Purposefully different approaches to flexible learning at scale: a Dublin City University case study

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Study Context

- A series of masters-level qualifications delivered in conjunction with an industry partner (Skillnet Ireland).

- Challenging both traditional modes of delivery and targeting new groups for workplace training and skills development in a flexible manner.

- Serves as a useful case study of both change implementation and the role of diverse QA Stakeholders in such processes.
MSc in Computing
(Artificial Intelligence)
Who Should Apply

The course is aimed at those employed in Republic of Ireland registered companies. To qualify for direct entry they must have a Level 8 Honours Degree (2.2) or higher in Computer Science, Computing, Computer Applications or a related discipline. Applicants without these entry requirements (e.g., Level 7 degree or lower than an Honours 2.2 in a Level 8 degree) may be considered if they can demonstrate previously obtained competence equivalent to the entry requirements.

Programme Structure

- **YEAR 1**
  - SEMESTER 1: Research Methods & Professional Skills, Foundations of Artificial Intelligence
  - SEMESTER 2: Data Analytics and Data Mining, Machine Learning

- **YEAR 2**
  - SEMESTER 1: Topics in Artificial Intelligence, Data Management and Visualization
  - SEMESTER 2: DCU Elective modules, Statistical Machine Translation, Mechanics of Search, Computer Vision
  - SEMESTER 1 & 2: AI Practicum
Learning design fundamentals

- A focus on academic excellence
- Online delivery, with both synchronous and asynchronous elements
- Flexible learning design
- Applied and career-oriented
- Delivery through the FutureLearn platform.
QA process – a collaborative approach

Academic Staff
- Course materials
- Pedagogical approach
- Assessment practices

Learning Designers
- Scaffolding
- Design-based considerations
- Technical Recommendations

Platform QA process (FL)
- Validation
- Standardisation
- Accessibility

The flow diagram illustrates the collaborative approach of the QA process involving Academic Staff, Learning Designers, and Platform QA process (FL). Each role contributes specific aspects to the overall process, ensuring a comprehensive approach to quality assurance in educational materials and practices.
Reflections on process

- **Win-win** is possible, indeed necessary, to implement change.

- Quality assurance within changing structures and curricula is challenging and complex, but critical.

- There are diverse means of viewing QA, and a wider lens is necessary than compliance, towards transformative, organisational and strategic purposes.

- Working with valued 3\textsuperscript{rd} parties can also bring new perspectives useful organisationally, not merely operationally.
A wider context and relevance….

- A rapidly-changing landscape requires organisational and institutional evolution within HE.

- COVID-19 has highlighted tensions regarding online delivery, and the strategic need for conceptualising QA in such a diverse manner.

- Wider debates regarding lifelong, non-formal and reskilling are not mutually-exclusive, and, in fact, diverse conceptualisations.
Online Microcredential in Business & Management

FinTech - Financial Innovation

Investigate the changes brought about by FinTech innovation and harness evolving opportunities in the future of FinTech.

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- Duration: 12 weeks
- Cost: $1,659
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Looking to the future…

- Understanding what’s effective, in what context, and for who, is key.

- There’s no “one-size fits all” approach to QA in this context, and tensions between personalisation and standardisation are evident.

- Including broader employer, trade union and societal stakeholders is an enriching means of broadening research, and also broadening QA.
Core questions…

▪ How can QA processes inform changing academic environments, given the increasing emphasis on flexible learning approaches?

▪ What are the tensions and opportunities in these processes?

▪ What wider stakeholders require further engagement?

▪ Whose conception of quality matters?
Go raibh maith agaibh!

Thank you!