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## Introduction to the IMPACT Special Issue

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## Introduction to the IMPACT Special Issue

### Cover Page Footnote

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## Introduction to the IMPACT Special Issue

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This Special Issue of the *Irish Journal of Academic Practice* (IJAP) celebrates the work of the TU Dublin IMPACT project. IMPACT was a National Forum and HEA-funded initiative under the Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement (SATLE) funding during the 2020/21 Academic Year. The aim of the SATLE fund was to develop a strong foundation for future enhancement of teaching and learning (T&L) within an institution and in line with local and national priorities. The significant SATLE funding was used, through IMPACT, to develop strategically aligned, sustainable processes and infrastructure to maximise the impact of TU Dublin's T&L practices on the student and staff experience. The SATLE funding, with the support of the IMPACT project team, empowered and enabled cultural, community and capacity change in TU Dublin. This is evidenced in the presentation of eleven papers in this Special Issue of the *Irish Journal of Academic Practice* (IJAP).

The entire IMPACT project was undertaken in the shadow of Covid-19; however, through adversity the IMPACT project forged opportunity. A strong community of enthusiastic stakeholders – staff, students and external colleagues – engaged with, and shaped, the IMPACT project. The IMPACT project was broken into five work packages, each with its own workstream, that developed a digital open access repository, structured staff and programme-team development, supported the development of cross-disciplinary programmes of the future and empowered innovative T&L practices.

This Special Issue synthesises these work packages and presents some of the research conducted within. Much of the research disseminated here emanates from over 30 projects that were seed-funded by IMPACT. These seed-funded projects acted as beacons within the evolving university; showcasing how T&L innovation can support and enhance the adoption of best practice throughout TU Dublin. To ensure equitable access to seed-funding, and to encourage the integration of new members of the TU Dublin T&L community, funding applications were anonymously peer-reviewed. Funded projects were awarded seed-funding proportionate to the

scale of project and were supported in their development. Projects were showcased via internal and external formats throughout their lifespans. The strategic seed-funding calls were designed in consultation with key stakeholders (including academic, professional services, Students Union and external partners). The calls were themed based on strategic priorities for TU Dublin and were also categorised based on scale, resulting in four distinct calls over the course of the 2020/21 academic year: *Synergies* (<https://tudublinimpact.wordpress.com/strategic-synergies>), *Accelerator, Incubator* (<https://tudublinimpact.wordpress.com/accelerator-and-incubator-fund>) and *Communities of Practice* (<https://tudublinimpact.wordpress.com/communities-of-practice>).

The funded projects were tasked with achieving positive change and enhancing student success; a brief, themed, summary of the key funded project activities is noted below:

- *Students as Partners in Learning*: A variety of approaches to learning that centralised the student, and student success, were implemented. A strong theme of game-based learning was observed and this approach was positively evaluated by the participating students. Additionally, student partnership was observed in assessment and learning outcome dissemination. Several projects incorporated students as leads, through all levels (7 to 10) and across many disciplines (e.g. Business, Tourism, Engineering).
- *Authenticity*: An authentic pedagogical approach was cultivated; ranging from student ‘design partners’ with full decision-making power over the content, activities, assessment and collaboration with industry and social partners in an applied learning environment, through to an authentic assessment Community of Practice (CoP) that allowed staff, students and other stakeholders to come together to support each other in developing assessments that reflected the real world, and in doing so allowed students to show their learning outcome attainment in a more genuine way.
- *Inclusivity*: Teaching, learning and assessment was viewed and reimagined through the lens of inclusivity. This took the form of Continual Professional Development (CPD), alternative pedagogical approaches and the development of appropriate resources for staff and students. Engagement by both students and staff enabled a more inclusive and representative curriculum, one that reflects the diverse and multi-cultural TU Dublin and society we live in today. A whole-of-university approach was adopted; for example,

library services provided information-literacy training, developed a ‘Discover Diversity’ collection, supported challenging and informative seminars, and ran accredited CPD.

- *Agility*: Remote working for staff and off-campus education for students are two of the most powerful emerging trends during the Covid-19 period. Several projects focussed on the agile adoption and adaption of technology to support staff and students. These included the development of mixed-reality T&L that will enhance practice post-pandemic, as well as the creation of a CoP to sustainably support staff development in this area.
- *Sustainability*: We, as a society, have a moral imperative to embrace education-for-sustainability, as enshrined in SDG 4.7; this aligns with the “Planet” pillar of TU Dublin’s Strategic Plan and was a key driver for change in the funded projects. A key challenge is that sustainability poses complexity beyond that traditionally taught in higher education. To address this, projects funded in this area focused on practical ways to embed sustainability into the curriculum, from an intra- and inter-disciplinary approach. Staff CPD was prioritised, with case-studies developed in the Food discipline that informed emergent areas in Pharma, Tourism, Engineering and beyond. Integration of enabling approaches, such as the UN Sulitest, allowed students to develop their sustainability-literacy skills and so take on leadership roles in designing and developing curricula that are sustainability focused.

The eleven papers that form this Special Issue of IJAP, address a variety of IMPACT themes and initiatives. The papers include research evaluating the initiatives undertaken, literature reviews underpinning the work of IMPACT, case studies from individual practitioners, and exploratory discussions of how IMPACT will continue to influence practice.

Opening the issue, **Harvey et al.** present evaluation and exploration of the CoP approach taken to support institutional transformation and the formation of a new educational model at TU Dublin as part of the IMPACT project. Four CoP case studies are presented, demonstrating the potential of the approach for CPD, the adoption of innovative teaching and learning practices, and organisational change.

Next, **O’Leary et al.** describe and discuss *Our Student Voice*, a project addressing support for students (particularly class representatives) engaging with quality assurance and enhancement

processes in their university. Digital training resources were designed and provided to help students learn relevant knowledge and skills for effective participation in key processes at TU Dublin. Findings will be of interest to colleagues in other institutions seeking to enhance student participation in quality assurance and enhancement processes.

**Moore et al.** explore the literature related to educator innovation in higher education institutions, describing the main enablers and barriers. Recommendations are made on how higher education institutions can create an organisational climate conducive to educator engagement in teaching innovation.

Authentic Assessment has been a key theme of the IMPACT project. **Higgins** presents a practitioner case study, an authentic assessment redesign adapted to remote working, which has become a norm for many people during the Covid-19 pandemic. An authentic assessment framework for Computing students is described and discussed which uses industry principles for project delivery to frame group assessment and reflection activities by students.

The roundtable discussion podcast created by **Freeman et al.** is situated in the context of a Business Faculty engaging in fundamental change in pedagogy that enables students to become sustainability literate graduates thereby developing appropriate knowledge, skills, and mind-sets. The podcast features six colleagues engaged in conversation and reflection around a pedagogical initiative (the use of the UN supported Sulitest platform, specifically the Sulitest quiz tool) designed with the broad aim of enhancing sustainability literacy among business students using innovative digital tools as part of an authentic assessment strategy.

**Darby and Dowling** call on practitioners to build *MultiStories* – to recognise and then change the lack of representation of the knowledge of Black and ethnic minority groups in our curricula. We see also the potential of collaboration between information literacy specialists in our libraries, and subject-discipline experts in their Schools and departments. Decolonising the university is distinguished from decolonising curricula, the latter being essential to the former. A pilot process for this change is described, and supporting resources presented.

Given that social care education in Ireland is undergoing a period of transition, **McGarr et al.** Used this as an opportunity to explore authentic practice-based assessment. Specifically, the potential offered by the ‘Integrative Framework for Practice Teaching’ is proffered from the

perspective of a number of educators' experiences of using this framework in their practice. Specific teaching and learning activities integrated within the framework are mind-mapping, problem-based learning and the use of creative media.

**Beagon et al.** investigate students' experiences of reflecting on the development of their professional skills using an ePortfolio in a pilot project. Their findings show, among other things, that students need support in the reflection process, and clearer signposting in the process of identifying and mapping skills. The outcome of this study can be used by educators who wish to incorporate a professional skills ePortfolio in their engineering programmes.

IMPACT has supported a range of local projects to support innovations within specific disciplines. **Carolan's** case study explores the use of a serious game, Lucas Pope's 'Papers, Please' to support teaching, learning and assessment of immigration, refugee and citizenship law. Students' reflections on their experiences playing the game were combined with a formal assignment on their learning. Carolan finds games-based learning to have great potential and identifies a range of positive outcomes when this approach is combined with other T&L methods.

Open Educational Resources (OER) at TU Dublin have been an important deliverable from the IMPACT project. **Coyne and Alfis** take this starting point in their paper to frame a wider discussion around the potential benefits of OER, calling for national and international policies in respect of OER to be enabled further in Ireland. They highlight particularly the valuable and critical role of librarians in support of this change, and in overcoming some of the barriers to widespread adoption and use of OER.

**McAvinia et al.** detail the outcomes of the Co-CREATE literature and practice review as part of its wider project in 2019-20, which went on to inform and influence the direction of the subsequent IMPACT project at TU Dublin. Co-CREATE was a Team Teaching Fellowship project to support and underpin the building of a quality curriculum framework for the new technological university. The following emergent themes were considered from the perspective of how these might be translated to the technological university context - student voice, agency, sustainability in curriculum design, the importance of interdisciplinary approaches in the development of new programmes and provision, the place of graduate attributes, innovation,

global citizenship and the impact of new technologies, and the impact of “connected” approaches to curriculum in research-intensive universities.

Beyond these themes and the valuable scholarship showcased in this special issue, the impact and influence of the funded projects are detailed and a set of recommendations for near future T&L enhancement in TU Dublin are captured and shared openly. These will inform the emergent TU Dublin Education Model. Full details are available on the TU Dublin IMPACT website ([www.tudublinimpact.wordpress.com](http://www.tudublinimpact.wordpress.com)). The reader is encouraged not only to browse this Special Issue, but also to visit the IMPACT website, and to contact authors and project leads to continue this valuable collaboration into the future.