NATIONAL FORUM FOCUSED RESEARCH PROJECTS 2014 - CALL FOR PROPOSALS

The National Forum seeks research proposals from individuals/groups from a single institution or across institutions to carry out defined pieces of research as set out below. These projects may be of particular interest to individuals/groups who may have completed research on similar or allied topics in the area or who are currently actively involved in such research.

Research Focused Projects

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<th>Focused Research Project NO:</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Broad Research Questions to be addressed</th>
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| 1                           | TEACHING FOR TRANSITIONS  
A review of teaching for transitions-related teaching and learning activity and research | What scholarly and developmental work in Ireland has been carried out in the realm of teaching for transitions in Irish higher education?  
How can this knowledge base be utilised effectively across the sector to enhance learner transitions in Irish Higher Education? |
| 2                           | TRANSITION FROM SECOND LEVEL AND FURTHER EDUCATION TO THIRD LEVEL  
A review of the ways in which students are best prepared to participate successfully in higher education and to make the transition from second and/or further education to a higher education learning context | To what extent have early higher education students been equipped with the skills, competencies and orientations they need to succeed in Irish Higher Education?  
The study of higher education students would focus on their views on the differences in T&L between the two levels and on how well their second level experience prepared them for effective engagement with higher education. |
| 3                           | STUDENT NON-COMPLETION  
An analysis of existing qualitative data relating to non-completion among Irish Higher Education students | Why do students leave higher education?  
NOTE: This project will give rise to a report that will bring together the qualitative research on non-progression and non-completion of students in Irish higher education, drawing from existing available data. |
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<th>data throughout the sector.</th>
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| **4** | **ICT RETENTION**  
A review of the impact of retention interventions focused on students in ICT related areas of study | What constitutes good practice on retention of ICT students at NFQ levels 6-9? |
| **5** | **A CURRENT OVERVIEW OF RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL) IN IRISH HIGHER EDUCATION**  
What are the current policies, frameworks and processes that are used to support the recognition of learning; formal, informal, accredited and experiential?  
How can these current policies become more coherent and consistent across the higher education sector in Ireland? |   |
| **6** | **EXISTING RESEARCH OUTPUT FOCUSED ON HIGHER EDUCATION TEACHING AND LEARNING IN IRELAND**  
What is the scope, level, and focus of existing research in higher education teaching and learning that has taken place in Ireland both across and within disciplines that is in the public domain?  
How can this knowledge base be integrated and developed to enhance the impact of scholarship in teaching and learning in Ireland and internationally? |   |
| **7** | **LEARNING RESOURCES AND OPEN ACCESS**  
How can digital learning resources be utilised, maintained and developed in order to enhance teaching and learning in Irish Higher Education?  
What are the different models for the reuse of learning objects?  
How can the digital resources be effectively utilised in an open access environment. |   |

**DURATION AND BUDGET**

- All projects are of 6 months duration (All project must be completed by May 2015)
- Budget allocation for each individual project is €25,000
- Selected project teams will be required to work actively and in partnership with the National Forum. This will include attendance at the National Forum research project seminar (see details below), sharing and presenting results of research at key national events (seminars, conference, webinars etc.). Project teams will also be required to submit ethics forms to a Forum committee for ethical clearance.
Successful project teams will share initial interim results such as materials used in presentations and draft papers with the Forum Board, as well as their final reports. The results of these research projects will be made available to the entire sector. Researchers from both public and private higher education institutions are eligible to apply and will be judged on the same criteria.

**PROPOSAL: REQUIREMENTS**

Teams can submit more than one proposal, but each must be separate and focus on only one of the above projects.

Applicants should describe their proposed project sufficiently to allow reviewers to determine its feasibility and potential impact on policy and practice in enhancing teaching and learning in higher education. The proposal should show how it will deliver on its objectives within the defined time frame and budgetary limits. Proposers should provide evidence of their ability to complete the project by describing their research background, track record and achievements to date and include a letter of support from their institutions. This letter of support should clearly identify the ways in which the institutions aims to facilitate the team members to carry out the research and should also highlight how the institutions’ own strategic objectives demonstrate a particular focus on the research area.

Proposals should be no more than 1500 words, in 12 point font double-spaced, and should include the following:

- An outline of the research plan and brief description of proposed methodology,
- A budget narrative,
- An explanation of the availability of data to be used.
- CVs from the research leader and all proposed team members, (outside word limit)
- A letter of support from all relevant institutions. (outside word limit)

Proposals should be emailed to info@teachingandlearning.ie by 5pm on 17th October 2014 for consideration by 30th October 2014.

**Evaluation criteria:**

Proposals will be judged based on:

1. The track record of the members of the project team – with a particular focus on the combination of research and practice in relevant areas of teaching and learning enhancement
2. Focus and quality of the research proposal in terms of approach and methodology including the clarity of understanding of the nature and breadth of data and sources of evidence that the proposal intends to draw upon

3. Strategic alignment of research focus with institutions’ objectives and the level and quality of institutional support

4. Overall potential of the proposed research to give rise to a substantial impact on enhancing teaching and learning in higher education

5. Appropriateness of proposed budget expenditure plan

ALL SUCCESSFUL PROPOSAL TEAMS WILL AT THE INITIAL STAGES OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS BE REQUIRED TO ATTEND A TWO-DAY SEMINAR WITH A FOCUS ON CREATING STRONG LINKS BETWEEN RESEARCH TEAMS, CLARIFYING THE BOUNDARIES AND CONNECTIONS BETWEEN ALL PROJECTS, ENSURING THAT DATA, WHERE RELEVANT IS SHARED ACROSS RESEARCH GROUPS AND AVOIDANCE OF DUPLICATION OF EFFORT AT ALL STAGES IN THE RESEARCH PROCESS.

Situating the research focused projects within the Work plan of the National Forum

Through supporting and facilitating these focused research projects, the Forum aims to develop a set of research partnerships across the sector combining practitioners and researchers in a way that aims to give rise to research output that can speedily inform and guide practice on the ground. Institutions that have already demonstrated a strategic, institutionally-focused interest in the areas outlined are encouraged to collaborate with researchers across the sector in order to create teams that combine expertise in research and in practice.
Appendix 1 DETAILED PROPOSAL OUTLINE

1. Background, key definitions and relevant existing research and literature from which this project will draw.

2. Existing data bases and data sets that the study will access

3. New data required as part of this study

4. Key definition and concepts central to this study

5. Research methodology, nature and limitations of the study, including design and specific research procedures

6. Project schedule, key project management timelines (including the seeking and securing of ethical clearance (This will be facilitated through the National Forum Ethics Board)

7. Project team profiles, bios and research areas, experience and output.

8. Planned structure, length and proposed sections of the final research report.

9. Availability of team members to attend two-day workshop in advance of research start dates

September 22nd 2014