

Eye on LIT

The purpose of this article is to share experiences and innovative developments in Limerick Institute of Technology.

Active Learning Compendium

LIT has as its slogan “Active learning through a fusion of theory and practice.” To make this claim a reality, each Department and each programme develops strategies and approaches to ensure an active learning experience for the learners. An Active Learning Compendium has been developed to document active learning practices currently in use and to share these with staff across the Institute. The Compendium will be launched at the LIT Staff Development Day on February 19th and will be available to staff through the Institute’s e-LIT intranet. Initial entries in the Compendium describe such methods as the use of case studies within the Department of Business, an Everyday Physics project for first year Physics students, placement programmes within various Departments, and the use of reflective learning journals on the BA in Fine Art.

By sharing practices and experiences in this Compendium, staff can discover new ideas that they can adopt and adapt for use with their own learners. Over time the Compendium will be added to and entries refined so that it becomes a repository best practice methods within the Institute.

LIT Staff Development Day

LIT’s next Staff Development Day is planned for Thursday February 19th. Multiple parallel sessions will take place. Topics to be covered include: Introduction to service learning, design and supervision of student projects, creativity in teaching and learning, staff mentoring, developing a teaching portfolio, multiple choice questions as a suitable means of assessment, technologies for the teaching of mathematics, inquiry based laboratory sessions, implications of learning styles for teaching and teaching the culturally diverse class. The February Staff Development Day is now an annual event in LIT since it was introduced three years ago, and it provides a valuable market place for ideas and a forum for discussion concerning innovations in teaching and learning.

Learning Styles

For the second year running, almost 600 new entrants at LIT completed the learning styles questionnaire as part of their Induction programme in September 2008. The online self-report questionnaire (at www.shannonlearning.ie) scored the learners on four dimensions of preferred learning style – Activist/Reflector, Sensing/Intuitive, Visual/Verbal, Global/Sequential. This questionnaire was essentially adapted from one devised by Prof Richard Felder at North Carolina University and is widely used in Higher Education Institutions in many parts of the world. Each learner who completed the questionnaire was provided with a profile of their learning style and feedback on its significance.

A report of the most significant overall findings was prepared and presented to academic staff in November 2008. This report examined the learning styles of students compared with demographic features such as age group, year of study, gender, institution attended, subject studied and leaving certificate points. The report also presented a comparison of the results obtained in 2008 with those of 2007 (the pilot year).

Follow-up lunch time workshops for learners are held at various points throughout the academic year to explore learning styles further and to help learners to use knowledge of their learning styles in order to improve their chances of success in their studies.

Shannon Consortium Downtown Centre

The Shannon Consortium Downtown Centre is a partnership initiative between the Shannon Consortium partners – Limerick Institute of Technology, the University of Limerick, Mary Immaculate College and the Institute of Technology Tralee. The Centre is located in Denmark Street, Limerick and its aims are to encourage and support adult learners to consider their higher education learning options and goals and also to develop closer links between local higher education providers and the general public by establishing a higher education presence in the heart of Limerick City.

One of the core services offered in the Downtown Centre is an Educational Guidance Service which offers information, advice and guidance to adults (ages 18 plus) interested in finding out about higher education learning opportunities. The Downtown Centre also delivers a Certificate in General Studies, offering modules in the business and community field, with electives in the areas of humanities, science and mathematics.

Successful completion of the programme guarantees direct entry for participants onto designated undergraduate courses within each of the partner institutions.

Shannon Consortium Learning Innovation Incubation Centre

With increasing focus and interest on teaching and learning globally and more particularly within each of our academic institutions, the launch of the new Shannon Consortium incubation centre for teaching and learning is welcome. Funded by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) under the Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF), the centre seeks to inspire, nurture and sustain innovations in teaching and learning. Central to the centre's philosophy for innovation in teaching and learning is the premise that 'big ideas start small'. The centre will provide seed funding for fledgling ideas in teaching and learning facilitating the development of innovative methods, promoting active learning and enhancing the student learning experience.

BSc. in Craft Management (Work Based Learning)

LIT is developing, in collaboration with IT Carlow, a Level 7 BSc. in Craft Management, to be delivered using a work based learning (WBL) approach. The Institutes are developing this programme in recognition of their obligations under the Qualification (Education & Training) Act 1999 to provide for progression of craft persons beyond the base (licence to practice) qualification at Level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications. This programme is being developed as part of the SIF2 Apprentice Progression Project, and it is being designed specifically to meet the needs of the different crafts, employments and learners. While continuing the skills development at the core of the Level 6 Craft Certification, the Level 7 WBL programme, in line with the NQAI Level 7 award descriptors, will broaden and deepen the understanding and competence of the qualified craftsperson through the development of a reflective practice mindset in the learner.

Connect World Digital Media Awards Competition

Two multimedia students from LIT have reached the final of the Connect World Digital Media Awards Competition. The two students are Kelley Corless and Erika Varga (a visiting student from Rutgers University). This initiative was supported by lecturing staff members Denise McEvoy and Patricia Green who have brought a number of active learning methodologies into their classroom (including blogging, web design and podcasts) which have benefited both the students and the college.

Launched in 2003, The Digital Media Awards were created to raise awareness of the emerging digital media sector in Ireland and to act as a showcase for the varied dynamic works being created by companies and third level institutions across a broad spectrum of categories in Digital Media.

The LIT student project is titled “Free Trade: A Primer on Rhetoric vs Reality” and its main objective was to simplify and educate children in the concept of Free Trade. It was designed on the principle that if the concept could be explained in such a way that a child could understand its meaning and principles then it could communicate easily to any person.

TÚSNUA

LIT has joined with Enterprise Ireland, the County and City Enterprise Boards, FÁS and the University of Limerick (UL) to create Túsnuá (Begin Anew), dedicated to providing a joined-up approach for those in the region who are facing the challenge of redundancy. The Túsnuá website (www.tusnuá.ie) provides a one-stop shop for accessing education and training programmes available across the organisations. A wide-range of opportunities is available across a variety of disciplines, offered in a number of formats, from full-time, to part-time, flexible and distance learning. The Túsnuá website also provides access to support from Enterprise Ireland and the County and City Enterprise to help those facing the challenge of redundancy to start new enterprises.