Centre for Transformative Learning Summer 2022 Newsletter

Student Engagement

The First Seven Weeks Programme

The First Four Weeks (F4W) programme offered support to all students with a specific emphasis on supporting first, second, international, mature, access and disability students. Further information on the programme is available on the F7W Newsletter

AICUR 2022.

The 9th All Ireland Conference for Undergraduate Research (AICUR) took place on March 29th, 2022. This year's conference was hosted online, marking ACIUR's second year in an online format. Once again, this year we were blown away by the number of students participating, representing a great selection of HEIs across Ireland. We received 56 submissions and were delighted to welcome students from Trinity, UCD, MIC, DCU, and of course UL. Students opted for a combination of live presentations, recorded presentations, and posters to showcase their research, and we are delighted to host each student's work on the AICUR website.

As well as our student presentations, we welcomed Dr Garret Maher, the Executive Director of the Global UG Awards who advised students on how to advance their research submissions into the Global UG Awards. We also welcomed Sharon Cunningham, CEO, Co-Founder and board member at Shorla Oncology ('Shorla') who was named Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur 2019, to deliver our keynote address. To close AICUR 2022, we hosted our inaugural student panel discussion, where students discussed the importance of research at undergraduate level and its impact on shaping their future careers. AICUR 2022, truly was a student-led endeavour, highlighting the high standards of research undertaken at the undergraduate level.

The Student Engagement and Success Unit continued to provide support to first year students, hosting workshops including 'The Best You in Semester 2' workshop which was offered by the Student Support Officers.

The Five Learning Centres continue to provide support to students both online and face to face as deemed most appropriate:

A total of 30,336 visits were made to the Mathematics Learning Centre's (MLC) drop-in centre Sulis site in the period between summer repeats 2021 and the middle of week 15 Semester 2 2022. 3,092 hours of the MLC's 24/7 support material was viewed throughout the year. In addition to the engagement with the MLC's 24/7 material, a total of 2,868 attendances at MLC classes were recorded throughout the year. This is a combination of attendances at MLC online group support classes, MLC appointments, MLC revision programmes and MLC in-person drop-in support. Furthermore, voluntary anonymous student surveys submitted this year indicate that almost half of the students who completed the surveys feared that they would fail their mathematics module(s), with almost all students stating that the MLC would contribute to them passing their module or getting a better grade.

Science Learning Centre (SLC) is providing support (through the Drop-in Centre (face to face), online appointment-based sessions and support tutorials) to undergraduates whose degree includes a science or engineering component. A total of 14,244 visits were made to the Science Learning Centre (SLC) SULIS site by 3,742 unique visitors enrolled as 'participants' on the course between May 2021 and May 2022. The SLC Sulis site also contains 50 videos created by tutors in various subject areas and 2,756 hours of video content was viewed throughout the year. We provided support tutorials for 8 modules this year (5 Chemistry modules, 3 Mechanical Engineering modules; 6 modules at the request of student reps, 2 'Prepare and Repeat' modules). 183 online 1-1 appointments were made over the academic year. SLC is also continuing to cater to some of the specific requests made by students with special needs and is working in collaboration with disability services to provide the best facility to these students.
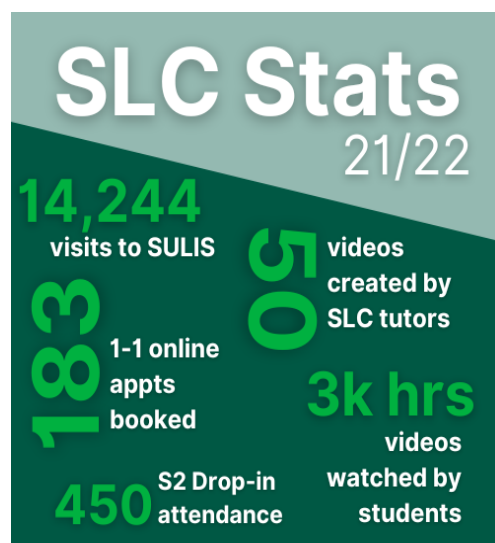

ICT Learning Centre (ICTLC): During AY 2021/22, the ICTLC operated a hybrid model of support, with students being able to avail of both online synchronous support and face-to-face support in our centre. These supports include drop-in sessions, one-to-one appointments, group sessions, and our Prepare and Repeat (PAR) sessions. In total, 550 students, primarily from the core ICT courses, availed of the supports with a total of 2038 visits recorded. A series of targeted support classes for 3 first-year and 6 second-year ICT modules were delivered face-to-face in both semesters. During the past academic year, 5 core programming modules were supported using the Digital Learning Support Hub (DLSH).

The first of our three on-campus 3-day UL Cybercamp's is returning in person on-campus for the first time since lockdown for 40 secondary school students. The camps run from the 27th of June to the 7th of July. All 120 places on the three camps have been taken. Each 3-day camp consists of a day that focuses on a specific area of ICT fundamentals namely: An introduction to programming, basic web design and Electronics/robots. The ICT Learning Centre and the Peer Supported Learning Centre manage the camps with funding from the HEA and additional help from both the CSIS and ECE departments. We're very excited to welcome these students to UL and show them a little of what they may encounter should they decide to begin their academic and career journeys here with us.

The Peer-Supported Learning Centre (PSLC) offered Peer-Supported Learning Group (PSLG) support to 10 modules this year from the Faculty of Science & Engineering, School of Allied Health, and the Kemmy Business School. A total of 1008 individual students were targeted with 239 (23.71%) attending the support. While the attendance rate was lower than last year, the usual trends were seen with students attending the at least 50% of the support sessions (8 weekly sessions per semester) showing an average QPV 30.70% higher than the class average, compared to those who attended no sessions showing an average QPV 3.24% below the class average. Similar findings for pass rates are seen with those attending 50% or more of the support sessions passing (achieving a grade of C3 or higher) on average 17.29% above the class average whilst those who didn't attend passing at a rate 2.21% below the class average.
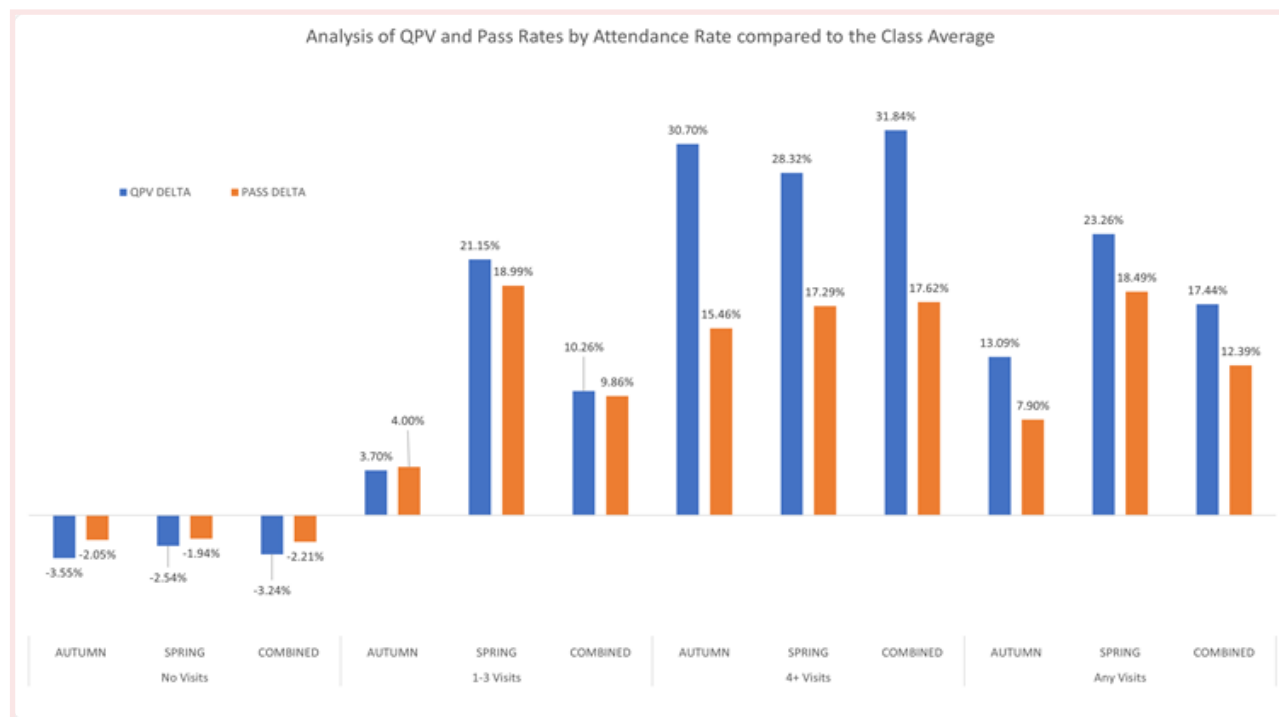
Attendance Rate compared to class average for PSLG programmes AY2021/2

The PSLC trialled two new initiatives this academic year in addition to PSLG support. These were:

⇒ The targeted Soft-skills Seminar Series that is now embedded with the 4th year Electronic and Computer Enginee(ECE) department undergraduate and master's programmes. Delivered via the Digital Learner Support Hub (DLSH) platform, the new initiative operated on a flipped classroom model with asynchronous text and video materials supplemented by forums and an 'Ask Me Anything' (AMA) Live Session. Feedback from the participating students and lecturers has been very positive and the support will be offered again in the coming academic year.

⇒ The ECE Mentoring (MENTECE) programme. A quasi-buddy support offering guidance from 4th-year students of ECE's new 5-year Engineering programmes, and lightly tied to two historically difficult 1st year electronic engineering modules, the support gave the targeted students the opportunity to learn from each other and from the experienced mentors on hand. The support was suggested as a way to bridge the knowledge gap experienced by some first-year electronic engineering students who opt for the ECE stream as well as affording them the opportunity to make friends and peer networks often for some, unfortunately due to Covid restrictions, for the first time. While attendance rates were lower than hoped (14 of 61 students targeted attended at least once), feedback has been very encouraging, and we hope to continue this support again for the coming academic year.

Digital Learning Support Hub (DLSH). For DLSH supported modules, each week during the semester, appropriate online content is deployed. This content is supported with scheduled weekly face-to-face ICTLC sessions or online using the Peer Supported Learning Group (PSLG) model. An additional core ECE first-year programming module was supported with PAR during the spring semester. A total of 40 students targeted based on their grades in prior assessments with relevant online content made available to the students each week. A flipped classroom model was used with the focus of these classes on lab work and solving typical assessment questions. With the managed return to campus this year, the ICTLC implemented Pair-Programming support in labs for the core first-year ECE programming modules in both semesters. The centre organised and mentored 3-person teams for the Robocode (first-year national programming competition) during February with the winners of our in-house competition representing UL during the event held in early March.

DLSH offered continued avenues for the PSLC to make its support more accessible and flexible. Of the 10 PSLG programmes deployed, 5 were run online through DLSH. The online platform allowed us to reach out to more students and the freedom to deploy supports 'after-hours'. Unfortunately, a certain level of 'online fatigue' has hampered attendance rates but the positive reception of the online nature by those who attended encourages us to continue to examine, adapt, and develop online and hybrid deployments of our supports going forward.

The Regional Writing Centre delivered 28 workshops on various aspects of writing for academic assessment during this period, over two-hundred and fifty students attending.

- Two PhD Writers' Weeks were facilitated for 18 PhD candidates, most in their final year.

- Volunteers from StudentVolunteers.ie judged the Regional Writing Centre's 11th annual
  National Secondary School Essay-writing Competition.

  Three winners honoured on May 26 in an online ceremony:

  ⇒ Jasmine Gillan, Méan Scoil Nua an Leith Triuigh, Co. Kerry.
  ⇒ Nele Prenzel, Sandford Park School, Ranelagh, Dublin 6.
  ⇒ Rachel Feeley, Mercy Mounthawk Secondary School, Co. Kerry.

- Seven international scholars visiting through the Erasmus Mobility + from Bosnia and Ghana were hosted by the RWC.

Peer Tutors

Four new Peer Tutors were trained. Peer-tutors in the Writing Centre received and responded to 20 'quick queries' (questions that can be answered in less than 15 minutes) during this period and provided online tutoring to 162 students.

Tutor group Spring 2022

Digital Education

LevUL Up Spring 2022.

LevUL Up is a digital skills development programme for UL students coordinated by CTL in collaboration with the Library, ITD, and the Educational Assistive Technology Centre (EATC). It runs in association with the Irish Universities Association Enhancing Digital Teaching & Learning project. The Spring 2022 programme comprised of a Digital Skills Awareness Course plus a calendar of 19 live online workshops on a range of digital skills and literacies. ~760 people registered for Spring 2022 workshops with a ~47% attendance rate. ~560 people are currently enrolled as students on the Digital Skills Awareness Course. Over the past 3 semesters, Spring 2021-2022, ~5,110 people have registered for these digital skills and literacies workshops.

VLE Review and Implementation Project

The VLE Review and Implementation Project has moved into the Implementation Phase. The VLE Project Team are engaging with D2L consultants and taking part in Brightspace training. A pilot group of academics are working with members of the VLE Project Team to prepare their modules for September 2022 on Brightspace. During the autumn semester a range of faculty-based meetings will be held to showcase the Brightspace pilot modules and outline project timelines for the academic year 23/24.

As part of the VLE Implementation process, several teaching and learning tools to work in integration with the new VLE have been explored and shortlisted in order to meet university requirements around accessibility, content authoring, attendance tracking, interactivity in the classroom and peer assessment. These tools will be tested in order to provide an enriched virtual learning environment for teaching, learning and assessment.

REAP

The REAP Project was funded under the 2018 HEA Innovation and Transformation call. This was a collaborative project between the University of Limerick, Mary Immaculate Collage and the Technological University of the Shannon: Midwest.
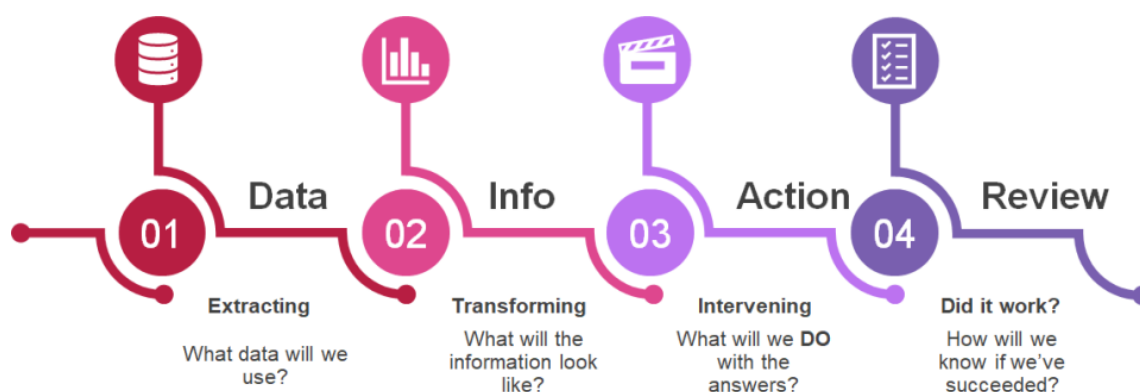
The REAP Project has recently delivered the Essentials for e-moderating short course with 70 participants to date and will be offered again in AY22/23.

Digital Education

STELA Live

The National Forum 'STELA Live' project, led by Dr Angélica Rísquez, Claire Halpin/Sarah Gibbons and Dr Mohd Fazil, aims to set up the resources and parameters to provide a timely and appropriate learning intervention for students who may be at risk of failing or underperforming. In doing so, we are building institutional data and insight on the possible application of learning analytics interventions in UL and laying some foundations to facilitate the General Principle of Interoperability set out in the *Policy on the Use of Data to Enhance Teaching, Learning and Assessment (Learning Analytics).* To date, the project has completed a comprehensive baseline analysis of four large first year undergraduate modules and we are currently working on the creation of a dataset to enable piloting an intervention in SEM 1 2022/23 to support student success in collaboration with the Power Intelligence Unit in ITD.

01 Data	02 Info	03 Action	04 Review
Extracting	**Transforming**	**Intervening**	**Did it work?**
What data will we use?	What will the information look like?	What will we **DO** with the answers?	How will we know if we've succeeded?

E-laboratory for Digital Education

In June 2022 CTL, along with UL Engage, hosted project partners University of Maribor (Slovenia) and the coordinator of the University of Rijeka (Croatia), on a project titled 'E-laboratory for digital education which received funding of €163,877. This project focuses on developing the digital pedagogical competencies of teaching staff through researching frameworks, approaches to digital inclusion and the development of inclusive online examination methodologies. The project will result in an e-learning platform that provides and promotes evidence-based approaches to good practice as well as e-courses for faculty members.

Professional Development

Dr Michael Wride facilitated a face to face seminar, *Research in Teaching and Learning: Transforming teaching practice and the student experience*, as part of UL Research Week.

There has been an ongoing series of webinars and workshops this semester focusing on topics including teaching philosophy, feedback, peer feedback and transforming learning Events & workshops | UL - University of Limerick

The inter-institutional peer observation network (UL, TUS and MIC) continues to provide a valuable opportunity for UL academic staff to engage in productive interactions with colleagues to gain feedback on their teaching. There was a mix of online (both synchronous and asynchronous) peer observation this year as well as a welcome return to face to face peer observations. It was also great to see several-inter-institutional peer observations between colleagues from MIC and UL who all gained greatly from the mutual interactions.

In the Graduate Diploma and Masters in Teaching Learning and Scholarship we were delighted that we were able to hold the first sessions of the year face to face as part of our ongoing blended approach. This was a valuable opportunity for the participants in the course to get to know each other and help to develop the community of inquiry which is so valuable for the success of the course in enhancing excellence in teaching and learning across the disciplines.

The UDL Community of Practice was launched in December 2021 through the National Forum VITAL series of events to create a structure that allows our staff to promote best practices and build common capability in Universal Design for Learning across the University of Limerick.

 In collaboration with colleagues from the University of Hull, Dr Mary Fitzpatrick was awarded funding as part of the Advance HE Collaborative Fund for the development of case studies on *Utilising the Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Learning for Strategic Change*.

Professional Development

Faculty Writers' Retreat: 12 faculty pursuing the Graduate Diploma in Teaching, Learning and Scholarship participated in a Faculty Writers' Retreat from April 11th to 13th, leading to the preparation of multiple research papers for submission to important journals in the participants' respective disciplines.

National Forum Academic Writing Practice Open Course: Dr Íde O'Sullivan led the national rollout of National Forum Academic Writing Practice open course in partnership with NUIM, Hibernia, TUD, and LKIT. 30 digital badges were awarded to successful participants and a further 13 facilitators' digital badges were awarded to participants.

Curriculum Development

UL's Integrated Curriculum Development Framework and implementation plan was approved by Academic Council on May 18th. The ICDF builds on the institution's existing strengths and defines a shared understanding of the curriculum, which aligns to the institutional vision and strategic goals of the University. It provides a vision for an educational philosophy at UL and supports programme teams to create and sustain a collective curriculum philosophy, which fosters consistency in the design and delivery of   programmes (O'Neill, 2015).

The existence of an over-arching institutional framework serves to guide programme teams in curriculum design and development, focusing on a more consistent and coordinated approach to learning and teaching guided by an agreed set of principles which establish the vision of our graduates and describe the learning and teaching environment. While the introduction of the ICDF is a new initiative at UL, it is guided by the University's strategic visions and will serve to support programme teams to achieve the ambitions set out in the strategy and not burden them with additional requests for the curriculum.

The ICDF promotes careful learning design and development. It supports faculty to design high quality learning experiences for students and foster a student-centred learning environment. It supports the development of new curricula that are research-led and foster challenge-driven, experiential and collaborative learning modes The ICDF brings togethers key policy drivers such as embedding graduate attributes, promoting employability and developing inclusive curricula which will enhance the student experience.

Curriculum Development Consultations: For further advice on curriculum development and design, please contact Dr Íde O'Sullivan, Curriculum Development Support Lead ide.osullivan@ul.ie

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Teaching Awards

UL Excellence in Teaching Awards

The UL Excellence in Teaching Awards recognises and endorses the value of teaching activities, collaborative engagement in evidence-based research and key teaching innovations. The 4 UL Faculties are considered in this award for teaching excellence.

The winners of the UL Teaching Excellence Awards 2021/22:

- **Teaching Excellence Award (Individual): Eamonn Curtis, SEN.**

- **Teaching Excellence Award (Team): Dr Catherine Norton, Dr Mark Lyons, Dr Brian Carson, Prof Ian Kenny, Dr Frank Nugent and Prof Giles Warrington, EHS.**

The award panel comprised of Dr Louise Naylor, Director of Education, University of Kent, Dr Patrick Ryan, Associate Vice President Student Engagement, UL, Prof Manuel João Costa, Pro-Rector: Student Affairs and Pedagogical Innovation, Universidade do Minho, Portugal, Míde Nic FhionnLaoich, Student Intern, Irish Universities Association and Dr Mary Fitzpatrick, Head CTL (chair).

The panel were extremely impressed by the very high standard this year so heartiest congratulations and very well done to all. Presentation of these awards will take place at the Autumn Conferring. Calls for nominations will open again in the Autumn Semester.

Three UL Academics shortlisted for the Regional Teaching Excellence Award

Eleanor Giraud, Irish World Academy of Music and Dance (UL), **Florence Le Baron-Earle**, School of Modern Languages and Applied Linguistics, Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (UL), and **Jean McCarthy**, Work & Employment Studies, Kemmy Business School (UL) were shortlisted for this year's Regional Teaching Excellence Award.

This award is a collaborative process between UL, MIC and TUS, which aims to showcase and champion outstanding practice in Higher Education teaching from across the Region. Being shortlisted for this award is a considerable achievement; all shortlisted candidates were required to put themselves through the very rigorous process of compiling a detailed teaching portfolio comprising multiple sources of evidence of excellent practice.

The overall winner of this year's award is **Dr Anne Dolan**, Mary Immaculate College. A virtual event to acknowledge Anne's achievement, and the achievements of all of the short-listed candidates, took place on Tuesday 31st May and was hosted by MIC President Professor Eugene Wall.

Florence Le Baron-Earle and Eleanor Giraud

Jean McCarthy

The candidates were acknowledged for their "passion and dedication for their teaching and for student learning, and their admirable work and effort particularly considering the ongoing challenges. Each shortlisted candidate demonstrated strengths in various areas and there was excellent consideration for broader support of students and of UDL and Diversity & Inclusion across all the portfolios"

International Collaborations

Writing Beyond the University Research Seminar

Dr Íde O'Sullivan was awarded a scholarship to participate in Elon University's Center for Engaged Learning (CEL) 2019-2022 research seminar on Writing Beyond the University: Fostering Writers' Lifelong Learning and Agency. Íde's research team, *Team Recursivities*, is studying the non-linear complexities of students' writing–occasions, opportunities, processes, and texts within and beyond the university. Team members include Ashley J. Holmes, Georgia State University (United States); D. Alexis Hart, Allegheny College (United States); Anna V. Knutson, Duquesne University (United States); Yogesh Sinha, Sohar University (Oman); and Kathleen Blake Yancey, Professor Emerita at Florida State University (United States).

Íde with the team at Elon University, North Caroline, USA.

EUA EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY ASSOCIATION

Dr Mary Fitzpatrick is leading a European Universities Association (EUA) thematic peer group on *Collaborative Teaching Practice* with participants from 10 Universities for the period March 2022 – February 2023.

SEDA
STAFF AND EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

SEDA webinar *CPD and Reflective Practice – Opportunities for Meaningful Outcomes* on 25th January 2022 facilitated by *Prof Carole Davis, Dr Mary Fitzpatrick & Prof Pam Parker*.

European Commission

Erasmus+

A new iteration of the LTF professional development series, now matched against the European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators (DigCompEdu), was delivered, building on the comprehensive resources available on the LTF website.