

## CUA Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LTA) Principles

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## Introduction

The CUA Learning, Teaching and Assessment Principles presented, was developed following development sessions with the Teaching and Learning leads in GMIT, IT Sligo and LYIT, consultation sessions with the CUA work group three, and academic council briefings on each site. The team was guided by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning Strategic Priorities in Ireland (see Section 2), the EUA EFFECT Principles for the enhancement of teaching and learning in higher education institutes in Europe (see Section 1) and the LTA strategies in place across the CUA institutes.

The CUA LTA Principles are focused on creating a quality driven environment for student centred learning. Student-centred learning, quality assurance (QA) and the development of the digital teaching and learning experience, are key elements of higher education in Europe today. There is also strong consensus on the need to further enhance accessibility and inclusion, and to provide a broader and more diversified educational experience. Enhancing the profile of teaching and innovative pedagogies, strengthening the link between education and research, promoting the use of digital technologies for teaching and learning, and communicating the overall importance of higher education for individuals and society: these topics and CUA LTA strategic initiatives are presented in Section 3.

### CUA Teaching and Learning Institute Leads:

Dr Carina Ginty (GMIT), Dr Joe English (LYIT) and Dr Niamh Plunkett and Gavin Clinch (IT Sligo).



## Section 1: EU EFFECT Principles

### EU Principles for the Enhancement of T&L in Higher Education (EUA EFFECT Project).

In order, to support the enhancement of learning and teaching in European higher education institutes and to inspire and facilitate ongoing exchange and cooperation in this field among universities and between national and European initiatives, a set of ten Principles for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching is proposed (see Figure 1). The Principles have been developed through discussion with a broad range of European higher education institutions and their representatives. They are non-prescriptive, cherish diversity of purpose, content and methods, commend other ongoing sectoral initiatives, and respect fully the fundamental tenets of institutional autonomy and academic freedom. They also promote the values of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and embrace the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

**Figure 1: Ten Principles for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning (T&L) in European Higher Education Institutes (HEI's)**

EU Principles Enhancement of T&L in HEI's (EUA EFFECT Project)
1. HE Learning experience nurtures and enables the development of learners as active and responsible citizens, critical thinkers, problem solvers, equipped for life-long learning.
2. Learning and teaching is learner-centred.
3. Commitment to learning and teaching is integral to the purpose, mission and strategy of the institute.
4. Institutional leadership actively promotes and enables the advancement of learning and teaching.
5. Learning and teaching is collaborative and collegial process involving collaboration across the institute and within the wider community.
6. Learning, teaching and research are interconnected and mutually enriching.
7. Teaching is core to academic practice and is respected as scholarly and professional.
8. The higher education institute community actively explores and cherishes a variety of approaches to learning and teaching that respect diversity of learners, stakeholders, and disciplines.
9. Sustainable resources and structures are required to support and enable learning and teaching enhancement.
10. Institutional QA for learning and teaching aims at enhancement and is a shared responsibility of staff and students.

These Principles underpin the need to re-emphasise the education mission of the university. They aim to serve institutional leaders working with staff, students, and external stakeholders to ensure the quality, relevance, and attractiveness of higher education. While the main responsibility for the design, implementation and continuous enhancement of learning and teaching resides with each university, national authorities also play an important role in providing frameworks that enable and support universities in their efforts. National and European policy makers, as well as other relevant stakeholders, are therefore also invited to consider these Principles in their work.

**The CUA have considered all the EFFECT principles for inclusion in the CUA LTA framework and aligned them with the National Forum strategic priorities and relevant CUA LTA strategic initiatives.**

**Source: EUA EFFECT Project 2018** (see <https://eua.eu/downloads/content/institutional%20strategies%20support%20package%20-%20principles%20-%20guiding%20questions.pdf>)

## Section 2: National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning Strategic Priorities

The National Forum (NF) strategy was developed following consultation across the sector from October to November 2018 (see Figure 2). Senior managers and individual staff from universities, institutes of technology and private colleges provided input through online consultation and through face-to-face meetings. Collective responses also were received from 20 groups/representative bodies.

A dedicated consultation with students across the sector, led by the National Forum's Student Associate Interns, ensured that the perspectives of over 1,100 students, collected through focus groups, open-forum consultations and online forums, helped to shape and inform the Strategy. Previous consultations with staff and senior managers across Irish higher education, as well as national reviews and research studies, also provided key insights to ensure the strategy was grounded in evidence and took cognisance of the experiences and drivers within and across institutional contexts. For further information visit [www.teachingandlearning.ie](http://www.teachingandlearning.ie)

The NF strategic priorities include: the professional development of all those who teach; developing teaching and learning in a digital world; enhancing teaching and learning within and across disciplines; and developing student success. **The CUA LTA Principles and collaborative LTA strategic activities align with the NF strategic priorities.**

**Figure 2: National Forum Strategic Priorities (2019-2021)**

### The Professional Development of All Those Who Teach

Promoting evidence-based, flexible, inclusive professional development for all those who teach, reflecting the contextual needs and drivers within and across higher education institutions

**PD Teach**

### Teaching and Learning in a Digital World

Supporting those who learn, teach, and support learning to embrace and harness the potential of digital technologies with the goal of enhancing learning, teaching, and overall digital capability

**T&L Digital**

### Teaching and Learning Enhancement Within and Across Disciplines

Recognising that disciplines are a key unit of change in higher education, with a focus on disciplinary excellence in learning, teaching and assessment

**T&L Discipline**

### Student Success

Developing a vision of success, in partnership with students, with the aim of providing all students with the opportunity to fulfill their potential and become creators of new knowledge who are community engaged, ethically conscious, professionally competent and equipped to flourish in a global world

**Student Success**

**Table 1 CUA LTA Principles and Strategic Initiatives**

CUA LTA Principles Adapted from the European EFFECT Principles for the Enhancement of Learning & Teaching in European Higher Education Institutes.	National Forum T&L Strategic Enablers	CUA LTA Strategic Initiatives aligned to the LTA Principles and National Forum Strategic Priorities	Timing
<b>1. HE learning and teaching experience nurtures and enables the development of ALL learners and stakeholders as active and responsible citizens, critical thinkers, problem solvers, equipped for life-long learning.</b>	Student Success PD Teach	1. Offer a Micro-credential for CUA academic community on the PDF Portfolio (L9 award developed in GMIT) to enable engagement with the National Professional Development Framework (NPDF) Five Domains.  2. INDEx Digital Student & Staff Experience Survey – Produce CUA Report	Piloting in GMIT 2020 – CUA rollout 2021-23 2020 + 2023
<b>2. Learning, teaching &amp; assessment is learner-centred.</b>	T&L Discipline Student Success T&L Digital	3. Set up a project titled Re-imagining Assessment in the CUA (i.e. managing feedback, assessment strategies, integrated approaches etc.) building on the T&L GMIT CPD Online Clinics & Resources Initiative.  4. Build on the IT Sligo Universal Design for Learning (UDL) NF funded project (2020) to rollout across the CUA sites.  5. PROGRESS Project (LYIT) aims to develop an evidence-based professional development plan for all teaching staff to support student engagement. Roll-out this PD student engagement survey on CUA sites.	2021/22 (NF fund)  2020-2022  2020-2022
<b>3. Commitment to learning and teaching is integral to the purpose, mission and strategy of the CUA.</b>	PD Teach T&L Digital T&L Discipline Student Success	6. HE Manager/EB Briefings and Discovery Tool: Conduct CUA LTA initiative briefing sessions and engagement with the Digital Discovery Tool with EB/Mgt groups on each CUA site. Outputs feed into a digital dashboard that will determine the resources required on the HE Manager Learning Pathway on iNOTE/DigitalEd.ie platform.	2021-22
<b>4. Institutional leadership actively promotes and enables the advancement of learning and teaching and student success.</b>	PD Teach Student Success T&L Digital	7. Executive Board leaders on each CUA site engage with LTA leads on each CUA site to promote engagement with the CUA LTA initiatives across faculties and campuses through the following activities: - EB/ Mgt Groups engage with the DigitalEd HE Manager Pathway (iNOTE) and Forum. - Engagement with CUA LTA Forum Work Group as a key communications channel for LTA dialogue, development and advocating for the necessary interventions.	Ongoing  2021-23 Ongoing
<b>5. Learning and teaching is collaborative and collegial process involving collaboration across the CUA and within the wider community.</b>	PD Teach T&L Digital T&L Discipline Student Success	8. CUA iNOTE Project – building digital teaching and learning capabilities for staff (DigitalEd.ie).	2019-2022
<b>6. Learning, Teaching and research are interconnected and mutually enriching.</b>	T&L Discipline Student Success PD Teach	9. PRTC's development in the CUA and TU structured Masters programmes are vehicles to upskill relatively inexperienced PG research supervisors.	2020 and beyond
<b>7. Teaching is core to academic practice and is respected as scholarly and professional.</b>	PD Teach T&L Digital T&L Discipline Student Success	10. PG Cert. Diploma and MA Teaching and Learning programmes in the CUA + CPD opportunities on <a href="http://www.cpdlearnonline.ie">www.cpdlearnonline.ie</a> (CUA CPD Platform) and DigitalEd.ie CUA digital teaching and learning platform.	Ongoing
<b>8. The higher education institute community actively explores and cherishes</b>	PD Teach T&L Digital	11. HCI Project proposal CUA HigherEd 4.0 proposal with (GMIT, IT Sligo and LYIT) (value 12m euro project)	2020-2024

a variety of approaches to learning and teaching that respect diversity of learners, stakeholders, and disciplines.	T&L Discipline Student Success	CUA LTA Principles   Oct 2020	
9. Sustainable resources and structures are required to support and enable learning and teaching enhancement and student success.	Student Success T&L Disciplines T&L Digital	<p>12. Rollout the UNLOCK project (LYIT) to CUA sites to harness the potential of learning analytics to support student success using student engagement data (e.g. ISSE &amp; INDEx). Sharing of templates to analyse and interpret data at local level.</p> <p>13. Rollout of a Learning Analytics dashboard for the CUA (GMIT NF project 2020 and DALTAI project).</p> <p>14. CUA iNOTE Project – building digital teaching and learning capabilities (DigitalED.ie) and an online student services support model.</p> <p>15. Embedding the Student English Language Support Programme (IT Sligo) for all CUA students (note: this service covers all students for whom English is not a first language).</p> <p>16. Building on the CUA RPL My Experience Project by creating a regional RPL assessment service centre for promoting access to higher education (i.e. potential CUA HCI project fund).</p>	<p>Piloting 2020 – CUA rollout 2021/22</p> <p>CUA rollout 2021/22</p> <p>2019-2022</p> <p>2020/21</p> <p>HCI project 2021-2024</p>
10. Institutional QA for learning and teaching aims at enhancement and is a shared responsibility of staff and students.	PD Teach T&L Digital T&L Discipline Student Success	17. Linked projects/initiatives above iNOTE, UNLOCK, RPL My Experience.	Ongoing

**1. PDF Portfolio:** This 5 ECTS credits Level 9 module (GMIT) facilitates teaching staff to develop a Professional Development Framework (PDF) digital Portfolio aligned with the National Forum in Teaching and Learning Professional Development Framework (PDF). Through engagement with the PDF, participants become reflective practitioners in teaching. Participants are facilitated to construct a digital portfolio through a blended learning approach. The resulting digital portfolio provides evidence of professional critical thinking processes in teaching and learning under the five domains of the PDF including: personal development; professional identity and values; communication; knowledge and skills; digital capabilities.

**2. INDEX Survey** – Produce an Institute and CUA Report: This will provide baseline data for the iNOTE project on digital skills and it will serve as an impact evaluation tool post iNOTE. INDEX explores the perspectives of all staff who teach on the institutional digital environment and use of technology for teaching, learning and assessment. It identifies and highlights what makes a difference to students and staff who teach with respect to digital infrastructure, digital skills, digital tools, and digital literacy. The survey helps us gain a better understanding about students' digital experiences and expectations and provides a basis for future strategic decisions about digital initiatives and investments. In addition, it will enable the CUA to undertake some international benchmarking with other countries who have completed a similar survey (UK, Australia, New Zealand).

**3. Re-imagining Assessment in the CUA:** Building on COVID-19 online assessment experiences, an assessment guide resource and assessment and evaluation workshops delivered in GMIT. It is proposed a CUA T&L assessment webinar and workshop series runs across the CUA sites from 2021 for multi-disciplinary groups. The sessions will draw upon national and international experts on assessment including Dr Orna Farrell (DCU), Dr Tony Bates, Prof. Geraldine O'Neill (UCD) and Dr Naomi Winstone (Naomi is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and the Director of the University of Surrey Assessment and Learning Lab).

**4. UDL Project:** An Effective Institutional Approach to Teaching, Learning & Assessment through a Universal Design for Learning Lens. In 2021 HEA funding for students with disabilities will be aligned with HEI compliance with UDL. Employing a resource to work with and support staff across the college to build greater capacity to design their curriculum and teaching practices to ensure a good student experience and robust academic standards is a key step in reducing retention. This collaborative and interdisciplinary project will enrich the academic knowledge within pedagogy. More specifically the findings will add to the theoretical discourse of how accessibility can be facilitated through UDL. It is projected that on completion, this project will be extended across the CUA to include GMIT & LyIT facilitated through National Forum Funding and building on the experiences and outcomes at IT Sligo.

**5. PROGRESS Project:** PROGRESS [Professional Growth for Equity, Sustainability and Success] project [LyIT] aims to develop an evidence-based professional development plan for all teaching staff to support student engagement which can be adopted and adapted across all Higher Education Institutions. The overall aim of this planning model is to create sustainable pathways and equity of access to career growth opportunities for HEI staff. Equally important is that the professional development of staff is informed by and also impacts positively on students' experiences of success.

**6. Higher Education (HE) Manager/Executive Board (EB) Briefings and Digital Discovery Tool:** CUA LTA initiative briefing sessions and engagement with the Digital Discovery Tool with EB/Mgt groups on each CUA site. Outputs feed into a digital dashboard that will determine the resources required on the HE Manager Learning Pathway on iNOTE/DigitalEd.ie platform.



**7. Executive Board leaders** on each CUA site engage with LTA leads to promote engagement with the CUA LTA initiatives across faculties and campuses through the following activities:

- EB/Management Groups engage with the DigitalEd HE Manager Pathway (iNOTE) and Forum.
- Engagement with CUA LTA Forum Work Group as a key communications channel for LTA dialogue, development and advocating for the necessary interventions.

**8. & 14. CUA iNOTE Project and engagement with DigitalEd.ie programme for all CUA staff:** The CUA, HEA Innovation in Teaching and Learning award (2019-2022) is building digital capabilities in the region. The iNOTE project provides opportunities to transform the higher education experience in the CUA institutes. The project includes five work packages:

Work Package 1: The development of quality assurance policies and procedures to enable digital learning (Project Lead Letterkenny IT, Dr Simon Stephens)

Work Package 2: The development of a digital teaching and learning training programme and online education courses for all staff to build digital capabilities and pedagogic expertise, in order to design, deliver and support flexible, distance and e-learning programmes. This work package includes consultation and mentoring from an international partner (NY State University/SUNY) with a focus on replicating best online and flexible delivery practice. (Project Lead GMIT, Dr Carina Ginty)

Work Package 3: The development of an online learning student support services model. (Project Lead IT Sligo, Prof. Jacqueline McCormack)

Work Package 4: Design and development of three online learning programmes in Galway-Mayo, Sligo and Letterkenny.

Work Package 5: Evaluation and dissemination of all project outputs across the CUA.

DigitalEd.ie is a major output from Work Package 2. DigitalEd.ie is a Digital Teaching and Learning education platform, providing access to digital learning pathways, a discovery tool, digital stories, a digital resources directory, a digital champions network and a digital education forum available to all CUA staff to collaborate on developing teaching and learning. The site provides a gateway to help CUA staff build digital capabilities and pedagogic expertise, to design, deliver and support flexible and online learning programmes. This initiative is led by GMIT Teaching and Learning Office.

9. Developing a range of **digitally enhanced student supports** for those undertaking programmes through flexible delivery (iNOTE Work Package 3 Project) e.g. online student counselling service (SilverCloud), Studiosity, Being Well Living Well online Course, Academic Success, Online Student Advisors/Mentors and more.

10. **PRTCs development in the CUA and TU structured Masters programmes** are vehicles to upskill relatively inexperienced PG research supervisors. CUA Postgraduate Research Training Centres (PRTCs) are intended to stimulate cross-institutional collaboration within the CUA, and with the CUA's external stakeholders. Coupled with other institutional and cross-institutional supports PRTCs will help accelerate the CUA's achievement of the research-related TU designation criteria, and demonstrate the effective functioning of the CUA as a TU.

11. **Certificate, Diploma and MA Teaching and Learning programmes in the CUA + CPD opportunities on [www.cpdlearnonline.ie](http://www.cpdlearnonline.ie) (CUA CPD Platform).** A suite of programmes has been designed for applicants who would like to gain a formal qualification in teaching and learning in Higher Education. A flexible, blended learning professional development pathway is open to all lecturers in the CUA to develop teaching, learning, assessment, and education science research. In addition, an



open online learning platform at [www.cpdlearnonline.ie](http://www.cpdlearnonline.ie) is open to all staff in the CUA to build teaching, learning, assessment, student engagement and digital capabilities. The platform is managed by GMIT Teaching and Learning Office and contributions come from colleagues across the CUA.

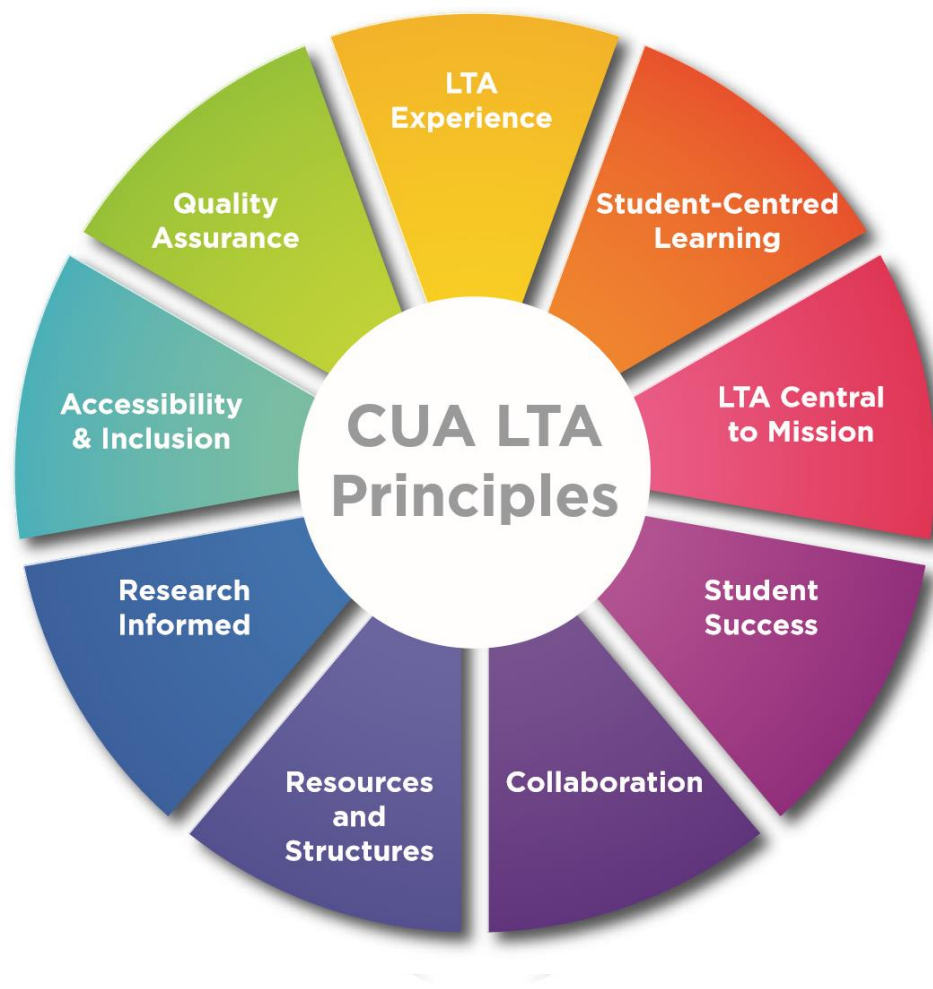
12. **HCI, CUA HigherEd 4.0** is a 12 m euro HCI funded project called, enabling agile responsiveness from higher education. This project will build a regional Recognised Prior Learning (RPL) assessment and careers service centre for promoting access to higher education and it will engage employers and lifelong learners. The project maps out a vision for the future of the agility of higher education in responding to the needs of individuals and employers, and the funding will be used to establish the systems and the capacity required to deliver flexible and highly innovative higher education opportunities.

13. **UNLOCK Project: UNLOCK [Unlocking Learning Analytics through Student Engagement]** project (LyIT) aims to harness the potential of learning analytics to support student success using student engagement data from surveys including StudentSurvey.ie (ISSE) and the Irish National Digital Survey (INDEx). Recurrent and key themes will form the basis of staff-student focus groups tasked with co-designing Unlock initiatives supporting student success.

15. **Learning Analytics Project:** This capacity building project aims to create accessible learning analytics for lecturers and to enhance learning in Higher Education. This project will maximise and drive GMIT's Data for Enhanced Student Success Policy through digital transformation of learning and the approach can be replicated across the CUA sites. It will pilot a dashboard interface for learner analytics and quantitatively evaluate the impact of the use of analytics and feedback on staff and student (full-time and online) engagement. This project is building on research conducted in the School of Science and Computing from 2019 on harnessing learning data to provide personalised feedback forms and the improvement of assessment design through learning analytics. It will automate existing processes to make them accessible and scalable across the institute and shareable with CUA institutes.

16. **Online English Language Support Programme:** The aim of this multi-campus project is to provide IT Sligo, LyIT and GMIT international students (or all students for whom English is not their first language) with high quality online English language support that includes live online lectures, online video lessons and tests. The Course Tutor will use a suite of diverse software programmes to deliver a user-friendly but content rich student experience. Each student will be treated individually and can work at their own pace and level. The project will critically evaluate the effectiveness of the programme on students' English language skill development and support, not only from an academic perspective but also from a personal language skills development in the 'real' world.

17. **RPL My Experience Toolkit:** The My Experience RPL Initiative was established in 2013 with a group of teaching and learning partners across the CUA sites. It is the first and longest running established CUA collaborative project. The My Experience RPL assessment toolkit has gained national and international recognition from the QQI in Ireland and the EU Commission and CEDEFOP. The RPL toolkit supports and facilitates Irish or international applicants in applying for RPL to gain entry onto a programme or seek exemptions from parts of a programme. In 2015, the team released version 1 of the My Experience RPL Toolkit including: a RPL online portfolio assessment tool built on Moodle; an RPL information website for candidates at [www.myexperience.ie](http://www.myexperience.ie); an online course on RPL Skills for higher education staff available at [www.cpdlearnonline.ie](http://www.cpdlearnonline.ie); and a level 9, 10 ECTS teaching development module aimed at RPL assessors and mentors (an elective/minor award from the Diploma and MA in Teaching & Learning at GMIT). The RPL Portfolio assessment tool is now on Version 3 and since launching the online assessment tool over 500 RPL applicants have built an ePortfolio RPL application online. **The CUA will build on this initiative in the HigherEd4.0 HCI funded project planned.**



## Conclusion

This document outlines the CUA LTA principles and it is guided by the LTA strategies in place across each institute, the EU EFFECT principles, and the National Forum strategic enablers. The collaborative CUA LTA related strategic initiatives are focused on creating a quality driven environment for student centred learning.

In summary, student-centred learning, accessibility and inclusion, quality assurance (QA), research informed teaching, and the development of the digital teaching and learning experience, are key elements of higher education in Europe today. Enhancing the profile of teaching and innovative pedagogies, strengthening the link between education and research, promoting the use of digital technologies for teaching and learning, and communicating the overall importance of higher education for individuals and society, are key priorities for the CUA.

Figure 3: CUA Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LTA) Principles

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