

Forum Insights

NAIRTL
May 2015



Introduction

There is a continued tension between the demands of research and teaching and Higher Education teachers struggle to embrace these competing core activities. NAIRTL, the Irish Network for Advancing the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning promotes innovation, supports development and sustains good practice that links research with teaching and learning in higher education institutions. This focus, i.e. the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning, proposes a high quality, pedagogically sound teaching experience where students are exposed to cutting edge research and methods and are engaged in authentic research themselves.

Achieving teaching excellence can often be seen as a distraction from research which is more favourably viewed in institutional promotion criteria and departmental reviews. The 'divide' between these core activities can be deliberately bridged by activities such as creating undergraduate research and inquiry programmes and encouraging a more inclusive research community where teaching is seen as a legitimate area for inquiry with the ultimate aim of fostering "a culture of enquiry and engaged scholarship" in Higher Education where all students "...learn in an environment where research and teaching are closely linked" (Hunt, 2011, p. 54).

NAIRTL's current activities are focused on scaffolding research and inquiry in undergraduate programmes, the professional development of research supervisors of postgraduate students, and supporting Higher Education staff to engage in research and inquiry into their teaching and learning.

Background and launch of the NAIRTL network

NAIRTL is a collaborative project whose founding members are University College Cork (the lead partner), Cork Institute of Technology, National University of Ireland, Galway, Trinity College Dublin and Waterford Institute of Technology, but whose activities are conducted at a national level across the higher education sector. Originally conceived of and organised as a National Academy, NAIRTL was launched as a national network on June 7th 2015 as part of the Inaugural European Conference on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (see www.nairtl.ie/conference2015 for details).

Principles of the NAIRTL network

The NAIRTL network will work to achieve the following:

- foster collaboration amongst the higher education sector to support and sustain good practice in the integration of research, teaching and learning
- develop, support and promote NAIRTL's activities
- provide sustained access to NAIRTL resources and the outputs of projects funded under the NAIRTL Grants initiative
- ensure complementarity with national and institutional initiatives working to support and enhance teaching and learning
- maintain and extend relationships with interested colleagues around the theme of the integration of research, teaching and learning

Recent achievements

Supported by funding from the National Forum for 2014/15, the NAIRTL network developed resources, programmes and activities relating to the integration of research, teaching and learning (IRTL). This resulted to the following outcomes and outputs:

- Publication of the review of the NAIRTL National Awards for Excellence in Teaching and Learning
- Reactivation of the NAIRTL Supervisor Support and Development working group and coordination of two master classes on issues relating to professionalising supervisory practice as well as the development of associated materials.
- Organisation of the Inaugural European Conference on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning conference
- Coordination of a workshop/panel discussion on approaches for scaffolding Undergraduate research and inquiry opportunities in Higher Education modules and programmes

Contact Us!

NAIRTL continues to advance its objectives through collaborative working groups with representation from across the higher education sector. Academics and practitioners who wish to coalesce on some of the proposed activities may do so by participating in one of our many events (see details of upcoming events below) or by requesting to become involved in a particular strand of activity. Please visit the NAIRTL website www.nairtl.ie for details of on-going activities or email

nairtl@ucc.ie for any specific information. You are also invited to avail of the extensive NAIRTL repository (www.nairtl.ie/Resources) which amongst other resources includes 13 books and handbooks designed and produced by NAIRTL which serve to enhance the capacity of teachers to integrate research, teaching and learning.

Activities 2015

1: EuroSoTL 2015, Cork, June 8th-9th

The inaugural EuroSoTL conference, a regional event of the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, will take place in Cork in June 2015. The conference is open to all Higher Education staff and students with an interest in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.

Keynote speakers

- Professor Kathy Takayama, President of ISSOTL, Executive Director of the Sheridan Center for Teaching & Learning and Professor of Molecular Biology, Cell Biology and Biochemistry, Brown University, USA
"Authentic inquiry in STEM through collaborative e-Portfolios"
- Professor Veronica Bamber, Chair of the QAA 'Student Transitions' Enhancement theme and Director of the Centre for Academic Practice in Queen Margaret University, UK
"Making the most of SoTL to support students in the transition from undergraduate to postgraduate taught students"
- Professor Joelle Fanghanel, Professor of Higher Education and Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic Development & Scholarship), University of West London, UK
"Defining and supporting the scholarship of teaching and learning: a sector-wide study"

2: Panel discussion on "Scaffolding undergraduate research and inquiry in the curriculum", EuroSoTL 2015, Cork, June 9th

This session will feature a seeding paper by Dr Dilly Fung on the "Connected Curriculum" at University College London, an institutional wide initiative which seeks to integrate research into every stage of an undergraduate degree. This will be followed by case studies of good practice in embedding undergraduate research from participants in an institutional pilot mapping exercise. Participants will be introduced to a mapping tool which was developed from the COEUR tool of the USA Council on Undergraduate Research and further refined by the work of Angela Brew, Macquarie University, Australia. It is envisaged that the session will encourage further discussion on approaches to support the incremental development of students' research skills and an enquiry-based mind set. Participants will be invited post event to use the mapping tool for their own programme or module.

3. Supervisor Support master class on "Transcultural supervision pedagogies and reflective practice", Dublin, June 16th

Featuring a keynote presentation from Professor Catherine Manathunga, Victoria University, this master class will explore a series of pedagogical strategies for working with culturally diverse students, based on the experience of Australian supervisors, and suggest a possible framework for reflexive practice that takes account of the ways in which history, geography and cultural knowledge enters into supervision pedagogy.