

## CASE STUDY

# Successful partnership with ILM to enhance engagement with *Professional Skills for Research Leaders* (PSRL) at University College Cork (UCC)

## Background:

In 2013, University College Cork (UCC) gained the HR Excellence in Research Award in recognition of the University's on-going commitment to adopting the principles of **The European Charter for Researchers** and a **Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers**. This commitment is echoed in the University's Research Strategy.

The University is keen to provide its research leaders with the tools they need to perform in their "multi-faceted role". Mary O'Regan, HR Research Advisor and Dr Maeve Lankford, Manager for Staff Welfare and Development, took an innovative approach to designing a blended approach to the roll out of the Epigeum *Professional Skills for Research Leaders* (PSRL) programme, incorporating input from the Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation, The Careers Office and experienced PI's across UCC.

To support this initiative UCC is delighted to announce that ILM has rated them as an approved provider for PSRL. This means that each participant will receive an ILM endorsed programme certificate of attainment for completing the suite of programmes, on-line tests and attending the workshops.

The value of recognised qualifications is increasing and the ILM certificate of attainment will enable researchers to provide evidence of their research leadership skills. Not everyone wants to take a formal management qualification, which is why UCC recognises that a good quality in-house management development programme will give researchers the freedom to participate while ILM monitor and endorse the overall quality of the programme.

The University hopes that this ILM endorsed *Professional Skills for Research Leaders Programme* will assist Senior Post Docs, Research Fellows and early career Academic staff to enhance their research management skills at this critical time in their careers.



## Process:

To gain ILM provider status all of UCC's policies as well as the full Epigeum programme were submitted for examination and UCC were required to show all the administrative and reporting capabilities behind the programme not just the student facing side. UCC uses Blackboard as its virtual learning environment.

## Practicalities:

- The first iteration has involved a pilot study with 20 in the cohort comprising of Senior Post Docs, Research Fellows and Academics across all disciplines.
- PSRL includes 6 modules and each online module is supported with a 2.5-3 hour workshop. Key principles that inform the content of each workshop were agreed with a focus group of PIs and Researchers in advance of commencement of the pilot and include the following: content must be new and complementary to the online content, we will not simply revise what was covered online; activities will be very practical in focus and, where possible, will provide participants with tools that they can use with their own research teams; each workshop will include input from a PI who is accomplished in the topic of the workshop; there will be plenty opportunity for networking between presenters, participants and speakers at all workshop.
- It is an ILM requirement that attendance at the first and final workshops is compulsory and participants must achieve 80% attendance across all workshops.
- The programmes follow a timed release of modules over a 6 month period – this encompasses the online course content and test, followed by the workshop and then progress to the next module.
- The pass mark for the course is 70% which is gained through students successfully completing the module test. If the test needs retaking the student is unable to see previous correct answers in order to ensure robust quality assurance.
- Certificates are issued with both ILM and UCC logos.

## Results:

So far so good! Feedback from the first 4 blended workshops was very positive. Participants felt that the programme was relevant to their needs and that participation in the blended workshops was helpful on many levels including getting to know others at that level (peers) and building professional relationships. The ice-breakers at the beginning of each workshop were very effective. Feedback about the content of the videos and scenarios included in the online programmes was very positive. The participants felt participating in the programme gave them the opportunity to reflect on their careers in the long term (5 years) which is exactly what we were hoping for!

## Some participant Quotes about the Modules and blended workshops:

*Very interesting – made me think outside my normal sphere/experience*

*Could spend all day discussing issues*

*Very useful – helps with reflection and forces you to think about strategies to enhance your career*



## Modules:

- Introduction to *Professional Skills for Research Leaders*
- Developing and consolidating your research career
- Funding your research
- Managing a research team
- Research collaboration
- Communicating your research