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## UEM Guiding Principle 2 (Connected, engaged & internationalised curriculum)

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# UEM Essentials

## Guiding Principle

# 2

### At a glance

#### Guiding Principle 2

Connected, engaged and internationalised curriculum

Provide a connected, engaged and internationalised curriculum, co-created and delivered in partnership with the student and with industry, community, HE and international partners;

Maintain a strong emphasis on the application of knowledge, research and scholarship, sustainability, experiential learning and development of active citizenship through all interactions with students.

Integrate research-led innovative teaching; enquiry-based collaborative learning and research skill development; workplace, community and international experiential learning; career development learning; and the full range of formal, informal and technology-enhanced learning experiences in the formation of the graduate.

FOR MORE INFO



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### CONNECTED, ENGAGED AND INTERNATIONALISED CURRICULUM

We exist in a highly connected, globalised world; one that is immersed in, and enhanced by, technology. Reflecting on the world in which we live, the world in which we teach and learn, requires purposeful design, consideration and joined-up thinking.

The curriculum is one of the fundamental elements of Higher Education; however, the understanding and application of the curriculum has changed over time in line with the needs of society and the desires of our learners and partners.

Carefully aligning our values throughout our curriculum, and actioning them through impactful and co-created learning, can define what a learning experience in TU Dublin will be.

## INTRODUCTION

The curriculum is a difficult concept to define as it is understood differently depending on the context in which it is used. Several authors have explored this tension, from a higher education perspective, in the scholarly literature and this has been recently synthesised in the TU Dublin CoCREATE project report (Ryan et al., 2020) and subsequently published as a standalone literature review (McAvinia, 2021).

The curriculum is more than just the sequence of modules a learner takes, the type or number of assessments or even the validated requirements to complete a programme of study (Coate, 2009). A broad definition of the curriculum is offered by Jackson as part of his Lifewide Curriculum Concept (2016, p.3): [The curriculum is] “all a student’s experiences while they are studying at university – since most experiences have some potential for learning.” Complementing this baseline

definition, Annala and Mäkinen (2012, p.4) classify the curriculum from the perspective of the connection between teaching, research and the world in which we live: [The curriculum is] “the intentional and dynamic process, which reveals the values and principles in relation to learning, knowledge and disciplines, and the cultural and political purposes of Higher Education.”

Both definitions, broad and more pointed, are appropriate for the University Education Model (UEM) and help to crystallise our collective understanding of the curriculum and how key concepts such as co-creation, connection-making and internationalisation can be interwoven forming part of our TU Dublin experience and chiming with other Guiding Principles such as Guiding Principle 1 (Student Centred and Student Engaged for Student Success) and Guiding Principle 5 (Knowledge Creation to Application).



## RELEVANCE TO THE UEM

A connected, engaged and internationalised curriculum is one of the 10 Guiding Principles that form the foundation of the University Education Model. **‘Connected’** is considered horizontally and vertically across, and through, a learning path to ensure coherence for the learner through a considered arrangement of learning experiences. The curriculum is both co-created and delivered through partnership; the partnership includes active and engaged learners as well as industry, community, Higher Education and international partners. The curriculum places a strong emphasis on research, scholarship and, ultimately, the application of knowledge and thus supports Guiding Principle 5. Fundamental curriculum values of experiential and experimental learning

will empower learners and learning partners to positively impact the world in which we live, particularly through sustainable and active citizenship. These impacts, and the embodiment of them through our learners, graduates and partners, are grounded in the immersive use of research-led innovative teaching, enquiry-based collaborative learning and the engaging implementation of research skills in the workplace, community and internationally. TU Dublin learners benefit from a wide range of formal, informal and technology-enhanced learning experiences inspiring a transformative learning experience and producing rounded, agile and critical graduates that are ready for their future careers.

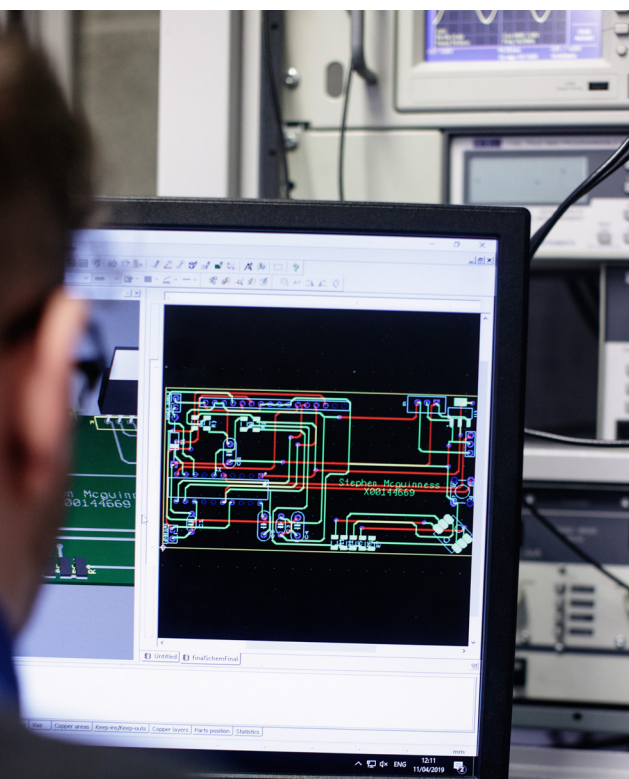
## EMERGENT PERSPECTIVES

Merging Jackson's (2016) and Annala and Mäkinen's (2012) definitions of the higher education curriculum, experiences are the basis of learning and how these integrate the values of a discipline as well as the cultural and political rationale for higher education. An example of the seamless integration of cultural, political and discipline values, through experimental and experiential learning, is Community Engaged Research and Learning (CERL). Learners who engage with CERL experiences not only develop discipline understanding, they also develop themselves and contribute to active

citizenship. Active Citizenship has been defined (Anon, 2009, p.2) as:

“engagement, participation in society and valuing contributions made by individuals, whether they are employed or outside the traditional workforce... in practical terms, engagement and participation may mean... being active and caring about the local neighbourhood, the environment as well as larger global and national issues”.

With these core pillars in mind, some examples of CERL from across TU Dublin include:



### Wells for Zoe

One example of high impact, international, CERL learning experiences in TU Dublin is the Wells for Zoe project. In this initiative, TU Dublin learners from across several disciplines work in partnership with the Irish-Malawian charity Wells for Zoe. Learners spend up to three months in Malawi undertaking community-based projects as part of their work placement module collaborating on challenges that local communities face; including, pump design and digital marketing projects.

### TU Dublin Computer Science + SJOG

Another example of a transformative partnership is CERL collaboration between TU Dublin computer science students and staff and individuals supported by Saint John of God (SJOG) Community Services. In this initiative, TU Dublin learners, SJOG staff, and the individuals who they support with intellectual disabilities co-designed accessible apps to support independent living ([Lecturer video](#), [Community Partners video](#)). This project also chimes with Guiding Principles 7 (*Inclusive, Global and Multicultural*) and 10 (*Access and Equal Opportunity*).

Building on this value of Active Citizenship, TU Dublin details in its' Strategic Intent (Anon, 2019, p.15) that it will be: “*known for the creation of new knowledge and the development of timely and practical solutions that address the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*”.

To achieve this, learners and staff across TU Dublin have embraced multi-modal approaches to teaching and promoted sustainability through professional development, literacy and international benchmarking. Examples of this include the TU Dublin IMPACT and HEA-Transform EDU projects that have supported the integration

of the SuliTest and Sustainable Education into TU Dublin curricula. The inclusion of the SuliTest, as part of a connected, sustainability-embedded, curriculum empowers learners to reflect upon, and build on, their own awareness and understanding of the UN SDGs in the context of their personal, academic and future professional lives. Leveraging technology enhanced and machine learning, in combination with targeted staff professional development in the area of Education for Sustainability, has created a connected, trans-disciplinary pathway focusing on Sustainability in TU Dublin.

Find out more about the  
University Education  
Model (UEM) @ TU Dublin  
Intranet

## CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

Developing a connected, engaged, internationalised and co-created curriculum, that is grounded in impactful learning experiences, is a challenge. It requires joined-up thinking from all involved and requires both intra- and inter-discipline cooperation at a local, national and international level. The potential benefits are large; however, there remain significant barriers to widespread implementation. Some of these barriers are explored below through a design-thinking approach of ‘how might...’ questioning:

- How might time-poor stakeholders (staff, students and external stakeholders) engage in high impact, co-created learning experiences as part of a connected and internationalised curriculum?
- How might relationships with community/industry partners, resulting in impactful learning experiences, be created and sustained?
- How might inter-, as well as intra-, discipline connections be made to allow the co-creation of transdisciplinary learning experiences at a local and international level?
- How might a multimodal approach to teaching and learning truly integrate our non-academic partners into our learning community through a connected, co-created and internationalised curriculum?

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