

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, and in partnership with Age Action, NUI Galway and Duhallo in Cork. 600 older people have discovered internet skills thanks to DCU students acting as their mentors.

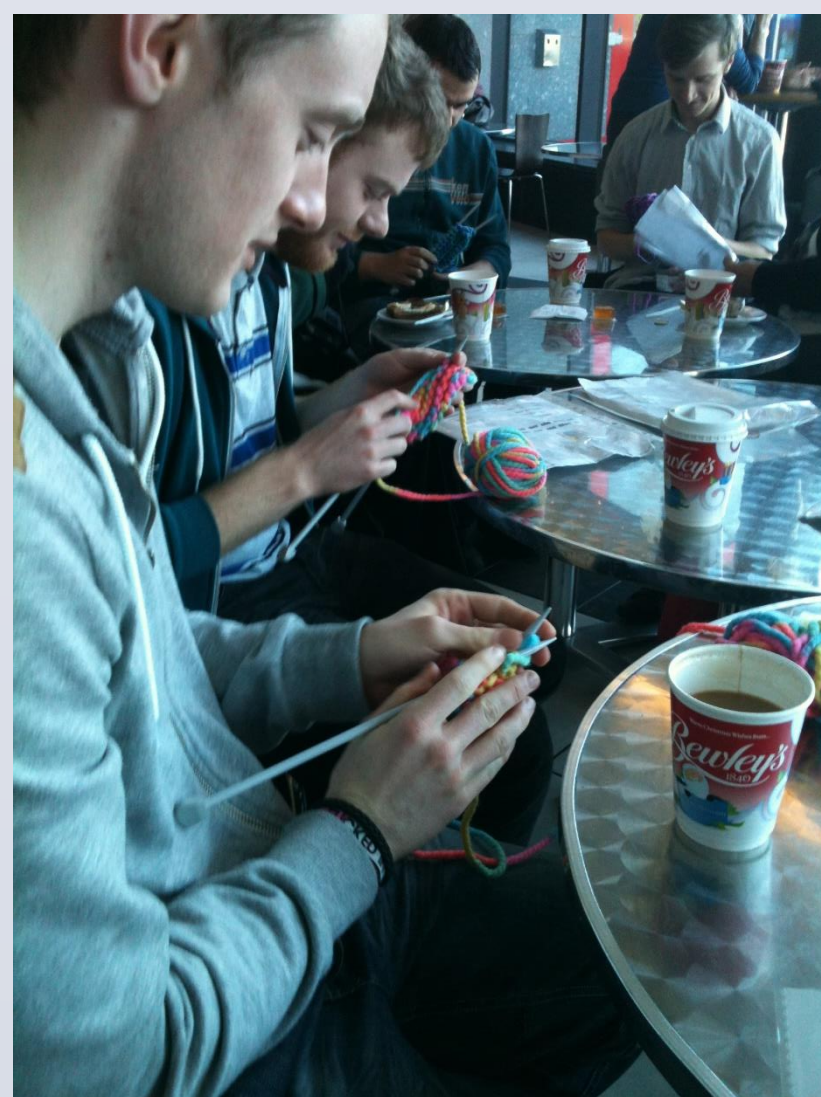
B4 programme: The programme engages older people with new technologies. DCU ILP's technology modules are run on an innovative model, with student volunteers acting as tutors and mentors.



ILP participants: DCU ILP caters for learners from 55 onwards; this year over 500 people engaged with the programme to discover digital literacies, from opening a browser to social media communication.

DCU students: Over 100 DCU students from all faculties volunteered to mentor our participants on weekdays and Saturday mornings.

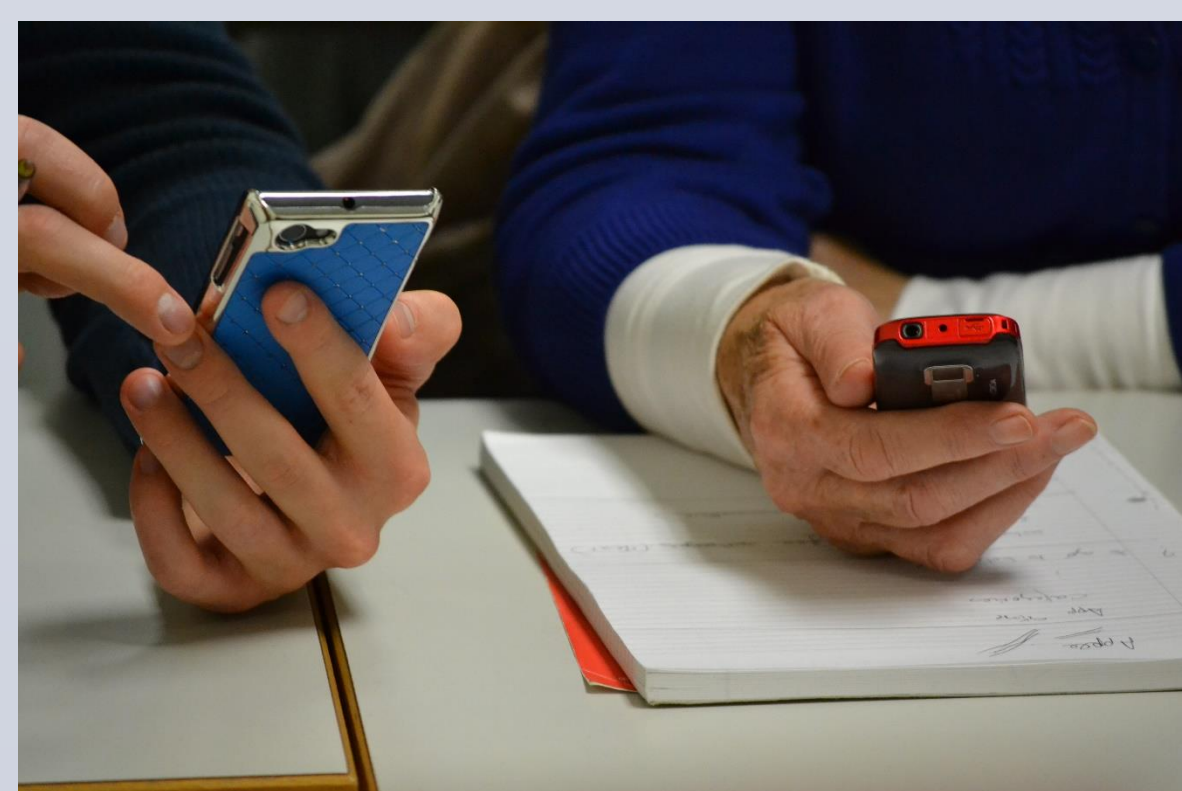
Reciprocal learning: Our model of intergenerational learning allows our older participants to engage in learning at third level, whilst also imparting their life skills. It allows our DCU students to experience mentoring and volunteering, whilst learning from the older generation.



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 Likes 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.

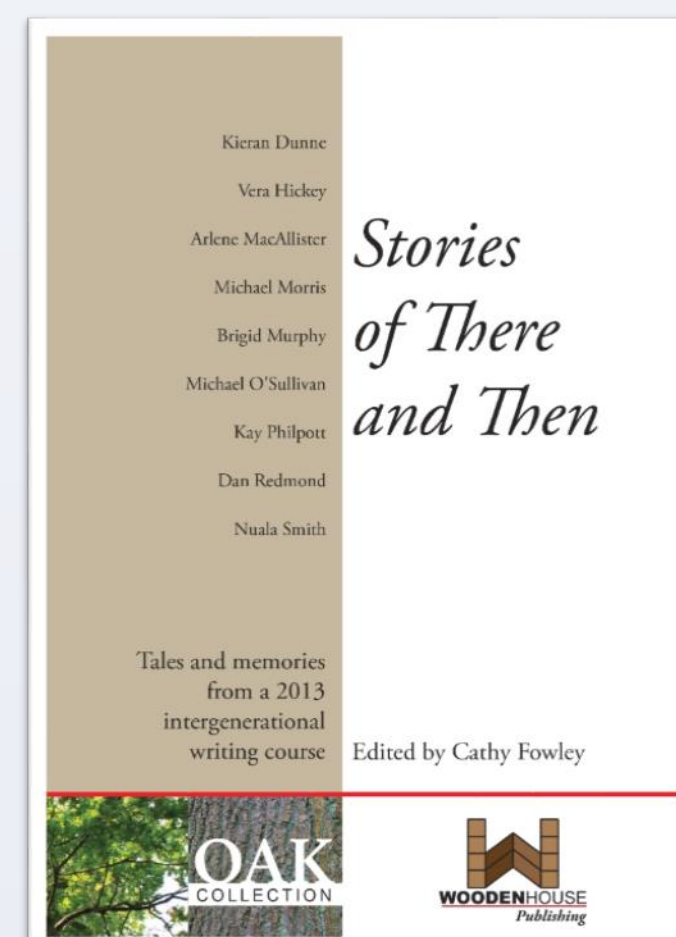


This (The DCU ILP) gives me a hunger for learning and questioning. Before, I would have been afraid to ask questions now I love asking questions even with my grandchildren, now I feel we are learning together... If I had one single regret it is that I haven't had this years ago. (ILP participant)

Taking part in the Intergenerational Learning Project has been one of the most rewarding PDS I have participated in... I believe it is an environment that creates mutual learning and in which everyone takes something from each class. (DCU student)

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.

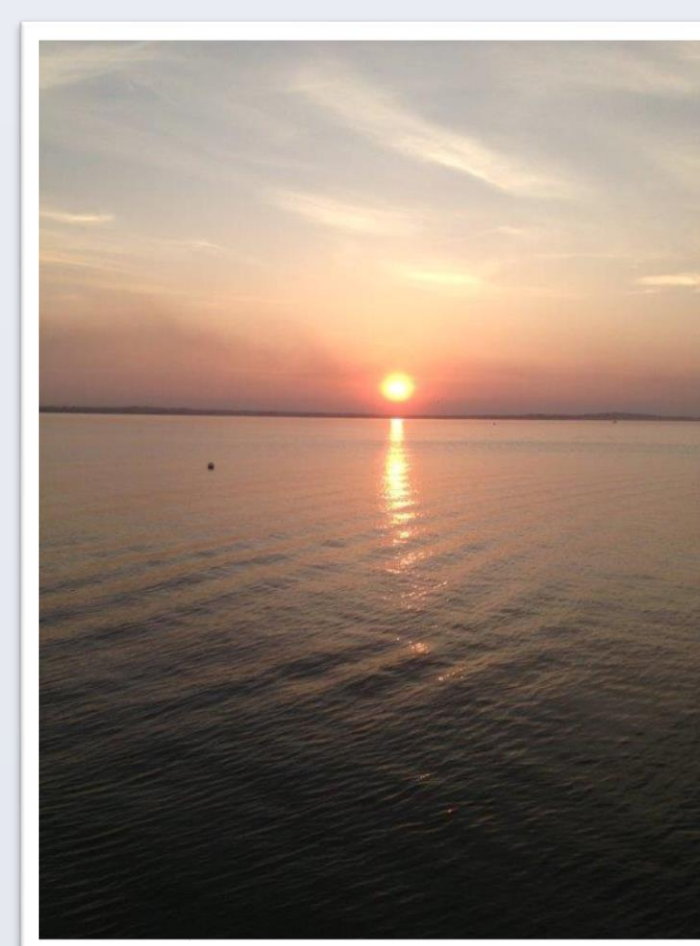


Lifewriting:

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 lifestories.

Advanced lifewriting: participants prepare their books of memoirs for publication.⁷

The first collection of stories from the participants' lives was published in September 2014 by Wooden House Publishing. The book was launched in DCU by author Mary Russell. The 2015 collection will be published in September 2015.



Digital Photography

The Advanced Digital Photography module grew from an ICT module introducing digital photography. Its members have now 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.

Exploring new learning

Collaboration with DCU schools/faculties

The Intergenerational Learning Programme has reached out to various schools and faculties in order to create modules which can introduce older learners to topics and concepts taught within the University. These modules typically run for 8 weeks; each week, a 2 hour session is presented by different lecturers, on a topic of their choice, which has been selected with ILP coordinators to fit in to the main theme of the module, and to be suitable for a varied audience of older participants. Each week participants are greeted by a member of the ILP and shown to a lecture room where the lecturer and subject matter is introduced.

Saturday morning sessions

The ICT modules are run on an innovative intergenerational model, involving ILP coordinators as mentors to groups of DCU students who design and deliver the modules with the help of volunteers students acting as one-on-one mentors to the older learners.

Sharing the past through photography



As part of an ongoing collaboration with Photowings, 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 Photowings website. This new project, Homeplaces, will also link with Northampton University, where students are interviewing older Irish immigrants about their memories from home.

