Intergenerational Learning Programme
Engagement, Innovation, Learning
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Sustained engagement with wider community

DCU Intergenerational Learning Programme began in 2008 to engage older people from the wider community and DCU students in teaching and learning together in a third level environment. It started with a small number of classes on Saturday mornings, where older people were joined by DCU student volunteers to learn basic ICT skills, and gradually evolved, through engagement and dialogue. To date, close to 600 older participants and 600 DCU students have taken part in ILP modules.

Through their participation in the Intergenerational Learning Programme, some learners have overcome fear of technology, and become proud participants in the digital world; some have gone on to join undergraduate degrees, and others have discovered a talent for writing. The DCU student volunteers came from various schools and disciplines, from the business school, nursing, science, computer science, languages, and they all comment on the benefits that they have personally derived from their participation in the programme.

We believe that the invaluable knowledge residing in our older population could and should be used to far greater effect to enhance teaching, learning and research in higher education for the benefit of all. Indeed the intergenerational modules have helped to create learning communities, where knowledge and experience are shared both ways. This innovative dialogical approach has thus created a space where both older learners and young DCU students engage in meaningful learning.

Exploring digital literacies

DCU ILP have been recipients of grants from the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources for the past 3 years, as part of the National Digital Strategy, in partnership with Age Action, NGI Galway and Duhallow and Natural Resources for the past 3 years, as part of the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources for the past 3 years. These funds have supported the delivery of innovative educational programmes to DCU students and older learners.

DCU ILP technology modules are run on an innovative model, with student volunteers acting as tutors and mentors.

Digital devices: As technological innovations continue at pace, topics and skills are added to our programme. Whereas our learners used to be coached in the use of a mouse, they are now owners of mobile technologies, and very much aware of new concepts and practices encountered on social media sites, from Facebook to Selfies.

Our pedagogical model of tutor, student mentors and older learners has similarly evolved, giving increased ownership of learning to both generations. The ILP has recently introduced new modules which concentrate on mobile devices, led and taught by our DCU students.

On the web: www.dcu.ie/ilp

Exploring new learning

 Collaboration with DCU schools/faculties
The Intergenerational Learning Programme has evolved to include many aspects of student learning. The programme engages older people with new technologies. DCU ILP technology modules are run on an innovative model, with student volunteers acting as tutors and mentors.

Mobile devices: As technological innovations continue at pace, topics and skills are added to our programme. Whereas our learners used to be coached in the use of a mouse, they are now owners of mobile technologies, and very much aware of new concepts and practices encountered on social media sites, from Facebook to Selfies.

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Sharing the past through photography

As part of an ongoing collaboration with Photoswings, an educational non-profit organisation, our DCU students and ILP participants have been exploring the past of the city through family photographs. The results will be part of a digital exhibition on the Photoswings website. This project, Homeplaces, will also link with Northampton University, where students are interviewing older Irish immigrants about their memories from home.

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Exploring creativity

 DCU ILP participants can explore creativity through music, writing or photography. Their works are showcased each month of May as part of Bealtaine. This year, readings and an exhibition of photographs will take place on campus on May 10th.

Lifewriting: The first semester of the Lifewriting module is an introduction to Lifewriting, with sessions on memories, ethics, and writing. Continuing Lifewriting delves deeper into memories and identity, as well as the reasons for writing lifeliters. Advanced Lifewriting: participants prepare their books of memoirs for publication.

Digital Photography: The Advanced Digital Photography module grew from an ICT module introducing digital photography. Its members have been exploring digital photography for three semesters, under the guidance of a DCUBS Masters student, who has since graduated yet comes back to DCU as a volunteer tutor. A selection of photographs will be exhibited on campus for Bealtaine.

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