

Centre for Transformative Learning



Autumn 2023

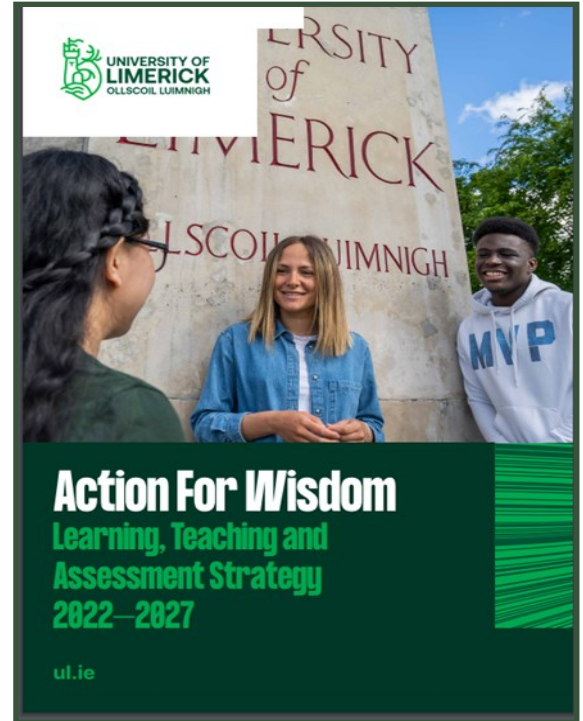
Action for Wisdom

CTL has been working to progress the three pillars of Action for Wisdom:

- Transforming the Curriculum
- Transforming Teaching
- Inclusive Student Engagement and Support

An update on implementation of the actions across all three pillars of the strategy was provided and approved by Executive Committee and Academic Council at recent meetings.

In a bid to showcase and share innovative practice and research in learning, teaching and assessment from across the faculties, CTL, in collaboration with faculties, is delighted to host a University Conference, Naming, Sharing and Transforming Practice (funded by SATLE22), which will take place on campus on Wednesday, 17th January 2024. [Registration](#) for this conference is now open.



Transforming The Curriculum

A Curriculum Development Lead, Dr Geraldine Grimes, has been recruited to progress the implementation of the ICDF. Consultations with faculty ongoing. Further information on curriculum development available [here](#).



Dr Geraldine Grimes

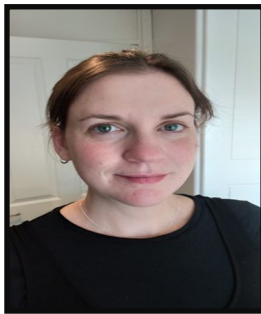
Curriculum Development



Transforming Teaching

Universal Design for Learning

Dr Suzanne Stone and Dr Annie O'Donovan joined the CTL team to build on the excellent work to date at UL in respect of embedding the principles of UDL to further enhance the student experience. During semester, staff from across the university attended a series of introduction to Universal Design for Learning workshops delivered in both face-to-face and online. The UDL@UL community of practice, originally established in 2021, was relaunched by the provost Professor Shane Kilcommins in October, and a series of events both formal and informal are planned throughout the year including a guest speaker event enabled by SATLE. [Learn more about the Community of Practice](#)



Dr Annie O'Donovan

UDL, Educational Developer



Dr Suzanne Stone

UDL, Lead



Twenty-six members of staff at UL are currently undertaking the National Forum for Teaching & Learning digital badge in UDL, supported by staff in the CTL, Dr Suzanne Stone and Dr. Íde O'Sullivan. The course is a 25-hour commitment which involves self-directed learning complemented by Peer Group engagement. In semester two, this course and badge will be offered to staff at UL. [Register interest here.](#)

Continuous Professional Development

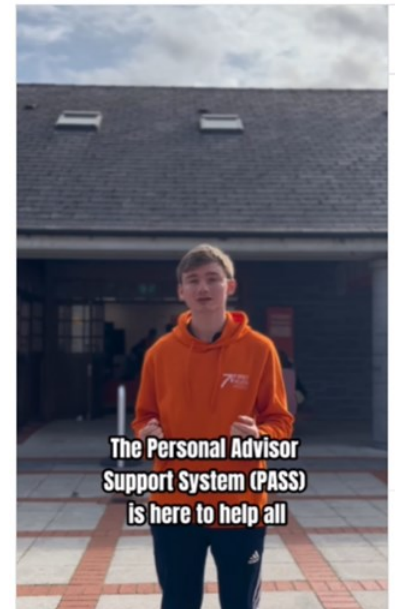
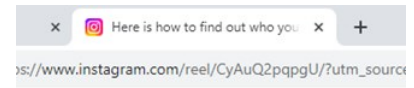
- Twenty six lecturing staff from across the faculties took part in the **peer observation network** this semester. Peer observation is a voluntary system of professional support that can help teachers at any stage in their career gain valuable insights about their teaching performance in a confidential, trusting and formative climate. Registration for peer observation will open again in Spring 2024.
- *Faculty led webinars: Teaching, Learning and Assessment – What do you do?* Speakers came from across the faculties spoke about their teaching innovations. The final webinar consisted of a panel discussion on Teaching Excellence: How do we Evidence what we do? We thank all the contributors and attendees for their excellent contributions.
- CTL held a series of professional development webinars and in-person workshops throughout the semester to help faculty enhanced their teaching practice. Topics included *Writing your Teaching Philosophy Statement*, Show and TEL events supporting professional development in the effective use of BrightSpace and workshops on *Curriculum Design and Development: Writing Learning Outcomes, Introduction to Programme and Module Design: Constructive Alignment of Learning, Teaching and Assessment.*

Inclusive Student Engagement and Support

Personal Advisor Support System (PASS)

At the beginning of academic year 2023/24, academic advisors were provided with a PASS PowerBI report, hosted in the PASS Sharepoint site. This report provides a filter function by year or programme, and equally allows advisors email their advisees by year, programme, or individually. Academic advisors have also been provided with a Brightspace site to interact with their advisees and this site has been pre-populated with a range of resources relevant to students' academic journey in UL. Email communication to re-energise the profile of PASS amongst academic advisors has been phased and delivered from the PDP's office, Faculty Deans, and the CTL.

First-year undergraduate students have been provided with a separate PASS SharePoint site outlining the functions of PASS, how to identify who their academic advisor is, and it is also pre-populated with a range of resources relevant to students' academic journey in UL. This year the F7W Hub staff can provide students with the name of their academic advisor, and F7W hub staff have created a very effective and engaging [video](#) in addition to email communication to all first-year undergraduate students about PASS, it's use to them, and offering a point-of-contact should they need it.



First Seven Weeks

The First 7 Weeks filmed several video projects providing useful information to students including a new [promotional video](#) targeted at students describing the programme. The First Seven Weeks [interactive handbook](#) has continued to be a valuable source of information for students and has been updated throughout the Semester. A new [video](#) was created to introduce the handbook to new students helping it to reach 5000 visits.





150 Directional Guides assisted students

12 weeks of on campus support with over 10,000 visits to the F7W Hub during the autumn semester 2023.

Increased our social media followers by 2000. followers from 2k to 4k

12 weeks of hosting in-person activities with over 13 academic workshops

Reached over 25,000 students on Instagram

Instagram reach  25,911  378.9%

Answered more than 1000 questions online

Over 2000 responses from the First7Weeks Feedback Survey



First Seven Weeks Hub Staff 2023

Digital Skills Development



This Autumn 2023, in collaboration with the VLE Project Team, CTL provided a range of Brightspace Student Supports via its *LevUL Up Digital Skills @ UL* programme (join the [Digital Skills Hub](#) on Brightspace to learn more). Initiatives included:

Email Promotions: Students received biweekly CTL emails for the first few academic weeks highlighting available Brightspace Student Supports.

Brightspace Tips Video Series: LevUL Up created and shared a series of useful Brightspace Tips Videos on its [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#) and [YouTube](#) social channels.

Live Workshops: LevUL Up digital skills workshops ran from academic week 1-7, with almost 200 student attendances. For the first three weeks of term, daily drop-in 'Introduction to Brightspace' workshops were held. For the rest of term, workshops focussed on a variety of other digital skills related topics ran with collaborative input from CTL and Library colleagues. Workshop topics were:

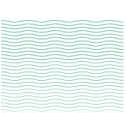
- Introduction to the Glucksman Library Assignment Toolkit
- Super Fast Note Taking with Markdown and Obsidian
- Video Creation & Editing: Introduction to Panopto on Brightspace for Students
- Staying Safe Online: A Student's Perspective
- Introduction to LinkedIn Learning for Students

Digital & Future Skills Course

Led by the Centre for Transformative Learning (CTL) in collaboration with UL@Work project and Library colleagues, and aligned to an aim in Action for Wisdom - ULs Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategy - a pioneering Digital & Future Skills Course was developed. It serves a dual purpose: to introduce and frame digital skills and capabilities development for students, informed by globally recognised frameworks; and to provide tailored opportunities for students to develop digital skills within the context of their academic programme of study. It aims to meet students where they are, at a level they are at.

In Autumn semester 2023, a pilot implementation of the Digital & Future Skills Course was integrated into a first-year module - Preparing for Academic Success - on the Bachelor of Arts (BA) programme in close collaboration with the Course Director. ~460 BA students interacted with the course as part of their academic module.

Throughout the Autumn semester, students engaged in a predominantly self-directed learning experience on the course, leveraging tailored digital learning lessons and resources at specified times. Students also completed self-assessment surveys using a question set from Jisc's Discovery Tool enabling them to identify strengths and areas for development. Notably, a significant percentage of the module grade was directly tied to the course.



Digital Skills Development

Brightspace

As part of the large-scale migration of all modules to Brightspace completed in September 2023, CTL coordinated in collaboration with the VLE Project team supports for students and staff. A total of 566 individuals have attended Brightspace training (1352 hours of training in total). Each person attended an average of 2.4 hours of training. 710 individuals have accessed Brightspace 101 (Introduction to Brightspace for Instructors). The average total time spent in Brightspace 101 by a user is 2h21m. Videos of Sessions (Sessions 1,2,3 and Quiz training) produced, 77 users have viewed training videos at least once. A knowledge base was created for staff and students with ongoing updating and development: [Brightspace Knowledge Base | University of Limerick \(ul.ie\)](#)

Brightspace Launch SEM1



1138 SEM1
MODULES
PUBLISHED IN
BRIGHTSPACE



WEEK1
BRIGHTSPACE
LOGINS:
> 9000
UNIQUE
LOGINS PER
DAY.



441
ACADEMICS
HAVE
ATTENDED
BRIGHTSPACE
TRAINING
SINCE MARCH.



REVIEW OF
STAGE 3 -
SURVEY
ACADEMICS
DURING WEEK
2.

BRIGHTSPACE SUPPORT

As we approach the end of the semester, we would like to remind staff that they can reach out to their Faculty Learning Technologists or email brightspace@ul.ie if they need support.

QUICK ACCESS TO BRIGHTSPACE SUPPORT ON TOPDESK

When you [login to TopDesk](#), you can access various Brightspace forms simply by typing 'Brightspace' in the search bar and pressing 'enter'. For example, you will find forms for bulk enrolling existing users, creating non-UL guest accounts, requesting site merges, and so on.

SHOW AND TEL SESSIONS

A range of Show and TEL sessions were organised to showcase teaching with Brightspace throughout the autumn semester. A list of recordings is available at this link:

[Show and TEL: Teaching with Brightspace | University of Limerick \(ul.ie\)](#)

The training Working Group focused as part of the VLE Project on the [Show and TEL: Teaching with Brightspace](#) series, which curated in the LTF [Blog](#). The group worked on the priorities for the Stage 4 approach to training. Large scale migration of all modules to Brightspace was completed in September 2023 with the new VLE live for all staff and students.

Learning Centres



Regional Writing Centre

- Peer Writing Tutor uptake incrementally rising since Covid era, 220 appointments projected this semester, nevertheless, down from pre-Covid levels of 400 appointments per semester.
- Peer Writing Tutor hours available remains at 300 hours per semester, down 100 hours per semester from pre-Covid levels, though uptake has increased from Covid-levels of below 40% to current-levels of 52% of available hours offered (compared with pre-Covid utilisation of 75%).
- Also, increasing is the percentage of face-to-face sessions to online sessions. Currently, 60% of our appointments are face-to-face. This is up from 53% last semester.
- 103 Quick Queries (an asynchronous method of answering questions that require less than 15 minutes of tutor time) were answered by our tutors this semester to date.
- Thus far this semester, 307 students have attended 13 RWC-delivered presentations on various aspects of writing.
- The RWC hosted a PhD Writers' Week for 8 PhD Candidates in August.
- Three writers' groups now occupy the RWC's Writers' Space, Monday through Wednesday each week.
- The 13th Annual National Secondary School Essay-writing Competition was launched in September of this year. The prompt enquires into the reasons that so many young Irish people are emigrating out of Ireland. Already, we have our first entry, so... good sign.
- Following on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter continues to rise thanks to the work of Coop Admin Assistants. Currently, 1,181 follow Instagram, 1.2k follow Facebook and 1,148 follow our Twitter account.
- The RWC hired five tutors this semester and will hire three more in the spring to cover graduating tutors.
- Signe Sandere will finish in January. Her replacement, Molly Mc Namara, 2nd year B.A. Psychology and Sociology, starts on January 8, 2024.
- RWC Director, Lawrence Cleary, presented at the IWCA 2023 Conference in Baltimore, ending his term as At-Large Board Member.
- The RWC will host the 2024 EWCA Conference on June 11th through 14th. The call for papers was issued in mid-October this year, abstracts now being accepted.

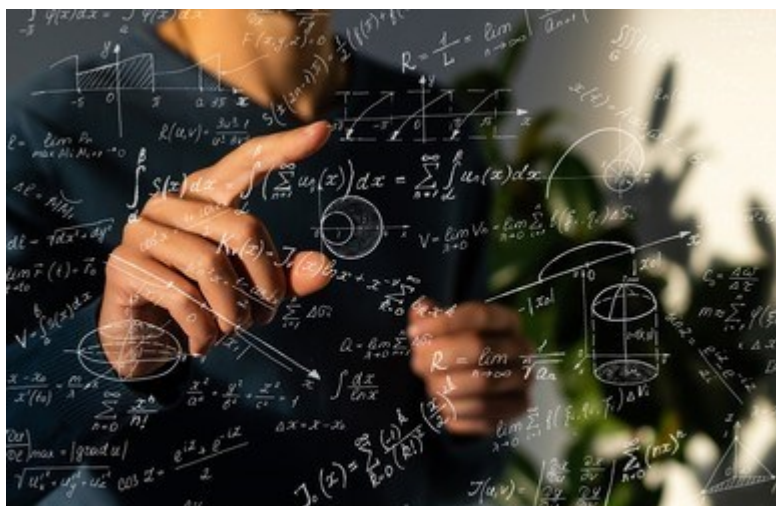


Participants of the PhD Writers Week 2023

Learning Centres

Mathematics Learning Centre (MLC)

- The Maths Learning Centre (MLC) supported students via its drop-in centre, online classes, and 24/7 online material. 770 student visits were made to the drop-in centre, in addition to 1,420 attendances at live online sessions to date. A further 1,076 hours of the MLC's 24/7 support material was viewed on Brightspace. The MLC is currently running exam revision courses for several mathematics modules in advance of the end of semester exams.
- The MLC ran its annual two-week Head Start Maths course in August, for mature students who were starting their studies in UL. The Head Start Maths course is a bridging course that helps mature students to make a successful transition to third level maths, by improving/refreshing the basic maths skills that are required for their UL programmes, and by facilitating a development in their confidence in maths.
- The MLC conducted its annual tutor training day for new tutors in the dept. of Mathematics and Statistics in September. The tutors who engaged with the training reported increased confidence with respect to their teaching, and increased knowledge and development of skills in the areas of planning, time management, communication, questioning, explaining, and understanding of students, among others.
- The MLC gave a workshop on Succeeding in Mathematics, as part of the First Seven Weeks Programme.
- The MLC developed and deployed relevant and timely online maths learning content targeting students engaged in two Initial Teacher Education (ITE) courses. This was part of a NISE Path 1 Phase 2 funded initiative granted to the CTL Learning Centres, which supports the Programme for Access to Higher Education.
- The MLC is continuing with its piloting of a tutor evaluation system for those in support teaching roles, in conjunction with the CTL.
- The MLC is on the local committee involved in the organisation of the 2024 Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching – Mathematics, Statistics and Operational Research in Higher Education ([CETL-MSOR](#)) conference, which is being hosted by UL in August 2024.



Learning Centres

ICT Learning Centre

- The ICT Learning Centre (ICTLC) is supporting the four core first-year computer programming modules (626 students) during the Autumn semester using the [Digital Learning Support Hub \(DLSH\)](#) framework. Relevant online video and quiz content made available to the students each week from week 2. Each week the DLSH content is further supported by both face-to-face and live online Peer-lead sessions (10 sessions weekly) using the Peer Supported Learning Group (PSLG) model. This year the majority of support sessions are face-to-face with some online to offer flexibility for our students.
- The core ECE first-year programming module (367 students) receive additional support from ICTLC staff implementing the Pair-Programming (PP) method of learning in labs to encourage active engagement and peer learning. A second ECE first-year programming module (61 students) was supported by ICTLC student-peers each week from week 2 to 13 inclusive with weekly face-to-face peer learning sessions (3 per week) utilising the PSLG model.
- The ICTLC opened in week 3 with 20 hours of Drop-in support being offered each week, both face-to-face in the centre (CS1-046) and synchronously online. This year the centre has a full drop-in schedule up to and including week 13 to ensure the maximum support was offered to new first-year students that had a delayed start to their semester. There were over 600 visits so far to our drop-in support during the semester.
- Over 20 hours of module/subject targeted sessions were delivered by ICTLC staff for students of 3 modules during the Autumn semester.
- Our UL Cybercamp's for secondary school students was held again in the summer of 2023. There were three 3-day camps between the 26th June and the 5th of July. During this time, 88 students, 27 of which were ladies, from 39 schools took part in the initiative and the feedback from the attendees has been extremely positive. Each 3-day camp consists of a day that focuses on a specific area of ICT namely: An introduction to programming, basic web design and Electronics/robots. The ICT Learning Centre and the Peer Supported Learning Centre manage the camps with the help of both the CSIS and ECE departments. For more information on the camps, please see our [website](#).



Learning Centres

Science Learning Centre

- The Science Learning Centre (SLC) supported students this semester via the Drop-in Centre, online 1-1 appointments and weekly group support tutorials between Weeks 3-14. We provided support in the fields of Physics, Engineering, Chemistry, Chemical Engineering/Process Technology and Biology.
- We now casually employ 40 PhD/MSc students throughout the Faculty of Science & Engineering to work as tutors in various roles at the Centre.
- Support Tutorials were requested for 9 modules, with permission given for 8/9 modules and tutors sourced for 7 modules. In total, 756 attendances were registered for the support tutorial sessions, with the average attendance per session being 23 students. The total attendance numbers have doubled in comparison to the Autumn semester of 2022.
- The Drop-in Centre had 160 attendances registered over the Autumn semester, an increase of 15% on attendance in Autumn semester of 2022, but still considerably lower than pre-Covid levels.
- One hour (2 x 25-min slots) of online 1-1 appointments per subject area were available each week from Weeks 4-14 of the semester, totalling 110 available appointments. On average, 36% of appointments were booked this semester, a drop of 14% from Autumn semester 2022.
- Emails were sent at the start of each month to all undergraduates in the Faculties of SEN and E&HS regarding the supports on offer at the SLC, and the Director attended all major 1st year modules at the start of the academic year to communicate the supports on offer.
- The SLC organised two staff coffee mornings at the beginning of the semester to promote the SLC support options to new academic/support staff at the university.
- We launched a LinkedIn Profile which is run by a SLC Tutor and helps to promote the events of the centre and also the research/academic activities of the tutors. Within six months of creating the LinkedIn profile, we have 425 followers.
- A new initiative was created for tutors to have bi-monthly training sessions organised by an elected tutor from October onwards. To date, we have had training sessions with:
 - ⇒ FRS recruitment regarding preparing for careers industry post-PhD
 - ⇒ Tara Ryan, PhD tutor, on Science Pedagogy and how it relates to SLC tutors within their roles
 - ⇒ UL PSU on services and support that can be provided to PhD tutors throughout their studies
- The SLC received funding from DLSH to develop an online, self-paced 'Physics for Science Teachers' course to provide students on LM092 and LM096 with additional resources and support throughout the academic semester. So far, five online self-paced sessions worth of content (approx. 3hrs per session) have been created, and designed to increase access and widening participation for students on ITE programmes.



Our tutors enjoying a Christmas event