



Graduate Student Conference

Proceedings and Abstracts

DIT Aungier Street
4 June 2013



Student Retention and Learning: Current Research & Practice

Fourth Annual Graduate Student Conference



Dublin, 4 June 2013

Dear Colleagues,

It gives us great pleasure to welcome you to our fourth Graduate Student Conference. Since last year, we are very pleased that a number of participants from last year's cohort have presented at national and international conferences and events. Also some have published in peer reviewed journals, and so the process of disseminating educational research is well and truly underway from the postgraduate programmes in Learning, Teaching and Technology in DIT!

Our vision is that this will grow and continue, and that many who present here today will ultimately disseminate their work further afield. We are confident that you will have a fantastic conference where you will learn, share and meet like-minded colleagues.

As well as wishing you an enjoyable and engaging conference, we would like to take this opportunity to thank you for submitting and/or attending; without your presence there is no conference.

With best wishes,

Roísín Donnelly and Kevin O'Rourke

Graduate Student Conference Co-Chairs



Introducing the next Volume of DIT's Online Journal....

Irish Journal of Academic Practice

Published by the Learning, Teaching and Technology Centre



<http://arrow.dit.ie/ijap/>

Journal Overview: This academic year we are introducing the second volume of the online Irish Journal of Academic Practice (IJAP), which is published once annually since 2012 by the LTTc at the Dublin Institute of Technology; it features peer-reviewed scholarly & practice-based case articles, and research reports written by graduate (diploma and masters-level) participants in the areas related to the MA in Higher Education and the MSc Applied eLearning.

Purpose: This journal is a vehicle for the academics who are the participants on the postgraduate programmes to disseminate their research to a wider audience. The participants are drawn from different components of the third level sector in Ireland including vocational, further and higher education. Such a graduate journal is a good place to learn the 'ropes' of the publishing process, and try out ideas in early stages of research and study.

Journal Focus & Scope: IJAP is based the areas of learning, teaching, technology and professional development. Special emphasis is on innovative practices in teaching and learning. Articles in the second volume edition include:

- Exploring Student Engagement and Collaborative Learning in a Community-based Module in Fine Art
- Using Model Building in Structural Engineering to Enhance Student Understanding of Construction Principles and Methods
- One Size Fits All Learning Preferences - An Exploration of Rapid Authoring *Tools*
- Scaffolding Fully Online First Year Computer Literacy Students for Success
- A Study of the Causes of Attrition among Adults on a Fully Online Training Course
- Engaging Student's Learning through a Blended Learning Environment
- How much do our first year students know? Diagnostic Testing in Mathematics at Third Level
- High Oral Communication Apprehensives – How can students be helped to reduce their fear of public speaking?
- An Activity-based Approach to the Learning and Teaching of Research Methods: Measuring Student Engagement and Learning
- Developing a Collaborative Virtual Learning Environment between Students Across Disciplines in the Built Environment



Graduate Student Conference

MA in Higher Education/MSc Applied eLearning

Theme: Student Retention and Learning: Current Research & Practice

Tuesday June 4, 2013 Aungier Street

Rooms 4079/4098/4099

TIME	EVENT			LOCATION
9.15	Registration Opens, Coffee & Refreshments			Outside 4079
9.30	Welcome & Opening Address, Launch of Annual Irish Journal Academic Practice (Volume 2) Dr Noel O'Connor			MAIN ROOM 4079
10.00	Keynote Speaker: Dr Una Crowley, NUIM Topic: Student Retention and Learning Chair: Dr Jen Harvey, LTTC			
11.00	Coffee & Refreshments			Outside 4079
	Graduate Student Presentations: Each presentation will last 15 mins plus 5 mins allowed for questions			
	Theme: Retention & Assessment Room 4099 Chair: Orla Hanratty	Theme: Learning Across Contexts Room 4098 Chair: Claire McAvinia	Theme: Learning Technologies Room 4079 Chair: Kevin O'Rourke	
11.30	Paul O'Kearney Bridging the Gap: Identifying the Factors Influencing Student Retention in Youth Reach Programmes	Paula Bourke An Investigation of Undergraduate Participation in ERASMUS outward mobility in DIT	Joe Dennehy A Possible Solution to Problems of Teamwork and Wikis	
11.50	Geraldine McCorkell Is Third Level for me? Exploring the Retention Rate for Students with Disabilities in First Year	Andrew Myler How are they learning? A Study of Learning in Elite Youth Soccer Players in Ireland	Deirdre Lawless A Quantitative Exploration of Vertical Alignment in a Modular MSc in Computing Programme	
12.10	Carina Brereton Aesthetic Practitioner Education and Regulation in the UK: Commercial Protectionism or Safeguarding Public Health?	Liana Rose Exploring the relationship between second language learning and motivation among ESOL learners in rural Ireland	Odette Gabaudan Using technology to prepare and support students on an Erasmus mobility	
12.30	Kathy Young Real Life Assessment: An evaluation of a Students Learning with Communities Project in a BSc Environmental Health Programme	Michael Holton Classroom-centred Self Regulated Learning in a Religious Educational Context	Barry Ryan Computer says no...knowing when enough technology is enough	
1.00	Lunch & Conference Close			

There will be an afternoon 'Technology Swap-Shop' workshop in Room 4079 from 2-3.30pm; details will be provided separately.

Book of Abstracts

Keynote: Dr Una Crowley, NUIM

Title: Promoting self-regulated learning skills in underachieving and 'at risk' students

Overall, Irish Higher Education has been very successful in pursuing its ambitious goals, namely 'to widen participation and increase graduate numbers', moving from a system that was confined to a social elite to one of widespread participation (HEA 2006, p.202; 2011). However, it could be argued that while Higher Education has the potential to enable a rich and engaged learning experience leading to personal transformation, a greater understanding of the world and a capacity to act in positive and reflexive ways, for some it can alienate, waste opportunity and limit potential (Mann 2008). The problem seems to be that most universities have not yet been able to translate what is known about student underachievement and lack of 'preparedness' 'into forms of action that have led to substantial gains in student persistence and graduation' (Tinto, 2006, p.5).

Paul O’Kearney: YouthReach Dublin

Bridging the Gap: Identifying the Factors Influencing Student Retention in Youth Reach Programmes

The Youthreach education programme was initially set up to provide early school leavers with a second opportunity at education. There is anecdotal evidence to suggest students from the Youthreach education programme have found difficulty in completing their first year in higher education. The aim of the study was to gain accurate, viable and trustworthy evidence to discover what factors most influence student progression, retention and course completion. Prospective, current and graduate and drop-out students completed a qualitative semi-structured questionnaire in order to identify their main issues and problems encountered or envisaged. As a result of the research it was concluded that failure to cope was the most evident explanation of failing to complete their first academic year after Youthreach. Prospective students recommended that personal assistance from a peer or teacher may facilitate them in their academic pursuit. Current further education students cited academic writing and the production of assignments as the most profound obstacle or hindrance to their chosen course. Successful students admitted they would have benefitted from further preparation in their studies as many found the gap from the Youthreach programme to further or higher education daunting. From all students who failed to complete their first year it was apparent that a lack of student preparedness played an important role in their lack of ability to cope in the higher education environment. A further study is planned to investigate the correlation of these initial findings on a larger scale. A further objective is to provide solutions in order to ensure that students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds and programmes similar to Youthreach have a success rate similar to those arriving from mainstream schools.

Carina Brereton: Vocational Training Charitable Trust

Aesthetic Practitioner Education and Regulation in the UK: Commercial Protectionism or Safeguarding Public Health?

Recent developments in the cosmetic interventions and beauty industry have heightened the need for a review of the current self-regulated model of licensing and education in the sector in the UK. The industry attracted the attention of the UK Department of Health, following the PIP implant scandal which exposed unsafe practices, a lack of quality assurance of medical products used for non-medical purposes and unethical advertising practices in the cosmetic interventions sector. A review group was set up to look at how the UK sector was regulated and organised, including education, training and accreditation practices. The review group were surprised to discover that non-surgical cosmetic interventions (beauty treatments) which can have major adverse and irreversible impacts on health and wellbeing are almost entirely unregulated (Keogh 2013). Non-surgical cosmetic interventions include treatments such as dermal fillers, Botox®, laser and intense pulsed light



treatments, along with many others. This presentation seeks to identify the level and type of regulation in this sector in Europe as well as examining the classification of education and training within this sector in European countries, with the purpose of exploring whether or not there is a link between higher levels of education for beauty therapists and non-statutory self-regulation of beauty salons. The findings of the research conducted in Europe may help to inform the debate in the UK.

K.A. Young: DIT

Real Life Assessment: An example of a Students Learning with Communities project in a BSc Environmental Health Degree programme.

A Students Learning with Communities project (SLWC) has been running for the past five years in a fully integrated and credited Health Promotion module on a level 8 BSc Environmental Health honours degree programme. To date 2,000 second level pupils and 175 BSc Environmental Health students have participated in the programme. The aim of the project is to allow students develop key professional skills while having an additional benefit to the community in increasing health literacy amongst an important sub group of the population. The project preceeds both a seven month placement period which students complete in a private or public professional setting and a time when students must select and submit a thesis title. Students are set various work packages in line with the learning outcomes of the module including the development of a paradigm on the environmental determinants of health.

Formative feedback is given which helps students synthesise the modules they are studying on the course and also to apply the paradigm to the wider community setting. A needs assessment is then completed within pupils of an upper second level school to assess what area of the paradigm they would like students to research and present a lesson plan on within the school setting. Students work in groups to contact a school, research and present a 40 minute presentation with a period for reflective activity among the school pupils. To date areas such as Alcohol, Tobacco, Drugs, Body Image including recent trends in Obesity, Cosmetics, School Life Balance and Cyber Safety have been presented. Students engage with technology and have used packages such as précis, and recently clickers have been an addition to the project.

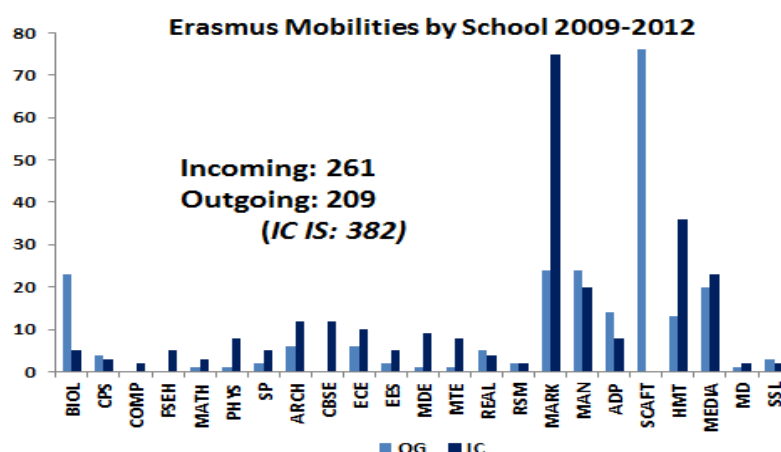
A multi-layeral evaluation technique has been undertaken and includes pupil evaluation, student evaluations and transition year co-ordinator evaluations. All evaluations to date demonstrate a high level of interest in the project particularly among second level teachers and students have indicated that a wide range of skills have been learnt during the project which are essential for their professional practice period that directly follows this project. An extension to the project has been the interest second level teachers have expressed in establishing a link with third level in developing assessment techniques for the Junior and Leaving Certificate programmes.

Learning Across Contexts

Paula Bourke: DIT

Undergraduate mobility within ERASMUS: A DIT case study

ERASMUS is the Higher Education branch of Europe's lifelong learning program and has supported mobility of approximately 3 million staff and student participants since 1987. All mobility's within ERASMUS are tracked; active exchanges and outgoing/incoming participation are key markers. The benefits of ERASMUS mobility for students can be the development of intercultural competency and graduate attributes of value in a globalised society and workplace. This presentation examines DIT ERASMUS statistics from 2009-2012, with a particular emphasis on outgoing participation. Trends are analysed in the context of recent EU policy, National and EU statistics and literature to determine emerging factors to inform actions to enhance outgoing mobility participation. Whilst there is an apparent balance in active exchange agreements between incoming and outgoing numbers across DIT Colleges, the Institutes' exposure to incoming mobility's is high. The College of Business utilise their current exchange agreements efficiently, where combined outgoing and incoming actual mobility's are most closely matched to active exchanges. There is a persistent mobility imbalance related to College domain and overall, outgoing participation is lower than incoming participation, reflecting National trends. There is huge diversity across schools but where international placement is compulsory, outgoing mobility is obviously high. Nationally, DIT ranks third in ERASMUS mobility. Fundamental facilitators including program structure, credit mobility, early access to information, the role of peer motivation and peer multipliers have been identified. ERASMUS is an EU wide scheme and is administered centrally with the same supports in place and available across DIT. Therefore, it is proposed that a DIT specific study is warranted to elucidate best practice across DIT in relation to the Institutes student and program profile.



Where is your school?

How does it compare?

How can you increase the number of outgoing participants in Erasmus?

Why would we want to?



Andrew Myler: DIT

How are they learning? A study of learning in youth elite footballers in Ireland

Elite youth soccer players in Ireland reach a significant point in their development when recruited to the National Elite U-19 League. At this point players have a 2 years period in which they aim to become proficient enough to earn a professional contract with their club of choice. They encounter a steep learning curve during this period in their sporting education with increased competition and additional physical and mental demands. The author is the Elite Development squad manager for a Dublin based professional football club. This case study is aimed at examining the type of learning that takes place within an U19 elite team the learning theory driving the coaching practice and its influences on player development. Looking at how methods for facilitating learning have evolved, such as the facilitation of peer learning and its role in shaping learning outcomes.

Liana Rose: Global Translations

Exploring the relationship between second language learning and motivation among ESOL learners in rural Ireland

This presentation explores what motivates adult students to learn English as a second language along with an in-depth analysis of types of motivation, student's individual attitudes and efforts. The study involved two immigrant couples living in rural Ireland with different geographical and educational backgrounds; three of the participants arrived in Ireland with no English and one with minimal levels. They have been resident in Ireland for 8 years and they have attended English classes for two hours a week provided by a local VEC. A 24-item questionnaire was administered to measure learners' language attitudes, desires, learning orientations and confidence. The results of the study showed that some are intrinsically motivated to learn language and some learners do it for instrumental reasons. This study will continue to explore the relationship between second language learning and self determination among ESOL learners to understand students' motivation and enhance their classroom experience and performance.

Michael Holton: An Garda Síochána

Classroom-centred Self Regulated Learning in a Religious Educational Context

There is an increasing emphasis in the literature on the need for higher education to be student centred and learner-led. This is reflected in the growing research into such pedagogical approaches as independent learning, autonomous learning, self-directed and self-regulated learning. Research has consistently asserted that class socialisation, especially in the form of group-based work, can encourage such individual independent study. This presentation investigates that in a further educational context: an Institute of religion for college-age young single adults. Some months after a 10-class course on religious marriage preparation, these students completed a survey which measured their assessment of the role that various classroom activities



(both group and non-group based) had on whether and why they engaged in further individual independent study. Findings revealed that there was a mix between students who did not engage in further independent study, and those who did; for the latter, classroom group work did not motivate them to do so. For those students who did engage in further independent study, it was reported that classroom group activities motivated them to engage in a self-regulated way. The presentation will note interesting correlations between various factors influencing self-directed learning.

Deirdre Lawless: DIT

A Quantitative Exploration of Vertical Alignment in a Modular MSc Programme

“To compress all our information about a single candidate into a single ranking number is clearly absurd – quite ridiculously irrational. And yet it has to be done.”

Hoffman (1978)

A mechanism commonly used to report the measure of the success of a student’s achievement in an educational programme, is the overall mark they achieved, usually generated by considering the mark achieved in a selected range of subjects according to some prescribed criteria. The usefulness and fairness of using a single numerical mark for this purpose and the methods used to generate this mark and their usefulness and fairness are much debated. However numerical grading remains the predominant mechanism used by educational programmes to report student achievement.

Academics generally put significant effort into the design and delivery of student educational programmes, in particular the content, teaching, learning and assessment strategies used. The alignment vertically, horizontally and constructively, of what are students expected to be able to know or do at the end of a given programme and how assessment of this can be agreed throughout the programme is also a major focus. The numerical grades students achieve could also then offer evidence into how students’ achievements reflect this alignment.

This presentation aims to explore if a quantitative analysis of student performance, in the form of overall percentage results achieved, can offer insights into the effectiveness of the vertical alignment between modules of two modular MSc programmes which share the same design and a number of common modules. Further it aims to explore if including additional factors which may influence this alignment, in particular mode of study (i.e. full-time or part-time) and the specialist or generalist nature of a programme, can offer additional insights. The overall goal is to investigate if numerical marks are a useful tool for assessing effectiveness of educational design.

Hoffman, B. (1978). *The Tyranny of Testing*. New York: Greenwood Press.



Joe Dennehy: DIT

A Modest Proposal: A possible solution to some problems of group work and wikis.

This presentation addresses the topic of wikis and their role in facilitating group work. It first reviews the literature on the theoretical foundations of collaborative learning, focusing on Cognitivism, Constructivism and Social Constructivism. In doing so it considers some of the contributions of Piaget, Vygotsky, Dewey, and also the later work of David Kolb which draws all these together under the heading of Experiential Learning. It goes on to examine the use of group work at various levels of international educational systems over the past four decades. It reviews a range of studies carried out in recent years into the potential use of wikis to facilitate group work. It notes the, sometimes disappointing, results of these studies. It suggests that a possible cause of these sub-optimal results is that insufficient attention has been given in the early part of the first year of academic programmes to familiarization on the part of students with the basic problems associated with group work and with the development and functioning of wikis. Finally, it proposes, as a potential contribution to improved results from the use of wikis to facilitate group work, the development by students of a wiki to research issues associated with the use of group work in education, in the first 2-3 weeks of a first year Economics module in a general business course, as a precursor to engaging in a substantial group-based economics research project facilitated by a wiki.

Odette Gabaudan: DIT

Using technology to prepare and support students on an Erasmus mobility

http://www.powtoon.com/p/cKMkQRqgVHb/#.UZ_10IPV6U8.gmail

Barry Ryan: DIT

Computer says no...knowing when enough is enough!

Engaging first year students in large lectures halls can be particularly difficult. Students are exposed to a myriad of distractions, principally technology-based and available through their laptop and smartphones. In this case study, to circumvent these distractions and in an attempt to enhance student engagement, technology was integrated into the learning environment. Additionally, technology forms were chosen that would improve communication, enhance peer based learning, foster a community of self-learning and provide the students with a real and virtual spaces to engage with each other and the content both synchronously and asynchronously. Twitter provided a method of communication between students and the lecturer in the form of an in class back-channel and also a means of rapidly disseminating information to the class. Various technologies were used, both inside and outside the classroom, in order to prepare the student for the in-class learning activities and also to provide a structured independent and peer-driven learning environment. In this case study it was observed that the in-class technologies were readily and enthusiastically engaged with by the students, however, the outside class technologies were less so. Only the technology that had an assessment weighting associated received continuous



student interaction. Post module evaluation noted that although students welcomed the use of technology in their learning there was a sense of being overwhelmed with technology and that the students needed space to engage with their different technology based communities; social, personal and educational. In light of this, the talk concludes with suggestions for other practitioners that wish to integrate similar technologies into their learning environments.

Aims of Presentation

The talk aims to describe the integration of several technologies into a First Year Foundation Organic Chemistry Module with the specific aims of improving communication, enhancing peer based learning, fostering a community of self-learning and providing the students with a real and virtual spaces to engage with each other and the content both synchronously and asynchronously. The majority of the technologies discussed are free to use and the paper will outline how these can be applied in other educational environments.

Infographics Posters

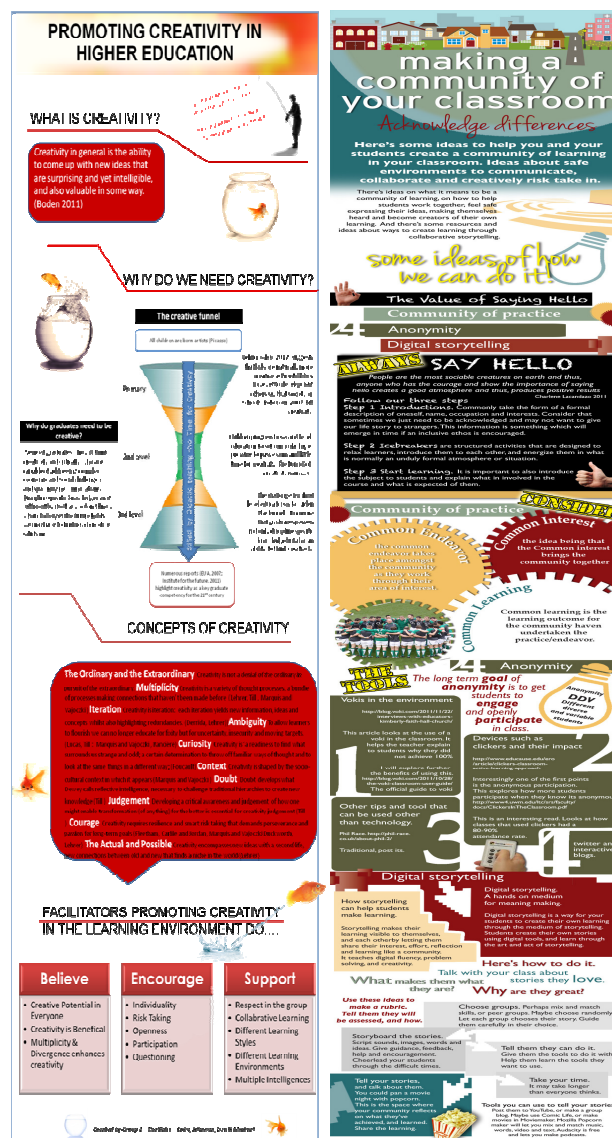
An infographic (Information graphic) is a graphic visual representation of information, data or knowledge intended to present complex information quickly and clearly. They can improve cognition by utilizing graphics to enhance the human visual system's ability to see patterns and trends. A number of MSc Applied eLearning and MA in Higher Education participants, from year 1 of the programmes have produced a range of infographics as part of their work on our new 'Creativity and Critical Thinking' Module, and will be happy to informally discuss how they designed and developed these.

Promoting Creativity in Higher Education

Lisa Donaldson; Johanna Cleary; Michael Gleeson; Colin Hughes

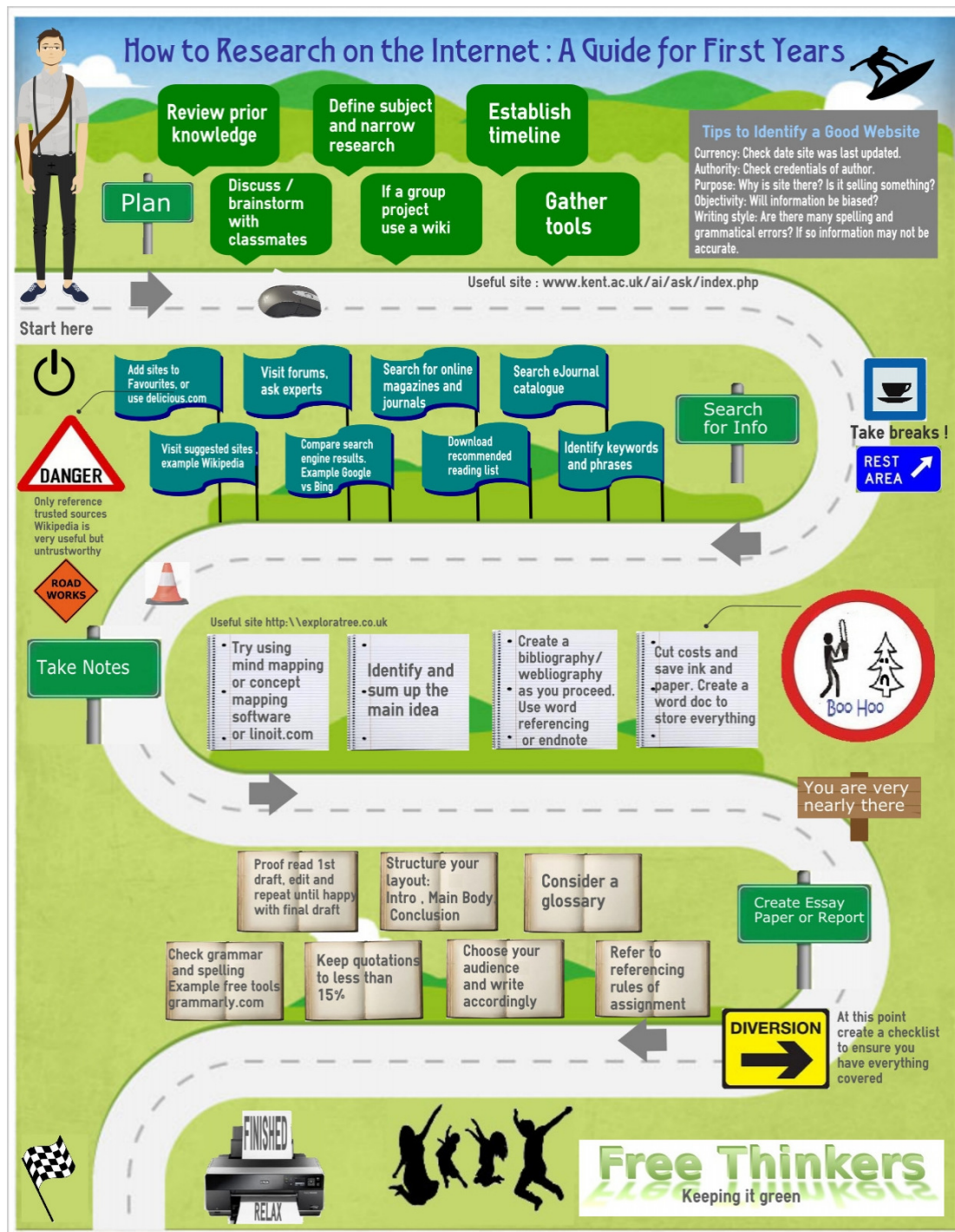
Making a Community of your Classroom

Keith Brennan; Andrew Myler; Joanna Carty; Siobhan O'Reilly



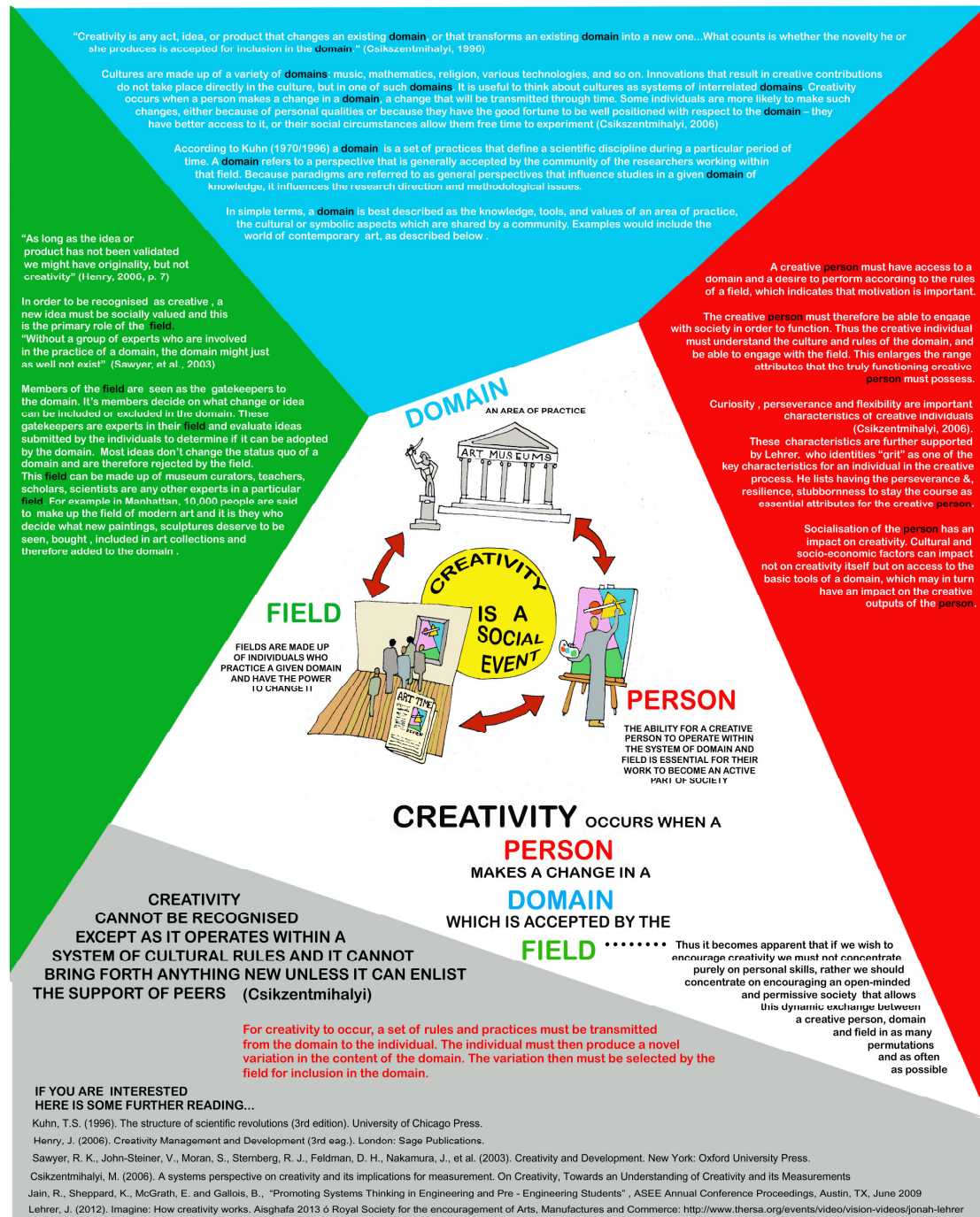
How to Research on the Internet: A Guide for First Years

Raymond Murray; Joe Dennehy; Jennifer Byrne; Geraldine McCorkell



Creativity as a Social Event

Carina Brereton; Dominic Stevens; Valerie Fenton; Patrick Walsh





Conference Notes