



THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF ALL THOSE WHO TEACH



TEACHING AND LEARNING IN A DIGITAL WORLD



TEACHING AND LEARNING ENHANCEMENT WITHIN AND ACROSS DISCIPLINES



STUDENT SUCCESS

LEARNING ABOUT IMPACT
AND LOOKING TO THE FUTURE:
TEACHING AND LEARNING
ENHANCEMENT FUND PROJECTS 2014-18



NATIONAL FORUM
FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF TEACHING
AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

**Learning about Impact and Looking to the Future:
Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund Projects
2014-18**

Published by:
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March 2020

Foreword

Several developments in European higher education converged in recent years that brought about the often-referred-to “shift from teaching to learning”. The Bologna Process played a major role in this shift, as did increasing student numbers and a greater diversity in the student body. All the countries taking part in the Bologna Process were faced with these challenges and found different national approaches. Achieving parity of esteem for teaching and research (or at least getting closer to it), making politicians and higher education leadership aware of the strategic importance of good teaching (and learning!) was not an easy task, in particular in some research universities. Ireland, however, was particularly bold and fast in its response: Already in 2013, the Irish government decided to establish a new institution to support teaching and learning in higher education - the National Forum. At the time, there were very few examples across Europe that could serve as a model for such an institution and the Irish government entered largely uncharted waters with its initiative.

As an outside observer, I think that the setting of Irish higher education was particularly suitable for such an endeavour: with around 250,000 students and 24,000 staff in across more than 30 universities, institutes of technology and colleges, the sector has probably the ideal size for an experimental approach like that of the Forum – neither too big nor too small.

The Forum staff, but also staff and students across the country, enthusiastically set out to explore the possibilities offered by this new opportunity – from the start of the Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund, the Forum was spoilt for choice when it came to deciding which projects to fund. The presentations and reviews of the projects showed enormous engagement and creativity, and took place in a remarkable spirit of collegiality.

Seven years after its establishment, the Forum has become a prime example in Europe and beyond for the promotion of higher education teaching and learning – the numerous invitations extended to Forum staff and to Forum-funded projects to international conferences are proof of this, as are the articles that emerged from many of the projects.

The Forum supports individual teachers and students – this is of course commendable but in the long run it has to prove its worth in showing its sustainable impact at system level. The time is right to look back at the first three rounds of funding and analyse in detail the outcomes of the 32 Forum projects. This is the purpose of the present report. It explains the positive change the Forum has brought about in Irish higher education with regard to professional development, engagement with digital themes, the development of joint platforms and resources, and several other important aspects. At the centre of the Forum’s activities and ambitions stands student success, and the examples in this report show some of the many roads leading to that goal.

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KEY IMPACTS

The Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund projects 2014-18 represented an investment of circa **€4.74m over five years** in teaching and learning in Irish higher education. The evidence presented in this report indicates that this investment resulted in enhanced learning experiences, advances in underpinning systems and structures and a culture of enhancement which has developed significantly in the years since 2014. In addition, Ireland's international reputation as a leader in the area of teaching and learning was reinforced. Key impacts are listed below.

Student learning enhanced through:

- Increased student engagement
- More efficient use of class time
- More meaningful learning experiences
- Improved understanding of subject matter
- Enhanced digital capabilities
- Increased accessibility to course content
- Better understanding of future work expectations and contexts
- Improved assessment and feedback practices
- Improved understanding of student transitions
- Increased involvement in teaching and learning decision-making

Student involvement in enhancement of teaching and learning more valued and widespread

Centrality of teaching and learning better understood and supported

Increased collaboration across roles, fields of study, and institutions

Culture of enhancement fostered across the sector

Professional learning and development of participants and team members enhanced

More confident, sophisticated and widespread engagement with digital technology among those who teach

Clearer understanding of the nature and importance of professional development among those who teach and lead

Innovative teaching and learning practices supported and embedded

Increased engagement with scholarship of teaching and learning

About the 32 Funded Projects

Over 400 staff collaborating across 25 institutions ...

... created over 900 publications, websites, frameworks, platforms/tools and case studies to underpin innovative teaching and learning practices.

... organised close to 500 seminars/workshops/webinars and 13 national events to facilitate sharing of knowledge and practices.

... engaged approximately 12,500 staff and students in the enhancement of teaching and learning in higher education.

A Look to the Future...

A key motivation behind the impact review underpinning this report was to gain a better understanding of the concept of impact, and how those in the Irish higher education community are achieving, recording and representing the impact of their teaching and learning enhancement work. A lot has been learned which will inform local and national processes and structures in the future.

Key Points to Remember as we Look to the Future

Within the area of teaching and learning, impact can be difficult to objectively measure.



A narrow, metrics-driven approach to the evaluation of impact in higher education can tend to focus attention on what can be objectively measured, failing to recognise many other valuable, but less tangible, impacts.



This can result in the broad impact created through the investment of funding, time and effort across the higher education community not being recognised or understood and significant 'value for money' going unnoticed.



There is a need to consider, at national level, a range of agreed impact approaches, and associated indicators, that are appropriate to teaching and learning in higher education in Ireland and build capacity in their implementation.

We have reached a key moment for teaching and learning in Irish higher education. There is increased investment, in terms of both resources and time and energy, and the fundamental link between teaching and learning and key educational imperatives such as employability, internationalisation, innovation, equality of opportunity, academic excellence and student success, is coming into sharp focus. National structures and approaches to underpin teaching and learning enhancement have been established and are being emulated internationally. In every higher education institution across Ireland people are engaging in and committing to teaching and learning enhancement. A key aspect of understanding the impact of this engagement and commitment, and what is considered impact by different stakeholders, is understanding how teaching and learning is valued by each.

There is a truth to the saying ‘what gets measured gets done’. What gets measured, and how, can be influential in the context of evidence-based decision-making at every level of higher education. Another saying, commonly used in discussions on impact, highlights the importance of ‘measuring what we value rather than valuing what we measure’. Bamber (2013) has reconceptualised ‘impact’ as ‘evidencing value’, highlighting that the way evidence is gathered and presented can reflect the value of what has been achieved. It is important, therefore, to know what value is present before making decisions as to how to evidence it.

In the coming year the National Forum will work in partnership with the sector to explore how teaching and learning is valued across a range of levels in Irish higher education: individual, discipline, institution and system. The national consultation, Valuing Ireland’s Teaching and Learning (VITAL), will involve students, staff, leaders and policymakers and will centre on three questions:

- How is teaching and learning currently valued and recognised?
- Ideally, how could it be valued and recognised?
- What influences how teaching and learning is valued and recognised?

The vision of the National Forum, which was endorsed by the sector in 2018, is a valued and informed teaching and learning culture in Irish higher education. If engagement in, and commitment to, the enhancement of teaching and learning is to be valued, that value must first be understood and articulated. Through this consultation, a national picture will be developed and an evidence base for future decisions will be established. This will be an important first step in working towards a truly consultative, context-appropriate approach to valuing and recognising teaching and learning enhancement in Irish higher education.

The combination of the increased investment in teaching and learning at national level¹ and the acknowledged progress and maturity of teaching and learning enhancement in higher education in Ireland, brings with it an increased focus on evidencing impact. Cognisant of this expectation, the National Forum has already proactively devoted considerable time and expertise to the questions of impact and value in terms of teaching and learning in higher education. At this point in time there is an opportunity for the sector as a whole to develop a shared declaration and approach with regard to how we value and recognise teaching and learning in Irish higher education. We believe that valuing teaching and learning, with recognition as a key enabler, is an essential next step in our understanding of impact.

1 For example, through the 2018 Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund, the HEA’s 2018 Innovation and Transformation Fund and the Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement Funding 2019

Introduction

The Irish higher education sector aims to optimise the learning and development opportunities for each student to recognise and fulfil their potential to contribute to, and flourish in, society². The National Forum provides key system-level teaching and learning infrastructure for the achievement of this aim, and for the implementation of related recommendations in the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (Department of Education and Skills, 2011). The vision of the National Forum, informed by learners, teachers and leaders across the sector, is a valued and informed teaching and learning culture in Irish higher education.

The Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund

The establishment of the National Forum's Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund in 2013 was a fundamental step in supporting innovative, evidence-based teaching approaches, and teaching and learning enhancement efforts which are characterised by collaboration, sharing of good practice, and meaningful staff and student involvement. In addition to funding the National Seminar Series and a number of pre-specified nationally co-ordinated projects, the Fund supported large collaborative teaching and learning enhancement projects within and between institutions. In total, the Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund represented an investment by the Government of €6m in teaching and learning in higher education in Ireland up to 2018, with circa €4.74m of this investment being directed towards collaborative enhancement projects.

Project teams submitted proposals under specified themes and the proposals were reviewed by an international non-partisan panel of experts, including student representatives, through a two-phase selection process. Successful projects were monitored by review panels every six months, via a series of open-forum presentations, thus ensuring transparency, support, collaboration, sharing of expertise, and accountability for the realisation of project objectives. In all, 32 teaching and learning enhancement projects were funded through the 2014, 2015 and 2016 Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund calls.

Initial Considerations on Impact

At the time the Fund was established, conversations began about how best to ensure projects were focused on achieving and demonstrating meaningful impact. Following an initial scoping of impact models internationally, the National Forum Board approved an impact framework for the National Forum which was adapted from a framework used for similar nationally-funded enhancement projects in the New Zealand context (Weir et al., 2014).

The National Forum Impact Framework encouraged project teams to consider and demonstrate the reach of their projects, as well as the impact their enhancement work had on teaching and learning practices and staff, on learning and learners, on organisational practices and systems, and on the evolving culture of teaching and learning enhancement in Irish higher education. To ensure strategic alignment, the Framework also asked project teams to identify how the impact of their projects aligned with key system-level enhancement frameworks, such as the National Professional Development Framework for All Staff Who Teach (National Forum, 2016) and the Roadmap for Enhancement in a Digital World (National Forum, 2015). The Impact Framework served as a guiding structure both during project reviews and for the final impact reports submitted by project teams on completion of their projects.

2 An evidence-based national understanding of student success was developed in consultation with the higher education sector in 2019. See National Forum 2019b for more detail.

In the years since the establishment of the Fund, thinking and understanding about how impact is achieved, evidenced and communicated has evolved significantly. This report examines what we now know about the impact of teaching and learning enhancement and leverages the power of hindsight to look back and reflect on the impact these projects have had, and how that impact was achieved. This allows us to learn for the future and advance our approaches to ensure the positive consequences of teaching and learning enhancement efforts are optimised and impact is captured and communicated in a meaningful way which reflects the value of what has been achieved.

Focus, Scope and Layout of this Report

This report aims to provide a high-level overview of the impact of the 32 Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund projects which were completed up to December 2018 and to share lessons learned about achieving, sustaining, capturing and communicating impact in higher education. The overview is informed by:

- a review of related literature on impact
- final open-forum presentations given by project teams at the end of their period of funding
- impact reports submitted by project teams at the end of their period of funding
- individual discussions on impact conducted with project representatives in spring 2019
- high-level metrics submitted by project teams in summer 2019

The report begins with a general overview of evidence-based insights on the topic of impact, based on a review of related literature.

Section one of the report then provides an overview of the 32 projects completed up to 2018. Findings regarding the impact of the projects are detailed, according to the themes that were in evidence across the presentations, impact reports and discussions.

Section two of the report looks at the topic of impact through a wider lens. It combines the practice-based evidence detailed in section one, scholarly insights from the literature, and the system-level experience of the National Forum. It presents lessons learned on how impact is achieved and considerations for how impact can best be captured and communicated.

The report concludes by summarising high-level points on the topic of impact and looks to the future and how the sector will be supported to ensure the value of what is achieved through teaching and learning enhancement efforts is appropriately understood and recognised, for the benefit of the higher education community and beyond.

Insights on Impact from the Literature

A review of the related literature, conducted by the National Forum in 2019, demonstrated that impact is inherently complex and 'messy'. It can be difficult to describe and evidence in a way that enables the value of an intervention to be captured and communicated clearly and effectively. A number of key insights from the literature³ which give a sense of the nature of impact in teaching and learning were identified:

- **Impact can be both intended and unintended.**

Impact can be described as either intended or unintended. The intended impact of any teaching and learning enhancement should be determined from the outset and linked to the original purpose of the intervention. While impacts can be positive, this should not be automatically assumed; unintended undesirable impacts ('grimpacts') may also emerge from an intervention. (Hicks, 2016; McCowan, 2018; Donovan, 2019)

- **Impact is multi-layered.**

Impact is often described according to a series of layers or levels. The first level may encompass impact which is easily captured but somewhat superficial, e.g., feedback forms measuring participant/student satisfaction. As the levels build up, each one identifies deeper or more significant impacts, e.g., changes to teacher practice, changes to institutional culture. (Guskey, 2002; Kirkpatrick, 2007; McCowan, 2018)

- **Impact is not an outcome or result at the end of an intervention, it is linked to ongoing change.**

Outputs or outcomes, such as resources, publications or changes to policy/structures may be a means through which impact occurs, but they do not, in themselves, represent impact. This is because outputs/outcomes do not demonstrate the consequences of change, and they rarely take account of what may have occurred during an intervention. (Collini, 2012)

- **Impact is a process which triggers change intended to be sustainable.**

In planning for sustainability in the context of teaching and learning enhancement, it is the sustainability of the impact that should be prioritised. In aiming for sustained impact, it is important to remember that impact is a process that plays out over time. The tension that can be created by a demand for return on investment may put an emphasis on immediate evidence and a preference for quantitative data. It takes time to capture impacts, determine what exactly they are, who 'owns' them, and how to best communicate them to ensure they are well-understood. A key to enabling the sustainability of impact is to ensure that it is meaningful, accessible and applicable to the needs of beneficiaries and stakeholders. (McCowan, 2018; Stufflebeam, 2014)

- **Impact can be creative, peer-oriented and powerful.**

Impact can result in new knowledge and prompt change, made powerful because it has been created collectively, often across disciplines or institutions. Change can be unsettling; however, positive change is invaluable because it fosters reflection and inquiry and stimulates new thinking. The process of striving towards positive, sustainable change can have an affective dimension, nurturing collegiality, teamwork and peer learning, which is impactful in itself. (Bamber, 2013; Weir et al., 2014)

3 For a full list of insights from the literature, see National Forum (2019a)

The literature related to impact indicates that identifying real world impact(s) is not solely about counting numbers or metrics from which to make inferences. Capturing impact effectively involves various sources of objective and subjective evidence. If we, as a sector, take a considered approach to impact, this may lead to a better understanding of the profound and ongoing nature of impact and its 'ripple' effects.

In keeping with this thinking, the next section gives a sense of the outputs and related impacts that resulted from the commitment and engagement of senior managers, staff and students across higher education institutions in recent years through the Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund projects.

Section One: The Impact of Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund Projects 2014-2018

Funded Projects at a Glance

2014 Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund

The focus of the 2014 Fund was building digital capacity in Irish higher education. This first funding call was released at a time when the National Forum was conducting a nationwide consultation on the development of the Roadmap for Enhancement in a Digital World, which was published subsequently in 2015. The Roadmap provides guidance to institutions and policy partners in the development of local and national digital strategies to ensure alignment, coherence and a sense of common endeavour at sectoral level.

Specifically, the 2014 call for proposals aimed to support the advancement of the draft recommendations and actionable first steps arising from the sectoral consultation on building digital capacity. Project teams were also encouraged to align their proposals with the theme of 'Teaching for Transitions', which was a national focus at the time.

Ten 18-month projects were funded under the 2014 call, as follows:

Project	Focus	Lead and partner HEIs
Using Digital Technology to Enhance Inter-Professional Education (IPE)	... implemented and evaluated the impact of an online inter-professional education programme designed to promote collaborative practice within undergraduate health care disciplines.	NUIG, UCD
Transitioning to E-assessment in Mathematics Education (TEAME)	... leveraged the potential of Numbas, an online assessment tool, to construct localised formative e-assessment for first year mathematics and statistics courses across partner institutions.	UCC, CIT
Electronic Preparation for Professional Practices (ePrePP)	... enhanced student learning in healthcare placements to ease the transition from student to professional through the creation of a digital platform incorporating shared competencies, digital resources, and ePortfolios with the aim of enriching learning on clinical placement and nurturing inter-professional collaboration.	UCC, UL, IT Tralee, UCD, TCD, NUIG

TEL Tools: Pedagogical Resources for Technology Enhanced Teaching and Learning	... involved the development of an online platform featuring a collection of online micro-learning courses designed to help those who teach to optimise their use of technology to enhance teaching and learning.	CIT, UCC, IT Tralee, UCD, DIT
Live and Learn in Ireland	... produced open-source digital resources to assist the transition to Ireland of international students, informed by a survey of 573 international students across five higher education institutions.	IT Tralee, WIT, ITC, CIT, UCC
Assessment for Learning Resources for First Year Undergraduate Mathematics Modules	... involved the development of formative assessment tools for use in large-group classes, including UniDoodle, an app-based student response system to support student engagement and provide immediate, ongoing and high-quality feedback to students.	MU, AIT, DkIT, DCU
Supporting Transition: Enhancing Feedback in First Year Using Digital Technologies (Y1Feedback)	... involved a study of feedback practice and experience across partner institutions and a synthesis of the feedback-related literature, leading to efforts to address challenges associated with feedback in the first year of higher education and to leverage the potential of digital technologies to support and enhance feedback approaches.	MU, DCU, DkIT, AIT
Get Ready Education	... centred on the development of a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) designed to address the needs of students making the transition from post-primary education to higher education.	IT Sligo, UL, GMIT, LIT, MIC, NUIG, LyIT
Student Success Toolbox for Flexible Learners	... focused on addressing the problem of effective transitions and the foundations for student success during the initial stages of the study lifecycle with a specific focus on flexible learners, through the planning, development, pilot and release of eight digital readiness tools.	DCU, MU, DkIT, IT Sligo
All Aboard! Enabling and Empowering Staff and Students to Flourish in the Digital Age	... developed a national framework for digital skills, informed by an extensive review of all existing digital skills and digital literacies frameworks, supplemented by a collection of open digital badges, each associated with a particular digital skill.	NUIG, UL, MIC, UCD

2015 Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund

While the 2015 Fund remained mindful of the recommendations arising from the sectoral consultation on building digital capacity, its focus was situated within the wider teaching and learning enhancement context. The call had two funding streams: Type A supported projects which aimed to build digital literacy and digital engagement for students and teachers through regionally co-ordinated technology enhanced learning weeks; Type B supported projects with a strong focus on discipline-specific pedagogies for enhancement and impact on student learning within fields of study.

Six Type A six-month projects were funded and six Type B 18-month projects were funded, as follows:

Project	Focus	Lead and partner HEIs
Type A projects – Regionally co-ordinated technology enhanced learning weeks		
Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) ePortfolio Roadshow (My Experience)	... shared the My Experience RPL Assessment Toolkit, which includes an information website and an online RPL application tool for candidates looking for access or advanced entry to a higher education programme, in addition to an online course for higher education staff seeking professional development in RPL assessment skills and in supporting RPL applicants effectively.	GMIT, IT Sligo, LyIT
Take 1 Step	... co-ordinated five technology-enhanced learning 'roadshows' encouraging staff and students to take one step in engaging with digital literacy.	UL, MIC, LIT
Transformation through Collaboration	... involved the recruitment and training of staff as Digital Champions in each partner institution to demonstrate the ways in which technology can be used to solve education challenges across disciplinary contexts.	UCC, CIT, WIT, ITC, IT Tralee
Digital Skills in Action	... worked with members of academic communities in the creation of digital case studies and e-practicums which were shared with the student, academic and leadership communities through technology-enhanced learning events.	IADT, MIE, NCAD, TCD, UCD
Technology Enhanced Learning: What Works and Why?	... enhanced staff and student digital literacy through workshops, seminars, drop-in clinics, small-scale innovation projects, and peer-mentoring groups, which resulted in a collection of guides and resources that shared lessons on what works and why with respect to the digital dimension of teaching and learning in given disciplinary contexts.	DCU, AIT, DkIT
An ePortfolio Strategy to Enhance Student Learning, Assessment and Staff Professional Development	... fostered new ways to encourage academic staff to reap the benefits that ePortfolios can bring to academic programmes of the future by encouraging them to re-think their curricula in light of the possibilities offered by digital technologies.	DIT, ITB, IT Tallaght, Hibernia College

Type B projects - Focus on discipline-specific pedagogies for enhancement and impact on student learning within fields of study

GeoLab: Developing Digital Teaching and Learning Resources for the Virtual Microscope	... resulted in the consolidation and digitisation of rock samples across the four national higher education geoscience units in Ireland and the creation of online tutorials and manuals for use by staff who teach.	UCC, TCD, NUIG, UCD, Open University
DigiLanguages: Enhancing Digital Literacies for Language Learning and Teaching	... developed a digital interface for language learning and teaching intended as a student support mechanism, and also as an online learning tool for a number of different purposes.	UL, DCU, DIT, LIT, MIC, NUIG
ChemE: Irish Engineering Graduates Advancing Global Manufacturing Competitiveness	... developed digital learning objects and tools, integrating theory, experiment and simulation, across different core modules of the undergraduate chemical engineering curricula in partner institutions.	UCD, CIT, DCU, DIT, UCC, UL
Street Law	... involved undergraduate law students developing professional and other transferable skills by teaching practical law to grassroots audiences using interactive teaching methodologies.	LyIT, TCD, NUIG
REX: Research Expertise Exchange	... brought together three higher education institutions involved in initial teacher education to build a digital bridge between academic and professional practice through the creation of a web-based portal, the Research Expertise Exchange (REX), to nurture digital skills for research and meet a real-world demand for expertise.	MIC, UL, NUIG
Technology Enhanced Assessment Methods (TEAM) in Science & Health Practical Settings	... developed a framework for applying the principles of good assessment and feedback to practical assessment, and piloted and evaluated technology-enhanced assessment practices across 45 programmes in four partner institutions under identified priority themes.	DkIT, IT Sligo, ITC, AIT

2016 Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund

The 2016 Fund aimed to provide strategic support for sectoral alignment of existing professional development provision with the National Professional Development Framework for all Staff Who Teach in Higher Education, which was published in 2016 following widespread consultation and input throughout the higher education sector. The focus on professional development was linked to the previous sectoral consultation on building digital capacity. A key recommendation from that first consultation was the need for strong, student focused, professional development for teachers and leaders, not just in the realm of digital skills but also in the wider pedagogical processes, practices and provision that make for highly competent staff in higher education.

Ten 18-month projects were funded under the 2016 call, as follows:

Project	Focus	Lead and partner HEIs
Social Policy Education: Enhancing Digital Skills (SPEEDS)	... expanded social policy educators' digital capacities and improved their confidence in integrating digital skills into curricula.	UCC, IT Tralee, UCD, TCD, WIT, ITC, CIT
Aligning Teaching and Learning Across the Technological Sector (ATLAS)	... interpreted the National Professional Development Framework within the context of existing accredited provision across technological higher education institutions in Ireland.	AIT, DkIT, ITC, LyIT, WIT
Alignment and Development of an Online Programme for Graduate Teaching Assistants	... developed an online module for graduate teaching assistants that can be used by any institution as an independent 5-ECTS online professional qualification in teaching and learning or as five discrete areas of professional development.	TCD, NUIG, MIE, IADT
Levitus	... developed a conceptual framework for the engineering community for thinking about professional development, which was then aligned with the National Professional Development Framework.	DIT, ITB, IT Tallaght
DSTEP: Developing Staff To Enhance Programmes in a Sustainable and Impactful Way	... worked closely with the staff in one field of study (psychology) to enhance student engagement, taking a whole-of-programme approach to professional development and using focus groups to inform a number of workshops and events and the creation of a suite of open educational resources.	DCU
Teaching and Learning Champions: A Professional Development Leadership Programme for Managers in Irish Higher Education	... enhanced the capacity of middle and senior managers for leadership in digitally-engaged teaching and learning through the establishment of a Teaching and Learning Champions Forum for Senior Managers across four higher education institutions and the development of a Special Purpose Award in Mentoring of Leadership in Teaching and Learning.	LyIT, NUIG, GMIT, IT Sligo

<p>L2L: Librarians Learning to Support Learners Learning</p>	<p>... allowed staff in libraries across three institutions to explore and reflect on their professional development from multiple perspectives resulting in the development of a website for library staff who teach and a book which shares stories of the professional development journeys of librarians who teach.</p>	<p>DKIT, ITC, DIT</p>
<p>Collaborative Knowledge Exchange for Learning Impact (Crannóg)</p>	<p>... worked with those in senior leadership positions in higher education institutions, such as heads of school/department and deans, to build capacity in leadership in relation to teaching, learning and building digital capacity and capability.</p>	<p>NUIG, DCU, UL, MIC</p>
<p>Professional Development Capacity Building in the Shannon Consortium</p>	<p>... saw a recently developed UL Graduate Diploma/MA in Teaching, Learning and Scholarship in Higher Education programme being enhanced and aligned to the needs of the three partner institutions in the Shannon Consortium.</p>	<p>UL, MIC</p>
<p>Aligning Maynooth University's Accredited T&L Programmes with the National PD Framework (MAPpd)</p>	<p>... benchmarked Maynooth University's Professional Certificate in Teaching and Learning for Tutors and Demonstrators and its Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education with the National Professional Development Framework, and redesigned both programmes to align with the Framework.</p>	<p>MU</p>

Overall Impact of Funded Projects

As mentioned previously, the evidence of impact of funded projects is drawn from the following four data sources:

- recordings of final open-forum presentations given by each project team at the end of their period of funding
- impact reports submitted by each project team at the end of their period of funding
- individual discussions on impact conducted with the 32 project leads⁴ in spring 2019
- updated high-level metrics submitted by project leads in summer 2019⁵

While the presentations and impact reports provided the perspective of the project teams on anticipated or emerging impact at early stages, the follow-up individual discussions with project leads provided an opportunity to consider, in hindsight, what impact projects had, how the impact identified was achieved and what had been learned about achieving, sustaining, capturing and communicating impact in teaching and learning. As projects started in different years⁶, longer-term impact was easier to gauge with earlier projects than with those that finished in 2018.

A content analysis across the four data sources revealed the following ten key impacts:

- Student learning experiences have been enhanced.
- There is an increased appreciation for, and commitment to, ensuring the meaningful involvement of students in teaching and learning enhancement.
- The central role of teaching and learning to the student experience is more widely understood and supported.
- Strong, collaborative links have been built across roles, fields of study, and institutions.
- A culture of enhancement has been advanced through shared learning, synergies across projects and a building of sectoral capacity.
- The professional learning and development of participants and team members has been enhanced.
- Engagement with digital technology in teaching and learning has become more confident, sophisticated and widespread.
- Structured engagement with the National Professional Development Framework has resulted in a clearer understanding of the nature and importance of professional development.
- Developed resources, platforms and frameworks are now underpinning innovative teaching and learning practices.
- Engagement with, and appreciation for, the scholarship of teaching and learning has increased.

4 In some cases, other team members took part in this discussion instead of, or as well as, the project lead. Also, in one case the information was provided online rather than face-to-face.

5 All but one project team submitted these metrics. The national figures presented in this report are therefore based on metrics from 31 projects.

6 Projects varied from being six months post-completion to four years post-completion at the time of this review taking place.



Student learning experiences have been enhanced.

The subject-specific engagement in the enhancement of teaching practices and the informed introduction of digital technologies was shown to translate into improved student learning experiences. Evidence of impact on student learning was gathered by project teams from participating staff and via student focus groups, surveys and task-based evaluations. Such evidence illustrated positive changes including:

- Increased student engagement
- More efficient use of class time
- More meaningful learning experiences
- Improved understanding of subject matter
- Enhanced digital capabilities
- Increased accessibility to course content
- Better understanding of future work expectations and contexts
- Improved assessment and feedback practices
- Improved understanding of student transitions
- Increased involvement in teaching and learning decision-making

*Laboratory demonstrators and technical staff have reported **enhanced levels of student preparedness** for experiments supported by digital resources; as a result, the duration of in-lab introductory material is reduced, allowing better use of lecturer/demonstrator and laboratory time.*

(ChemE impact report)

*The teaching has totally changed . . . our students in some of our modules are coming to their practicals having viewed a video, having done a quiz, that never happened before . . . **it's vitally motivating for the staff to be moving your discipline forward.***

(TEAM discussion)

“the student experience when they're learning is way more positive

*It went from a very singular way of learning to a collective way of learning because everyone could see the same picture, and it can be projected – that, from a learning point of view, was hugely beneficial. . . **the student experience when they're learning is way more positive.***

(GeoLab discussion)

*[Law students'] blogs demonstrate clearly the **enhanced confidence and organisational skills** they believe the Street Law programme has been responsible for . . . [their feedback] has been consistently positive in terms of skills development, confidence and self-belief.*

(Street Law impact report)

*There was strong evidence that **student involvement in the project resulted in a professional confidence** and development of teacher-researcher identity such that students realised that they themselves, as teachers, have the capacity and responsibility to engage in evidence-informed practice.*

(REX impact report)



There is an increased appreciation for, and commitment to, ensuring the meaningful involvement of students in teaching and learning enhancement.

Evidence of a committed students-as-partners approach was a key criterion in selecting projects to be funded. Further, each project review panel included a student representative, to ensure this approach carried through each stage of project development. Project presentations, discussions and impact reports indicated that teams developed a strong appreciation for the value of ensuring the meaningful involvement of students in enhancement endeavours, and student partnership and engagement practices have been enhanced as a result. It was clear that positive experiences of student partnership had a lasting impact on attitudes towards and intentions regarding future involvement of students in decision making.

Students were involved in the selection and review of all projects, taking part in 17 expert panels from 2014 to 2018.

“it’s really about kind of shifting your mindset around and having the students there really challenges us to do that

*I think it’s really about kind of shifting your mindset around and having the students there really challenges us to do that. I would say in my own practice, we would always have had a practice of, say, sending information to heads of school or heads of department. But now I actually send them to the students’ union as well. It’s like, how do we treat people with this kind of level of parity?
(L2L discussion)*

*The students were participants in every stage of the project . . . we very much try to work in partnership with students, but I think the quality of that engagement improved as the project went on and **I think that will have impact on future projects.**
(Teaching and Learning Champions presentation)*

*I don’t think we’ll ever be involved in any enhancement initiative ever again without significant student involvement. **I think it just shows what is possible and kind of changed the way we do things . . . It helped us to develop some skills in that area.**
(TEAM discussion)*

***There has been a recognition [among middle managers] of the need to regularly connect on a more direct level with the student experience.**
(Crannóg impact report)*

*The lasting impact is now in any initiative we do say, “Well, where is the student rep in this? How do we include the student voice?” . . . **We saw the value of it.**
(Y1 Feedback Discussion)*

*The student engagement and student partnership philosophy which was embedded at every stage of the project design has **impacted the work of [our institution] in very significant ways.** The strategic plan 2019-2023 commits the institution to student partnership and this is reflected in changes to policy (e.g. in the Quality Assurance Handbook) and practice (e.g. collaboration with students at all stages of the design and development of a new building).
(Teaching and Learning Champions metrics form)*



The central role of teaching and learning to the student experience is more widely understood and supported.

There has been an overall increase in appreciation for the importance of teaching and learning across the sector, and more recognition of its link to providing quality student learning experiences. Many projects prompted the establishment/redesign of structures and policies to underpin teaching and learning enhancement at institutional level.

Since 2017, nine funded projects featured as quality enhancement highlights in QQI Reports on Quality in Higher Education.

“recognised need for teaching and learning enhancement

*The **recognised need for teaching and learning enhancement** and the value of engaging and valuing such at the School level has been a positive outcome . . . [middle managers] have reported a commitment to valuing the existing advocates for teaching and learning enhancement and innovation within their Schools more so than previously.*
(Crannóg impact report)

*The success of [the project] has **led to the establishment of a School-level teaching and learning committee**, which is tasked with the design of a five-year teaching and learning strategy. So that's a very big shift in practices because we never would have had that culture of speaking openly about our teaching practices.*
(SPEEDS impact report and video)

*The project has **had an important impact on our curriculum review processes**. There have been very tangible effects of the integration of digital literacies into our modules and programmes.*
(DigiLanguages metrics form)

*Increased use of technology through this project, specifically relating to recording of lecture material, has increased the awareness of issues such as data protection and intellectual property, which has **aided in the updating of our policies**.*
(DSTEP impact report)

*Another key way that I can see change is the **embedding of the ideals, and the principles of the project, and the findings of the project within policies** within the institutions. And you can very much see that in [one partner institution] who have an assessment and feedback policy, which is based on the principles of [the project], and an assessment guidelines initiative we'll be starting here through the teaching and learning committee.*
(Y1 Feedback discussion)



Strong, collaborative links have been built across roles, fields of study, and institutions.

Among the core required criteria for selecting projects was strong evidence of collaboration. The collaborative approaches observed included sharing resources, sharing ideas and practices and working towards mutual goals. Strengthened collaborative links within and between institutions were reflected in fewer barriers between roles, between fields of study and between institutions.

Over 400 staff in 25 higher education institutions collaborated across projects.

Involvement in projects helped many of those involved to see the value of collaboration, with some staff experiencing inter-institutional collaboration for the first time. The value of collaboration was seen in the way trust was built across institutions with the subsequent sharing of knowledge and insights and ability to continue to work together in the future.

*It opened the door to collaborative projects in a way that I hadn't really envisaged before. It would not have occurred to me if we were looking at piloting or developing a project to contact other institutions . . . It actually makes you realise it's not that difficult to do and **it makes you realise how responsive other institutions are**. I think that's a really important thing . . . I would say that's a lesson learned, that it's worth collaborating. I think it's taught me how much you can do through collaborating.*

(Street Law discussion)

*It was our first time really working with other Irish institutions . . . it was the first time we all kind of worked together in that kind of development capacity. And **we've all worked well together since**.*

(TEL Tools discussion)

“we've all worked well together since

*An important, but un-measurable impact is the sense of collaboration and community engendered through the project. This was felt to be **hugely important for the project team, who worked across disciplinary boundaries in ways that they hadn't before this**.*

(DigiLanguages metrics form)

***There are lessons learned in terms of how you need to collaborate**, how you need to work together, how you need to respect another institution's, perhaps, traditions or ways of working in certain areas.*

(My Experience discussion)

***I now feel more connected**, I feel, and I'm sure others in [my institution] feel, more connected to people in [the partner institution] and vice versa. Rather than being two separate groups which do their own thing and that are slightly suspicious perhaps of one another, now there are greater links.*

(TEAME interview)

*A positive unexpected impact was actually the collaboration that's happened between the distance education crew and then the rest of the schools. **Historically it was an us and a them. That is no longer the case** . . . We now have people that are sharing content. They're sharing in both directions.*

(DSTEP discussion)

Overall, the collaboration encouraged through the funded projects led to shared learning, synergies and 'ripple effects' beyond project lifespans.

“ people who have been working on a project can take topics to each other and be able to share what's happening in their institution and find common ground

You can't put a price on [cross-collaborations between institutions]. It's something that comes with time, you know, people work together on a particular project, and then, after that, there's the genesis of an idea for something else . . . but that only happens because those people who have been working on a project **can take topics to each other and be able to share what's happening in their institution and find common ground.**

(MAPpd discussion)

The project outputs have **continued to see, post-project, further collaborations with other partner institutes** in terms of the development of course material, the proposed teaching and learning activities and the use of technology enhanced learning tools across the institutions.

(TEL Tools metrics form)

In a lot of the centres for teaching people are on their own, and by collaborative projects, **it connects people and it shares the work, in a way, it shares the expertise, it builds.**

(Y1 Feedback interview)

REX has created a learning environment that extends beyond the walls of the three partner institutions; **it has broken down barriers between academic institutions and schools** and has created opportunities for learning conversations that were not previously possible.

(REX impact report)

You share knowledge and **you save time when you share resources and share knowledge and experiences** . . . you're making tweaks and changes based not just on what's happening in your institute but what's happening in the institutes you're collaborating with. That's informing change. So the external perspective is really important, sharing of resources and expertise and all of that.

(Get Ready Education discussion)



A culture of enhancement has been advanced through shared learning, synergies across projects and a building of sectoral capacity.

A connected, informed teaching and learning community has been fostered in Irish higher education with learning, approaches and collaborations from projects being used as foundations for further enhancements. The learning that has occurred sector wide as a result of these projects was emphasised. This learning related to, for example, content-specific learning, learning about how to engage staff and students and learning about processes, systems and frameworks.

Close to 500 seminars/workshops/webinars and 13 national events were held across projects, with an overall participation of approximately 12,500.

There was a sense that, as one team lead phrased it, 'you cannot unlearn'; the learning from one project or initiative fed into subsequent initiatives in which team members participated and a culture of enhancement was fostered.

*There is active leadership and engagement by senior managers collaborating with students, lecturers and employers which **provides a model for other enhancement projects.***
(TEAM impact report)

*I think **it's had an impact in the way that people think about things** . . . it's made other people think about how you make sense of skills development frameworks. So, we're now seeing people apply the same metaphor to other things other than digital, and we're also seeing other people apply it to digital but in other educational sectors, and in other countries.*
(All Aboard discussion)

*[The project] allowed us to go really deep in an issue and build expertise . . . **That expertise is still there. That expertise is still being shared** . . . that for me is an example of sustainable impact of the project.*
(Y1 Feedback discussion)

“ The project led to the strengthening of a cross-institutional community of practice for teaching and learning

The project led to the strengthening of a cross-institutional community of practice for teaching and learning . . . it facilitated the partner institutions to engage in meaningful and focused dialogue, which resulted in changes to teaching and learning provision across the sector.
(ATLAS metrics form)

*We have had the opportunity to engage in a cross-fertilisation of ideas and the development of expertise through experiential learning. **We are in a position to advise others who are developing their teaching and learning practices** through reflecting on and sharing our own experiences.*
(SPEEDS impact report)

***Other third-level institutions in Ireland and abroad are learning from our experience.** A reservoir of knowledge and experience in the area has been developed.*
(TEAME metrics form)



The professional learning and development of participants and team members has been enhanced.

Project team members and participants noted the positive impact involvement in projects had on their own professional learning and development. Staff built content- and process-specific knowledge and experience and this was reflected in subsequent promotions and recognition through teaching/enhancement awards.

36 awards/official recognitions have been attributed to participation in the projects.

*I had people who had never engaged in teaching and learning conversations before saying that they were able to speak to that on the [promotion] application form . . . Two years ago, people would have been terrified of that, whereas now I think quite a significant number of the senior lecture applications will get excellence in teaching and learning because they've so much to document about all the training that they've engaged in . . . **It's been career changing for many people, myself included.***

(SPEEDS discussion)

*I can say without a shadow of a doubt that the **staff involved in [this project] have raised their profile** . . . through the support of this project [one staff member] re-designed her modules and actually got nominated and shortlisted for a teaching award . . . The fact that [the changes she made] were specifically called out within [the nomination] really makes a difference.*

(DSTEP discussion)

***I see the impacts on people. I see the people and how they think.** I think that we all think differently about assessment and feedback now, and about assessment and feedback processes. I see that in the way we support staff. I see it in the workshops we do and how all of us have integrated the knowledge, the guidelines, the practice within our programmes . . . That has been strength building.*

(Y1 Feedback discussion)

***The project team has greatly enhanced their IT competency,** becoming familiar with various ePortfolio vehicles. The creation and development of the web platform has led to greater confidence in IT and online digital tools for learning.*

(ePrePP impact report)

“The expertise that the project teams developed for themselves, that is a gift that keeps on giving

***The expertise that the project teams developed for themselves, that is a gift that keeps on giving** . . . being awarded the funding for that project was definitely, hugely impactful for me. Just in terms of what I got to do. It took me out into a different space.*

(Y1 Feedback Discussion)

***It was the first time I'd ever managed project infrastructure and project finances as well.** I now understand things around project finances and that knowledge was not there at all beforehand.*

(Student Success Toolbox discussion)

*It's helped people's reputations . . . **members of the team [have] moved onto longer-term contracts.** They've been able to demonstrate specific materials that they've produced to show what their skillset is like.*

(All Aboard discussion)



Engagement with digital technology in teaching and learning has become more confident, sophisticated and widespread.

Building digital capacity was a focus across all funding calls, with 22 projects having a strong digital emphasis. A recurring theme was the important impact the projects had on building the confidence of teachers in engaging with digital technologies. It became clear that the confidence to try new technologies was a key barrier to engagement for many of those who teach, and it was this confidence that many projects fostered.

22 funded projects focused specifically on building digital capacity, literacy and engagement.

*People have different levels of confidence or preconceptions, and so those kinds of **preconceptions are a barrier to learning almost anything** . . . I think if you're honest that learning things involves effort and it's difficult for everybody, but you can help each other, then that can make a big difference. So, I suppose that's one of the main lessons from [our project].*

(All Aboard discussion)

*I had very poignant moments actually of people sitting beside me and their eyes filling up with tears, at feeling exposed that they couldn't do this . . . but I do think it's changed because **it voiced those fears and it allowed us to speak to everyone within the school about us all having those challenges**.*

(SPEEDS discussion)

*We have seen [staff] develop an app, advanced elearning packages, use Google drive and video since the project concluded. We have also seen their colleagues engage more in the area of technology-enhanced learning . . . [This project] **allowed us to reach out to people who might not have before engaged in a conversation around applying technology to their teaching practices**.*

(Transformation through Collaboration metrics form)

*[Those] who have developed and/or used project resources have confirmed that **they have benefited from the process, in terms of digital skills, confidence** in the development and deployment of digital resources and understanding of the benefits, limitations and very significant challenges of digital learning.*

(ChemE impact report)

In addition to increased confidence among those who engaged with projects, a shift in mindset was also evident across many project teams. Project team members identified key turning points during the lifecycles of their projects when their focus transferred from the digital tools themselves to the pedagogical concern that needed to be addressed and how digital tools might help. This change in mindset was transformative for many, affecting their underlying thinking and allowing them to take a more sophisticated approach to digital enhancements in subsequent work.

“ We initially envisaged the project to be about technologies but instead the focus became pedagogical approaches

We initially envisaged the project to be about technologies but instead the focus became pedagogical approaches. I think it is fair to say that the project changed all our thinking.
(Y1 Feedback metrics form)

*Direct engagement with resource development and deployment has facilitated members of the project team in **understanding where digital resources may/may not be effectively used** to replace or to supplement more traditional teaching & learning approaches.*
(ChemE impact report)

You could not argue with the real tangible benefit of [embedding this digital technology] in terms of the teaching benefit. You just couldn't defend a contrary argument I think . . . I was surprised at even the more senior members of staff, who would have been brought up in a very traditional way . . . just absolutely didn't blink or were very happy to engage and use it. I think that to me was a positive benefit.
(GeoLab interview)

*[It] was about identifying and demonstrating to people that **technology can solve educational problems**, in as wide a range of contexts as possible . . . We were quickly seen as somebody who could solve a diverse range of problems across the university.*
(Transformation Through Collaboration discussion)



Structured engagement with the National Professional Development Framework has resulted in a clearer understanding of the nature and importance of professional development.

Among the 32 funded projects, 10 focused specifically on supporting the implementation of the National Professional Development Framework. Project teams interpreted the Framework within and across institutional contexts, roles, and fields of study. This resulted in increased familiarisation with the Framework and a more coherent and efficient engagement with the Framework has been made possible through the development of mapping tools and conceptual frameworks. This impact was especially timely as the 2018-20 Higher Education System Performance Framework subsequently recommended that all higher education institutions implement the Framework from 2018 (Department of Education and Skills, 2018).

10 funded projects focused specifically on the implementation of the National Professional Development Framework.

We now have our programmes aligned with the Framework, which is great . . . When I'm talking to academic staff in our institution, I have to be able to communicate the objectives of the Professional Development Framework, what it means for them, what it means in the context of their own professional development.

(MAPpd discussion)

*Because the project involved consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, including students, programme board members, academic council representatives, and senior management, this has **allowed for the National Professional Development Framework to be brought to the attention of more people** within the sector and has ensured that current and future professional development aligns with the Framework.*

(ATLAS metrics form)

***A conceptual framework for the engineering community for thinking about professional development has been developed** and aligned to the National Professional Development Framework. The next step will be to formalise it in TU Dublin institutional policy and practice.*

(Levitus metrics form)

***There is an appetite for the National Professional Development Framework** among those who have become aware of it through this project.*

(PD Capacity Building in the Shannon Consortium metrics form)

The data demonstrated a deepened understanding of the nature and importance of professional development among those who engaged with the Framework. There was a clearer interpretation of professional development as an ongoing process that can take a variety of forms and be useful to the range of staff who teach in higher education.

***We understand professional development differently**, not as a one-off intervention but as something that can happen over time. Not as something that happens when you go to a seminar but as something that can happen in the course of your day-to-day work and as something that can happen when you talk to peers and colleagues.*

(L2L presentation)

“the Framework itself has given us the lens to say: to be professional, these are the things that you need to be considering about your teaching practice

*I think that the project has given us that lens . . . and **the Framework itself has given us the lens to say: to be professional, these are the things that you need to be considering about your teaching practice.** Staying current with your discipline area, but also staying current with pedagogy, staying current with digital...not for the sake of it, but used in an appropriate manner.*

(ATLAS discussion)

*[Metrics] do not represent the many one-to-one professional development conversations between educators . . . **Our participants are (becoming) change agents at department, school, institutional, local and national levels,** and thus the overall impact of the project will continue to ripple outwards into the future.*

(SPEEDS metric form)



Developed resources, platforms and frameworks are now underpinning innovative teaching and learning practices.

The projects resulted in the development and sharing of valuable resources, platforms and frameworks which are now embedded in systems across the sector and have gone on to underpin further enhancement initiatives at local and national levels.

22 websites, 6 frameworks, 19 platforms/tools, 161 case studies and over 600 other resources (micro lessons, videos, guides, etc.) developed.

Specific examples of impactful frameworks and platforms include:

The All Aboard national digital skills framework, which underpinned Ireland's first digital skills week in 2017, involving 322 events organised across education, community and industry. The project lead for All Aboard was also invited onto the panel for Skills in the Digital Age at the Ministerial Summit of the OECD in Cancun to mark the launch of the Cancun Declaration on the Digital Economy. (www.allaboardhe.ie)

The framework published by the ePortfolio project on www.eportfoliohub.ie which is now being used as the basis for ePortfolio development at TU Dublin as part of the HEA-funded Transform-EDU project.

The Teachers' Research Exchange (now T-REX), an online social network for Irish teachers and other educational researchers which encompasses over 400 active projects and more than 2,000 members including academics, pre-service teachers and in-service teachers. (www.t-rex.ie)

The My Experience Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Toolkit including an RPL online portfolio assessment tool built on Moodle, an RPL information website for candidates at www.myexperience.ie and an online course on RPL skills for higher education staff available at www.cpdlearnonline.ie. Since launching the online assessment tool, over 300 RPL applicants have built an RPL ePortfolio.

The TELU (technology-enhanced learning for you) platform, at www.TELU.me, which features over 150 openly-licensed courses, each designed by experienced educators and designers and curated into easy-to-use, structured formats with the intention of being useful and practical for those who teach. The platform has been visited by close to 8,000 unique visitors, approximately half of whom are based abroad, and its resources were incorporated into numerous subsequent funded projects.

*ePrePP has been **key to driving and providing a platform for the exponential growth in the use of ePortfolio for the assessment and evaluation of clinical placement** . . . The project has also broken new ground by piloting ePortfolio within hospital and community pharmacy settings.*

(ePrepp impact report)

***Running the website and the badges are now part of our embedded work**, and we wouldn't be doing that unless there was a user demand for it. It's not that we just decided we're going to keep doing this just for the sake of it, it's because we know people wanted it. So, I suppose that makes it seem worthwhile.*

(All Aboard discussion)

“ The project has removed limitations that would have once restricted students to laboratory access

The project has removed limitations that would have once restricted students to laboratory access. Teaching and learning material can be accessed online via a network connection . . . Feedback reports show that students are accessing the virtual microscope collections out of general interest outside of assigned class/practical work. Positive impacts on student confidence and development is reflected in the analysis of student feedback.

(GeoLab impact report)

[Industry partners] have identified that **some of the developed online resources will form the basis for training resources for students/graduates**, to ensure familiarity with standard equipment/processes/practices before entering into these environments.

(ChemE impact report)



Engagement with, and appreciation for, the scholarship of teaching and learning has increased.

Scholarship of teaching and learning, in broad terms, underpinned all projects. Various projects involved explicit research elements such as conducting a gap analysis, reviewing relevant literature and existing datasets, conducting interviews, focus groups or surveys. This was to ensure that project decisions and resulting enhancements were well-informed and evidence-based. In many cases, this embedded research led to dissemination through conferences and scientific journals, and increased engagement with and appreciation for the scholarship of teaching and learning.

32 peer-reviewed articles, 1 book and 100 other publications resulted from the projects, to date.

*Our project has had a research design focus. That is, we designed resources (of various kinds), trialled them, evaluated their impact, and then made modifications before trialling them again. **We have already published a number of papers on this process, and we continue to work on writing up the data that we have collected.***

(AfL Resources for Y1 UG Mathematics Modules impact report)

“we’re reaching a sort of critical mass, we need to go to the next stage, which is about moving from, say, the conferences to publications

*We’re looking at trying to get a research group established around learning and teaching . . . **we’re reaching a sort of critical mass, we need to go to the next stage, which is about moving from, say, the conferences to publications,** works being published, say, focusing on moving maybe to higher impact journals . . . just taking a more strategic approach to it.*

(TEAM discussion)

*It was actually shocking to me how little international literature there is on teaching and learning in the social sciences . . . **We intend to write research articles on teaching and learning within the discipline. I think we’ll be quite influential in shaping a field of literature that really doesn’t exist.***

(SPEEDS discussion)

*With regard to contribution to the scholarship of teaching and learning, several academic **staff involved in the project have now instigated technology enhanced learning research** projects with their classes.*

This increased engagement with the scholarship of teaching and learning has raised the profile of Irish teaching and learning scholarship and resulted in a more open, outward-facing teaching and learning community in which evidence-based practice is both valued and fostered.

In terms of raising the profile of Irish higher education and the research we were doing, it really did . . . First of all we went [to conferences] to learn. And then we went to share . . . for me that was huge . . . It was about building networking and connections, and finding out what other places were doing. It was far broader than just profile. Profile was the consequence. But the reason we did it was to learn. To build networks. The people we met at those conferences are people we’re still in touch with.

(Y1 Feedback discussion)

Impact on Ireland's International Reputation

The many innovations and scholarly contributions arising from the 2014-16 Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund projects, as well as the national model for supporting and fostering a culture of enhancement, have been showcased internationally, with Ireland being looked to as an example of a national system to emulate.

“the Forum has become a prime example in Europe and beyond for the promotion of higher education teaching and learning

Christian Tauch, International Advisor and Reviewer (Germany)

Internationalisation was built into the project selection and review process since its inception, with 10 international experts serving on selection and review panels between 2014 and 2018. These experts have been unanimous in their admiration for the efficiency and effectiveness of the funding and support processes and have voiced their admiration for the foresight the Irish Government

showed in establishing the National Forum to lead and advise on teaching and learning enhancement at national level. A number of experts have since begun to investigate the possibility of establishing a similar body in their own countries.

Sharing of practice through international communications and institutional visits, and over 100 presentations at international conferences, allowed project teams to contribute to and learn from examples of innovation in other countries. This has resulted in international networks and collaborations being established and the internationalisation of teaching and learning being advanced in Ireland and abroad.

Projects have also been highlighted as examples of good practice in documents of the European Universities Association and the European Commission and the National Forum Director and project leads have been invited to showcase the work of projects to the OECD, the European Commission, and by national representatives in countries including Australia, Czech Republic, Croatia, France, Italy, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, the US and Uzbekistan.

Section Two: Achieving, Sustaining, Capturing and Communicating Impact

We now have a more confident, informed and connected higher education teaching and learning culture in Ireland. The Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund has enabled the exploration and embedding of innovations in digital technologies and enhanced pedagogies across disciplines towards the ultimate aim of student success. The nature and importance of the professional development of those who teach is now better understood and supported and other pillars of student success, such as student partnership, supported transitions across education levels and optimised assessment practices, have been enabled. There is a deeper understanding of how to engage staff and students in teaching and learning enhancement, how to navigate and influence related systems and processes, and how to collaborate effectively with senior management and policy partners in efforts towards shared ambitions.

The extensive review of impact underpinning this report created an opportunity to take stock and summarise learnings regarding the achievement, capture and communication of impact at local and national levels from which to build into the future.

Lessons Learned About Achieving and Sustaining Impact

Learnings from these projects and the review of impact literature have provided increased clarity for those intending to engage in teaching and learning enhancement at institutional level regarding how impact can be achieved and sustained:

- An enhancement initiative is most likely to reach its potential, and therefore achieve meaningful impact, if it is responding to an authentic need for which an achievable solution has been identified, the timing is right, and the value of the initiative is clearly understood and articulated.
- Careful planning at the proposal stage will have long-term benefits. It is important to take the time to explore and understand what knowledge/skills/interest key team members have and account for any gaps. Equally, agreeing realistic expectations with participants and preparing contingency plans for unexpected events will increase the ability to achieve intended impact.
- Consulting key participants, students, senior managers, discipline leaders and/or external partners at every stage creates a sense of shared ownership and investment, which in turn optimises the impact potential.
- Alignment with existing and upcoming strategic/policy developments at institutional/national level increases the likelihood of being impactful at system level. Due to the dynamic nature of the higher education context, a key to such alignment is ensuring that enhancement initiatives remain flexible and responsive to change.
- The sustainability of impact is best considered from the beginning, at planning stage: What positive change is the initiative striving to embed and how? How will the content and availability of any developed resources be future-proofed? What actions will be needed beyond the initiative timeframe to ensure sustainability of impact?

At national level, a number of elements were also noted to influence the achievement of impact:

- The allocation of funding, in itself, allows for space and time to be created for focused teaching and learning conversations and the exploration and embedding of innovative practice. Large-scale investment in teaching and learning enhancement demonstrates the value placed on teaching and learning in higher education by decision-makers at system level and this can have a positive influence on institutional priorities.
- Underpinning this, for such funding to have maximal impact, there is a need for funding and support structures for teaching and learning within and across institutions to be optimised. The well-established institutional support structures for research funding are not yet echoed for teaching and learning across Irish institutions, although significant advances have been made in recent years.
- Selection and review criteria and processes can be important in shaping the nature and extent of impact achieved. For example, the advice and feedback from students and international reviewers in the Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund represented additional expertise on which teams built effectively. Similarly, the requirements for collaboration and for meaningful student involvement impacted positively on understandings, practices and the wider culture of enhancement.
- Encouraging networking and collaboration and stipulating that applicants for funding take account of previous work done in similar areas is important in fostering synergies and allowing enhancements to build on each other, encouraging collective progress for the benefit of the entire higher education community.
- Impact in teaching and learning is a complex, long-term endeavour. Different initiatives can result in different forms of impact, prompting a need for varied approaches to capturing and communicating this impact. There is a need for continued, responsive support for those involved in teaching and learning enhancement in the capture and communication of impact across institutional and disciplinary contexts.

Considerations for Capturing and Communicating Impact

Discussions with project teams highlighted the need for support and guidance in how to capture and communicate the impact of future teaching and learning enhancement initiatives. Considerations for the capture and communication of impact are outlined below, based on impact discussions and presentations and related scholarly insights compiled during the review of literature.

- **What purpose is the impact linked to?**

It is crucial that the purpose that an enhancement initiative strives towards is clearly understood and articulated. All considerations in capturing and communicating impact will come back to this key foundation. The evidence gathered and communicated must be appropriate to the demonstration of the achievement of this purpose.

- **Where is the strategic/policy alignment?**

A strategic approach to impact and its evaluation is important to ensure the value of any impact is communicated to beneficiaries and linked to policymaking. Making links between strategies/policies at local and national level and the purpose and anticipated impact(s) can assist in communicating impact to key audiences and beneficiaries at a later stage. Further, this can help to ensure the initiative and its impact is connected to future developments and sustained beyond the funding period.

- **How is the long and short term being taken into account?**

Impact evaluation needs to take a long-term view to ensure emerging, 'slow-burn', long-term impacts are not missed, and that initial impacts are monitored over time to establish their real value. Just as it is important to consider the sustainability of impact beyond the initiative timeframe, capturing the long-

term impact of the initiative needs to be planned for. What short- and long-term impacts are anticipated, based on the purpose of the initiative? How is the ongoing capture of these impacts being accounted for during the planning stage? What evidence will best demonstrate these impacts?

- **How are unexpected impacts allowed for?**

In planning to capture and communicate short- and long-term impacts, it is also helpful to remember that some impacts may be unanticipated. Flexibility and regular review over an extended time frame, including after the end of the activity, is needed to ensure that any unexpected impacts can be identified and further levels/depth of impact can be captured. Methods selected for gathering evidence should therefore allow for the capture of unanticipated impacts.

- **How is context taken into account?**

The occurrence of impact is not often a simple linear process, and a tailored approach has to be taken in its capture and evaluation. This is because the evidencing of impact is context-dependent, requiring consideration of the specific dimensions of the given intervention and of the environment in which it occurs. Environmental influences may be cultural, political, economic and/or demographic. As options for evidencing impact are considered, it is worth thinking through how these measures may need to be adapted for the specific context and whether such adaptations need to be included in the eventual communication of impact.

- **What evidence mix is appropriate to the evaluation of impact?**

It is essential that any forms of measurement used to evidence impact are 'fit-for-purpose' and are not selected simply because they are the easiest to use or most easily communicated. Measures used should reflect what is important to measure, as reflected in the original purpose of the intervention. Any evaluation approach should also embrace and reflect the perspectives of all stakeholders and beneficiaries, such as students, staff, senior managers, external partners, and policymakers. The particular mix of evidence gathered for a given initiative will depend on the nature of the impact to be captured, allowing for unanticipated impacts, the context in which impact occurs, and how such impact can be best communicated to the intended audience(s).

- **What communication form is appropriate to the audience(s)?**

There may be a number of potential audiences for any communication of impact, including funders, beneficiaries, participants, the wider higher education community, or those hoping to achieve similar impacts within their own contexts. These audiences may each see different impacts as valuable or may each see the same impact as valuable in different ways. Similarly, they may each see different representations of impact as more or less valid. It will be important to consider how communications can take account of the perspectives and expectations of different audiences so that the nature of each impact can be understood, and its value represented appropriately.

- **How might the communication form influence the evidence mix and vice versa?**

The communication form chosen to respond to different audiences may influence the evidence mix chosen to represent the impact achieved and vice versa. Different forms of impact may be best communicated through, for example, metrics, case studies, testimonials or quotes. In the planning stage, gathering ideas for the variety of ways in which a given impact can be communicated and involving stakeholders in such discussions can be useful. Such a discussion can then inform the agreed evaluation approach.

- **To what degree can a link to impact be proven?**

A common expectation in any evaluation of impact is that it can be proven that the captured impact would not have occurred without the intervention. The practical application of this expectation within the dynamic context of education can be challenging and it is worth thinking this through. What legitimate claims can be made about the impact achieved? While it may be possible to demonstrate a clear link to

some impacts, in some cases links to impact can be inferred but not proven. Being transparent regarding what has been found, and how, allowing audiences to make their own judgements, is fundamental to the clear communication of impact.

- **What can be learned from the process of capturing and communicating impact?**

The capture and communication of impact can feed forward for development and improvement purposes, rather than being seen solely as a mechanism of public accountability. The exercise of exploring what impact was achieved and how reveals a lot about achieving and sustaining impact in the first place and it is worth considering how such learning can be recorded for the benefit of future enhancement initiatives.

Concluding Reflections and Next Steps

The Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund projects 2014-18 represented an investment of circa €4.74m in teaching and learning in Irish higher education. The evidence presented in this report indicates that this investment resulted in enhanced learning experiences, advances in underpinning systems and structures and a culture of enhancement which has developed significantly in the years since 2014. Ireland's reputation as a leader in teaching and learning enhancement has also been reinforced. The 32 funded projects involved over 400 members of the Irish higher education community working collaboratively to engage a further 12,500 senior managers, staff and students in the enhancement of teaching and learning over a five-year period.

A key motivation behind the impact review underpinning this report was to gain a better understanding of the concept of impact, and how those in the Irish higher education community are achieving, recording and representing the impact of their teaching and learning enhancement work. A lot has been learned which will inform local and national processes and structures in the future.

Key Points to Remember as we Look to the Future

Within the area of teaching and learning, impact can be difficult to objectively measure.



A narrow, metrics-driven approach to the evaluation of impact in higher education can tend to focus attention on what can be objectively measured, failing to recognise many other valuable, but less tangible, impacts.



This can result in the broad impact created through the investment of funding, time and effort across the higher education community not being recognised or understood and significant 'value for money' going unnoticed.



There is a need to consider, at national level, a range of agreed impact approaches, and associated indicators, that are appropriate to teaching and learning in higher education in Ireland and build capacity in their implementation.

We have reached a key moment for teaching and learning in Irish higher education. There is increased investment, in terms of both resources and time and energy, and the fundamental link between teaching and learning and key educational imperatives such as employability, internationalisation, innovation, equality of opportunity, academic excellence and student success, is coming into sharp focus. National structures and approaches to underpin teaching and learning enhancement have been established and are being emulated internationally. In every higher education institution across Ireland people are engaging in and committing to teaching and learning enhancement. A key aspect of understanding the impact of this engagement and commitment, and what is considered impact by different stakeholders, is understanding how teaching and learning is valued by each.

There is a truth to the saying 'what gets measured gets done'. What gets measured, and how, can be influential in the context of evidence-based decision-making at every level of higher education. Another saying, commonly used in discussions on impact, highlights the importance of 'measuring what we value rather than valuing what we measure'. Bamber (2013) has reconceptualised 'impact' as 'evidencing value', highlighting that the way evidence is gathered and presented can reflect the value of what has been achieved. It is important, therefore, to know what value is present before making decisions as to how to evidence it.

In the coming year the National Forum will work in partnership with the sector to explore how teaching and learning is valued across a range of levels in Irish higher education: individual, discipline, institution and system. The national consultation, Valuing Ireland's Teaching and Learning (VITAL), will involve students, staff, leaders and policymakers and will centre on three questions:

- How is teaching and learning currently valued and recognised?
- Ideally, how could it be valued and recognised?
- What influences how teaching and learning is valued and recognised?

The vision of the National Forum, which was endorsed by the sector in 2018, is a valued and informed teaching and learning culture in Irish higher education. If engagement in, and commitment to, the enhancement of teaching and learning is to be valued, that value must first be understood and articulated. Through this consultation, a national picture will be developed and an evidence base for future decisions will be established. This will be an important first step in working towards a truly consultative, context-appropriate approach to valuing and recognising teaching and learning enhancement in Irish higher education.

The combination of the increased investment in teaching and learning at national level⁷ and the acknowledged progress and maturity of teaching and learning enhancement in higher education in Ireland, brings with it an increased focus on evidencing impact. Cognisant of this expectation, the National Forum has already proactively devoted considerable time and expertise to the questions of impact and value in terms of teaching and learning in higher education. At this point in time there is an opportunity for the sector as a whole to develop a shared declaration and approach with regard to how we value and recognise teaching and learning in Irish higher education. We believe that valuing teaching and learning, with recognition as a key enabler, is an essential next step in our understanding of impact.

7 For example, through the 2018 Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund, the HEA's 2018 Innovation and Transformation Fund and the Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement Funding 2019

Acknowledgements

The National Forum would like to extend sincere and deep gratitude to the many project team members across the sector who took the time to contribute to this report.

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DOI: 10.6084/m9.figshare.12205622