Application form for Community-Based Research Projects

Introduction

The DIT Programme for Students Learning With Communities supports staff and students engaging in community-based learning and research (also known as service-learning), and builds links with communities.

Students Learning With Communities involves DIT staff and/or students collaborating with underserved community partners (local groups, not-for-profit organisations, charities etc) to develop real-life projects for mutual benefit. Learning comes alive for the students as they work on these projects with community partners, developing professional transferable skills, and enhancing their understanding of their specialist subject skills and of the community they work with. Students receive course credits for their work, as these projects are embedded into their studies. Community partners become part of the teaching process through the collaboration, contributing to the education of students, and increasing the relevance of DIT's programmes of study. The processes and outcomes of the collaborative projects are designed to further the community's goals. These projects give all participants the opportunity to engage in critical thinking, and ultimately aim to energise participants to work for social change.

We continually update a list of research questions from underserved community partners who don't have the resources to do the research themselves. These requests for research cover a wide range of topics - both applied and theoretical. We match students (undergraduate and postgraduate) to the real-life research topics that relate to their studies and interests. The student and community partner then work collaboratively on that piece of research (and its application). Students will learn from the community about their strengths and needs, which will give them invaluable understanding of their possible future clients/employers. The project will also help them to develop your interpersonal skills and your ability to apply your theoretical learning to practical problems. The project forms part of their programme of study, and their work is assessed as part of course requirements.

Because of the practical nature of these projects and the fact that they are addressing a real issue raised by a community partner, we need to be assured that students are fully committed to carrying them through. So we ask interested students to go through an application process before a final decision will be made on the appropriateness of the student/community partner match.

FOR THE STUDENT TO COMPLETE

Student name:
Course code and year:
E-mail address:
Contact number:
DIT lecturer/module:
Community Research Topic you are interested in:

Why would you like to work with a community partner on this project?

Name three strengths/skills that you would bring to this project?

What three limitations are you bringing to this project, and how could you work on them as part of the project?

A community partner will dedicate a lot of time to work with you on this project. So that we can understand how you might return that commitment, can you give an example of when you previously demonstrated commitment?

Clear and open communication is central to a collaborative project. Can you give an example of when you previously demonstrated clear and open communication?

Have you discussed this project with your lecturer?
If so, how do they feel about you doing this?

What would you like to be able to tell people about your project when it's finished?

Do you have any other relevant experience that we should be aware of?

Please give the name and details of 2 referees we can contact about this application – no more than 1 should be a DIT lecturer.

	Referee 1	Referee 2
Name		
Job title		
Company		
E-mail address		
Phone number		

Would you be available to complete an interview with DIT staff from the Programme for Students Learning With Communities, and/or your community partner, to check your suitability for the project?

We will also ask you to come to a meeting (or meetings) with staff from Students Learning With Communities, your community partner and/or lecturer before this project starts. Are you available for such meetings (please see details of process below)?

We ask that if you run into any problems with this project that might prevent the agreed outcomes being achieved, you contact your lecturer, community partner, and/or Students Learning With Communities staff **immediately** so we can revise the plans for the project before it falls behind. Are you happy to agree to this?

Finally, we ask that you be professional in all your dealings with the community partner, and be careful of your own safety and those of others you meet during the course of this project. We ask that you and your lecturer complete a risk assessment form for this project (template form is available on our website) before starting the project. Do you agree to do this?

If you are working with children or vulnerable adults you will be required to consent to Garda vetting, and you may be required to complete the Garda vetting process before starting work. Do you consent to Garda vetting?

As well as handing in your thesis/product for assessment you must also give a copy of your thesis/design/product (or another appropriate format of results) to Students Learning With Communities staff and also to your community partner. Do you agree to do this?

We would like to publish your work on our webpage (www.communitylinks.ie/slwc) and in other relevant media, subject to quality approval by your lecturer/community partner. Do you agree to this?

Would you like us to add you to our mailing list, so that we can notify you of practice group meetings and other networking events during the year that you might like to attend, to support you in this work?

Please forward this form to your supervisor and ask them to complete the final page. They should then e-mail the completed form to slwc@dit.ie.

Once we have received this form from your supervisor, we will be in touch with you and with them regarding the next step in your application process, which may be an interview or a meeting with your lecturer/community partner.

Thanks very much for your interest in this project.

Students Learning with Communities

Process for setting up Community-Based Research Projects

1. Student to complete application form and forward to the supervising lecturer, who should fill out the last page and send it to slwc@dit.ie

2. Student may be called to interview with DIT staff from the Programme for Students Learning With Communities, with or without the relevant community partners

3. Meeting between student, lecturer, and staff from Students Learning With Communities to discuss approach to community-based research, relevant DIT procedures, details of project and community group etc.

4. Meeting between student, lecturer, community partner and staff from Students Learning With Communities. This meeting will involve the following:

   - Community partner to give background to project and to organisation, and to clarify detail of project being proposed
   - All parties to agree realistic goals for the project within the agreed timeframe (bearing in mind the capabilities of the student and the learning outcomes of the module)
   - Lecturer to describe range of standard of work expected from pass level to first class honours, and explain technical aspects of the work.
   - Communications protocols to be agreed (contact details exchanged, agreement as to how often regular communication should take place etc)
   - Deliverables/milestones to be agreed with a timetable for these. If these can't be agreed on the day, a date will be agreed by which the student will send the full list of deliverables/milestones to the lecturer and community partner.

The project will then proceed under the guidance of the lecturer and community partner. Staff in Students Learning With Communities are available if there is any further support needed, or if there are any problems in the course of the project.

A final report on the project should be made available by the student to the Programme for Students Learning With Communities (in addition to those submitted to the community partner and academic supervisor) where it will be publicized, and held on file should a similar community request be received, so it can be of further use.

FOR THE SUPERVISING LECTURER TO COMPLETE

Your student has completed the above form as s/he would like to complete their self-directed project (dissertation, thesis or work placement) in collaboration with a community partner. You can find more information about curriculum-based collaboration with communities on our website: www.dit.ie/ace/slwc

To help us process the student's application, and support this collaborative project, could you please answer the following questions:

Lecturer name:

Self-directed module title:

Has the student discussed with you their idea to undertake a collaborative project with a community partner?

>   If yes, how do you feel about this?

>   If no, would it be possible for you to discuss this with the student before completing and returning this form? Their contact details are on the second page of the form.

Are you happy for us to process this student's application, and then contact the relevant community partner to set up a meeting between you, the student, them, and ourselves? (We will organise and facilitate this meeting. The stages involved in setting up these projects are outlined on the previous page of this form.)

How can we support you in supervising this collaborative project (resources permitting)?

Would you like to be added to our mailing list, so we can keep you up to date on supports and events that might be of interest?

Is there anything else you would like to bring to our attention?

Thanks very much for your time, please now forward this form to slwc@dit.ie, where we will process it and keep you updated on progress.