



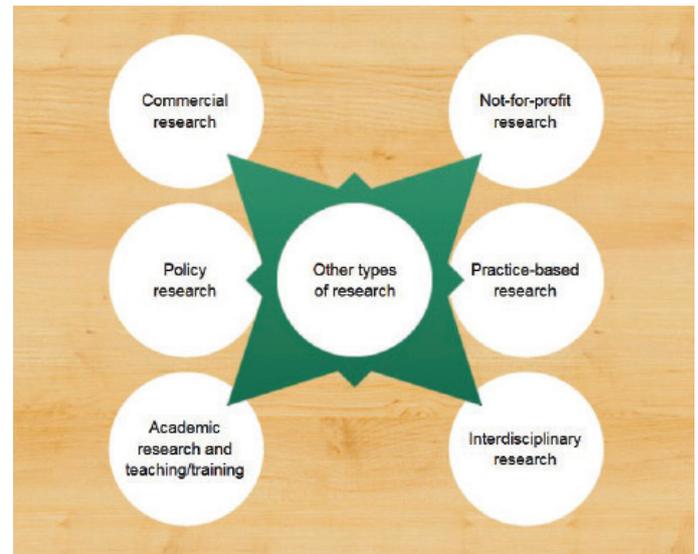
## Case Study

# Approaches to the implementation of **Professional Skills for Research Leaders** at University College Cork, Ireland

## 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.

As part of its commitment to the HR Excellence in Research Award, UCC in 2015 was keen to provide its research leaders with the tools they needed to perform in their "multi-faceted role". Mary O'Regan, HR Research Manager UCC and Dr Maeve Lankford, Kaleidoscope Coaching & Facilitation, took an innovative view 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 gained ILM approval as a provider for PSRL. This means that each participant receives an ILM certificate of endorsement 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 endorsement has enabled UCC's researchers to provide evidence of their research leadership skills. With PSRL, University College Cork has found that the ILM-endorsed **Professional Skills for Research Leaders** assists its Senior Post Docs, Research Fellows and early career Academic staff to enhance their research management skills at this critical time in their careers.

**The Epigeum 'Professional Skills for Research Leaders' course was an invaluable experience in my research career to date. The course taught me how to be an effective leader, mentor, manager and teacher of a research team. PSRL gave me the opportunity to reflect on and assess my current skills level, and encouraged me to take a strategic approach towards building my future career. The insights and perspectives provided by existing research leaders was particularly enlightening and informative. By undertaking this course, I feel I have saved myself from years of trial and error-based learning.**

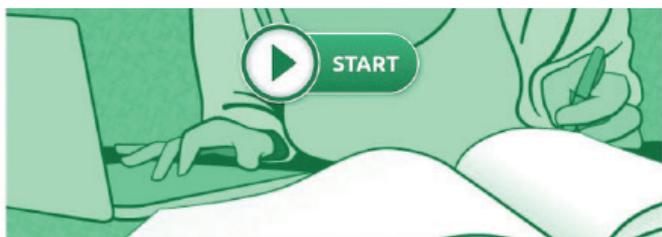
**Dr. Shane Hegarty**, Lecturer and Researcher, Department of Anatomy and Neuroscience, University College Cork, Cork, Ireland. Upcoming position: Research Fellow, F.M. Kirby Neurobiology Center, Department of Neurology, Boston Children's Hospital, Harvard Medical School

## 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 and is audited by ILM regularly.

## Practicalities:

1. The first iteration involved a pilot study in 2015 with 20 in the cohort comprising of Senior Post Docs, Research Fellows and Academics across all disciplines.
2. Now, in 2018, **60 of UCC's Researchers and early career academics have graduated with an ILM-endorsed certificate in PSRL which represents 20 graduates per year since UCC introduced the programme in 2015.** This is also an income generating programme for Human Resources.
3. **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 these principles have been reviewed yearly by each cohort of participants 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 of opportunities for networking between presenters, participants and speakers at all workshops.
4. It is an ILM requirement that attendance at the first and final workshops is compulsory and **participants must achieve 80% attendance across all workshops.**
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. **Certificates are issued with both ILM and UCC logos.**



## Results

**Excellent!** Feedback from the first two cohorts (60 Researchers and early career Academics) has been 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!

## Modules

Module 1	Introduction to <i>Professional Skills for Research Leaders</i>
Module 2	Developing and consolidating your research career
Module 3	Funding your research
Module 4	Managing a research team
Module 5	Research collaboration
Module 6	Communicating your research