

Note: Call Ended on 28 October 2016

IRC: Research for Policy & Society Programme

Strand Name:

Enabling Technology-Enhanced Assessment OF/FOR/AS Learning in Higher Education: The Evidence

Partner: National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (National Forum)

Introduction

The *National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (National Forum)* supports the enhancement of teaching and learning in the Irish higher education sector. Key aspects that contribute to enhancement in the sector are in assessment and the role and use of technology.

Technology's role in the learning environment has been emphasised in recent European and national policies. In 2014, the European Commission stated that the '*integration of new technologies and pedagogies needs to be placed at the heart of institutions' teaching and learning strategies, and they should become an integral component of everyday institutional business*' ([European Commission](#), 2014. p. 27). The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (Hunt Report) maintains that higher education students of the future should have an excellent teaching and learning experience, informed by up-to-date research and facilitated by a high-quality learning environment, with state-of-the-art learning resources and e-learning facilities. Students should be facilitated to develop the generic skills needed for effective engagement in society and in the workplace ([Department of Education and Skills, 2011](#)).

In 2015, following an extensive national consultation process, the National Forum launched a national [Digital Roadmap](#) which set out some key priorities for the sector including:

- Prioritise the development across the sector of high-impact practices that leverage the potential of digital technologies to support student learning and substantially contribute to evidencing pedagogical excellence (p49)
- The barriers to the development, acquisition and application of digital skills and knowledge among academic staff and students need to be addressed and the relevant structures to actively support such development need to be put in place (p43).

The current [National Forum's assessment enhancement theme \(2016-2018\)](#), launched in December 2015, aims to explore the sector's understanding and implementation of assessment of, for and as learning. In particular, the aim of the theme is to consider the interplay between ideal assessment practices, actual assessment practices in operation and the mediating role of institutional policy and regulatory processes to understanding the push/pull factors for assessment practice change and development.

Study

The intended focus of this study is an evidence-based exploration of how technology can be used effectively and efficiently for assessment of/for/as learning across the Irish higher education sector. In particular, the study should investigate and make recommendations on questions identified during the earlier consultation with the sector regarding assessment, i.e.

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- How can technology enhance staff efficiencies in the assessment OF/FOR/AS learning process?
- What approaches could address staff concerns on the issue of student plagiarism that are often associated with technology-enhanced assessment of learning?
- What models of assessment design can assist staff to harness the potential of technology to enhance student learning?
- What types of learning environments do institutions need to provide to support technology-enhanced assessment OF/FOR/AS learning?
- What exemplars of good practice of technology-enhanced assessment OF/FOR/AS learning (Irish and international case studies) can be identified to support staff assessing higher order thinking, i.e. critical and creative thinking?

Requirements and Scope

The investigation should consider international as well as national developments in technology-enhanced assessment. At a national level, its results should be representative of the cross-section of institutions within the Irish higher education sector, i.e. universities, institutes of technology, HECA, colleges of education. It is important to note that the main focus of the study is to gain a deeper understanding of existing evidence (literature and best practice) and the creation of any primary data should only be conducted with a view to complementing this focus.

This research project should draw on and complement the existing and current research and projects of the National Forum. In particular, it needs to align closely with the Assessment Enhancement Theme’s research activities and draw on the findings of the Profiling of Assessment of/for/as Learning across Disciplines study. Reports should provide considerations, based on research evidence, for implementing recommendations pertaining to aspects such as: national and/or institutional policies/procedures; strategic, discipline and/or individual assessment practices and policies. In addition, where relevant, they should identify case studies of good practice.

Outputs and Liaison

The successful awardees will be expected to consult and work regularly with the National Forum. To this end:

- A specified contact person will be nominated by the National Forum.
- The successful awardee will be provided with a schedule of meetings, interim reports and final outputs required by the National Forum as part of the award contract.
- The National Forum must be invited to participate in or provide a nominee to any steering or advisory structure being convened to support the research project.
- Liaison on proposed publications and dissemination of research findings with the National Forum will be required.
- Acknowledgement of funding from the National Forum must be included on all communications associated with the project. All reports should comply with the requirements of the National Forum’s communication strategy.

Timeframe	12 months from commencement of project
Funding	Max €70,000