



Application for Community-Based Research Projects 2012-13

Introduction

The DIT Programme for Students Learning With Communities supports staff and students engaging in community-based learning and research (also known as service-learning), and builds links with communities.

Students Learning With Communities involves DIT staff and/or students working with community partners (local groups, not-for-profit organisations, etc) to develop real-life projects. Learning comes alive for the students as they work on these projects with real clients, using and developing their specialist subject skills. The community becomes part of the teaching process, and the students' work contributes to achieving community goals. These projects give all participants the opportunity to engage in critical thinking and to develop their social awareness. The Programme for Students Learning With Communities ultimately aims to energise participants to work for social change.

The Programme for Students Learning With Communities in DIT continuously collects research questions (that may have an applied dimension) from community partners who have a vision for research but lack the resources to do the research themselves. We then match these research questions with students who want to develop the specific skills to carry out this research. The student and community partner then work collaboratively on that piece of research (and its application). You will learn from the community about their strengths and needs, which will give you invaluable understanding of your possible future clients/employers. The project will also help you to develop your interpersonal skills and your ability to apply your theoretical learning to practical problems. The project forms part of your programme of study, and your work will be assessed as part of your course requirements.

Because of the practical nature of these projects and the fact that they are addressing a real issue raised by a community partner, we need to be assured that students are fully committed to carrying them through. So we ask interested students to go through an application process before a final decision will be made on the appropriateness of the student/community partner match.

Application Form

Student name: Geraldine Mc Cann
Course code and year: DT580 2nd Year 2013-2014
E-mail address: mccann.geraldine@gmail.com
Contact number: 0876129534
DIT lecturer/module: MSc in Applied eLearning
Community Research Topic you are interested in:

Can community education through the deliverance of a Digital Media Technology ePortfolio, bridge the gap between the transitions of further education to employment, from a tutor and students perspective?

Why would you like to work with a community partner on this project?

I have nine and a half years experience working with adult learners from a diverse range of cultural and socio-economic backgrounds for the CDETB. I have based my research proposal around community education. I feel it would be of great benefit to my research to be supported and guided by the experience of the community partners and to combine their skills and mine to develop and produce a research proposal that will be of significant importance to making changes in the deliverance of community education.

Name three strengths/skills that you would bring to this project?

1. Experience and background knowledge of the research proposal subject
2. Commitment and hard work
3. Technology related skills in the subject matter, which has allowed me to develop my research proposal from this point onwards and will allow me to share my skills with other community partners.

What three limitations are you bringing to this project, and how could you work on them as part of the project?

1. Participants that I have asked for their consent to partake of their own free will in my research proposal, my concern would be if some of them decide to drop out of the research. This is why I have encompassed my research question to include students and tutors to help assist in achieving blended qualitative data from different perspectives.
2. I would have concerns about my academic writing skills. Over the last year since enrolling on the MSc I can see how my writing skills have improved immensely. By reviewing previous work that I had submitted. Taking on board the advice and guidance from both my lecturers and peer review to implement and develop my academic writing skills in my area of expertise. To acquire additional reading and research skills by using online journals, books, reports etc. to improve my writing skills and keep a reflective journal.
3. I can work too hard, which in turn leaves me to work on autopilot where I can be totally emerged in my work and complete the work in hand, but as a result I would get very little sleep. By reflecting on my work ethic, I have learned to complete the tasks in hand over a longer period of time

which allows me to get some sleep and still achieve deadlines of work and assignments.

A community partner will dedicate a lot of time to work with you on this project. So that we can understand how you might return that commitment, can you give an example of when you previously demonstrated commitment?

Over the last three years I have been an Assistant Academic Lecturer of Information Technology Skills on the Mature Student Access Programme (MSAP) which started off with twenty five students per week in its first year under the umbrella of Community Links. For my first year lecturing on the MSAP I was employed part time. I was also employed by the CDVEC part time and worked in five different centres a week for community education. On my second and third year of working in DIT on the MSAP I was employed and worked full time hours, and the intake of students increased to one hundred and fifty students and also worked part time hours with the CDVEC. In total for my second and third year in DIT combined with the students of the CDVEC I had an average of two hundred students entrusted in my care for the academic year.

At the start of this year from January till August 2013 I was working four jobs delivering forty contact hours per week. During that time frame I was also studying part time on the MSc in year one. I met all of my deadlines and commitments both in work and college. My biggest commitment throughout 2012-2013 was planning my wedding and marrying my husband in December 2012.

Clear and open communication is central to a collaborative project. Can you give an example of when you previously demonstrated clear and open communication?

At present as part of my role as a tutor I have been asked to become an eChamp to provide eLearning training on virtual learning environments (VLE) to fellow staff and students. I provide clear and open communication through the deliverance of Lectures, Podcasts, webinars, questions and answers and email. I have also been asked to present a presentation at a teacher's conference in Brighton in November of this year as their Dublin based eChamp for the (ISC) and also in the subject areas in which I teach.

Have you discussed this project with your lecturer? Yes
If so, how do they feel about you doing this?

Dr Claire McAvinia is very supportive and has encouraged me in all areas of my research proposal. Dr Claire McAvinia is also my supervisor for the duration on my final year on the MSc. I had a meeting with Claire last week and we discussed linking in with community based learning and both agreed it would be of benefit to the development of my research proposal.

What would you like to be able to tell people about your project when it's finished?

On completion of my research proposal I would like to be able to answer my research question "Can community education through the deliverance of a Digital Media Technology ePortfolio, bridge the gap between the transitions of further education to employment, from a tutor and students perspective?" To be able to narrate the importance of community education, and encourage and support the students back into a social society using an educational environment that is safe and conducive for learning and aids breaking down the sociocultural barriers by developing the students' ability to interact with their peers, tutor, social media and the culture in which they live. To equip the learner with the knowledge, skill and competence to use a range of digital media technologies, in an online ePortfolio in a supervised environment, and to comprehend their uses, in an organisational perspective. It also aims enable progression for students to further education, training or supervised industry of employment.

Do you have any other relevant experience that we should be aware of?

In January of this year I joined the staff and students of the International Study Centre (ISC) for Bellerbys College. I teach Business Information Systems and Computing 1 to International Students as part of their International Foundation Year for Trinity and UCD. I have also been assigned as their eChamp to deliver virtual learning environments (VLE) training to students and staff.

I also teach community education in the Holy Family Parish Centre in Prussia Street, where I have worked for the last nine and a half years. I have taught in numerous educational environments over the years and community education has a huge place in my heart and has inspired me to become the tutor I am today. Working in disadvantaged areas of community education has given me a valuable insight to the importance of gaining an education both from the students and tutors perspective. I hope to relate my students learning journey as part of my research proposal to assist in the curation of an online ePortfolio, which will allow students and tutors to have a set of artefacts on Digital Media Technology 4N1858 as a template to implement in their own teaching and study.

Please give the name and details of 2 referees we can contact about this application - no more than 1 should be a DIT lecturer.

	Referee 1	Referee 2
Name	Dr Claire McAvinia	Celia Rafferty
Job title	Learning Development Officer	Adult Education Officer at CDETB
Company	DIT	CDETB
E-mail address	claire.mcavinia@dit.ie	celia.cdvec@gmail.com
Phone number	01 4027861	01 8623828/9

Would you be available to complete an interview with DIT staff from the Programme for Students Learning With Communities, and/or your community partner, to check your suitability for the project?

Yes

We will also ask you to come to a meeting (or meetings) with staff from Students Learning With Communities, your community partner and/or lecturer before this project starts. Are you available for such meetings (please see details of process below)?

Yes

We ask that if you run into any problems with this project that might prevent the agreed outcomes being achieved, you contact your lecturer, community partner, and/or Students Learning With Communities staff **immediately** so we can revise the plans for the project before it falls behind. Are you happy to agree to this?

Yes

Finally, we ask that you be professional in all your dealings with the community partner, and be careful of your own safety and those of others you meet during the course of this project. We ask that you and your lecturer complete a risk assessment form for this project (template form is available on our website) before starting the project. Do you agree to do this?

Yes. Note I have submitted my ethics forms to the Research Ethics Committee which meet on 10 October 2013. If I have to complete any additional forms please let me know.

If you are working with children or vulnerable adults you will be required to consent to Garda vetting, and you may be required to complete the Garda vetting process before starting work. Do you consent to Garda vetting?

Yes

As well as handing in your thesis/product for assessment you must also give a copy of your thesis/design/product (or another appropriate format of results) to Students Learning With Communities staff and also to your community partner. Do you agree to do this?

Yes

We would like to publish your work on our webpage (www.communitylinks.ie/slwc) and in other relevant media, subject to quality approval by your lecturer/community partner. Do you agree to this?

Yes

Please return this form by e-mail to slwc@dit.ie and copy it to your academic supervisor.

We will notify you shortly of the next step in your application process, which may be an interview or a meeting with your lecturer/community partner.

Thanks very much for your interest in this project.



Process for Community-Based Research Projects 2012-13

1. Student to complete application form and return to slwc@dit.ie
2. Student may be called to interview with DIT staff from the Programme for Students Learning With Communities, with or without the relevant community partners
3. Meeting between student, lecturer, and staff from Students Learning With Communities to discuss approach to community-based research, relevant DIT procedures, details of project and community group etc.
4. Meeting between student, lecturer, community partner and staff from Students Learning With Communities. This meeting will involve the following:
 - Community partner to give background to project and to organisation, and to clarify detail of project being proposed
 - All parties to agree realistic goals for the project within the agreed timeframe (bearing in mind the capabilities of the student and the learning outcomes of the module)
 - Lecturer to describe range of standard of work expected from pass level to first class honours, and explain technical aspects of the work.
 - Communications protocols to be agreed (contact details exchanged, agreement as to how often regular communication should take place etc)
 - Deliverables/milestones to be agreed with a timetable for these. If these can't be agreed on the day, a date will be agreed by which the student will send the full list of deliverables/milestones to the lecturer and community partner.

The project will then proceed under the guidance of the lecturer and community partner. Staff in Students Learning With Communities are available if there is any further support needed, or if there are any problems in the course of the project.

A final report on the project should be made available by the student to the Programme for Students Learning With Communities (in addition to those submitted to the community partner and academic supervisor) where it will be publicized, and held on file should a similar community request be received, so it can be of further use.