



Re-imagining our curriculum  
Consolidating the First Year Experience

Prototype Project Updates:

January 2016

<b>General Details</b>	
<b>Project Title</b>	<b>Serious Play: using <i>Lego Serious Play</i> as a first year student orientation, engagement and retention strategy.</b>
<b>Name of Main Applicant</b>	Barry Ryan
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<b>Signed</b>	
<b>Date</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> January 2016
<b>TU4D Theme (Please tick)</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Induction/early orientation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> First 5,6 or 7 weeks <input type="checkbox"/> Peer mentoring <input type="checkbox"/> Assessment and feedback <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Graduate Attributes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Students as autonomous self-directed learners <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Learning spaces – virtual & physical <input type="checkbox"/> Alternative Curriculum models	
<b>Summary of Prototype project</b> (max 200 words)	This pilot study investigated the appropriateness of <i>Lego Serious Play</i> , within a Level 6 programme, as an alternative student orientation, engagement and retention strategy. <i>Lego Serious Play</i> is a set of structured learning activities, combining metaphorical modeling by building with <i>Lego</i> , and peer discussion to explore complex issues. The pilot study was broken into three distinct phases and aligned to key first year themes of orientation, the first six weeks and the promotion of first year students as autonomous self-learners. Woven through these themes was the development of the TU4D graduate attributes. In all aspects, real and tangible learning activities, incorporating <i>Lego Serious Play</i> , formed the basis of student interaction and scholarship. Bespoke learning resources were created to structure these learning activities. Development of these universal resources (suitable for all disciplines and all levels) could allow adoption of <i>Lego Serious Play</i> into other Schools and Colleges within DIT and TU4D as a means of enhanced student orientation, induction and retention.
<b>Project dates</b>	Semester One 2015/16 Academic Calendar (September 2015 to December 2015).
<b>Main proposed original project outputs for the TU4D</b> (max 100 words)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of a model of student induction/orientation and integration through the initial weeks of first year through the use of <i>Lego Serious Play</i>.</li> <li>• An evaluation of the appropriateness of <i>Lego Serious Play</i> as</li> </ul>

	<p>a method of contextualising student orientation and induction whilst simultaneously introducing the first year students to core graduate attributes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universal resource worksheets for the use of <i>Lego Serious Play</i> for first year induction/orientation/integration suitable for all programmes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Project outputs including any evaluation data</b> (max 300 words, data to be included in an appendix but can be summarised here)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>'Induction/orientation' and 'students as autonomous self-directed learners'</i>.  <i>Lego Serious Play</i> activities were successfully used to 'ice-break' a new group of first year students; and this could be extended to include their orientation and induction. Following this approach, higher level thinking and learning was introduced in a tangible and contextualised way. Careful and considered introduction to higher order thinking skills is crucial to align student approaches to learning and the expectations of third level. Within <i>Lego Serious Play</i> students are encouraged to explore, imagine and develop their own understanding with the support of their classmates and the learning facilitator. Creativity, flexibility and group work were central to the <i>Lego Serious Play</i> learning activities and provided a foundation where students physically constructed their ideas; this acted as a pre-cursor for a constructive learning pedagogy widely adopted in higher education. Providing a structured learning environment to physically connect the internal thought processes and tangible objects helped the first year students to evolve their learning approach to one that excels in a higher education environment.</li> <li>2. <i>'First six weeks' and 'graduate attributes' and 'learning spaces'</i>  The use of <i>Lego Serious Play</i>, in a flexible learning space, gave students a physical way to showcase their development of core soft skills over the first weeks of their first semester. The shared language of <i>Lego</i> removed hierarchies and past experiences from the student group and allowed the new class to build new bonds based on their shared experiences. Continued use of <i>Lego Serious Play</i> and the process of building in metaphors helped students to think creatively (aligned to 'enterprising' graduate attribute), think differently (aligned to 'enquiry based' graduate attribute) and to work collaboratively (aligned to 'effective' graduate attribute). Students actively and autonomously constructed their understanding and shared their learning with each other. Communication, as a persuasion tool, is a core concept of <i>Lego Serious Play</i> and this skill underpins all of the DIT graduate attributes.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Lessons Learned</b> (max 200 words)</p>	<p>During evaluation students commented how they understood the <i>'Rapid Prototyping'</i> to develop and evolve an idea during the building and discussion processes, but that they struggled with making a connection to their programme. Over the course of the</p>

	<p>six weeks, attendance at the voluntary sessions dropped dramatically. This was attributed to the lack of credit or assessment associated with the activities, perceived lack of relevance to their course and the timing of the sessions. A small number of students commented on how they did see benefit to having time and space to think creatively and reflect; however, the majority of those surveyed noted that lack of perceived relevance and the feeling that playing with <i>Lego</i> was 'immature' significantly reduced their perceived benefit of the approach.</p> <p>Lessons learnt from this evaluative pilot include the need to deeply contextualise the use of <i>Lego Serious Play</i> by comparison to use in other academic settings (e.g. Nertantzi et al., 2015) and industry/business, to add value to the sessions. Furthermore, restricted use of <i>Lego Serious Play</i>, used intermittently with other alternative methods to explore Graduate Attributes (e.g. trigger questions and online activities), could maintain student interest and enhance engagement.</p> <p>Nerantzi, C., Moravej, H., &amp; Johnson, F. (2015). Using a Creative Approach to Evaluate an Undergraduate Unit and Move Forward Together. <i>Journal of Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice</i>, 3(2).</p>
<p><b>Next stage</b>(max (max 200 words)</p>	<p>This pilot study was evaluated through written student survey (n=14; 45% of total class). Data collected were both qualitative and quantitative in nature and were collected anonymously, transcribed digitally and coded directly based on student quotations for qualitative data. Emergent key themes were identified using the Constant Comparative method (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) for all qualitative data. A summary of the findings is noted in the "lessons learned" section above. This pilot is also integrated with another teaching and learning intervention with the same group of students and may be further evaluated at a later date.</p> <p>Strauss, A.L. &amp; Corbin, J. (1990). Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory. (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed). Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage.</p> <p>How do you plan to develop /implement your project outputs/findings over the next months?</p> <p>The future use of <i>Lego Serious Play</i> as a teaching and learning resource will be discussed in depth by the Programme Team (students and staff) taking into consideration the analysis of evaluative data collected. Key recommendations from the student participants will be adopted and the implementation in subsequent years will be modified to reflect these suggestions. In brief, a more blended and limited approach to the use of <i>Lego Serious Play</i> will be carried out. The most likely next use of <i>Lego Serious Play</i> will be in the 2016/17 Academic Year, focussing on student induction. Given the findings from this pilot, it is unlikely that further funding will be sought for this project.</p>