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## Engaging Lecturers as Students: Building Sustainable Professional Development

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# Engaging lecturers as students: building sustainable professional development

LIN Conference  
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*Dr Jen Harvey, Dr Roisin Donnelly, Dr Claire McAvinia*

# Outline

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- ▶ Retrospective evaluation of LTTC programmes
- ▶ Methods
- ▶ Findings



# A retrospective evaluation

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- ▶ DIT's Learning, Teaching and Technology Centre (LTTC)
- ▶ Postgraduate qualifications in third level learning and teaching for more than a decade
- ▶ Evaluative work to assess impact
- ▶ Focus on all programmes but especially Postgraduate Certificate (later, Diploma) in Third Level Learning and Teaching



# Research design

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- ▶ Literature review – national, international context
- ▶ Graduates within and outside DIT contacted in spring 2013
- ▶ Methods:
  - ▶ Online questionnaire, 78 responses (35% response rate)
  - ▶ Focus Groups later held for DIT staff only
- ▶ Data analysis during summer 2013:
  - ▶ Review, analysis of quantitative results
  - ▶ Thematic analysis of qualitative data
- ▶ Report written
- ▶ Results being disseminated internally and externally



# Headline Findings

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- ▶ **93%** of questionnaire respondents said their expectations had been met by their course;
- ▶ **96%** said their teaching practice had changed since completing their course;
- ▶ **92%** said they had seen changes in their students' learning as a result of their changed practices.
- ▶ **82%** of respondents said there were benefits for their departments as a result of their having taken the course, particularly in teaching development and course redesign.
- ▶ Validation of these findings via focus groups.



# Headline Findings

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*I'm a much better teacher – the students understand more and have given great feedback. I'm more confident in my teaching and not afraid to try new things.*

*The PG Cert was fantastic and I still tell people about it because it was such a positive experience. Thank you for that.*

*I have led the development of a new programme which will take its first students in September. This is something that I would never have considered possible before taking the course. I am recognised more as someone that understands the teaching/education side of things.*

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# Sustained professional development

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- ▶ Questionnaire respondents:
  - ▶ Five completed LTTC short courses
  - ▶ 54 completed the Certificate/Diploma
  - ▶ 23 completed the MA in Higher Education
  - ▶ 10 completed the MSc in Applied eLearning
- ▶ Progression from one course to another – very often Certificate/Diploma to MA or MSc
- ▶ 25% continued their studies to doctoral level
- ▶ 25% continued studies in other directions
- ▶ Focus Group participants had become research active
- ▶ Benefits for home institution and for the sector







# Factors affecting participation

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## ▶ Time?

- ▶ Once commitment made, time was found

## ▶ Scheduling?

- ▶ No clear result in terms of preferred days/times for courses
- ▶ Again, once commitment made, time was found

## ▶ Workloads?

- ▶ Varying degrees of time spent on studies
- ▶ Strong awareness of constraints on time, resources
- ▶ But participants identified 'added value':
  - ▶ Reading and writing more efficiently and effectively
  - ▶ Getting better outcomes from teaching - seeing students doing better
  - ▶ Developing research and teaching



# Should we change what we do?

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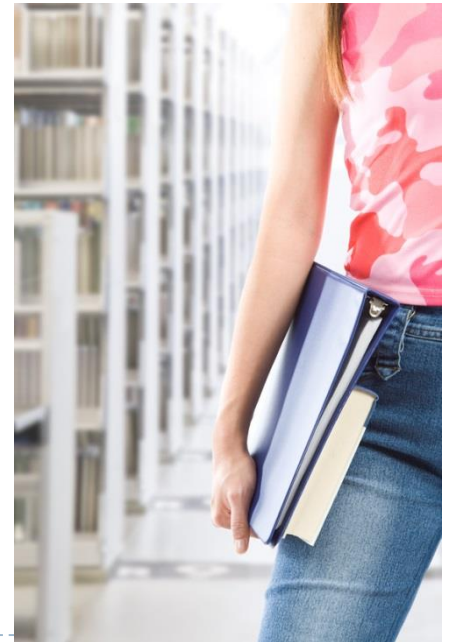
- ▶ Larger group size and lecture setting?
  - ▶ Felt strongly to be unsuitable
- ▶ DIT staff only?
  - ▶ Rejected by DIT staff as well as external people
- ▶ Remove observation or microteaching?
  - ▶ Resource- and time-intensive but enrich experience
- ▶ Certificate or Diploma?
  - ▶ Questionnaire results split, but Focus Group data favoured Diploma
- ▶ More modules over a longer time period?
  - ▶ Could be useful especially if more e-learning introduced



# Challenges

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- ▶ Increasing workloads
- ▶ Lack of buy-out or back-fill when trying to study
- ▶ More challenging conditions than when they started



# Impact of accredited professional development

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- ▶ More than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of questionnaire respondents felt that accredited professional development was *Very important* or *Important*
- ▶ Constant references to the value of meeting people in the group, discussing teaching, having a professional support network
- ▶ **Student-centred**



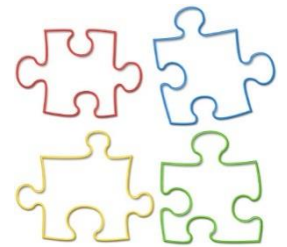
# Sustainable, sustained outcomes

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*I'm a much better teacher – the students understand more and have given great feedback. I'm more confident in my teaching and not afraid to try new things.*

*If I am continually and consciously questioning how I do my job, with an aim to improving, then this can only be of benefit to students, and ultimately to the college.*

*The courses help in some instances establish communities of practice because participants are discussing their teaching practice and innovative strategies openly.*



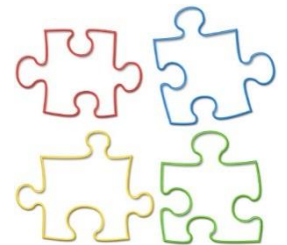
# Sustainable, sustained outcomes

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*I have run a number of workshops on groupwork and have placed more emphasis on supporting groupwork on our courses.*

*They now have a better teacher working for them and have been able to place me on different programs in order to teach new subjects, and the students have an opportunity to experience different methods of learning which can only add to the overall experience they are having in the college.*

- ▶ Resource and time intensive
- ▶ ..but cascades to departments, colleges, students



# Programme Team Reflections

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- ▶ Importance of creating a learning community
- ▶ Sharing disciplinary practices as a group, comparing teaching practice
- ▶ Providing a safe space
- ▶ Providing a mutually supportive space
- ▶ Issues for further consideration:
  - ▶ Integration of e-learning
  - ▶ Assessment on pass/fail basis



# Thank you

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LEARNING, TEACHING + TECHNOLOGY CENTRE





# Questions welcome

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