Re-imagining our curriculum
Consolidating the First Year Experience

Prototype Project Updates:

January 2016

General Details	
Project Title	**Kickstarting College Success Certificate – First 5 Weeks**
Name of Main Applicant	Claire McDonnell
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College	DIT
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Signed	*Claire Mc Donnell*
Date	20th Jan 2016

TU4D Theme (Please tick)

☐ Induction/early orientation   ☑ **First 5,6 or 7 weeks;**
☐ Peer mentoring   ☐ **Assessment and feedback;**
☐ Graduate Attributes   ☑ **Students/ autonomous self-directed learners,**
☐ Learning spaces – virtual & physical   ☐ **Alternative Curriculum models**

Summary of Prototype project (max 200 words)	We piloted an extended induction programme over the first 5 weeks of college, based on similar initiatives in other colleges (CIT, UL, IADT). The aim was to give first year students time to assimilate information usually presented in a condensed orientation day and to support their personal and professional development at this important stage.

We organised one lunchtime session per week for the first 5 weeks in DIT Kevin St. as outlined below;
1. Welcome and finding your way around
2. Learner support services
3. Health and wellbeing
4. Study skills and time management
5. Self-assessment & goal setting

The sessions were held on Wednesdays from 1.15 to 1.50 pm and staff from the relevant professional services (chaplaincy, library, careers, student services, health promotion etc.) contributed. Sessions were planned to be interactive and allow participants to ask questions and have discussions with their peers.
Students received a Skills for Success certificate for attending 4 or more sessions (a loyalty card system was used). Small value prizes were given in each session for participation and snacks were provided (water, soft drinks, fruit and energy bars). |

	A facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/DITKickstartingCollege), posters and class announcements were used to promote the weekly sessions.
Project dates	September 16th to October 14th 2016
Main proposed original project outputs for the TU4D (max 100 words)	(please include as a list of bullet points. These can be ones modified from the original submission) • Implementation of this approach for the first time on a campus in DIT (and, as far as we know, in ITB and ITTD also). • Use of a loyalty card system is unique to this prototype and the award of a Skills for Success certificate has not been applied in any similar Irish projects • This 1000 word paper presents the lessons learned and can be used for dissemination and to plan for wider implementation. • Participants completed a survey and have said they would be willing to participate in a focus group interview in June.
Project outputs including any evaluation data (max 300 words, data to be included in an appendix but can be summarised here)	(please include as a list of outputs aligned to TU4D themes, as relevant eg *1. Induction/orientation; 2. First 5,6 or 7 weeks; 3 Assessment and feedback; 4. Students as autonomous self-directed learners 5. Peer mentors 6. Graduate Attributes 7. Learning Spaces and 8. Alternative Curriculum Models)* **2. First 5,6 or 7 weeks and 4. Students as autonomous self-directed learners** 1. The facebook page, https://www.facebook.com/DITKickstartingCollege, used to promote the weekly Kickstarting College Success sessions and to disseminate information provided is a useful archive for first year students, their tutors and for anyone interested in implementing this approach more widely in DIT, ITB or ITTD. We have also captured images illustrating the project there, such as the one below; 2. We implemented an online survey once the sessions were complete. 17 students attended at least one session. Participants came from 5 programmes at levels 7 and 8 (DT224, 227, 259, 261, 299). 13 attended four or more sessions and got a certificate. 7 responded to the survey. A summary of the responses (which support student comments and observations made in the sessions) follows; All survey participants would recommend the sessions to

	1st years next year
	All respondents felt more confident about 1st year because of the sessions
	Some respondents commented that the open and discussion-based structure worked well
	Most respondents (4 out of 7) said they got to know new people
	Most respondents said the draw for a €100 voucher at the end (6 out of 7) & certificates (5 out of 7) were effective incentives

3. A 10 minute presentation was given to the College of Sciences and Health Programme Chairs meeting on January 20th to make them aware of the project, the survey results and the information available on the facebook page. This has led to an expression of interest in implementing the First 5 Weeks sessions in Cathal Brugha St to include some embedding within a programme.

4. A drop box folder is being set up to make materials used for each session available to staff interested in using materials with their students.

| **Lessons Learned** (max 200 words) | (Please summarise what you learned from the prototype project that you feel would need to be taken into account within a full project implementation)

It became apparent quite quickly that in order to attract students to attend the sessions need to be no longer than 35 minutes in duration. They also need to be as interactive and discussion based as possible, with students afforded many opportunities to interact with other students. In particular it was useful to ensure that students were put in discussion groups with students they may not have known prior to the sessions. This allowed students to get to know students from outside their programmes and helped them to integrate further.

From the student feedback it is apparent that the certificate, the €100 voucher and the other spot prizes given throughout the sessions were a key factor in the high levels of students who attended 4 or more of the sessions (13 out of 17 in total). In addition, the loyalty cards were a useful way of tracking students' attendance and encouraging them to attend. Therefore for the further implementation of this initiative it is important that funding is obtained in order to fund these incentives.

The Facebook page also proved to be very useful not only for the promotion of the session, but also to serve as a repository for the topics covered in the sessions. |
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| **Next stage**(max (max 200 words) | If you haven't already done so, how do you plan to evaluate your prototype project (please include at least one evaluation method and nature of data to be provided to the TU FYE working group)

Part of the evaluation of this pilot has already been carried |

out, an online survey was distributed to the students who had attended the sessions. The main results are described above.

To complement this and to gain insight on the impact of the sessions on the entire first year experience of students, a focus group with the students involved will be held. It is envisaged that this focus group will be run following the end of semester 2, and students will be asked to reflect on their first year experience and the impact of their participation in the 'Kickstarting College Success' programme.

How do you plan to develop /implement your project outputs/findings over the next months? (please reference possible future funding applications and/or change to your practice)

We intend on running this initiative again for the next academic year. We also plan on investigating the feasibility of embedding this initiative within at least one programme instead of the current extra-curricular model. It is also envisaged that 'Kickstarting College Success' programme could be incorporated as part of an e-portfolio of professional development for first year students.

As mentioned previously, funding is required to ensure cover the cost of certificates and other incentives for students to attend. Therefore we intend on applying for First Year Experience funding, should further funding be made available.