



Learning Innovation Network *Newsletter*

2ND ANNUAL LIN CONFERENCE

'Motivating Learners through Creative Approaches to Assessment'



Date : 15th October
Venue : The Sheraton Hotel, Athlone, Co. Westmeath

URL : http://www.lin-ireland.com/index.php?title=LIN_Conference

The second annual LIN conference will take place on 15th October in the Sheraton Hotel, Athlone, Co. Westmeath.

Assessment is a valuable means of assessing our effectiveness as teachers and the effectiveness of our students as learners. Yet getting assessment "right" is a pivotal challenge for every third level educational institution. Key questions include;

- What is best practice in assessment?
- What are the innovations and emerging trends in assessment?
- What technologies can be employed to facilitate the assessment process?
- How can we use assessment techniques to improve the quality of our students' learning?
- How can we create assessments to ensure that deep learning is taking place?
- How and when should feedback be given as part of a formative assessment strategy?

By focussing on innovations, best practices and emerging trends in assessment in order to promote quality assessment for student learning, LIN 2009 provides a forum for academics to come together and exchange ideas, share expertise, and engage in reflection.

The mission of LIN 2009 is to lay the foundations of an educational assessment community.

The key feature of LIN 2009 is the provision of assessment strategies and tools that can be immediately shared and implemented by participants in their own teaching practise.

The keynote address for LIN 2009 will be delivered by Prof. John Biggs. Our second keynote is Prof. Ranald Macdonald.

This conference will provide a unique opportunity for learning and teaching experts, researchers, educational practitioners and developers and other stakeholders to come together, share experiences, reflect on informed practice and explore sectoral innovations, all within the context of learning and teaching.

We encourage participation across the HE sector and we hope that you will find our programme (<http://www.lin-ireland.com/index.php?title=Programme>) inspiring. It is our intention that the annual LIN conference will become a permanent feature of the learning and teaching calendar.

Registration is now open. Whilst there is no attendance charge, it is vital to register your place.

To do so, please e-mail LIN@gmit.ie

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KEY NOTE SPEAKER



Professor John Biggs

John Biggs has held Chairs in Education in Canada, Australia, and Hong Kong. He has published extensively on student learning and the implications of his research for teaching. His concept of constructive alignment, a form of outcomes-based education, is outlined in *Teaching for Quality Learning in University* (McGraw-Hill/Open University Press). The third edition is co-authored with Catherine Tang, based on their experience in implementing constructive alignment in several universities in Hong Kong.

Keynote Overview : Enhancing Active Learning through Aligned Assessment

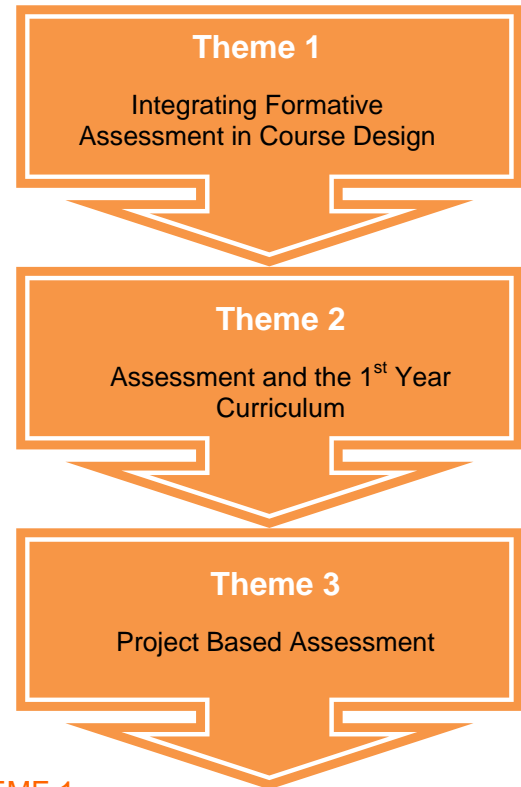
Assessment is a major determinant of how students learn. It is crucial that the assessment tasks are aligned to intended learning outcomes. When that is the case, the “backwash” from assessment, usually negative, actually encourages students to learn what it is intended they should learn, while open-ended assessment tasks allow for unintended but desirable outcomes. Constructive alignment is a design for teaching that inter-relates teaching/learning activities, assessment tasks, and intended learning outcomes in a way that allows for student creativity.

LIN AND THE STUDENTS

As LIN 2009 wants to take into account what the students think, the LIN organising committee is pleased to announce that a panel of students will be present to give their insights into what they see as effective feedback in Higher Education. Furthermore, a short video presentation of students interviewed from the DIT will be followed by an open forum discussion about effective feedback and student assessment.



CONFERENCE THEMES



THEME 1

These sessions will present innovations and best practices in the use formative assessment in course design.

THEME 1 PRESENTATIONS

- o Towards a formative assessment model through the investigation of assessment practices in Built Environment undergraduate education
- o Using Technology to Reduce Time and Increase the Frequency of Feedback on Assessments
- o Use of classroom assessment techniques in the teaching of Biology to postgraduate students

THEME 2

These sessions will focus on methods of enhancing the first year experience through assessment strategies such as peer assisted learning, focus groups, peer evaluation, portfolios and assessment tools.

THEME 2 PRESENTATIONS

- o Analysis of assessment strategies used in a Level 7, Year 1 engineering subject
- o Appropriate Assessment for First year Laboratory Courses
- o An evaluation of the use of Audience Response System as an assessment tool within BSc Hons Clinical Physiology programme at the University of Ulster

THEME 3

An effective assessment program uses multiple strategies to demonstrate learning and performance. The use of projects in which students work as a teams may be evaluated differently to traditional assignments where the learning outcomes are related to more transferable skills.

THEME 3 PRESENTATIONS

- o Assessing Generic Skills and Competences: Learning Portfolios in Action
- o Authentic Project-Based Assessments: Students Designing and Implementing Peer Physical Activity Training Programmes
- o Towards a Personal Learning Network - integrating Internet applications and services into third level teaching and learning

To view the abstracts please go to : http://www.lin-ireland.com/index.php?title=LIN_Conference

LIN 2009 WITH A DIFFERENCE

As one of the objectives is to ensure that attendees get the most from the conference, LIN 2009 has been organised to include :

1. Presentations in the morning – 20 minute presentations followed by 5 minutes Q&A
2. A 25 minute student perspective presentation on the different themes
3. Workshops and discussions with Prof. J. Biggs, Prof. R. Macdonald and Dr. M. Palmer in the afternoon
4. Plenary session and open forum prior to the close of the conference



LIN 2009 WORKSHOPS

WORKSHOP 1 : MANAGING ASSESSMENT



Dr. Marion Palmer

Dr. Marion Palmer is Head of the Department of Learning Sciences at IADT. She is chair of the Institute's Teaching and Learning Committee and the eLearning Steering Group. Prior to becoming Head of Department Marion was a lecturer at IADT, teaching instructional design, physics, and science and working in science education. Marion is a member of the Council of the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) and has completed a doctorate in education at Queen's University Belfast on teaching in Institutes of Technology. Assessment is a key interest and she has taught extensively in the area.

Assessment is a key function of lecturers; fair and consistent assessment is required by the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act (1999, p. 26). Managing assessment means planning, implementing and reviewing assessment to ensure that it meets the appropriate awards standards for the different awards of the National Framework of Qualifications. HETAC adopted a new Assessment and Standards document in April 2009 to be implemented by 2010/2011. This major document on assessment includes sections on principles, guidelines, sectoral conventions and protocols. This workshop is an opportunities to explore the implications of Assessment and Standards for lecturers and programme co-ordinators. This is a practical workshop that will use a range of scenarios to explore the framework for assessment and its impact on the everyday practice of assessment, teaching and learning and curriculum design.

(http://www.lin-ireland.com/index.php?title=Dr._Marion_Palmer)



WORKSHOP 2 : ASSESSMENT & THE 1ST YEAR CURRICULUM

In this session, Prof Biggs will explain some key principles of assessment that may be particularly relevant to assessment issues in the first year. Participants will then break into special interest groups to discuss how they may address problems that particularly concern them and report back their conclusions.

For a copy of the workshop schedule, please go to : http://www.lin-ireland.com/index.php?title=Prof._John_Biggs



WORKSHOP 3 : PROJECT BASED ASSESSMENT



Professor Ranald Macdonald

Ranald Macdonald was until recently Professor of Academic Development and Head of Strategic Development in the Learning and Teaching Institute at Sheffield Hallam University. Following early retirement this summer, he remains an Emeritus Professor at Sheffield Hallam and is a freelance Higher Education consultant. A former Co-Chair of the UK's Staff and Educational Development Association, he was also founder and Chair of its Research Committee until 2008 and is a SEDA Fellowship holder. He was awarded a UK National Teaching Fellowship in 2005.

In this session participants will draw on the ideas presented in the morning's keynote and their own experiences of assessing and being assessed. In doing so will draw out particular characteristics of project-based assessment, the processes and outcomes of learning and assessment through projects, and some of the unintended outcomes which may occur. In particular, we will be interested in what this approach to assessment can offer which more traditional methods do not. In doing so we may broaden the focus out to include inquiry and research-led learning, work-based learning and the use of portfolios as evidence of learning.



LIN POSTERS

The call for posters is open until September 30th.

NOTE: PRIZE FOR BEST POSTER

For more information on poster guidelines, please check out : http://www.lin-ireland.com/index.php?title=Poster_Guidelines



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‘EYE’ on AIT

AIT Mission Statement



To contribute to the technological, scientific, commercial, economic, industrial, social and cultural development of the State, with particular reference to the midland region, through the provision of a balanced education to the highest international standard founded in accessibility, mobility, collaborative links, and research excellence.

Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT) is the only higher education institution (HEIs) in the Midlands of Ireland. Established in 1970, it has expanded in size, scope and influence over the period. There are currently 5,700 full-time and part-time students in AIT studying a broad range of courses offered by the Institutes four Schools of Business, Engineering, Humanities and Science.

A new strategic plan for the institute, which sets out a vision to 2013, establishes a series of ambitious targets including increasing student numbers by 40 per cent; developing e-learning platforms for students; generating research income of €10 million per annum; and increasing collaboration across the tertiary education and industry sectors.

Felder & Brent at AIT

AIT hosted the ‘**Effective College Teaching**’ and ‘**Instructional Development**’ events which took place on the 14th and 15th of September.

Facilitated by Richard M. Felder Ph.D. and Rebecca Brent Ed.D. , participants engaged with a variety of topics including learning styles, planning a course, assessment and active learning.

The L&T Unit had originally requested this training seminar through the LIN project however it transpired to be a collaborative initiative with the support of [LIN](#), [AISHE](#), [EDIN](#) the [NDLR](#), the [Shannon Consortium](#), and the SIF 2 IoT Flexible Learning and Student Led Learning Project and Curriculum Reform Projects.

A total of 216 participants registered for the sessions over both days, from across the higher education sector in Ireland. Feedback from participants has been excellent and included comments such as the event was ‘inspiring’, ‘thought provoking’, and ‘very impressive’, best training event ever attended’.



2 day workshop of Richard M. Felder Ph.D. and Rebecca Brent Ed.D.



‘EYE’ on AIT

AIT Learning and Teaching Unit

The AIT Learning and Teaching Unit was established on December 5th, 2006 and is under the remit of the Academic Register, Dr Joseph Ryan. The unit is dedicated to the support and advancement of learning and teaching in Athlone Institute of Technology.

AIM

The unit will work collaboratively to continue to develop a culture that:

- Respects and supports individual differences among learners
- Encourages the development of student centered learning environments in which diverse students can learn and excel.
- Values and rewards teaching.
- Support staff in educational research.
- Assist with the dissemination of best practice in higher education.
- Encourages the implementation of pedagogical initiatives/innovations.
- Promotes and supports the objectives and measures outline in the Institute Strategic Plan, which relate to excellence and innovation in learning and teaching.

The activities of the L&T unit are co-ordinated by Nuala Harding,

Learning and Teaching Coordinator

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Aisling Keenan was recently appointed to the L&T Unit in the role of Project Co-ordinator

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Academic Professional Development

The L&T Unit was instrumental in bringing the DIT Postgraduate Certificate in Third Level Learning and Teaching to AIT as part of the LIN project. This pilot was used to inform the development of the special purpose award in conjunction with LIN and has informed the development of the LIN APD model.

A number of the PG Cert recipients have either contributed to or were directly involved in the team for the design and validation of the Certificate in Learning and Teaching which will commence in AIT in September 2009.

The development of this module was guided and supported by Dr Noel Fitzpatrick, Learning Development Officer with LIN.



Some of the AIT graduates of the DIT PG Cert in 3rd Level Learning & Teaching 2008

This programme will also be piloted in [IADT](#) which will provide a full comprehensive evaluation.



‘EYE’ on AIT

PASS (Peer Assisted Student Support) Athlone Institute of Technology, Athlone



Peer Assisted Student Learning (PASS) was introduced Athlone Institute of Technology and Galway-Mayo Institute and (our SIF II partner) in January 2009. [PASS](#) is a scheme that offers cross-year support between students on the same programme. It encourages first year students to support each other and learn co-operatively under the guidance of a trained student from the second, third, or fourth years of their programme.



Carina Ginty SIF 2 Project Manager and Nuala Harding L&T Unit Co-ordinator with student leaders from GMIT and AIT who attended a PAL Symposium in the University of Leuven, Belgium in April 2009.

Peer Leaders also presented simulated PAL/PASS sessions at the CELT Conference in NUIG and the Confederation of Students Services of Ireland Conference in June 2009.

Technologies to Enhance Learning

The L&T Unit provides a variety of supports for staff in the VLE Moodle. Training is provided at basic, intermediate and advanced levels and includes individual clinic type sessions.

Dr Mark Glynn, Senior Executive in Flexible Learning will provide a series of work workshops this semester in the use of Moodle for assessments.

Moodle team in AIT comprises : Geraldine Mc Dermott, School of Business, Noel Tierney, School of Business and Martin Ryan formerly School of Science.

Moodle technical support is provided by Colin Donohue.

AIT Research

Research capacity and capability is being continually expanded in Athlone. AIT has three strategic research institutes: in materials engineering, biomolecular sciences and software engineering. Further research clusters exist at school level.

The research institutes, which have developed international collaborations with leading multinational companies and universities in Europe, Asia and the US, have attracted significant multimillion euro funding.

Assisting in the economic, social, cultural and environmental development of the region is also a strategic priority for AIT. The institute plays a major role in fostering and developing entrepreneurial activity in the Midlands Gateway/region. The Midlands Innovation and Research Centre (MIRC), located on campus, operates as a converging hub for innovation, research and enterprise.

It provides incubation facilities for innovative and knowledge-based enterprises, an enterprise programme for entrepreneurs and start-ups, and makes available the resources and expertise of the institute to support client companies.



‘EYE’ on AIT

Usage and uptake of Virtual Learning Environments and Technology Assisted Learning Tools

In early 2008 five Irish tertiary institutions conducted an online survey of their student's usage of Virtual Learning Environments in their respective institutions. AIT was one of eleven institutes to deploy an updated survey in 2009.

The results will be supplemented with a staff survey which will be made available in September 2009 and institutional case studies. A research paper was presented at EDTECH 2009 and has also been accepted for the ALT-C 2009 Conference in September 2009.

This research was co-ordinated by Dr Robert Cosgrave, of UCC.

[For more on Edtech papers click here.](#)

AIT and LIN

AIT has participated in the LIN project since January 2007 and is represented on the LIN Steering group and the Academic Professional Development Subgroup.

NDLR

AIT has received funding on an annual basis from 2006. The L&T Unit has used this funding to support Technology Enhanced Learning Research Awards. This has led to the development of a research forum – Community of Practice in Information Technology (CoPIT). The aim of this CoPIT was to foster a research mindset within the institute towards instructional technology and deploying classroom technology in pedagogically appropriate situations.

CoPIT comprises :

Seamus Ryan, School of Business
Eimear Kelly, School of Humanities
Dr Sinead Devery, School of Science
Assumpta Byrne, Library
Barry O'Loughlin, School of Business
Sean Connell, School of Humanities
Frank Doheny, School of Engineering
Michael O'Rourke, School of Engineering
Technology Support: Donnie McHugh

Research papers were presented by all members of the CoPIT at EDTEC 2009, [click here for details.](#)



AIT delegates to EDTECH 2009

Seamus Ryan, Eimear Kelly, Assumpta Byrne, Barry O'Loughlin, Frank Doheny, Michael O'Rourke
Sean Connell, Sinead Devery, Geraldine McDermott, and Noel Tierney

The CoPIT presented a showcase of their activities to staff in AIT on 16th of June 2009.



'EYE' on AIT

News and Events

AIT looks forward to hosting the EDTECH 2010 Conference which provides an opportunity for delegates to engage with educationalists from primary, secondary, third level and further education providers; researchers and representatives from industry and the media.