was developed.

Outcomes

- The technological infrastructure for the establishment of an online portal showcasing research expertise and capabilities in Ireland has been developed;
- The feasibility of establishing such an online platform, and the benefits that would accrue from this, have been established.

LIT: Shannon Consortium Strand 4: Library Network Support Services

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The Library Network Support Services (LNSS) project was ranked 5 in the *Report of the SIF Evaluation* and was consequently terminated in the HEA's 2010 mid-year review of the SIF. The LNSS project comprised two strands pertaining to information literacy and library staff development respectively. The project website was launched in February 2009, and evaluation of the project is on-going.

The aims of the information literacy component of the project were to select, develop, implement, and evaluate a suite of information literacy initiatives to international standards across the partner institutions comprising the Shannon Consortium to provide a framework of support for learners.

Outputs of Information Literacy Strand

- March–September 2009: an information literacy awareness and training programme was provided for staff across the Shannon Consortium, further to which information literacy modules were delivered in institutions across the sector.
- The LNSS consortium customised, developed and rolled out the Epigeum Research Skills Online programme, comprising 15 courses for researchers and postgraduates; and a suite of 9 modules in information literacy for undergraduates.
- The consortium hosted a wide range of training events for students and staff, including workshops, seminars, classes and information sessions, on these newly available online resources.
- New online courses and assessment exercises on referencing, citation, and plagiarism integrated into curricula.

- As part of an international consortium of 12 higher education institutions, LNSS are currently developing a new suite of online student study modules— Student Study Skills Online—covering topics such as academic writing, reading skills, note-taking, and examination techniques.
- LNSS hosted the LILAC Librarians Information Literacy International Conference (March 2010).
- LNSS will host two further international library conferences: the International Conference on Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Libraries (2012) and the International Symposium on Information Management in a Changing World (2013).

The library staff development component of the project involved the sharing of library staff development opportunities across the Shannon Consortium with the aim of supporting skills development and innovative practice amongst library staff.

Outputs of Library Staff Development Strand

- Online survey of skills required undertaken and results analysed.
- LNSS ran a range of library staff development courses across the consortium in areas such as:
 - Presentation Skills for Library Staff
 - Designing and Implementing Portals
 - Web 2.0 in a Library Environment
 - Digitisation
 - Learning & Information Literacy in Web 2.0
 - Metadata
 - Marketing Information Literacy
 - Advancing Internet Searching Skills
 - Developing & Exploiting e-Book Collections
 - Copyright Seminar
- LNSS pioneered the first online course in Web 2.0 for librarians in Ireland through the roll-out of the *23 things* online course across the Consortium. The course is on social networking tools, such as blogs, wikis, uTube, and Flickr, and their role in libraries and education.
- Reflective practice programme designed and rolled-out.

Outcomes

- Increase in student numbers attending information literacy courses.
- Efficiency savings: information literacy programmes made available to staff and students across the Shannon Consortium.
- Improvements in teaching quality.
- Enhanced networking amongst library professionals.

LIT: Work-Based Learning Approach to Progression for Craft Persons on the NFQ

Contact: Ms. Mona Khan, SIF Project Coordinator, LIT
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Partners: ITT, ITC

This project aimed to develop and pilot a work-based learning progression route, from NFQ level 6 to level 8, for craft-persons across LIT and IT Carlow, with the potential for further roll-out across other institutes of technology.

Outputs

- An NFQ level 7 programme, a B.Sc. in Management (Craft) was developed in line with NQAI award-descriptors to build on the skills developed on the NFQ level 6 Advanced Craft Certificate and thereby to broaden and deepen the generic competences of the qualified craftsperson. Specifically geared towards unemployed craftspersons who hold a level 6 qualification, it is a one-year degree course which provides management, business, and communication skills to enhance participants' employment prospects and to enable them to establish their own businesses.
- The B.Sc. in Management (Craft) was validated in June 2009 and was rolled-out in IT Carlow and, in 2010, in LIT, with positive results and feed-back from students.

Outcomes

- A template has been developed for work-based learning programmes delivered on a flexible basis;
- Enhancement of skills-base of craftspersons;
- Enhanced inter-institutional collaboration.

LYIT: North–West Gateway Strategic Alliance

Contact: Mr. Danny Brennan, Registrar, LYIT.
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Partners: UU

The aim of the North–West Gateway Strategic Alliance was to develop a blueprint for the significant upgrading of higher education capacity in the North–West and border region, as called for in the *National Development Plan (NDP) 2007–2013*, through cooperation between LYIT and UU in the pursuit of their mutual ambition to develop a learner-centred ethos, enhance the quality of programme provision, improve student support services, and to actively support initiatives to develop the region,

especially in terms of workforce development. The scoping study aimed to provide a full picture of the status quo of higher education in the region—in terms of the opportunities for collaboration, views of stakeholders, the needs of the region, the respective operating environments of the partner institutions and possible models for achieving the aims of the project—as a basis for the design of a blueprint for the strategic alliance. The blueprint was conceived as a mechanism for building additional in higher education in the region, within the context of national priorities, institutional strategies and missions, and ‘best practice’ in higher education collaboration.

Outputs

- Publication of a scoping study on the optimum development of higher education in the region. The report, produced in collaboration with external consultants (Indecon Intl and London Economics), recommended that higher education provision in the region should be augmented through strategic collaboration between LYIT and UU. It identified collaborative opportunities and key requirements across the areas of undergraduate and postgraduate course development; lifelong learning; research; technology / knowledge-exchange.
- May 2009: a joint statement was issued by LYIT and UU endorsing the findings of the scoping study.
- Development of a PRTL Cycle 5 proposal for the North–West Doctoral Programme.
- Preparation of a submission under the INTERREG Programme for the establishment of a North–West Regional Science Park (NWRSP) to stimulate the establishment and development of high-quality technology and knowledge-based businesses in the region.

Outcomes

- Enhanced collaboration and strategic cooperation between LYIT and UU;
- Joint programme development and project proposals;
- While it was not possible to develop a final agreed blueprint, it is hoped to further the project’s objectives through the formation of a regional cluster.

NUIG: NUI Galway–GMIT Strategic Partnership (Knowledge Region)

Contact: Mr. Michael Kavanagh, Academic Secretary, Office of the Registrar and Deputy President, NUIG
Email: mkavanagh@nuigalway.ie

Partners: GMIT

This project aimed to enhance regional and national development through the articulation of the differentiation and complementarity of the missions of GMIT and

NUIG, and through strategic cooperation between the two institutions, to create of a Galway 'knowledge region'. The project fostered inter-institutional collaboration in the areas of research, teaching, curriculum development, access, and lifelong learning, the breadth and depth of which will be enhanced in future years. The achievements of the project have been extended to other higher education institutions in the BMW region through the Lónra network.

Outcomes

- Greater collaboration between GMIT & NUIG across a range of areas and initiatives, including the development of RPL policies; the development of teaching, learning and assessment strategies; staff development provision; research initiatives; equipment sharing; and the development of shared progression pathways from foundation to degree courses.

NUIG: Online Mental Health and Well-Being Portal

<https://mymindmatters.ie/>

Contact: Ms. Bea Gavin, Head of Student Counselling Service, NUIG
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Partners: DKIT, UCC, TCD

The purpose of this project was to provide students with access to a range of computerised mental health services through an online portal comprising four elements:

1. Publicly accessible psycho-educational materials on a range of topics presented in a variety of multi-media formats;
2. Semi-private and licensed online programmes;
3. Confidential and secure access to moderated, peer-support discussion boards and e-counselling;
4. Management and reporting tools with a repository for professional practice-based materials, such as policies, protocols, and reports.

It therefore seeks to harness the potential of new technology to contribute to positive student mental health and academic success, it being widely accepted that the former is crucial for the latter.

Outputs

- Establishment of an online mental health and well-being portal (mymindmatters.ie);
- As at March 2013, there had been 83,423 unique visitors to the site; 157,867 page views; 10 applications for online counselling; and 7 'Ask a Counsellor'

questions. [N.b. these figures should be understood within the context of very limited advertising of the site due to on-going technical difficulties.]

Outcomes

- Enhanced mental health and counselling resources for students;
- Positive impact on the mental health of students in participating institutions: on two occasions suicide risks were communicated and managed through the site.

NUIM: Data Information Systems for Strategic Decision Making

Contact: Professor James A. Walsh, Vice-President for Strategy and Quality, NUIM
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Partners: None

This project enabled NUIM to develop a suite of key performance indicators (KPIs) and data collection resources to inform strategic decision-making, and to address the deficits in established data collection processes through the introduction of a number of student surveys. It also facilitated the establishment of an institutional Research Officer in NUI Maynooth, thereby enabling the institution's participation in the IUA's Institutional Research Group. This Group has been active in establishing standardised data measures and definitions for the sector, and is engaged in the design of a national student survey.

Outputs

- Establishment of an institutional research office;
- Establishment of procedures and protocols for data management at institutional level;
- Development of a suite of KPIs for NUIM;
- Development of student feedback surveys;
- Preparation of reports on staff and student statistics and examination results by class size;
- Preparation of data for submission to international university rankings;
- Pilot of an academic workload model.

Outcomes

- Governance of the university is supported by the availability of KPI data;
- Enhanced monitoring of access and retention as basis for developing responses;
- Feedback on the student experience informs institutional decision-making.

TCD: Deaf Studies

<http://www.tcd.ie/slscs/cds/>

Contact: Dr. Lorraine Leeson, Director, Centre for Deaf Studies, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences, TCD
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Partners: TCD, ITB

Trinity College Dublin's Centre for Deaf Studies (CDS) was established in 2001 to deliver two-year undergraduate diplomas in (i) Irish Sign Language/English Interpreting, (ii) Irish Sign Language Teaching, and (iii) Deaf Studies. As well as establishing these courses, the CDS has been prolific in research, developing a strong international profile in several sub-disciplines of deaf studies.

The SIF 2 'Deaf Studies' project aimed to consolidate the achievements of the CDS to provide a national resource for the discipline. Specifically its objectives were to deliver a Bachelor degree, as a two-year 'add-on' course to which graduates of the diploma courses could progress; to develop digital teaching and learning materials to support blended learning in deaf studies; and to pursue research into aspects of deaf studies in order to support teaching and learning in the area.

Outputs

- Development of extensive multimodal digital course content across a range of topics available on the Deaf Studies in Europe Moodle portal;
- Creation by ITB of a plug-in for Moodle to facilitate the roll-out of content delivered with Irish sign language alongside text-based content;
- Publication of numerous books, book chapters, and journal articles on deaf studies;
- Delivery of numerous conference presentations, as well as appearances by CDS staff members on RTÉ;
- Hosting of workshops, seminars, and other events in partnership with a range of stakeholders;
- Three deaf staff members have undertaken Masters' level qualifications linked directly to their work.

Outcomes

- Significant increase in participation rates of students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing;
- Upskilling of staff in the CDS;
- Excellent employment rate amongst CDS graduates, who are facilitating increased access to education, employment and public services by deaf people in Ireland;

- Fifty-seven of the 83 trained Irish sign-language (ISL) interpreters in Ireland, of which there is a critical shortage, are CDS graduates, who are now serving the 6,500 deaf ISL users across Ireland;
- Twenty-seven of the 34 trained ISL teachers in Ireland are CDS graduates;
- Raised international awareness of the work of the CDS, with CDS staff frequently invited to give talks about the Centre's digitisation work;
- In 2010, CDS was ranked in the top three European programmes by the World Association of Sign Language Interpreters;
- In 2013 the CDS will host a large meeting of the European Forum of Sign Language Trainers, providing a further opportunity to show-case the achievements of the Deaf Studies project;
- CDS is regularly called on to advise national agencies (including the National Council for Special Education, the Equality Authority, and the Courts Services) on issues relating to deafness;
- CDS has secured funding from the European Commission's Leonardo da Vinci and Grundvig Programmes to support the development of multimodal digital content;
- CDS is the first to be awarded funding for a project on signed languages by the European Council for Modern Languages (Council of Europe). The project, led by the CDS, aims to align sign-language curricula to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

TCD: Roll-Out of the Certificate in Contemporary Living

Contact: Dr. Eoin O'Sullivan, Acting NIID Director & Ms. Niamh Lally, Project Coordinator, National Institute for Intellectual Disability (NIID)
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Partners: UCC

The National Institute for Intellectual Disability (NIID) has working alliances with a range of Schools across Trinity in the development of disability-focused education, research, and advocacy. A major collaborative venture of the NIID has been the development of the Certificate in Contemporary Living (CCL), on which 20 students with intellectual disabilities enrol annually to complete a 10-module course over a two-year period, comprising modules in transferable skills, humanities and expressive arts, as well as an 'Inclusive Studies' module in which students attend a sample of mainstream lectures in a discipline of their choice.

The SIF project facilitated the piloting of CCL curriculum materials across 5 HEIs as a basis for the evidenced-based development of the course, thereby improving access to higher education for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Specifically the project aimed to develop curriculum materials in a publishable format; to establish a national network of experts dedicated to the provision of inclusive higher education programmes; to provide training to staff across institutions; to monitor the

implementation of the CCL and to refine it on the basis of emergent evidence; and to undertake an action-based research project incorporating these aims.

Outputs

- Production and dissemination of handbooks of CCL curriculum materials;
- Five HEIs (UCC, DKIT, MIC, St. Angela's College, Sligo, and WIT) piloted CCL curriculum materials;
- Data gathered by NIID on the piloting of CCL curriculum materials in other HEIs, with whom surveys and telephone interviews were also conducted;
- CCL curriculum re-developed to reflect the results of the research on its piloting in other HEIs, resulting in the development of three new streams—in employment, education and civic engagement—as well as in the development of documentation to support the placement of the Certificate on the NFQ;
- The establishment of a national network of experts dedicated to the provision of inclusive higher education programmes comprising higher education staff from 6 HEIs and 20 disability service-providers and advocates;
- The provision of staff training and mentoring to HR and academic staff in 5 participating HEIs in the delivery of the CCL curriculum, lecturing strategies, the interviewing and selection of students, and their pastoral care. Fourteen tutor training days were held, creating a body of 60 higher education staff trained in areas relating to inclusive higher education across Ireland. Fifteen site-visits were undertaken to mentor staff and collect data via focus groups and interviews with tutors, students and their families.

Outcomes

- Strengthening of inter-departmental relationships across participating HEIs;
- Increased systemic advocacy for inclusive higher education and for the CCL programme;
- Greater understanding of the drivers of, and barriers to, broadening access to higher education for individuals with intellectual disabilities;
- Increased participation in higher education of students with intellectual disabilities—120 students enrolled in 6 Irish HEIs for the first time;
- Increased capacity for participation in higher education of students with intellectual disabilities;
- Enhancement of the international profile of TCD as a leader in the promotion of the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities in higher education.

UCC: Developing Fourth-Level Infrastructure

Contact: Professor Alan Kelly, Dean of Graduate Studies, UCC
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Partners: NUIG

The objectives of this project were to develop a graduate school infrastructure for UCC and NUIG to complement the structure of each institution; to underpin the achievement of national targets to increase the number of Ph.D. graduates; and to enhance the quality of graduate education in each university. In both partner institutions a graduate school was initially piloted in the area of the arts/Celtic studies/social sciences, with the subsequent development of additional schools in other disciplinary areas following. The project underpinned the development of a full graduate school structure in both UCC and NUIG.

Outputs

- The development of a full graduate school structure in each partner institution.
- Agreement of key functions, structures and practices of graduate schools;
- Support for key staff to manage and lead graduate education through the graduate schools.

Outcomes

- Enhancement of the infrastructure for graduate education in the partner institutions;
- Staff and practices in place to support graduate education at college level (i.e. between university-level and departments/schools) in each university;
- Stronger advocacy of graduate education within institutions.

UCC: Institutional Reform

Contact: Ms. Mary Ward, Change Programme Manager, Human Resources, UCC.
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Partners: UCD

UCC's Institutional Reform project built on the achievements of the SIF 1-funded Change Management initiatives through which the university's institutional restructuring was pursued. The Institutional Reform project supported the development of a devolved organisational structure within each of UCC's constituent colleges, as well as the delivery of a UCC Leadership Development Programme to support the management team's delivery of UCC's strategic objectives for 2006–2011.

Outputs

- Comprehensive training needs-analysis of University Management Group (UMG);

- Provision of training for UMG, including leadership development workshops and provision of tailored mentoring and coaching;
- Development and implementation of revised management structure for UCC;
- Review of central functions in the Registrar’s Office & HR and revised implementation plan for these.

Outcomes

- Enhancement of management skills across UCC;
- Establishment of a devolved organisational structure facilitating local decision-making and academic and administrative flexibility;
- Restructured Registrar’s Office & HR Office.

UCC: Widening Participation

Contact: Mr. Martin Flynn, Pathways Project Manager, Access Office, UCC
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Partners: CIT

Bridges to Learning

This project aimed to widen access to higher education for learners at all stages of the educational life-cycle in the Cork region through work with schools, community-based groups, and voluntary/statutory agencies. The project comprised the following elements:

- Assistive Technology Disability Initiative, which aims to improve access to higher education for students with disabilities through the promotion of assistive educational technologies;
- Home–School–Family Links initiative, which aims to improve access to higher education by students who, for socio-economic reasons, have not traditionally availed of it through the implementation of an access framework;
- Science & Technology Teaching & Learning Centre (now named the Eureka Centre), which aims to increase participation by under-represented groups, and in particular to support participation in science and technology.

These projects were synergised with existing access services in UCC and CIT, and in the wider community.

Outputs

Assistive Technology Disability Initiative

- Employment of an assistive technology coordinator;

- Provision of training in assistive technology to teachers, parents, and students across the Cork and Kerry regions;
- Promotion of assistive technology through a wide and extensive range of workshops, events, and major exhibitions;
- An assistive technology awareness and training programme was rolled out in 9 clusters of schools and colleges in the Cork area;
- Provision of a library of assistive technology software and hardware to schools, teachers, and students on a loaned basis.

Home–School–Family Links initiative

- Employment of two school co-ordinators (primary and secondary);
- A range of arts, music, and sports events provided on campus to primary school pupils in 10 DEIS schools and to secondary school pupils in 3 DEIS schools;
- CPD in speech and language development, testing of pupils by a speech and language therapist, in-class oral language sessions delivered in conjunction with a speech and language therapist, and in-class sessions delivered by a professional story-teller in 10 DEIS primary schools in Cork;
- Science and maths workshops, and TRIZ workshops and showcase events delivered in 10 DEIS primary schools in Cork and 3 DEIS secondary schools;
- Implementation of a demystifying third level (Professor Fluffy) initiative that aimed to raise awareness of the impact of education on improving career and life opportunities and directed towards 5th class pupils;
- Assistive technology was loaned and distributed, and training in the software provided to teachers at both primary and secondary level.

Science & Technology Teaching & Learning Centre

- Employment of a science and technology teaching co-ordinator;
- Establishment of a state-of-the-art teaching resource centre (now named the Eureka Centre) and VLE to support teaching and learning in science and technology in secondary schools;
- A wide and extensive range of educational opportunities provided for secondary school-pupils, including forensic science training, an astrophysics lecture, an electronics module, tuition in sensor technology, grinds and tutorials in applied mathematics, delivery of a ‘Women in Science’ seminar, a Junior Science Quiz, and training in investigative science;
- Up-skilling of teachers in specific areas of science; lectures delivered to teachers on a new syllabus for an electronics course, and on VLE software; and training in technology, Greenmath (algebra software), and forensic science provided;
- Applied mathematics quizzes organised and facilitated for 21 secondary schools in Cork region on an annual basis.

Outcomes

Assistive Technology Disability Initiative

- Awareness of the benefits of assistive technology raised and ongoing practical support and training provided;
- Increase in the number of students with a disability accessing higher education in UCC and CIT;
- Continuation of assistive technology role and delivery of workshops across region (now expanded through involvement with the SWRAA).

Home–School–Family Links Initiative

- Improved literacy and numeracy of primary-school pupils in disadvantaged areas;
- Continuation of joint access activities and co-ordination between UCC and CIT;
- Continuation and expansion of the ‘Demystifying Third Level (Professor Fluffy) Initiative’ to a greater number of DEIS primary schools;
- Up-skilling of primary and secondary school teachers in areas such as speech/language and assistive technology.

Science & Technology Teaching & Learning Centre

- Greater proficiency amongst secondary school pupils in science and technology;
- Up-skilling of secondary-school teachers in science and technology;
- Eureka Centre is a key component of science outreach activities to schools in the region.

Connections

- Linking up with regional networks in Dublin, Galway, Limerick, and Waterford, this project aimed to inform national policy for fostering equity of access to higher education by evaluating data from HEIs as a basis for the provision of support.
- Drawing on existing data, it sought to determine the participation rates in higher education in the disadvantaged communities targeted under the ‘Bridges to Learning’ project; and to promote inclusive strategies within the region based on this evaluation and consideration of the success of widening participation initiatives.

Outputs

- Development of the Pathways website;

- Publication of the *Students with Disabilities Tracking Report—2005 Intake: An Analysis of Their Progression, Retention, and Success Through Higher Education Institutions*;
- Hosting of the 'Pathways to Education Connections Conference' (28th–29th April 2010) in UCC, attended by over 130 delegates, and featuring 6 keynote speeches as well as 45 presentations in 20 parallel sessions. Topics covered included all aspects of widening participation in FE and HE, and included strong representation from community and voluntary organisations;
- Publication of the proceedings of the Pathways to Education Connections Conference (July 2011);
- Evaluation of three oral literacy projects aiming to enhance the speech and language skills of young children from disadvantaged areas of Cork city through the provision of CPD for adults and teachers, and through classroom interventions;
- Evaluation of the 'Demystifying Third-Level (Professor Fluffy) Initiative', which aims to raise the goals and expectations of primary-school children in respect of higher education;
- Design and implementation of a Results-Based Management Framework (RBM) for monitoring the effectiveness of access interventions;
- Research project on adult learners in Cork conducted by UCC and CIT to ascertain the profile of adult learners returning to education; the barriers that impede adults' progression into higher education; and the impact of the relationship between educational providers on facilitating this progression;
- Surveying of adult learners in higher education in the Munster region, based on data collated in two surveys undertaken in 2009 and 2010;
- The roll-out of the Certificate in Contemporary Living in UCC in 2009.

Outcomes

- Formation, in collaboration with the Shannon Consortium, of the South–West Regional Access Alliance (SWRAA);
- Greater inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities in UCC;
- Improved access to HE for adult learners and promotion of lifelong learning;
- Dissemination of good practice in widening participation through the Pathways to Education Connections Conference and the Pathways website;
- Enhancement of the access services in UCC and CIT through improved monitoring and evaluation of the outputs and outcomes of initiatives.

UL: Shannon Consortium Procurement Network (SCPN)

[http://www2.ul.ie/web/WWW/Services/Finance/Procurement and Supply Chain Office/Shannon Consortium Procurement Network](http://www2.ul.ie/web/WWW/Services/Finance/Procurement_and_Supply_Chain_Office/Shannon_Consortium_Procurement_Network)

Contact: Mr. Philip Gurnett, Procurement & Supply Chain Manager, UL
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Partners: LIT, ITT, MIC

The Shannon Consortium Procurement Network (SCPN) is a regional strategic alliance for procuring goods and services. It was the first financial shared services model to be implemented within the Irish higher education sector, and it has been hugely successful in streamlining procurement services and achieving efficiencies through centralised tendering for goods and services, such as electricity, mobile phones, couriers and office supplies.

Outcomes

- In respect of 2009 alone, the Network reported savings of approximately €480k in electricity charges across the partners in the consortium—an average saving of 17%.
- The SCPN has acted as service provider for procurement exercises outside the consortium including a highly publicised tender for electricity involving NUIG and the other HEIs participating in the Lionra collaboration throughout the BMW region, resulting in significant savings; and tenders for legal services involving other HEIs.
- Following a HEA efficiency workshop at which the achievements of the project were outlined, a further eight higher education institutions joined the network for the specific purpose of tendering for electricity. Annual savings in electricity costs across the enlarged network are estimated at €850k representing approximately 25% of annual costs.
- HEIs that have joined the Network benefit from the centralisation of complex tendering procedures and an accompanying reduction in administrative burden, as well as from an increase in purchasing power by larger volume purchases.
- The Network has provided a prototype for financial shared services in Irish higher education, demonstrating that opportunities for local arrangements can be maintained even in a shared procurement system.
- The success of the Network can be gauged from the fact that it is now being sustained through an annual contribution from the partner institutions to UL for the procurement service.

UL: Shannon Consortium Strand 1—Widening Participation

Partners: LIT, ITT, MIC

Strand 1A—Targeting Social Disadvantage (Regeneration)

Class of 2014 Programme

Contact: Ms. Elaine Byrnes, Class of 2014 Programme Coordinator, UL.
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Located at St. Enda's Community School, Southill, Limerick—a Local Authority housing estate with high crime-rates and high levels of deprivation—the Class of 2014 programme was established in September 2008 in order to increase the retention and attainment levels of the School's first-year entry cohort, and their progression to further and higher education. The initiative worked with this cohort throughout their secondary education through a series of sustained, intensive interventions, devised in collaboration with partners in the school and community—such as in-school support, after-school activities, and summer programmes—to support them to complete their schooling and to progress to further and higher education. Specifically the project aimed to

- Increase pupils' aspiration levels;
- Increase pupils' overall attainment levels;
- Improve performance in specific subject-areas;
- Address the psychological impact of pupils' life-experiences;
- Enhance the delivery of instruction and resources provided to pupils;
- Improve pupils' retention in, and progression through, education;
- Encourage teachers to deal innovatively with problems arising from educational disadvantage;
- Promote active involvement of parents in supporting children's educational progress;
- Promote active cooperation between families, schools, and community-partners in advancing the children's educational interests;
- Maximise the engagement of community stakeholders in advancing educational interest of pupils.

Outputs

- Provision of counselling for pupils;
- Administration of psychometric tests for pupils;
- Provision of life-coaching for parents, commencing in May 2009;
- Delivery of tuition in mathematics by students from NCE-MSTL;
- Mapping of services delivered to school by stakeholders;
- Development of strategy for delivery of interventions and services to St. Enda's;
- Individual reflective practice sessions held with pupils by project coordinator;
- Recruitment of 13 student-teachers to deliver after-school tuition;
- Delivery of tuition in six subject-areas: mathematics, science, business studies, English, Irish, and history;
- Home-visits undertaken by project coordinator;
- Provision of 'taster' programmes in mechanics, sports, science and engineering;
- Provision of assistive technology support for students with special needs;
- Focus groups held with parents from the southside of Limerick, in collaboration with the Community Liaison Officer;

- Development and delivery of pilot-programme: ‘Your Knowledge, Their Future: Empowering Parents in Education’;
- Delivery of cross-curricula activity programmes, and of Cybercamp to pupils;
- Hosting of awards ceremony for participants in ‘Your Knowledge, Their Future’ programme;
- Provision of science and engineering summer camp.

Outcomes

- Increase in St. Enda’s intake in 2008/09 school-year;
- 100% retention of pupils in ‘class of 2014’;
- Greater engagement in after-school activities;
- Improvement in pupils’ test scores;
- Enhancement of pupils’ levels of aspiration and self-esteem;
- Improved attendance by parents at parent–teacher meetings;
- Improved parental understanding of the education systems and structures;
- Development of partnerships between St. Enda’s, the local community, and educational agencies;
- Support leveraged from SIF consortia and Shannon Consortium institutions for school initiatives.

Embracing a Holistic Ecological Educational Perspective

Contact: Dr. Ann Higgins, Senior Facilitator, Transforming Education Through Dialogue Project, MIC.
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This programme was embedded in the Transforming Education Through Dialogue project undertaken within the Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) of MIC. It aimed to champion the cause of children experiencing educational disadvantage by working pro-actively to build partnerships between key stakeholders, and by identifying strategic and innovative responses to issues of educational attainment and inclusion. It facilitated collaboration between key stakeholders within the educational landscape in Limerick city, including the DES, the Children’s Services Committee (CSC), 16 DEIS band 1 primary schools and 6 DEIS band 1 secondary schools.

Outputs

- ‘How are Our Kids’ research project undertaken to provide a snapshot of the quality of children’s lives across Limerick city, and to inform policy development and planning across a number of sectors;
- Work undertaken with the Limerick offices of the DES to secure Dormant Accounts funding to maximise the use of school facilities for the community;
- MIC representation on the Quality Development of Out-of-School Services (QDOSS) group, which is dedicated to the promotion of positive outcomes for young people experiencing educational and social disadvantage;
- Workshops and training delivered to the after-school sector;

- Workshops and lectures delivered to undergraduate and postgraduate students in MIC to provide insight into issues of educational disadvantage and how to address this.

Outcomes

- Facilitation of development of initiatives to enable schools and communities to address issues which create barriers to access and lifelong learning;
- Identification, in partnership with key stakeholders in Limerick city, of sustainable and effective means to promote educational attainment and equality;
- Raised awareness of issues of educational disadvantage amongst stakeholders.

Learning Buddies

<http://www.learninghub.ie/>

Contact: Jennifer Moroney Ward, Learning Buddies Project Manager, Learning Hub, Limerick.
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The Learning Buddies project provided mentoring by higher education students for primary and secondary-school pupils, with whom they worked in project teams to support progression through primary and secondary education, and on into higher education. Based in the Learning Hub in Limerick, the Learning Buddies project team worked in collaboration with the Limerick-based Shannon Consortium institutions to identify higher education student mentors.

Outputs

- October 2008–June 2011: 138 projects / workshops supported, mostly involving primary and secondary-school pupils, with some adult education programmes also being delivered;
- During 2009 193 primary and secondary-level pupils participated in Learning Buddies programmes;
- By the end of 2010, the ‘Learning Buddies’ approach had been integrated into all projects delivered by the Learning Hub, with higher education students recognised as a key resource for schools in the region;
- 2011: official launch of the Learning Hub to celebrate the 999-year lease given to the organisation by the Salesian Sisters, and the opening of two new facilities—the Music Hub and the Science Hub—supported by Shannon Consortium institutions;
- Relaunch of Learning Hub website, and development and dissemination of quarterly newsletter;
- Creation of a Story Hub for creative writing by primary-level pupils, facilitated by volunteer students from UL, MIC and IT Tralee;

- 132 mentors trained to participate in Learning Buddies projects with participating schools;
- Development of the Mentor Handbook and Learning Log.

Outcomes

- Greater participation in learning;
- Increased levels of social fluidity within a geographical area, including the ‘regeneration zone’ of Moyross.

Strategic Innovation in Education (SIE)

Contact: Mr. Neil Haran, Project Leader, Unit B6, LEDP, Roxboro, Limerick.
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Established in 2008, Strategic Innovation in Education (SIE) is a community-based initiative that aims to address educational inclusion issues through a wider social inclusion lens. Specifically it aims to overcome social disadvantage and promote social inclusion by enhancing the educational landscape of disadvantaged communities in Limerick and the region. It seeks to achieve this through strategic partnerships with a range of stakeholders, and through the mobilisation of their resources and expertise, along with those of the Shannon Consortium partner institutions, for the broader benefit of the community.

Outputs

- SIE assisted with a range of planning and development initiatives, including the development of a strategy for children’s services by the Limerick Children’s Services Committee (CSC); the establishment of a multi-agency ‘Citywide Forum in Support of Older People’; and the development of an assets-based approach to community development.
- SIE has provided strategic support and advice for the Start Right Consortium, which aims to develop a coordinated model of early-childhood education and care; and for the establishment of an educare centre for primary education on the south side of Limerick city.
- Since the beginning of 2011, SIE has made a consultant with expertise in literacy available to the Department of Education and Skills to assist with literacy-focused strategic planning in DEIS primary schools.
- SIE staff have played a significant role in the organisation of the Festival of Lifelong Learning organised by the Limerick City of Learning Group—a sub-group of the Limerick City Development Board.
- SIE has adopted an advisory role to the National Education Welfare Board and the National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS);
- 2 speech and language positions were created in UL to support the NBSS’s programme of work in Limerick schools.
- Appointment of a Community Liaison Office (CSO) in UL to overcome barriers to university–community engagement activities.

- SIE has hosted and presented a variety of community-based learning events including two major conferences—‘Having a Voice’ conference and ‘Assets-Based Approach to Youth Development’ conference—in May 2009.

Outcomes

- Increased recognition of the need for long-term, strategic and systemic change to foster better outcomes for disadvantaged individuals and communities;
- Increased understanding of the needs, interests, and capacities of disadvantaged citizens across the lifecycle;
- Increased evidence-based planning and action;
- Mobilisation of residents to play a leadership role in the regeneration of their communities;
- Increased debate on key inclusion concepts;
- Enhanced strategic focus on ageing well in disadvantaged communities;
- 2009: SIE secured investment of €500k from Atlantic Philanthropies, with matching investment from the Limerick Regeneration Agency, for the project;
- December 2010: SIE secured three-year investment of €2 million from Atlantic Philanthropies, with matched funding of €2 million from the Limerick Regeneration Agency, for the ‘Supporting Social Inclusion and Regeneration in Limerick’ (SSIRL) initiative.

Strand 1B—Regional Learning Gateways

i.) Ennis Regional Learning Centre

Contact: Ms. Anne Griffin, Project Administrator, Ennis Regional Learning Centre, Clare County Museum, Arthur’s Row, Ennis, Co. Clare.
Email: anne.griffin@lit.ie

The Ennis Regional Learning Centre is a strategic collaborative outreach initiative through which the Shannon Consortium engages with local communities to expand access to, and participation in, higher education in the region. The Ennis Regional Learning Centre is centrally located in the Clare County Museum maximising visibility and accessibility for the general public to information and support services in relation to higher education in the region. Clare is the only county in Munster without a dedicated institute of technology or university, and Ennis Regional Learning Centre is the first initiative to offer both institute of technology and university undergraduate programmes in the county.

The Centre works in partnership with local agencies in Co. Clare to enable the Consortium to increase access and develop mainstream lifelong-learning activities in the county by opening up higher education temporally and physically. It offers mainstream courses from Shannon Consortium institutions on an outreach basis in Clare, creating innovative, flexible modes of delivery for mainstream higher education. This provides flexible access to existing certificate, diploma and degree

courses for students from diverse backgrounds in the county. Information and guidance on accessing higher education is also provided thus enabling adults to consider all their learning options and navigate various routes to access higher education in the region.

The Centre is strongly supported by local bodies, such as Clare VEC, Clare County Council, Clare Lifelong Learning Network, and Ennis Chamber of Commerce.

Outputs

- Establishment of Ennis RLC in a central location in Co. Clare;
- Provision, since September 2009, of an additional 158 places on academic programmes (accredited and non-accredited) delivered by partner institutions in the Shannon Consortium;
- Establishment of cross-institutional and local governance structures for Ennis RLC;
- Co-delivery of Certificate in General Studies by Co. Clare VEC and Shannon Consortium partner institutions;
- Marketing campaign to raise awareness about Ennis RLC;
- Provision of education guidance and 'Return to Learning' seminars.

Outcomes

- Widening of access to, and increase in participation in, higher education in Co. Clare, particularly by mature students and students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

ii.) Killarney Regional Learning Centre

Contact: Ms. Brid McElligott, Head of Development, IT Tralee.
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The Killarney Regional Learning Centre (KRLC) is a higher education access, support and guidance centre based in Killarney. It seeks to improve access to higher education in the south-west region by providing services and programmes which create new pathways into undergraduate programmes for mature and other non-traditional students. To date the KRLC has provided part-time programmes leading to a Certificate in Entrepreneurship and to a Certificate in Business Management; 'Return to Education' and 'Entrepreneurship' workshops; an Energy Technology workshop; CAO application workshops; KRLC promotional workshops; and an LMA information session.

Outputs

- Minor Award Programmes delivered at KRLC, in which c.50 learners participated;

- c.200 adults received information and guidance from the Educational Guidance Service provided by KRLC with support from the Shannon Consortium's Downtown Centre and UL;
- 22 people attended an Energy Technology workshop hosted in collaboration with RVR Energy Technology Ltd (April 2010) to highlight employment opportunities in the area;
- Workshops in entrepreneurship, energy technology, and 'return to learning' hosted;
- KRLC / IT Tralee hosted workshops with Jobs Clubs in Tralee, Killorglin, and Killarney;
- Adult Education and Training Exhibition held in Killarney;
- Virtual e-learning environment piloted;
- KRLC used for delivery of FETAC courses and mentoring workshops by Kerry Educational Services and Kerry Enterprise Board respectively;
- Audit of current training and educational provision undertaken in partnership with Kerry Hub Social Strategy and other stakeholders.

Outcomes

- Enhanced engagement with education by adults in the region;
- Development of stakeholder partnerships with other education and training providers;
- Successful application for LMA funding in 2011/2012 by KRLC.

UL: Shannon Consortium Strand 2—Innovations in Teaching and Learning Support

Partners: LIT, ITT, MIC

Strand 2A—Regional Teaching and Learning Incubation Centre

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

Contact: Dr. Colin Fitzpatrick, Lecturer, Department of Electronic and Computer Engineering, & Chair Environmental Committee, UL.
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The Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) project sought to create a learning environment that demonstrates how an inter-dependent and mutually respectful relationship between the economy, society and the natural environment is essential for the well-being of future generations. It aimed to put sustainable development on the agenda in the classroom and across the campus. Informally the project created awareness of sustainable development through extra-curricular activities, campaigns, lecture series, promotions and changes to the campus and its operations. From the formal perspective it supported staff to increase their capacity to deliver

participatory, active-learning pertaining to sustainable development through existing modules as well as through the development of new modules and programmes.

Outputs

- September 2009: establishment of a UL Environmental Policy and Climate Commitment Working Group;
- Production of a draft UL environmental policy and CO₂ emission-reduction strategy, proposed to the university management in June 2010;
- Roll-out of courses by the Department of Lifelong Learning & Outreach on organic growing, delivered bi-annually by Jim Cronin, a local organic farmer;
- Delivery of staff training in education for sustainable development;
- September 2008: commencement of UL's Farmers' Market in SU courtyard;
- Inclusion of films on the environment and sustainable development in the UL Film Season;
- Production of a calendar to promote environmentally friendly work practices and increased environmental awareness on campus;
- Establishment of an annual Environment Week each March in UL's residential villages;
- Production and dissemination to freshers of a UL Green Guide to increase awareness of environmental issues on campus;
- April 2010: creation of the UL orchard;
- Development of a module on sustainable development delivered through the B.Sc. in Energy course for the first time in the spring semester of 2010;
- Spring 2010: delivery of guest lectures from Gavin Harte (<http://www.esdtraining.net/>) on sustainable development, attended by over 2,500 students. Lectures repeated in autumn 2010 semester;
- Allocation of seed-funding to faculty for initiatives to incorporate sustainable development into undergraduate programmes;
- Survey of students' attitudes to environmental sustainability undertaken;
- Presentation on project given at 'Re-Thinking Education' conference, Tipperary Institute, May 2010 & May 2011.

Outcomes

- Prioritisation of education for sustainable development in UL's *Strategic Plan 2011–2015* (<http://www2.ul.ie/pdf/897822806.pdf>);
- UL Environmental Committee secured an annual budget of €5k to sustain project activities;
- UL Farmers' Market has becoming self-financing, with pitch fees introduced;
- Enhancement of students' transferable skills, such as critical awareness, communication, decision-making and information management;
- Enhancement of existing capacity in the area of environmental awareness and sustainable development education in UL;
- Greater environmental awareness across UL campus among students and staff, and more broadly across region;

- Development of collaborative initiatives in the area with Tipperary Institute, GMIT and NUIG.

Inter-Institutional Peer-Supported Learning Centre (IPSLC)

Contact: Dr. Hussain Mahdi, Senior Lecturer, Department of Electronics and Computer Engineering, UL.
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The aim of this project was to set up a cross-institutional centre for the promotion of peer-supported learning that would build on the expertise in the area of the Shannon Consortium partner institutions, and particularly on UL's Peer-Supported Learning Groups (PSLG) in order to make the PSLG model available to staff and students across the Consortium via training, advice, and resources. The project also involved an investigation into the effectiveness of enquiry-based learning approaches when integrated into classroom-based science teaching.

Outputs

- Delivery of induction programmes and seminars about peer-supported learning to staff across the Shannon Consortium;
- Delivery of PSLG supervisor training workshops to staff planning to implement model on their courses;
- Delivery of PSLG student-leader training workshops;
- Provision of seed-funding to support departments to pilot peer-supported learning programmes;'
- Maintenance of a regional peer-supported learning centre website, with resources provided;
- IPSLC was founding member of the PAL Network, established in 2006 as a forum for the exchange of best practice in peer-supported learning;
- 2008: UL hosted the 3rd Annual PAL Net Conference;
- 2010: UL and AIT jointly hosted the 5th Annual PAL Net Conference.

Outcomes

- Enhancement of students' transferable skills;
- Facilitation of social transition of new students into higher education;
- Development of transferable skills (e.g. leadership and communication skills) among student-leaders;
- Enhanced student feedback to HEIs;
- Improved student retention rates;
- Embedding of generic skills into curricula;
- Greater awareness of benefits of peer-supported learning across region and across the higher education sector nationally.

<http://www.youngentrepreneur.ie/>

Contact: Ms. Anne Looney, Enterprise Education Officer, Centre for Entrepreneurship, Education and Development (CEED), IT Tralee.
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Through the Young Entrepreneur Programme (YEP, the Junior Entrepreneur Programme and Endeavour Programme, this project sought to cultivate the spirit of entrepreneurship in students in secondary and tertiary education in the region. Aimed at 15–23 year-olds, the programme provided timetabled classroom-teaching and web resources, as well as providing students with local business mentors. The programmes culminated in a Young Entrepreneur of the Year award ceremony. Training was provided in entrepreneurship education to educators and mentors.

Outputs

- 32 business mentors recruited;
- Delivery of training in entrepreneurship to educators and mentors;
- Hosting of Blue Sky Day for students with over 600 attendees;
- Hosting of Business Plan Workshop Day, and Business Boot Camp Day for students;
- 21 primary schools participated in the Junior Entrepreneur Programme, which commenced in January 2011;
- Hosting of Young Entrepreneur of the Year award ceremony (May 2011);
- Publication by Jerry Kennelly and Jerry Clifford of a book, *Entrepreneurship Made Simple*;
- Production of an educators' manual in entrepreneurship.

Outcomes

- Development and enhancement of the work of IT Tralee's Centre for Entrepreneurship, Education and Development (CEED);
- Integration of entrepreneurship education into school-level and undergraduate curricula in Tralee and the region;
- Awareness raising of entrepreneurship education across Shannon Consortium;
- Promotion of entrepreneurship as a career-choice for students;
- Partnership-building with local enterprise;
- The Young Entrepreneur Programme (YEP) was nominated for the 'Promoting the Entrepreneurial Spirit Award' at the European Commission's European Enterprise Awards 2011.

The Teaching and Learning Incubation Centre

Contact: Ms. Andrea Deverell, Director, The Incubation Centre, UL.
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The Shannon Consortium's Incubation Centre aimed to embed innovation in teaching and learning at grassroots' level in higher education by engaging with academics, support staff, and students to explore and develop new ideas, and to develop a strong, vibrant network of teaching and learning innovators from across the region.

Outputs

- Establishment of Incubation Centre for Teaching and Learning;
- Development of competitive funding strategy for the support of innovative teaching and learning projects at grass-roots' level;
- Distribution of seed-funding to innovative teaching and learning projects across the Consortium;
- Dissemination of project outcomes on Incubation Centre website;
- Production of publications on research in teaching and learning.

Outcomes

- Enhancement of quality of teaching and learning across the region;
- Raised awareness of benefits of innovation in teaching and learning;
- Networking of staff engaged in teaching and learning.

Strand 2B—National Centre for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching and Learning (NCE-MSTL)

www.nce-mstl.ie

Contact: Helen Fitzgerald, Executive Administrator, NCE-MSTL, UL.
Email: helen.fitzgerald@ul.ie

The National Centre for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching and Learning (NCE-MSTL) researchers, coordinates, supports, develops, and implements initiatives to enhance the teaching and learning of mathematics and science in Ireland from primary school through to postgraduate-level education. It has developed a networked community of academics, researchers, teachers, and practitioners drawn from HEIs, schools, government departments and agencies, and industry with expertise in mathematics and science. The NCE-MSTL conducts evidence-based research into the teaching and learning of mathematics and science, and disseminates the outcomes of this research to enhance the delivery of teaching in these disciplines across all levels of education. It also promotes scholarship in mathematics and science teaching and learning.

Outputs

- The NCE-MSTL was launched by the President of UL, Professor Don Barry, on 25th June 2009;
- The NCE-MSTL Centre of Expertise in Mathematics and Science Teaching and Learning in LIT was opened in March 2010;
- The NCE-MSTL Centre of Expertise in Mathematics and Science Teaching and Learning in MIC was opened by the Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairi Quinn, T.D., on 26th May 2011;
- The Centre of Expertise in Mathematics Education / Numeracy was opened in ITTD in June 2011;
- NCE-MSTL website was established, and web-based resources developed for teachers, students, parents and other stakeholders;
- Recruitment of Ph.D. and Masters' students;
- From September 2008 to August 2011 the research of the NCE-MSTL was disseminated through a portfolio of publications.

Outcomes

- Enhancement of CPD in mathematics and science for primary and secondary-school teachers;
- Enhancement of teaching and learning in mathematics and science across all levels of Irish education;
- Establishment of a range of partnerships by Shannon Consortium with external stakeholders, including enterprises in the Mallow region, Discover Science and Engineering, Engineers Ireland, MACSI, Texas Instruments, Careers Portal, ESB, Intel, PDST, Blackrock Observatory Cork, Pharmaceutical Ireland, NCCA, and HEIs nationally and internationally.

WIT: Knowledge Transfer in the Curriculum

Contact: Ms. Paula Power, Office of the Registrar, WIT.

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Partners: CIT, UCC

This project aimed to develop innovative curricula to enhance students' skills-base for the world-of-work. Through the utilisation of peer-assisted learning, service-learning, problem-based learning, and the integration of work-placements into courses, the project sought to ensure that students acquire the transferable skills that employers demand. It sought to integrate these changes into undergraduate and postgraduate curricula, and to design new practice-based doctoral programmes with a greater emphasis on knowledge-transfer. The project comprised the following three strands:

- Governance and management structures and scoping;
- Implementing structural and curriculum changes;

- Doctoral programme development.

Outputs

- Initiatives developed in partnership with external stakeholders (e.g. Waterford Crystal, FÁS, social welfare offices) for the unemployed and for workers under the threat of the loss of their employment;
- 'Advantage Modules' in knowledge-transfer developed and delivered on a pilot basis in WIT's School of Business;
- Development of quality framework for teaching and assessment of knowledge-transfer activities at undergraduate and postgraduate levels;
- Delivery of training to staff in the teaching and assessment of practice-based knowledge-transfer modules;
- Development of a toolkit for the assessment of knowledge-transfer activities in modules and programmes;
- Establishment of a special-interest group on transferable skills in WIT's Department of Computing, Mathematics and Physics to examine the role of transferable skills in undergraduate and postgraduate programmes;
- Production of 5 conference papers;
- Establishment of structure for professional doctorates;
- Establishment of DBA course, on which 10 students commenced in 2010;
- Delivery of training on development of professional doctorates.

Outcomes

- Strategic partnerships developed across consortium and with external stakeholders;
- Enhanced capacity of staff to deliver practice-based knowledge-transfer modules;
- Enhancement of students' knowledge-transfer skills-base;
- Enhancement of awareness of importance of knowledge-transfer and transferable skills in curricula;
- Enhancement of capacity for delivery of professional doctorates.