



Re-imagining our curriculum
Consolidating the First Year Experience

Prototype Project Updates:

January 2016

General Details	
Project Title	Enhancing the first year experience through group work , research and presentation workshops.
Name of Main Applicant	Eric Bates
Position Held	Lecturer
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Names of any co-applicants (& colleges they are based in):	
Signed	
Date	
TU4D Theme (Please tick)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Induction/early orientation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> First 5,6 or 7 weeks <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Peer mentoring <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Assessment and feedback <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Graduate Attributes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Students as autonomous self-directed learners <input type="checkbox"/> Learning spaces – virtual & physical <input type="checkbox"/> Alternative Curriculum models	
Summary of Prototype project (max 200 words)	<p>I have two modules with the first year students on the DT170. The first module concerns research skills and the second deals with communications. Utilising both of these modules I propose to carry out a series of workshops with the first year entrants as part of my module.</p> <p>My experience to date has shown that the first year students take some time to see themselves as a distinct group within the third level environment. I would like to see that sense of coherence accelerated. I propose to engage the students in more dynamic interactions with their peers through group work within my modules that will both feed into my learning outcomes and also enhance their first year experience.</p> <p>In the first series of workshops I will allocate students into groups and each group will be given a topic to be researched. There will be six topics – essentially the six headings on the DIT Graduate Attribute Statement. The research will take place in the class (this class takes place in a computer lab) but students will also have to use the library. The students will be asked to explain what it means to be engaged, enterprising, enquiry-based, effective and expert. It will not be enough to simply copy the DIT statement. Each group will give an example of what this means and be asked to relate it to themselves and their own experience. The output from this will be a document that can form part of the submission for my research module.</p> <p>Following the production of their research paper the groups will</p>

	<p>then have to make a presentation of their findings where each student will have to speak for a minimum amount of time. Once again workshops will be carried out during the class time. These presentations will be video recorded to enable feedback to be given. This section of it will then tie in with the learning outcomes from my Communications module.</p> <p>It is envisioned that through group work, research and communications the first year experience will be enhanced and the sense of being part of a group will be embedded early on into their first year experience.</p>
Project dates	September 2015 through to May 2016
Main proposed original project outputs for the TU4D (max 100 words)	<p>This project could provide a template that can be transferred across multiple programmes across all three institutes. It will not require a large amount of resources but rather an advocate or advocates that could spread this across two modules similar to the two outlined above. Essentially it is taking the time to allow the students to get to know each other and work together. The provision of this as part of existing modules provides the space for this to happen. By spreading it across two modules it means the individual modules will not be affected if it were focussed in the time allowed for one module. The topics to be researched could be tailored to TU4D.</p>
Project outputs including any evaluation data (max 300 words, data to be included in an appendix but can be summarised here)	<p><i>1. Induction/orientation</i> The start of the project will occur in week 1 of the first semester. This has the potential to assist with induction and orientation as the new students become accustomed to their new environs. They will be going to the library in groups as well as working in the computer room.</p> <p><i>2. First 5,6 or 7 weeks;</i> Historically, we have seen many dropouts on the DT170 over the course of the first semester. The advantages of group work and the close working that will become part of the project may contribute to a positive experience in that critical period of the first half of the first semester. Students may not feel so alone through these activities.</p> <p><i>3. Assessment and feedback;</i> The videoing of the presentations will provide a different type of assessment and feedback to the student. My experience of this to date has been positive with students valuing the provision of a video and written feedback.</p> <p><i>4. Students as autonomous self-directed learners</i> The research skills that will form part of this project will encourage the autonomy of the learners.</p> <p><i>5. Peer mentors</i> Working in groups provides the opportunity for peer mentoring. Many new entrants into higher education come in at different levels and as such working in groups provides an opportunity for a sharing of the workload and peer mentoring.</p> <p><i>6. Graduate Attributes</i></p>

	<p>This project would provide the students with the opportunity to practice many soft skills such as communications and presentations. Working in groups produces many dynamic exchanges that contribute to a learner's experience. Making a presentation is a transferable skill that can be used across many different situations.</p>
<p>Lessons Learned (max 200 words)</p>	<p>This project will now enter the second phase as I take the same group of students for the Communications module in the second semester. As the second semester begins it is still unclear the level of progression among the first years. My concern at this stage is that poor exam results may have an impact on the number of students progressing to semester 2 which will in turn impact on the efficacy of this project. It may be that running the project completed in semester 1 would have better outcomes.</p> <p>The low level of personal computer literacy was a surprise. While most students were familiar with smart phones and every student had, some students struggled with basic packages such as Microsoft WORD. It may be that adapting to mobile technologies would enhance the efficacy of the project.</p>
<p>Next stage(max 200 words)</p>	<p>I have administered a short questionnaire to the students at different points throughout semester 1. I will collate the responses as the project ends and present the data.</p> <p>How do you plan to develop /implement your project outputs/findings over the next months? At this stage I am only half way through this project so I will await the final outcome before responding to this.</p>