NAIRTL Grants Initiative Goes National

The National Academy is pleased to invite applications for financial support for research activities and projects that are relevant to our overall aims and objectives. These include, for example:

- support for graduate students, researchers and academic staff to implement and advance effective research-informed teaching and learning practices for diverse audiences
- curricular reform at undergraduate or postgraduate levels that facilitate a research orientation or inquiry led approach to learning
- research into teaching, learning and assessment practices
- the creation of tools and strategies to enable teaching staff to use and improve good practice in the integration of research, teaching and learning
- the creation of learning communities that promote, support and sustain the integration of research, teaching and learning
- the integration of research into the undergraduate learning experience
- comparative studies of institutional policy and practice (national and international levels)
- dissemination of research findings based on the integration of research, teaching and learning

Funding is available at either of two levels:

- Small grants of up to €5,000
- Larger grants of up to €20,000

It is envisaged that up to thirty small scale projects and eight large scale projects can be funded nationally. The linkages of research and teaching upon which this initiative is built are represented in the following paragraphs.

Excellence in Teaching Awards 2009

NAIRTL is pleased to invite nominations for the 2009 National Awards Programme for Excellence in Teaching, honouring exemplary teachers and innovative researchers in Higher Education in Ireland.

Last year’s award ceremony was attended by Minister of State for Labour Affairs, Billy Kelleher, TD, and by a wide range of institutions and professional associations, such as Engineers Ireland. Award winner Professor Sylvia Draper of TCD gave a memorable short lecture using props to demonstrate why she continues to find chemistry an inspiring subject to teach.

The awards are intended to raise the profile of teaching and learning through recognition

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To find out more about the grants initiative visit www.nairtl.ie/funding and download the Guidelines and Application Form.
Meet the CELTs at their Galway Symposium

CELT is holding its 7th Annual Galway Symposium on Higher Education: Design for Learning: Curriculum & Assessment in Higher Education on June 11th and 12th. The Symposium will bring together speakers and workshop facilitators around a range of topics critical to the development of higher education programmes, courses and modules.

Topics include: the Bologna process and what it means in practice; the challenges of assessment in contemporary higher education; perspectives on the meaning of ‘curriculum’; issues in the design of materials and the learning environment/context. These topics will be addressed in parallel interactive workshop sessions and by keynote speakers:

• Prof Kathy Isaacs, University of Pisa
• Prof. Liz McDowell, head of the CETL for “Assessment for Learning”, University of Northumbria, Newcastle
• Prof Ferdinand Von Prondzynski, President of Dublin City University
• Dr. Kelly Coate, co-author of "Engaging the Curriculum in Higher Education", NUI Galway
• Dr. Janet Parker, Senior Research Fellow at the Open University, Editor in Chief of Arts and Humanities in Higher Education and Executive Editor of Teaching in Higher Education.
• Prof. Phil Race, Higher Educational Consultant, Leeds Met University.

Registration is at http://designforlearning.eventbrite.com/
Podcasts, announcements and pre-symposium discussion will be posted to http://ollscoil.blogspot.com
This event is being held in association with NAIRTL and Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT).

INMED conference tracks “changing times”

The National Academy sponsored the School of Medicine, UCC to host the second annual scientific meeting of the Irish Network of Medical Educators (INMED) at a two-day conference on February 5th and 6th 2009.

INMED seeks to enhance medical education on the island of Ireland by bringing together individuals and organisations with an interest in and responsibilities for medical and healthcare education. The theme of the 2009 meeting was “Changing Times”.

Professor Aíne Hyland described the work of the Points Commission. Dr Hamish Coate and Marita MacMahon Ball of the Australian Council for Educational Research outlined the evidence base supporting aptitude tests currently used, while Professor Fiona Patterson, City University London, provided an overview of entry and selection mechanisms. A review of the use of simulation in the education and accreditation of health care professionals was led by Dr Jean Ker, Dundee University.

WIT trains the trainers

WIT has just completed its annual staff development week (Feb 16-20). One day of this was devoted to Supervisor training. Four sessions were delivered by Professor Pam Denicolo, Dean of Graduate Studies, University of Reading and a council member of the UK Graduate Council. The four sessions were:

• The supervisory process
• Assisting your student to write up their dissertation
• Examining the thesis
• Issues for Heads of Department

All sessions were well attended and feedback was very positive.

Poster workshop at UCC

NAIRTL has worked with Irish Aid and UCC’s Applied Social Studies department (Dr Deirdre Horgan) on a project for first-year students of Early Child Development to learn about child abuse in India and raise awareness on the topic. Students researched the topic and had a videoconference with staff from the HOPE project’s Kolkata office. They also received a NAIRTL workshop on Powerpoint poster design. The posters will be displayed at the OMEP conference at the end of March and will utilise NAIRTL's display board.

Harvard and counselling

Dr Abigail Lipson, Director of the Bureau of Student Counsel at Harvard University, gave a lecture to UCC staff describing the free courses and workshops offered to students at Harvard.

These include guided reading, time management, perfectionism, dissertation writing, and an ADD group. Recently she added a highly popular workshop called “Insanely Busy?” Dr Lipson’s staff also support peer tutoring, study groups and a wide range of other activities from their welcoming office on Harvard Square. The Bureau’s mission is to support students in their learning and growth to help them make the most of the university experience. Dr Lipson gave the last word to William Perry, the 1930s founder of the service: “People ask me how I can stand listening to students’ problems all day. I don’t listen to their problems. I listen to their courage”.

of teachers who make an outstanding impact on the student learning experience. The awards are open to the 38 Higher Education Institutions that participate in the free fees initiative. All levels or categories of staff are eligible, but applicants should not self-nominate. Nomination forms and further information are available at www.nairtl.ie/awards or contact NAIRTL to receive a printed brochure.

The deadline for submission of nominations is 22 May 2009. Nominations will be evaluated in June and July, and award winners will be notified in August.

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Enhancing support for research supervisors

The Graduates Studies Working Group of NAIRTL carried out a survey of postgraduate supervisors during February and March to gain insight into what supports could be offered. The survey was distributed to four partner institutes in 2009 and remained open for a month. Opinion was gathered from academic and research staff on their perceived key priorities in the development of a national framework to support academic supervisors of postgraduate students.

The majority (83%) of the 402 survey respondents were supervisors and academic staff members and had been involved in academia for more than 11 years. There was broad support for the provision of training and mentoring schemes for staff, as well as an interest from many respondents in attending a training session themselves. Respondents considered the following three training areas to be the highest priorities:

- writing the thesis and publications
- providing constructive criticism and fostering independence, and
- managing a research group.

Overall respondents indicated a high priority for a wide range of areas of training and support and further analysis will identify whether these training needs are discipline specific or general. A final report on the survey will be published in due course. To contribute to the continuing discussion in this area please visit NAIRTL’s Graduate Studies forum www.nairtl.ie/phpBB3.


Centre for Active Learning resources website

Mick Healey, Director of the Centre for Active Learning (CeAL) at the University of Gloucestershire, and a member of NAIRTL’s International Advisory Board, maintains a variety of useful materials at CeAL’s website. The University has recently changed its URLs supporting undergraduate research in the new university sector.

Among the books which can be downloaded for free are:

- Gold, J (1991) Teaching Geography in Higher Education
- Roberts, C R and Roberts, J (Eds) 2007 Greener by Degrees: Exploring Sustainability through Higher Education Curricula University of Gloucestershire, Geography Discipline Network and Centre for Active Learning

The website also has copies of slides and handouts from CeAL seminars and workshops by many international scholars.

Diary dates

8–9 May

The 3rd PALNET Symposium on Peer Supported Learning “Peer-Learning: Is it Good Academic Practice?” takes place in Trinity College Dublin on Friday evening 8th May and Saturday 9th May 2009. This event is jointly organized by Trinity College and University of Limerick. The Symposium focuses on the relationship between peer learning, academic practice and the transition to higher education. The Symposium is aimed at lecturing staff in higher education institutions, and at staff concerned with improving student learning, retention, integration as well as staff providing support for first-year students in student services and Centres for teaching and learning.

Registration is free of charge and programme details will be available shortly at www.palnetireland.com.

1 May 2009

Council Room, UCC, 1 pm–2 pm

Dr. Norma Ryan, UCC “Featuring quality assurance in the design of learning outcomes”

This seminar will feature a discussion on the European Standards and Guidelines for QA in Higher Education in Europe and how these might be applied at a local level.

Dr. Norma Ryan, a biochemist by discipline, has held the post of Director of Quality Promotion at University College Cork since its inception in 1999. As Director of Quality Promotion Dr. Ryan has led the development and implementation of quality assurance/quality improvement reviews in UCC, the second cycle of which have commenced.

Dr. Ryan is a member of the Irish Team of National Bologna Experts and has presented papers at many European conferences and seminars on the Bologna Process, focusing in particular on the quality initiatives and practices. She is the Chair of the Irish Higher Education Quality Network (IHEQN).

30 Sep 2009

Aula Maxima, UCC

Fourth Symposium in the series being organised by the NAIRTL Bologna Working Group members (Chair Dr Stephen Cassidy, CIT; other members Dr Norma Ryan, UCC; Professor Paul Ryan, NUIG; Paul Barry, WIT; Professor Biswajit Basu, TCD and Jennifer Murphy, NAIRTL). Details of this symposium will be confirmed at a later date.
Dr Kelly Coate (NUIG) provided some fascinating facts and figures on whether there is a requirement for research and teaching to be linked. Her talk concluded with the concept of slow academia (based on the slow food movement).

The final talk in this series was by Professor Robert Mathieu (Madison, USA) on using the integration of research, teaching and learning as a lever for institutional change.

The audience for these lunchtime lectures has been varied, including a core group of staff taking teaching and learning courses, and others attending one-off lectures with discipline-based queries and policy concerns.

### About NAIRTL

NAIRTL is funded by the HEA Strategic Initiatives Fund.

NAIRTL is located at the Distillery House, University College Cork. For details regarding any of our events or activities, please look at our website. Alternatively, you are always welcome to give us a call. If you would like to highlight a relevant research project or initiative in the National Academy newsletter or make any suggestions for future content, please email nairtl@ucc.ie

### Contact details

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Website: www.nairtl.ie and look for NAIRTL on Facebook too.

### Research-led Teaching Lecture series at UCC

Dr David Ryan, Dean of Graduate Studies, organised a series of lectures at UCC on Research-led Teaching, supported by NAIRTL. All the lectures were recorded and can be viewed on the NAIRTL website at www.nairtl.ie/rtl

The series began with a talk from Professor David Boud (Sydney) on research-led assessment and avoiding the contradictions of certification.

This was followed by Professor Andrea Nolan (Glasgow) on the development of research-minded attributes in graduates.

Dr Angela Brew gave an inspiring talk on improving undergraduate engagement through research and enquiry, and the importance of strategic policy on teaching and learning.

Dr Barbara Cambride (Alexandria, USA) spoke on E-portfolio Learning and the linkage of this technique to research.

Dr Bettie Higgs (UCC) spoke to a capacity audience on the topic of threshold concepts, adding in her own work on wormholes and relating these to different disciplines.

Dr Iain Mac Labhrainn (NUIG) gave an entertaining and authoritative tour of the evidence base for higher education policy, sharing data from his survey of staff at NUIG.

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### New staff members

Catherine O’Mahony is NAIRTL’s new Events Co-ordinator. Catherine is completing a PhD on broadening public participation in setting priorities for science, technology and innovation in Ireland. Catherine is involved in the Cork Science Café and is a director of Genetic Heritage Ireland.

Imogen Bertin has been appointed as NAIRTL’s Publications Officer. Imogen has previously worked with the Royal Society of Chemistry, Apple Computer and NTR, and has published widely on teleworking. She is a trustee of the Guillain-Barré Syndrome Support Group.