

# What makes TU4Dublin's Student Experience Distinctive?

## What is the University's Unique Selling Point when it comes to Learning Teaching and Assessment (LTA)?

### A. Examples from Institutional Strategies and Statements Concerning LTA

#### 1 Nottingham Trent University, UK

Every student taking an undergraduate course at NTU will receive a work-based learning experience.

Source: Statement from VC at T&T Conference about forthcoming University Strategy, 31 March 2015



#### 2 Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne, Australia

"Students come first at Swinburne. Our courses are designed with your future in mind. Swinburne offers high-quality teaching, opportunities to engage with industry, state-of-the-art facilities and flexible study options."

Source: <http://www.swinburne.edu.au/study/>

#### 3 University of Technology, Sydney, Australia

"UTS has a reputation for producing highly-employable graduates. Our teaching is research-inspired and integrated, providing academic rigour with innovative technology."

"Discovery, problem-solving, critical thinking and creativity are features shared by great research and inspiring learning environments. At UTS, we integrate our approach to research and learning, so not only are our students engaged with the research our academics are undertaking, but also with inquiry-based approaches to research. As a result, our students graduate with knowledge of cutting edge practice informed by the future needs of our industry and community partners. This ensures we are developing the next generation of professionals and researchers who can lead our global society."

Source: <http://www.uts.edu.au/research-and-teaching>

#### 4 Hanze University of Applied Sciences, Netherlands

Hanze UAS emphasises the *development of professional learning environments*. "Hanze University of Applied Sciences, Groningen trains qualified and committed professionals. It is an environment in which students, research-lecturers and companies meet and learn from each other. Teaching, research and professional practice are closely connected. Assignments from professional practice are aligned to the teaching methods for each degree programme. Students, research-lecturers and partners in the professional field work together on solutions to issues close by and far away. Learning and working remain connected to each other throughout life."

### **Education enriches individuals and society**

Hanze UAS feels that it has a special mission to make everybody in the Hanze learning community aware of his or her social responsibility. The university of applied sciences encourages employees and students to develop and make a valuable contribution to society.

### **Emphases in education**

Energy and Healthy Ageing are the strategic areas in which Hanze UAS has a high profile. These major social concerns are primary areas of focus in the university's educational courses and research. Entrepreneurship is also a key concept and intrinsically associated with the name Hanze. The term refers to the relationship between education and practical application and the vital connection with the business community in the region, and at national and international level. In addition, Hanze UAS provides a safe and ambitious learning environment where people encourage one another to be the best that they can be. Hanze UAS is at the forefront in encouraging the most talented students and employees."

Source: Educational Vision 2020 <https://www.hanze.nl/eng/organisation/hanze-uas/onderwijsvisie-2020>

## **5 University of British Columbia, Canada**

"Start with research about how students learn. Add rapidly advancing technologies. Multiply by a desire to improve the student experience, widen access and strengthen institutional sustainability. The result?"

### **Flexible Learning at UBC**

It's a comprehensive strategy that's changing how, when and where UBC students learn. Flexible learning boosts reasoning and retention, and lets students customize their experience to meet long-term educational and professional goals.

### **Introducing the Six Pillars of Flexible Learning**

These priority areas are the foundation of our strategy:

#### **[Pillar 1: Transformed teaching + learning](#)**

Today's students expect education to be accessible, immersive, collaborative, personalized, and online-enriched.

#### **[Pillar 2: Expanded career + personal education](#)**

With more options for applied graduate degrees, career certification and personal study, lifelong learners will benefit from more focused, relevant and accessible education.

#### **[Pillar 3: Improved student experience](#)**

In an increasingly networked learning environment, UBC will add value via experiential learning opportunities and campus improvements that foster and enhance academic, professional and social connections.

#### **[Pillar 4: Enhanced personalization](#)**

Students will increasingly be able to customize their learning experience to meet short- and long-term educational goals.

#### **[Pillar 5: Extended bridging programs](#)**

Building on existing preparatory programs, new year-round educational programs will showcase the UBC experience to engage high-performing international and high school students.

#### **[Pillar 6: Strengthened academic partnerships](#)**

To expand and enhance academic programs and capabilities, UBC will collaborate with peer institutions at home and around the globe.

Source: <http://flexible.learning.ubc.ca/our-approach/>

## **6 University College London, UK**

At UCL every undergraduate student is promised an authentic research experience

### **"A global leader in the integration of research and education, underpinning an inspirational student experience"**

We will inspire our students at every level – undergraduate (UG), postgraduate taught (PGT) and postgraduate research (PGR) – and equip them with the knowledge and skills that they need to contribute significantly to society and be leaders of the future in their chosen field and profession. All our students and staff will be seen as collaborative members of our university community, with a shared interest in the future of UCL.

Our students will participate in the research process and the creation of knowledge, supported by our academic and research staff. They will understand the 'edge of knowledge' and learn how to deal with uncertainty. Through this integrated approach, they will develop their critical independent thinking skills, become confident problem solvers, be well versed in communicating complex information and experienced at working in a team. With these skills, our graduates will excel in the workplace and be highly valued contributors across all walks of life.

All aspects of the student experience at UCL should be truly outstanding. UCL will differentiate itself through an offer that explores how the creation and application of knowledge contributes to the resolution of the world's 'grand challenges'. Students will be attracted to UCL as a university that navigates the most pressing contemporary issues and explores how to synthesise and exploit disciplinary expertise in pursuit of knowledge and solutions to global problems. An innovative UCL education will prepare our students for a globalised world through studies of cultural diversity, global citizenship and leadership and a modern foreign language. ..."

UCL are developing a '**Connected Curriculum**' initiative, as the means by which in five years all undergraduate programmes of study will have a profile of 'research-based' characteristics. Research-based education is the focus of UCL's initiative: "entitling all students, through well-designed programmes of study, to benefit from participating in enquiry alongside UCL's world-leading researchers" (Fung 2014, 2). Seven dimensions of connectivity are identified:

1. Students connect with the discipline through participation in research
2. Programmes include a connected 'throughline' of learning activities and assessments, which require students to synthesise different elements of their learning
3. Students make connections across subject disciplines and outwards into local and global communities and organisations
4. Students can connect explicitly their academic learning with their wider learning and skills for future employment
5. Students can connect with an external audience and external partners through producing assessment 'outputs'
6. Students can connect closely with staff
7. Students can connect closely with one another and with alumni.

Sources: UCL2034 <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/ucl-2034/principal-themes/integrating-research-education>;  
[http://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/strategic\\_priorities/connected-curriculum](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/strategic_priorities/connected-curriculum)

## **7 Portland State University (PSU), USA**

### **Vision and Mission**

PSU emphasises 'taking the classroom into the community'

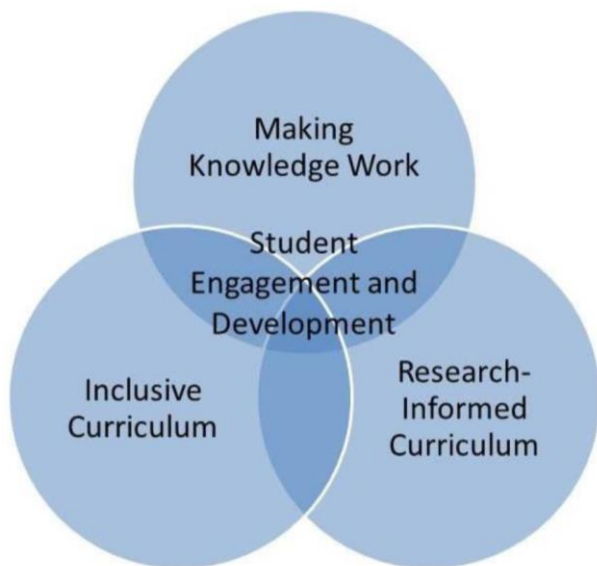
Portland State University's mission is to enhance the intellectual, social, cultural and economic qualities of urban life by providing access throughout the life span to a quality liberal education for undergraduates and an appropriate array of professional and graduate programs especially relevant to metropolitan areas. The University conducts research and community service that support a high quality educational environment and reflect issues important to the region. It actively promotes the development of a network of educational institutions to serve the community.

Source: <http://www.pdx.edu/portland-state-university-mission>

## **8 University of Bradford, UK**

They have developed a whole-institution curriculum framework.

Four over-arching *themes* guide the curriculum framework:



Supporting the curriculum themes are a further seven integrated curriculum *principles* which are evident within the educational design, delivery and experience of all programmes.

1. Assessment for Learning
2. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)
3. Collaborative Learning
4. Technology-Enhanced Learning
5. Real World and Experiential Learning
6. Enquiry-based Learning
7. Transition to Learner Autonomy

The University have developed a set of graduate attributes which act as a common reference point and stimulus for all of our programmes including research degrees, and an organising principle for the rest of the curriculum framework.

#### **Domains of University of Bradford Graduate Attributes**

<b>Domain</b>	<b>Indicative areas to be developed as attributes</b>
Academic development and critical thinking.	Learner autonomy, critical thinking, information literacy, research and enquiry
Employability and professionalism.	Self-awareness and management, communication, collaboration, life-long learning, professional values, digital literacy
Inclusivity.	Intercultural and international awareness, social and civic responsibilities, global citizenship, ethics, sustainability

Source: <http://www.brad.ac.uk/educational-development/curriculum-framework/>

#### **9 Evergreen State College, Washington, USA**

##### **The five foci of learning**

Evergreen State College is a public liberal arts college which emphasises its distinctive approach to teaching.

**“We Believe ... The main purpose of a college is to promote student learning through:  
Interdisciplinary Study**

Students learn to pull together ideas and concepts from many subject areas, which enables them to tackle real-world issues in all their complexity.

### **Collaborative Learning**

Students develop knowledge and skills through shared learning, rather than learning in isolation and in competition with others.

### **Learning Across Significant Differences**

Students learn to recognize, respect and bridge differences - critical skills in an increasingly diverse world.

### **Personal Engagement**

Students develop their capacities to judge, speak and act on the basis of their own reasoned beliefs.

### **Linking Theory with Practical Applications**

Students understand abstract theories by applying them to projects and activities and by putting them into practice in real-world situations."

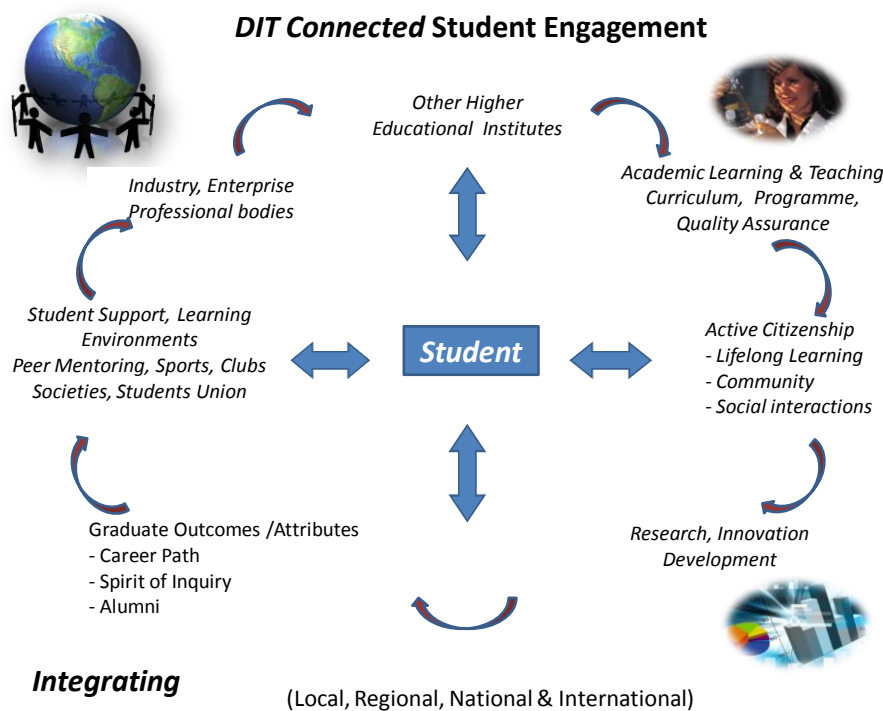
Source: <http://evergreen.edu/about/fivefoci.htm>

## **Statements from Constituent Institutions of TU4Dublin**

### **10 Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT)**

#### ***Towards a DIT Strategy on Student Engagement 2012-15 – enhancing the student experience at DIT***

This 2012 draft student engagement strategy emphasises creating connections



### **Guiding principles**

1. Importance of Active Learning:
2. Learning as a Shared Responsibility
3. Enriching Educational Experiences
4. Involvement as part of a Community
5. Supportive Learning Environments
6. Importance of Staff Development
7. Student involvement in Quality Processes
8. Internal Capacity enhanced by Institutional Knowledge

### **Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy**

In 2014 as a transition strategy while moving towards the merger, DIT decided to focus on Graduate Attributes (GA) over the year as they implement the GA policy.

*DIT Graduate Attributes:* Engaged; Enterprising; Enquiry Based; Effective; Expert in Chosen Subject Discipline

### *Themes and areas of focus*

1. Curriculum - Quality Curriculum Framework; Programme Team Culture; First Year Curriculum Redesign; Assessment and Feedback Review
2. Teaching - Academic Professional Development; Support Scholarship of Teaching through sharing best practice; Quality student Feedback and Assessment
3. Students - Successful managed transitions; Personal development; Empowering responsibility through participation
4. Diversity - Learning opportunities for different learner needs; Market Responsive; Flexible learner pathways; Alignment with HEA Compact targets
5. Engagement - Strategic Partnerships; Knowledge Exchange; Regional Focus & International Outlook; Collaboration on Institute and TU Activities

### *Sources:*

<http://www.dit.ie/litc/media/ditlitc/images/strategiesandpolicies/DITStrategy%20for%20Student%20Engagement%206Nov12.pdf>; <http://www.dit.ie/litc/resources/policyandstrategies/assessmentstrategy/>

## **11 Institute of Technology Tallaght (ITT)**

### *Themes*

1. Structure
2. Vibrant and challenging learning opportunities – the delivery of a flexible, accessible, engaging, responsive and relevant curriculum
3. Assessment and feedback integrated into learning – the further development of assessment that is engaging, promotes learning and enables continuous development
4. Professional development framework for staff – the development and support of staff in an environment that promotes innovation, continuous enhancement, scholarship and pedagogic research
5. The enhancement of a culture that supports learners and promotes student success, whichever entry route they have taken
6. The development and maintenance of infrastructure and support systems to facilitate an effective learning environment

Source: ITT (2011) *Learning, Teaching, and Assessment Strategy* [http://www.it-tallaght.ie/contentfiles//Documents/publications/strategic%20plan/Learning\\_Teaching\\_Assessment\\_Strategy.pdf](http://www.it-tallaght.ie/contentfiles//Documents/publications/strategic%20plan/Learning_Teaching_Assessment_Strategy.pdf)

## **12 Institute of Technology Blanchardstown (ITB)**

ITB does not have a separately identified LTA strategy. McSweeney (2014) in a discussion document on whether or not to develop one noted:

“Within Irish Higher Education, there now exists a number of common policy drivers which are encouraging the development of clear strategies towards teaching and learning. Institutes are being encouraged to:

1. Improve the relationship between research and undergraduate teaching.
2. Broaden flexible course offerings.
3. Broaden access and opportunities.
4. Provide skilled and adaptable graduates in key demand areas.
5. Examine clustering and merging of institutions (including emergence of technical universities).
6. Examine trends in non-progression and focus on the first year experience.

The establishment of the national forum for teaching and learning has also seen repeated calls for institutes to develop or enhance strategies on teaching and learning and to place particular emphasis on digital strategies.”

## **13 TU4Dublin**

“is accessible, grounded locally, adaptable, multi-disciplinary, internationally focused, commercially, technologically, socially engaged and enterprising, supportive and respectful of all its learners, researchers, civil society, and open to new ideas.” (<http://www.tu4dublin.ie/foundation-themes>)

### **Foundation Themes**

1. Re-imagining our curriculum
2. The Digital Campus

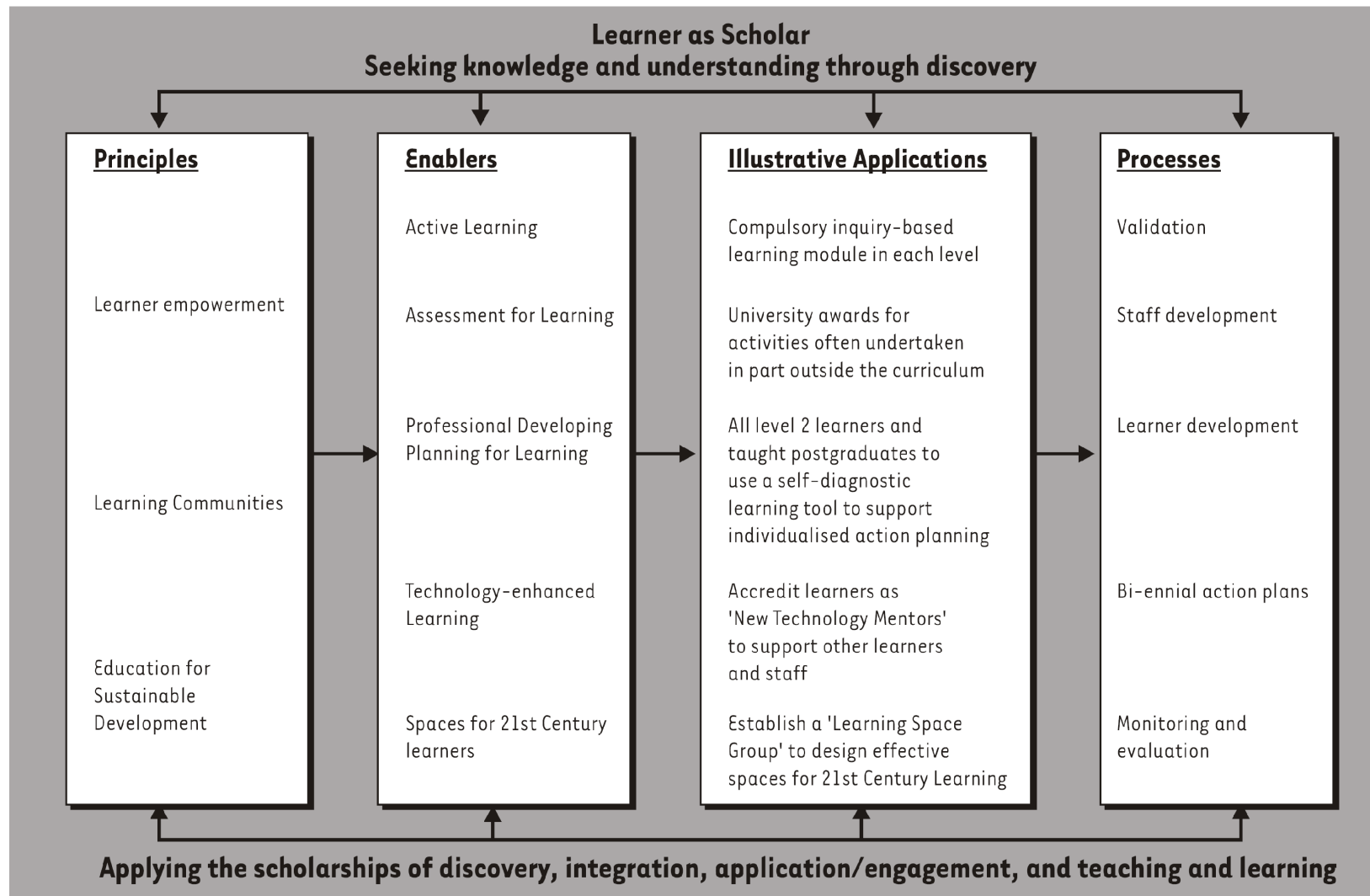
3. Strengthening our Research
4. The Enterprising University
5. Dublin's Globally Engaged University
6. Designing our Workplace
7. Getting our People Ready
8. Converging for Designation
9. Connecting through Dialogue

**Themes by which TU4Dublin could be different from the other seven Irish universities according to Tom Collins**

1. Democratic
2. Engaged
3. Inclusive
4. Ecological
5. Creative

Source: Keynote to HEIT Symposium 31 March 2015 <https://vimeo.com/125704827>

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## B. Some Conceptual Frameworks

### 1 Students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education - an overview model



Source: Healey et al. (2014, 25) <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/engagement-through-partnership-students-partners-learning-and-teaching-higher-education>

Students may be engaged as partners in learning and teaching in four different ways:

- *Learning, teaching and assessment* – Engaging students in partnership means seeing students as active participants in their own learning, and although not all active learning involves partnership it does mean engaging students in forms of participation and helps prepare them for the roles they may play in full partnership. Engaging students as teachers and assessors in the learning process is a particularly effective form of partnership.
- *Subject-based research and inquiry* – Whether it involves selected students working with staff on research projects or all students on a course engaging in inquiry-based learning, there is much evidence of the effectiveness of this approach in stimulating deep and retained learning. As with active learning, not all ways of engaging students in research and inquiry involve partnership, but there are many examples where students have extensive autonomy and independence and negotiate as partners many of the details of the research and inquiry projects that they undertake.
- *Scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL)* – Conducting projects in partnership with students has been suggested as one of the five principles of good practice in SoTL. There are an increasing number of effective initiatives of engaging students as change agents in institutions where they undertake research projects into the learning and teaching they experience with the intention of enhancing the quality of student learning.
- *Curriculum design and pedagogic consultancy* – Students are commonly engaged in course evaluations and in departmental staff-student committees, but it is rarer for institutions to go beyond the student voice and engage students as partners in designing the curriculum and giving pedagogic advice and consultancy. Yet where institutions have implemented such initiatives they have seen significant benefits for both students and staff.

## 2 Thinking strategically about employability and graduate attributes: Universities and enhancing learning for beyond university

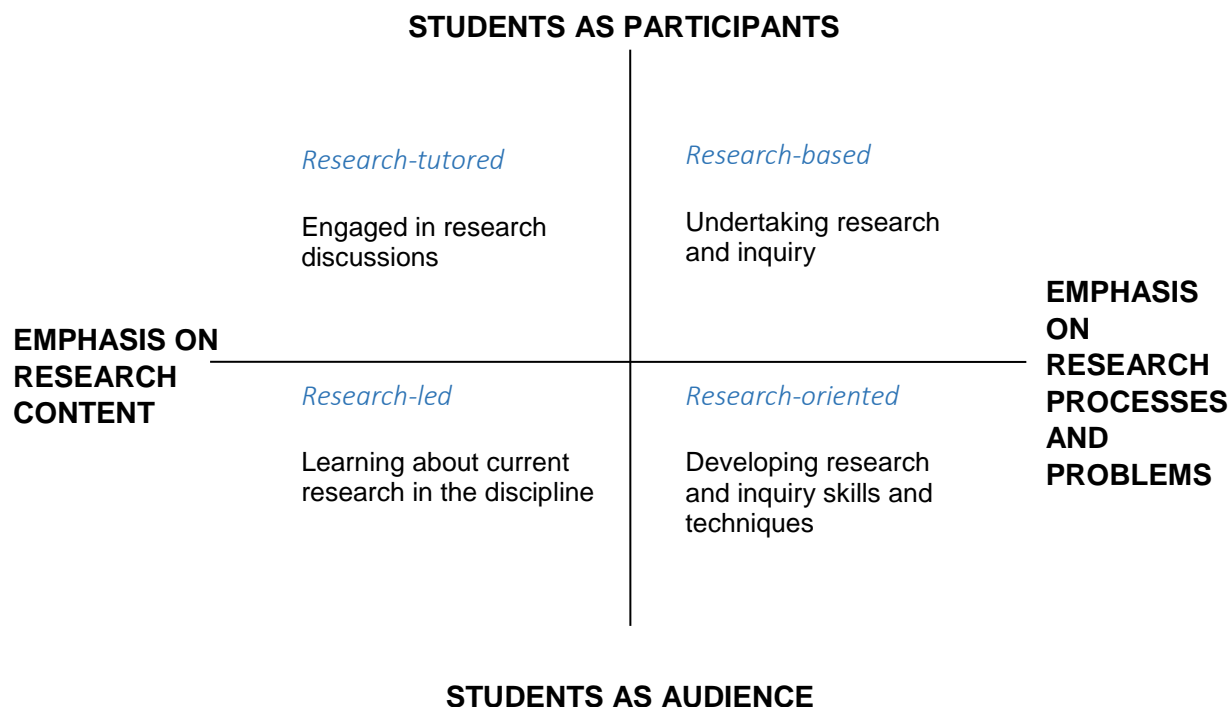
“This complex diagram attempts to give a flavour of the context in which attributes are acquired and developed. In the diagram, grey represents the primary (but not exclusively) areas of involvement for academic staff; blue for employability advisers and careers officers; yellow for educational developers; pink for the students. The importance of collaborative work between academics, careers and employability advisers, educational developers and student engagement is clear. What is solely owned 'by the academics is only part of the diagram. It is of course a highly contentious diagram, but useful for pragmatic purposes when considering strategic policy design at an institutional level.”

Under-graduate course of study	Curriculum design support from educational developers?		Work-related learning through placements related to the subject area	No formal engagement by academics with careers/employability advisers?		
	<b>Learning and teaching contexts:</b>  Research-teaching linkages  Assessment and feedback  Professional development (where relevant)	Work-related learning opportunities in the curriculum: (eg simulations; courses/ modules concerning generic attributes linked back to the programme of study)		Or interactions with careers/employability advisers with opportunities embedded into curriculum?		
			and not related to the subject area	Entrepreneurialism	Careers	PDP
Student attitudes towards the development of attributes for employability						
Student engagement with PDP to bring coherence and critical reflection to range of experiences						
Co-curricular activity	Membership of student societies	Work-related learning through part-time employment	Third sector voluntary work	Entrepreneurialism	Opting into PDP	
Careers Office	Career-specific 'mindedness' development		Support for placement	Interactions with employers	Involvement with PDP projects	
Serendipity	Social networks		Unexpected opportunities			

Source: Gunn et al. (2010) <http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/docs/publications/thinking-strategically-about-employability-and-graduate-attributes.pdf>

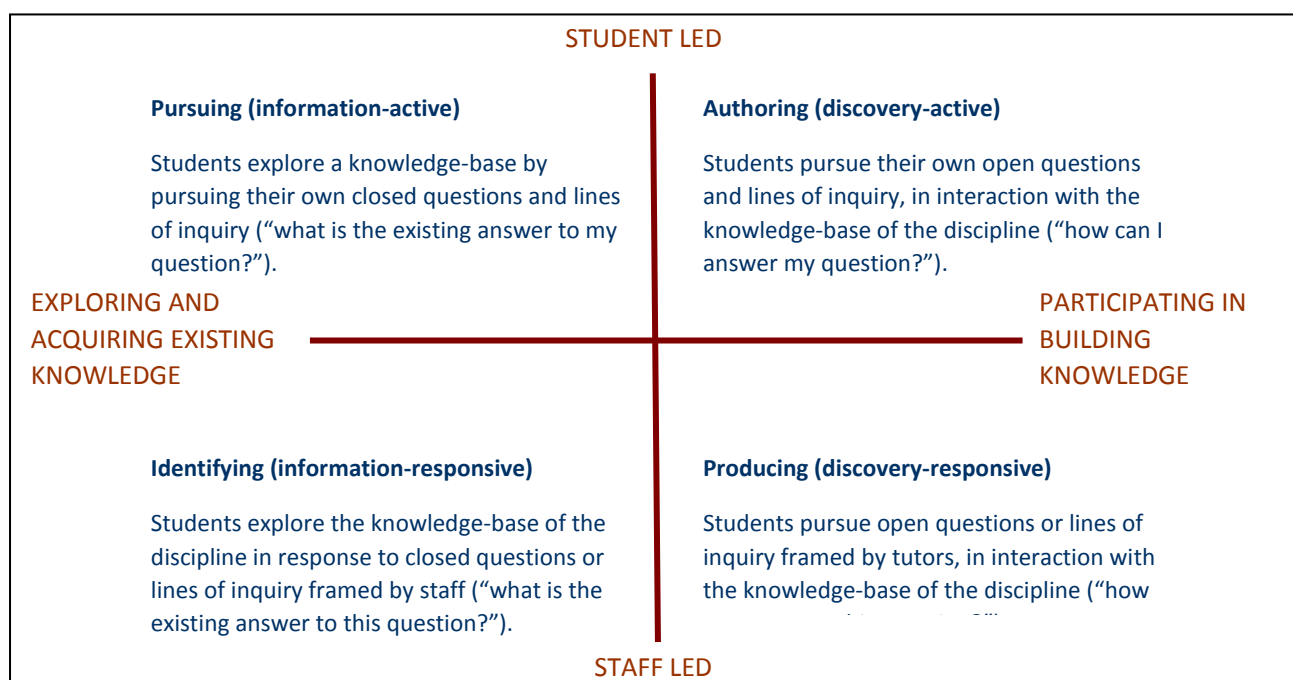
### 3 Developing Professional Learning Environments through Engaging Students in Research, Consultancy and Inquiry

#### Curriculum design and the research-teaching nexus



Source: Healey and Jenkins (2009, 7), based on Healey (2005, 70)

#### Inquiry-based learning: a conceptual framework



Source: Based on Levy (2009)