

Credne 1.1

Introduction

In a rapidly-changing, unscripted world, higher education institutions must reflect upon the competencies which their students will require in order to thrive.

The importance of creativity

As well as traditional, discipline-specific knowledge, there is a growing demand for graduates to develop and demonstrate a variety of **traversal competencies** – competencies which do not reside within any specific discipline and which are key to successful career mobility. **Among the most important of these competencies is creativity:** the ability to generate ideas and outputs which are perceived as both novel and valuable, or meaningful, within a given context. Given this, educators have an important role to play in creating a culture which fosters creativity, including modelling creative practices and behaviours, establishing conditions which promote creativity, and developing students' belief in their own creative potential and agency.

The ambitious goal of stimulating and promoting the full potential of both students and staff in higher education is at the core of the Credne project. This initiative aims to foster a culture of creativity in higher education, building the capacity of staff so that they have greater awareness about the nature of creativity, how it can be applied in their discipline, and how they can actively cultivate it in their students.

Creativity is the central force for transformation, the fuel for innovation, and essential to our individual and collective well-being. It is a resource that has underpinned human survival and development, and is key to our sustainable progress. Acknowledging the multidisciplinary

nature of creativity, the Credne project is based on the principle that **everyone has creative potential** which can be actively and meaningfully fostered. By creating a variety of digital resources, including **podcasts** with international scholars, **workshops** facilitated by experts from diverse disciplines, text-based **resources** which unpack the many components of creativity, **audio-visual** content that concisely encapsulates key content, and a wide array of **recommended reading** and other external resources, the Credne project seeks to cultivate creativity for both staff and students in higher education.

This handbook provides conceptual clarifications and insights, as well as specific tools to promote creativity in higher education. It is not, however, our desire to simply promote the idea that a set of fixed strategies can be used to enhance creativity. We would like to avoid the risk of having these insights used as a straitjacket by future generations of teachers: we want to stimulate and initiate a conversation regarding creative approaches, strengthening teachers' and students' own creative agency. **Creativity can be applied and fostered everywhere and in everyone, as long as it is supported by an ethos of openness and curiosity.**

It should be no surprise that we will collect ideas, theories and creative tools from a vast range of schools of thought, some of which may be rooted in different and even directly contrasting conceptualisation of creativity. This choice does not come from a lack of focus, nor should it be interpreted as a form of defeat in the face of the difficulty in defining creativity. On the contrary, it comes from the finding that creativity is contextual, and therefore prone to be interpreted, theorised and applied in sometimes radically different ways across time, cultures and disciplines. We embrace not the apparent (and misleading) assumption that creativity is hard to define, but rather the importance of its positionality. The literature on the subject shows that creativity behaves differently depending on the context. If it has been accepted that light behaves both as a wave and as a particle, we

should accept that creativity too might have similarly multifaceted qualities. This is the paradox of creativity.

Who is this handbook for?

Ignoranti quem portum petat, nullus suus ventus est.

If one does not know to what port they are steering, no wind is favourable to them. (Seneca. Epistolae, LXXI., 3.)

This handbook is for any higher education teaching practitioner, in any field or discipline, who is curious to explore and implement divergent pedagogical practices, in a way that is both innovative and effective. We are not merely providing strategies and tricks to spark creativity in the classroom; we hope instead to promote further reflections and to stimulate your own creativity in finding and implementing your own original ideas.

Although this handbook is primarily aimed at university teachers, it can also be consulted by teaching practitioners at any level, as well as by students.

The ideas we have collected here can be implemented during a tutorial, an online class, a workshop or interactive seminar, as well as in a lecture. They all represent simple starting points, the foundations of innovative practices.

Background

Across Europe, and beyond, we can witness a ferment in the educational policies and practices. At the university level, the focus is on building students' **critical thinking capacities**. And at all school levels there has been a move towards rethinking curricula. As well as providing traditional subject-specific knowledge, we need to equip students for work and learning throughout their lives. Learning has moved away from a mere reproduction of facts, and students are encouraged towards a more meaningful and

mindful understanding of the world in which they live, and provided with the key transversal skills to negotiate that world successfully.

With this in mind, DCU aims to provide a learning environment that allows students to create, explore, innovate and re-imagine. To succeed in this task, we need to look beyond cognitive learning, to build on **an ethos of openness that cherishes a multidisciplinary approach** in the search for new solutions to new – and old – problems. The task demands imagination, the involvement of feelings and emotion, and the creation of a space where there is room to experiment, cooperate, and explore.

Education that appeals to students' strengths and builds on their interests is more likely to create well-being and the foundations of a life-long willingness to learn and innovate. This in turn will better equip them with the skills, resilience and knowledge to tackle the dynamics of our changing society.

Credne: what's in a name?

Credne isn't an acronym or an abbreviation, but you can use it to make your own one if you want. Here are a few possible components to start with: *creativity, design, newness*. You can do the rest yourself – be creative!

Credne actually takes its name from Irish mythology. **The original Credne was one of the three artisans of the Tuatha Dé Danann**, and, by some reckonings, a god of creativity and the arts. He teamed up with the physician (or god of healing) Dian Cécht to make a prosthetic silver arm for the wounded King Nuada – a nice early example of creative interdisciplinary collaboration with a novel and valuable outcome!

Credne is pronounced "CRANE-ya" (the modern spelling would be "Creidhne"), but you can say it any way you want.