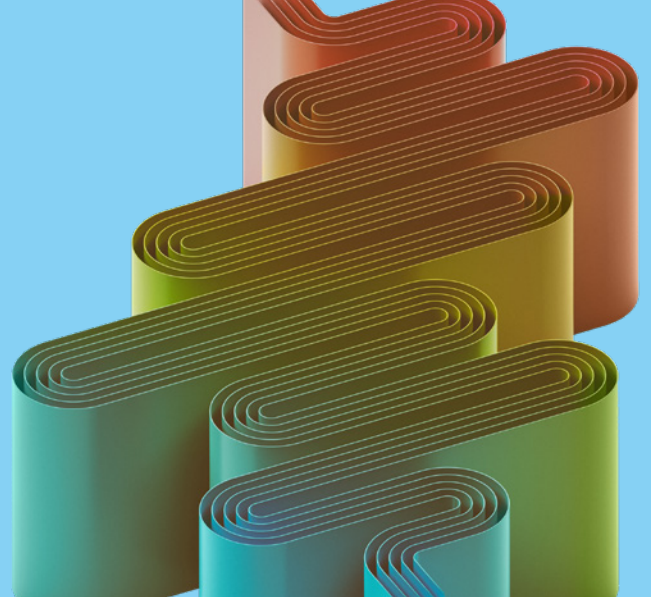


Transforming higher education training



Case study - The Research Skills Toolkit and University College Dublin

University College Dublin, one of Europe's leading research-intensive universities, has a long-standing history with Epigeum, engaging with our courses since our founding in 2005. Currently, University College Dublin is subscribed to the *Research Skills Toolkit*. Alan Baird is a veterinary physiology and biochemistry Professor and has extensive experience mentoring PhD students. Previously, Alan was part of a management structure that generated substantial changes in how research degrees were organised and administered. We spoke with Alan to discuss the implementation and use of the *Research Skills Toolkit* in supporting University College Dublin's researchers.



Who did we speak to?

Alan Baird, *Veterinary Physiology and Biochemistry Professor.*



What kind of subscription do UCD have?

The *Research Skills Toolkit* accessed via their VLE (initially on Blackboard, currently on Brightspace).



Highlights

We asked Alan if he would recommend the *Research Skills Toolkit* to other institutions. "Certainly," he replied, "if someone is learning to drive you would recommend them the highway code."

Case study

Implementation

University College Dublin chose to implement the *Research Skills Toolkit* as part of a process of modularisation and integrated the Toolkit into a modular construct delivered via their VLE (initially on Blackboard, currently on Brightspace). Modules are delivered across a twelve-week semester, with two workshops or online activities to supplement the didactic learning. Each component is set up to be released at a particular time, with learners receiving emails detailing each week's activity and expectations.

To incentivise learners to complete the programme, University College Dublin uses a credit-based system to acknowledge the work learners put in. There is also a high pass rate, and learners can fail (and resit). This pass rate is determined through a final quiz. Although quizzes accompany most modules, these are formative elements, and the final examination provides the pass/fail status. Alan further added how there is an informal system for supervisors to reach out to learners who may need to be undertaking the modules to encourage uptake.

Outcomes

Alan highlighted a few key benefits of the *Research Skills Toolkit*. "It covers all the basics," he told us, describing how the course promotes self-reflection rather than simple pedagogy. "My preference and the most useful part [as described by some learners] is the [Working with your Supervisor module]." Moreover, he highlighted the benefits of how the course can be accessed through the Epigeum platform or whichever VLE the institution is using.

When asked what he believes the challenges on the research horizon are, Alan noted that "the grey areas are hard", with key issues being myopia and silo formation. The *Research Skills Toolkit*, therefore, provides a platform to address these issues and the "different rituals and expectations" across practices and subject areas.

In his words, "the Toolkit could be described as an extensive user-friendly highway code. It raises awareness but it can't make you a good driver." This is why University College Dublin's complementary initiatives are incredibly beneficial. Additional rigour means that the assessment they have built is designed to ensure learners have engaged with every single part of the programme.

The key to a successful implementation is the imagination and interest of the people running the course. University College Dublin's integration of the Toolkit and elements developed around the same time as the Toolkit create a seamless and rounded user experience.

We asked Alan if he would recommend the *Research Skills Toolkit* to other institutions. "Certainly," he replied, "if someone is learning to drive you would recommend them the highway code."



Get in touch

To find out more about any of our programmes and what Epigeum can do for your institution, please get in touch.

