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## In Search of a Sustainable Model of Academic Development: Combining E-learning and Problem-based learning

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# In Search of a Sustainable Model of Academic Development: Combining E-Learning and Problem- based Learning

Roisin Donnelly

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# Abstract

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- ▶ The context of this study is in teaching in higher education, and in teaching about teaching. At its essence is an exploration of an emerging model of academic development grounded in practice. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, how do you create a sustainable learning environment in the context of academic development in higher education with new tools and pedagogies emerging and becoming available for use?
- ▶ Sustainability is not about how to maintain good educational programmes beyond implementation. It is not how to keep going in a linear, sustained fashion. It is not how to keep up relentless energy. A definition of sustainability that works for the context of this research is that provided by Fullen (2005, p.ix):
  - ▶ *Sustainability is the capacity of a system to engage in the complexities of continuous improvement consistent with deep values of human purpose.*
- ▶ The focus of the paper is based on the argument that it is important to seek to develop e-learning and problem-based learning (PBL) strategies in higher education today that support approaches whose emphasis is on the innovative and cutting edge educational strategies related to education for sustainability. Education for sustainability should be learner centred and will require a significant shift for both academics and students alike. It is essential that all academics who are willing to engage in this process acknowledge that they too are learners and will need to reflect on their teaching and learning practice if we are to develop a truly sustainable PBL/e-learning environment into the future.
- ▶ To meet these demands, it is argued that teachers need professional development opportunities that support them in a transformational process and in a sustained way. Such transformation of curriculum and pedagogy is a complex process for teachers; it is the premise of this paper that combining problem-based and new technologies appears to hold promise in overcoming the traditional limitations of professional development.

# Logistics of the Module

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- ▶ One module out of 8 offered on a PG Diploma in Third Level Learning and Teaching
- ▶ 10 lecturers as participants
  - ▶ new academic staff
  - ▶ existing staff updating their skills and knowledge
- ▶ 10 weeks duration
- ▶ 3 F2F sessions; the remainder is online



# Why Combine Online & Problem-based Learning?

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- ▶ PBL is the model of curriculum development used for this course
- ▶ Both PBL and Online are motivating ways to learn: it is active learning working with real problems
- ▶ Help with higher order thinking and problem solving skills



# Why Combine Online & Problem-based Learning?

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- ▶ **Developing key skills -  
learning how to learn,  
IT Skills,  
Communication and Team-work**



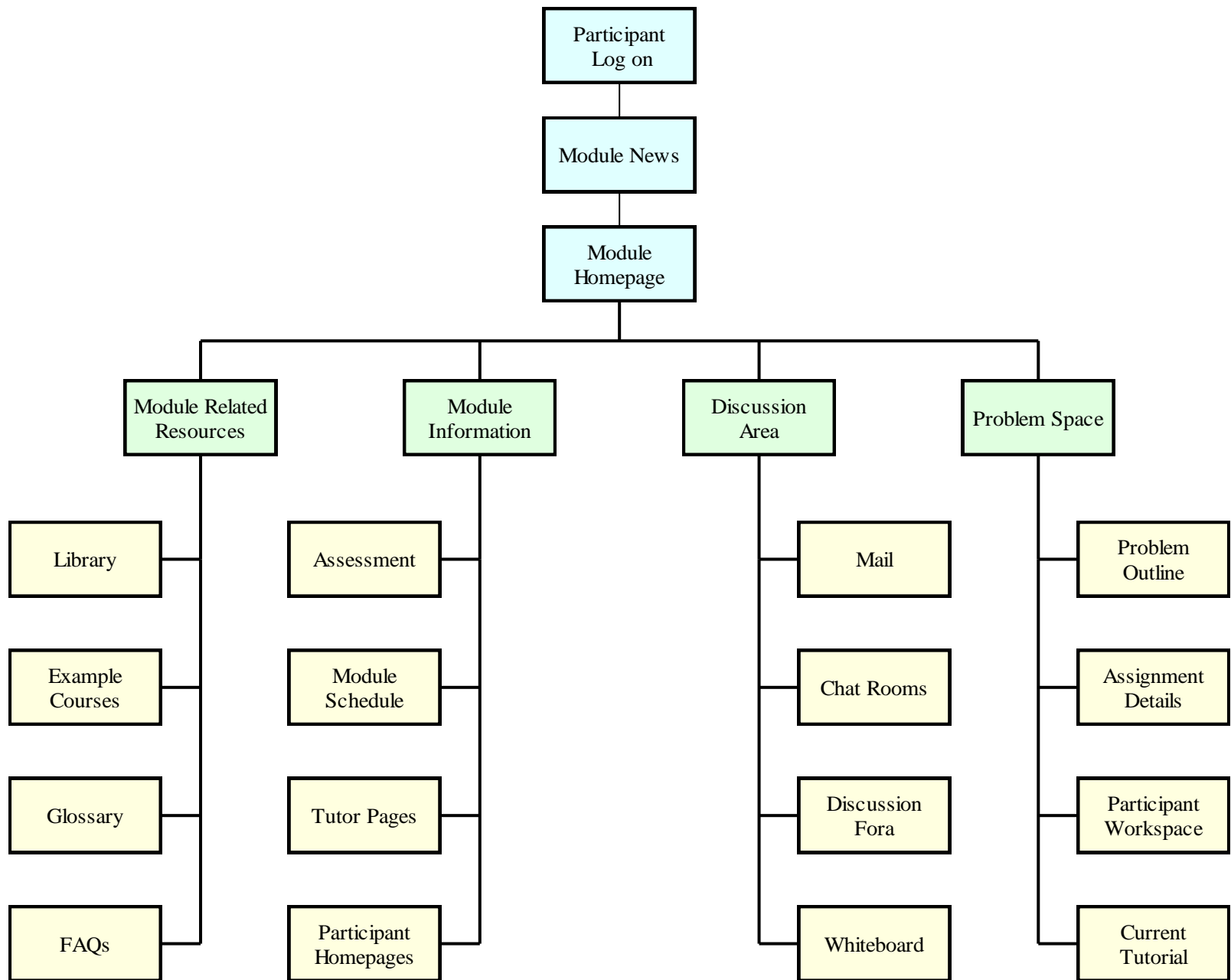
# Structure of the Module

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- ▶ Pre Induction
- ▶ Induction
- ▶ 2 real life “problems” presented and solved online
- ▶ Assessment



# Online Learning Module





# Tutor's Pages

[Jen Harvey](#) | [Roisin Donnelly](#) | [Lillian Greenwood](#) | [Maria Lee](#)

**Roisin Donnelly received the Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching in Higher Education from the University of Ulster which led on to her completing the M.Ed. in Professional Development in Higher Education. She has an M.Sc. in Computing and Information Systems and brings 8 years of experience in higher education as a lecturer and researcher in Northern Ireland and Australia. Her teaching and research interests include Computer Assisted Learning and Assessment, Presentation Skills, Active Learning Methods, Online Learning Environments, Research Methods in HE and Problem-based Learning.**

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Photographs to  
be added soon!

# Pedagogy

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- ▶ Constructivist Approach

- ▶ The Future

