



Online Resource for Learning Analytics (ORLA)

teachingandlearning.ie/orla

October 2017

This *Forum Insight* introduces the National Forum's Online Resource for Learning Analytics (ORLA), a new open-source library of learning analytics (LA) resources, available at teachingandlearning.ie/orla

What is Learning Analytics?

LA is a methodology that applies the principles of data analytics to learner data to help institutions, teachers and researchers to better understand students' learning behavior. The provided insights can inform decisions and actions that can deepen learning and enable institutions to reach out to students who may be experiencing difficulties.

What is ORLA?

ORLA is an open-source online library of resources relating to the key aspects of developing a successful approach to LA. ORLA is an output of the National Forum's Learning Analytics and Educational Data Mining for Learning Impact project. The aims of this project were: to develop and share a sectoral understanding of the concepts and potential of LA; to review the current status of its adoption in Ireland and internationally; to build a community of researchers, practitioners and interested parties; and to support the sector's capacity to engage with LA.

The resources in ORLA were developed by four advisory groups that comprised over sixty representatives from across the sector, including lecturers, students, researchers, IT professionals, student advisors and librarians. These groups focused on the following areas: IT and Infrastructure; Data Modelling and Aggregation; Ethics, Policy and Law; and Teaching, Learning and Effective Interventions. They identified the needs of the sector and the resources that would best address such needs. The majority of resources, including the case studies, were compiled specifically for inclusion in ORLA.

How is ORLA organised?

ORLA is divided into four sections, as follows:

- **About** provides a detailed introduction to the concepts and applications of LA.
- **Develop an Institutional Strategy** houses resources that are designed to support and guide institutions as they develop effective, sustainable strategies for gaining maximum benefit from their learner data, for the institution, for teaching staff and for students. This section is laid out as a sequential checklist of resources. In developing an institutional strategy, users are advised to work through the resources in order.
- **Resources for Teachers** hosts a suite of resources that are designed to support and guide teaching staff who wish to make better use of the data available to them
- **Case Studies** hosts a selection of bespoke case studies, written and submitted by educators who have successfully incorporated LA into their pedagogy or module management.

A full list of the resources contained in ORLA is included overleaf.

Resources Contained in ORLA

In addition to the case studies referred to overleaf, ORLA currently contains the resources below. It is intended that further resources will be added on an ongoing basis:

- **Learning Analytics Principles**

Explores the values and principles that an institution may wish to adopt to underpin their LA strategy.

- **Consultative Approach Guide**

Outlines the benefits of adopting a consultative approach to strategy development that includes all institutional stakeholders. It also explores the potential contributions of different stakeholders.

- **Guide to Developing Enabling Policies**

Lists 25 key themes that should be covered in a comprehensive institutional LA policy. Each theme is fully explored and possible actions are recommended.

- **Overview of International LA Policies**

Lists the policy themes that recur in eight internationally-recognised analytics policy and principle exemplars and contains links to the full policies.

- **LA & Data Protection in Ireland**

Details many of the issues institutions need to consider in order to ensure a legally-compliant approach.

- **Data Protection Checklist for LA**

The online data checklist from the Data Protection Commissioner's Office adapted for the purposes of LA.

- **Student Intervention Guide**

Explores 23 key themes institutions may wish to consider when planning data-enabled student interventions.

- **Designing Student Communications**

Draws on proven techniques for designing effective automated communications that engage students.

- **VLE Resources**

Three tailored guides that explore the standard reporting features available to teaching staff in Blackboard, Moodle and Sakai.

- **Data Conceptual Model**

An extensive list of data sources held by institutions, categorised by their possible LA uses.

- **Guide to Data Quality**

Explains the importance of good data and methods for assessing the quality of institutional data.

- **Irish Reporting Platforms**

Case studies of seven reporting platforms from Irish HE that are currently enabling LA.

- **Selecting an LA Vendor**

Offers guidance on some of the considerations that HEIs are advised to take into account when deciding whether to invest in a given platform.

- **Assessing Success**

Discusses some of the considerations and challenges for institutions when reviewing the success of their LA approaches.

- **Identifying Research Questions in LA**

Explores potential avenues for LA research including, for example, research questions that focus on students, educators and support staff, ethical and privacy considerations, and suggestions for promoting robust research methodologies.