



Advancing Social Responsibility in Higher Education: A Case Study of Community-Engaged Research and Learning at TU Dublin

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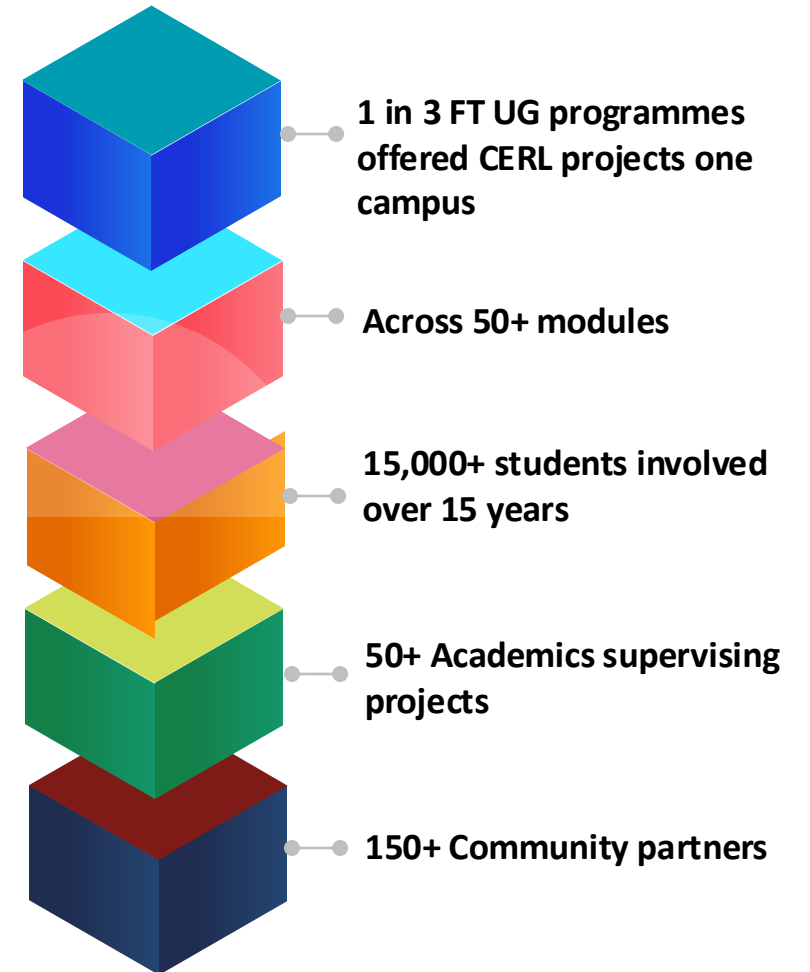
Community Engaged Research and Learning (CER/L)

Involves collaboration between university staff and communities to collaboratively design research projects that address community ideas or questions, for mutual benefit, to address societal challenges

CER/L activities are collaborative efforts involving students, staff, community partners, and the various Academic Schools, Research Centres and Research Hubs

The **Students Learning With Communities (SLWC) programme** worked mostly with **under-served communities** in our locality

Collaboratively designing undergraduate and postgraduate projects that **respond to ideas or questions** from community partners



Students Learning with Communities Programme Functions



Connect lecturers and community partners with a shared interest in collaboration



Assist TU Dublin staff to build sustainable relationships with communities, and vice-versa



Provide capacity building and networking opportunities for lecturers and community partners to support CERL



Develop initiatives to support collaboration in the curriculum between TU Dublin and community partners



Support staff, students and communities to address Sustainable Development Goals through co-designed real-life projects



Support the development of socially conscious graduates, using CERL, through collaboration with community partners and lecturers



Collaborate with national and international partners and networks to advance best practices in CERL

Our MCO research project focused on



- **Evaluation of SLWC supports**, to learn and develop recommendations for supporting CER/L
- 2-pronged approach to **data gathering**:
 - External evaluation of SLWC with academic and community stakeholders
 - Reflection and evaluation on more recent developing CER support practices
- Development of **change leadership and management framework** to analyse our data and to test as a potentially useful tool in paving the way forward in sustaining this activity
- Assessed the **outcomes, impact, and consequences of the initiative**
- **Analysis** of *what worked well* and *less well*
- **Conclusions: recommendations** for TU Dublin and other universities

Outcome & Impact Highlights

Increased **the quality of the student experience** -

Developed skills / graduate attributes such as **teamwork, communication and emotional intelligence**

Embedded in the curriculum & assessed

Students provided fresh perspectives and **new insights to community partners**

Community partners were supported to **articulate their research ideas and questions**



Outcome: Recycle IT adopted recommendations by Business students for time-saving elements in their processes for dismantling and processing waste electrical items.

Impact: They were successful in a funding application to develop a new pilot recycling programme.

Outcome: St John of God Community Services service users and staff have co-designed and co-developed apps with Computer Science students, for use by intellectually disabled people for a range of everyday purposes.

Impact: A co-designed toolkit based on this work, received a Zero Project Award at the United Nations in 2023.

Recognition important - Footage from the TU Dublin SLWC awards
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=52dgOmK2TDg>

Demonstrated Impacts

- Socially conscious graduates in practice
- Community partners gained practical outputs and were empowered to shape the direction of research themselves
- Enhanced culture of collaboration and respect between university and community groups
- International reach demonstrated – publications, follow-on EU projects etc.
- Contributed to real-world solutions aligned to SDGs
 - e.g., health (SDG 3), inequality and inclusion (SDG 10), sustainability (SDG 11)

Potential for Additional Societal Impact

01

A Model for the Responsive University

Demonstrates how universities can combine academic excellence and social responsibility and contribute to values-based HE

02

Transformation of Student Learning (and staff development)

Could inspire more widespread adoption of CE curricula producing graduates as ethical, adaptable, and civic minded citizens

03

Policy and Structural Influence

Findings and recommendations could be used as evidence to shape future national and EU policies and frameworks

04

Resilient and Empowered Communities

Builds local capacity, confidence, self-determination and user research skills

05

International Knowledge Leadership

Can lead and inform networks of practice set up to embed social responsibility as a pillar of HE globally

To conclude

- Community Engaged Research and Learning represents a **structured, values-driven approach** for universities to contribute to addressing societal challenges, in response to and in collaboration with community partners
- It can be embedded in the curriculum and assessed.
- We also have a programme of supports for Engaged Research by researchers and communities.
- CER/L aligns strongly with the principles of the Magna Charta Universitatum (MCU),
 - particularly in relation to its emphasis on **civic responsibility and being engaged fully with communities**

Good
Foundations

Route to
Implementation

Anchor and
Sustain

Students Learning With Communities – community perspectives

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jBN2l-O6Zk4> -
00:00 – 03:21



Acknowledgements

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- The TU Dublin Research Engagement Advisory Committee.

Thank You for
Listening
&
Happy to answer
questions

<https://www.tudublin.ie/reio>



<https://www.tudublin.ie/explore/about-the-university/sustainability/societal-engagement/sustainability-action-lab/>





SLWC Community Partners – Categories and Examples

Youth & Family Services

Aisling Project
Ballymun

Artane Coolock
FRC

Mental Health & Disability

Dyspraxia
Association of
Ireland

Saint John of
Gods; Day Service

Advocacy & Social Justice

Men's Aid

Community Law
and Mediation

Community Development

Northside
Partnership

St Teresa's
Gardens
Regeneration
Board

Homelessness & Housing

Focus Ireland

HAIL

Elderly Support

Friends of the
Elderly

WALK

Health & Medical Support

Heart Children
Ireland

First Light

Education & Learning

Solas

Brunswick Street
Secondary School

Environment & Sustainability

Recycle IT

Wells for Zoe

Arts & Culture

Phizzfest

Conversation
Salons

Sports & Recreation

DCC Sports

Running Blind

Social Enterprise

We Make Good

PACE Social
Enterprise