

Title: **Distributed and disaggregated: Developing excellence in teaching and learning in online distance learning teams**

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Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

1. Compare and contrast an online distance learning model with other teaching and learning models;
2. Examine teaching and learning/staffing models and related opportunities and challenges afforded by those different models, through group discussion;
3. Gain insight into three case studies of online distance learning team's working to develop high quality assessments, learning materials, and approaches to teaching in the online classroom;
4. Examine the opportunities and challenges afforded by a distributed, disaggregated staffing model, through group discussion.

Session Outline

The Open Education Unit is a provider of online distance learning, off-campus programmes since 1982 with over 5,500 graduates (Delaney, 2015; Delaney and Farren, 2016) in Dublin City University (DCU), and is located within the National Institute for Digital Learning (NIDL). The teaching and learning/staffing model utilised by the Open Education Unit is based on a well-defined delineation of staff roles. The model consists of a small number of full-time, campus-based staff working with a network of off-campus, disaggregated, and distributed part-time academic tutors, writers etc. from a variety of academic and industry backgrounds. While the full-time staff members execute a diverse range of functions and roles, focused on the management and coordination of the programmes/teaching and learning process, all other part-time members of the team have very specific and distinct roles, for example online distance learning tutor, assessment developer, learning material developer, etc.

The session will detail the Open Education Unit's development from a traditional distance education provider to an online provider with regard to the changes in approach to supporting and developing the work of teams this has necessitated. Three case studies will be presented as part of this session: 1) designing and developing a programme-level assessment strategy (Brunton, Brown, Costello, and Walsh, 2016); 2) developing a signature pedagogy (Shulman, 2005) in synchronous online classroom teaching (Costello, 2017; Farrell and Brunton, 2016; O'Keeffe, 2017); and 3) creating engaging online learning materials in a

distributed subject-team. Through these case studies we will examine the opportunities and challenges afforded by working in teams in the context of a distributed, disaggregated staffing model, with full-time and part-time staff, subject experts and online learning experts working together to ensure teaching excellence.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

- Presentation of the Open Education Unit's teaching and learning/staffing model – 10 min
- Facilitated discussion of different teaching and learning/staffing models with an examination of related opportunities and challenges afforded by different models – 10 min (Indicative discussion topics: 1. Comments on Open Education Unit model 2. Compare and contrast Open Education Unit model with other models)
- Presentation of case studies relating to the work of teams – 15m
- Q&A on case studies and facilitated discussion of the team work case studies – 10 min (Indicative discussion topics: 1. What were the pros and cons of the approaches taken on the three case studies 2. How could the approaches taken on the three case studies be improved?)

References

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