PROGRESS

Professional Growth for
Equity, Sustainability and Success

Summary Report:
Staff Survey & Interviews

Dr Eílis Flanagan

1. Introduction

PROGRESS, *Professional Growth for Equity, Sustainability and Success*, is a research project supporting evidence-based professional development planning for all staff in Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LyIT). The project is funded by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. Originally, this was an 18-month project with a completion date of 31st August 2020, extended to October 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a brief summary report of the research findings. Following this introduction section of the report are the recommendations for the institution (p.3), which arose from the project. These recommendations contain direction about best practice for designing and developing a professional development plan, as informed by the project data and relevant policy, literature and frameworks.

The overarching aim of the research is to create a robust and reliable evidence base to inform the design and development of the institution's strategic professional development planning processes and structures. Employing a Mixed Methods approach the project draws on the experiences and perspectives of staff, students and industry partners regarding their professional development (PD), which for this project comprises professional learning, growth in expertise and professional capacity, as well as career progression.

The primary objectives of the project are:
- to understand the experiences of all staff regarding their professional growth
- to identify the professional development priorities of all staff
- to explore the opportunities and barriers to engaging in effective professional growth related to expertise, job satisfaction & career progression
- to investigate how to build capacity for developing professional practice, particularly related to iterative PD opportunities, supporting evidence-based practice, the Scholarship of Teaching and creating communities of practice

- to explore professional development opportunities that enhance both disciplinary excellence and career growth
- to understand students' perspectives of how staff professional development impacts students' engagement in higher education, particularly through the lens of reflective and reflexive practice and building partnerships
- to investigate effective professional development structures for the institution

These objectives are aligned to the strategic priorities of the institution and the relevant professional development frameworks of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education and Higher Education policy.

2. Recommendations

There are six overarching recommendations arising from the evidence from staff in particular about their perspectives and experiences of professional development provision at the institution. These recommendations are also informed by the student voice about the impact of staff engagement in processional development on their experiences of educational success. Each overarching recommendation contains examples of professional learning areas for the institution to consider during its planning process.

- **Provision of Professional Development:** The key priority areas identified by staff were: (1) having time within their regular working hours to participate in PD; (2) the timing of PD provision; (3) ensuring that participating in PD does not contribute to staff workload [e.g. providing cover for staff while they participate in PD and not requiring staff to 'make up' that time]; (4) wellbeing; (5) equal access to PD opportunities; (6) having PD recognised positively by the intuition; (7) learning from and connecting with local industry; and (8) having the opportunity to share learning from PD with colleagues.
It is recommended that the institution listen to the staff voice and carefully plan and tailor the provision of professional learning opportunities for all staff at times convenient and most appropriate for staff, considering specific needs in Academia, Professional Management and Services Staff (PMSS) and Student Services. It is important that the institution offer a variety of experiences that speak to the diversity of the staff community and the context of the institution. It is also recommended that the institution create diverse pathways for staff to engage in professional learning, such as iterative cycles of training and upskilling for PMSS staff in the areas of digital tools (e.g. Microsoft Office, in particular Excel) technology and software (e.g. Agresso, MS Teams, MS SharePoint) and relevant institutional policies. Further, it is recommended that opportunities are provided for those who teach to implement teaching and learning innovations in their practice, which are supported by a community of practice (group of educators and researchers) and suitable funding. Finally, it is recommended that the institution implement a system of mentoring to provide staff with the opportunity to learn from peers (peer mentoring) and also from students (partnership mentoring) with the ultimate goal of forming meaningful partnerships that promote a culture of mutual learning and leadership.

- **Reciprocal system of professional learning:** The institution invests heavily in accredited professional learning of employees, particularly for those who undertake level 10 studies. It is recommended that a reciprocal system of professional learning be implemented across the institution, whereby those staff whose fees are fully paid by the institution are provided with the opportunity and are encouraged to share their learning with colleagues and management across the institution. This would make a significant contribution to the culture of celebrating professional learning at the intuition and would be of benefit to both the employee and the employer. Examples of sharing professional learning that could be initiated as either place-based events or online/virtual events could include but are not limited to: feedback series, brownbag lunches, discussion panels, webinars, social media posts, shared learning day, notice boards, blogs, vlogs, etc.

- **Framework for professional learning and growth**: The institution supports staff at various junctures to engage in professional learning. However, currently the challenge is creating equity of access for all staff to engage and participate in meaningful

professional development to enhance their expertise and their career growth. It is recommended that the institution work towards developing a culture of supporting and celebrating professional learning and growth by designing and implementing an integrative framework and providing a suite of associated and appropriate resources. There is a strong interest in professional development from staff across all areas in the institution and it is recommended that a transparent and coherent framework is designed and implemented to ensure the provision and regulation of professional development for all staff. A key recommendation is that this framework is informed by the three pillars of professional practice outlined in the PROGRESS model and contains fluid PD areas that staff can choose from and work through, rather than a series of sequential steps to follow. Further, it is recommended that the framework is embedded in the institution's Strategic Plan 2019-2023, Research Strategy 2015-2020 and forthcoming Student Success Strategy.

🔴 **Valuing professional development:** The research emphasises the importance of the impact of staff engagement in professional development. This impact should be considered in the context of the individual, the community of practice and the institution with particular focus on the areas of Academia, Professional Management and Services Staff (PMSS) and Student Services. To ensure the authenticity of PD, it is vital to consider if each professional opportunity and training is both relevant and fit for purpose and what impact the process would have on teaching and learning, student success, career progression, professional fulfilment and ultimately, institutional culture. It is recommended that a process of recognition for engaging in professional learning is implemented – if you don't count it, it doesn't count. Recognising professional learning is of paramount importance to the sustainability of the institutional culture of P. However, it is imperative to note that certifications and micro-credentials are only as useful as their portability and transferability. Recognition should be holistic rather than cumbersome, since it is more complex than certification alone. It is recommended that value be placed on the complexity of the relational process of engaging in professional learning and how jobs and particular roles are appreciated and respected within the institution. By valuing, recognising and respecting the professional learning of all staff the professional development framework becomes part of the institution's culture of building expertise. It is recommended that the institution consider the following areas when developing an approach to valuing PD: supporting staff to plan their PD, aligning individual and institutional priorities, performance management, professional learning appraisals, remuneration, building leadership capacity of staff, celebrating PD across the institution, support systems and resources.

🔴 **PROGRESS Model:** The institution required and sought an evidence-base to understand the experiences and perspectives of staff and students regarding professional development. This research has harnessed both the quantitative and qualitative data from staff and students in order to design a model for best practice to support professional development planning processes at the institution. It is recommended that the institution engage with the PROGRESS model when designing and developing their framework, support systems and resources, using the three pillars of professional practice. This will be a useful approach to catering for the priority needs of staff and also for planning a long-term approach to the provision of training, upskilling and general professional learning opportunities. It is recommended that the institution embrace the student voice about the impact of staff engagement in professional learning on their experiences of education and success.

- **Alignment with best practice:** A robust evidence-based approach to professional development planning in higher education is informed by both internal and external data. In that regard, it is recommended that the institution's approach to the design and development of its framework for professional learning is aligned to relevant policy, research literature and frameworks in higher education as well as industry and identified key stakeholders (see Pp 7&8).

3. Methodology

A Mixed Methods approach was adopted and methods included:
- an institution-wide survey of all staff
- semi-structured group interviews with staff
- case studies with staff and students utilising a survey for students, a reflective journal for staff and semi-structured group interviews with students

All staff at LyIT were invited to participate in a survey about their experiences and perspectives of their professional development as well as their priority requirements for developing professional expertise and for their career growth. Since supporting students' experiences of success rests at the core of this research, students participated in bespoke Teaching and Learning and Partnership Mentoring Case Studies, both adopting an action learning methodological approach. In the Teaching and Learning case study lecturers collaboratively implemented a digitally-supported teaching and learning innovation in Science in a clinical skills setting. This case study employed a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) strategy in the laboratory to explore the impact of students' self-assessment video recordings of their practical skill demonstration in a clinical skills setting. The significance of supporting teaching and learning innovations at the institution was explored. Data regarding the impact of the intervention from the students' perspectives was collected using Pre and Post -intervention questionnaires and group interviews. A reflective journal was used to capture the impact of the BYOD intervention from the lecturers' perspective. Student success and staff professional growth were further developed through the design of a bespoke Partnership Mentoring programme involving students as mentors to staff mentees. This case study provides staff members with an opportunity to be mentored by a student mentor to gain a direct insight to and an appreciation of the student experience at LyIT. Data was collected using reflective journals and group interviews. This summary report will focus primarily on the findings from the institution-wide staff survey and the group interviews with staff. For further reports on the Case Studies please contact the project lead.

Descriptive statistics were used to describe baseline data while cross tabulations were employed to demonstrate information along variables. Thematic analysis, drawing on Grounded Theory and the constant comparative method was used for open-ended responses and for the analysis of the interview data.

Data comprised:
- 58% (n=218) survey response rate from staff
- 12 interviews with staff
- 1 group interview with students
- 7 hours and 55 minutes of audio data
- 238 pages of transcripts
- 81, 241 words

Initial findings suggest the design of a meaningful professional development model, PROGRESS (see p.29), should be founded on the three pillars of:
(1) Professional Development *in* Practice
(2) Professional Development *for* Practice and
(3) Creating a Community *of* Practice.

The PROGRESS research findings emphasise the significant cultural shift required within the institution to implement changes in professional practice over time. Cultivating an institutional

culture of professional growth is a key priority for staff and one that involves implementation of a cogent, integrative framework that includes transparent process and support structures that serve to support staff in their meaningful engagement in professional learning. Further, a key challenge to encouraging, supporting and maintaining enthusiasm for engaging in professional development among all staff at the institution is understanding how to build sustainable and equitable professional networks across the institution.

The major research outputs include the PROGRESS model, which is an evidence-based model for supporting professional development planning processes at LyIT. This model can be adapted to other HEIs nationally and employed to support professional development planning within an institution's context. The overall aim of this planning model is to create sustainable pathways and equity of access to career growth opportunities for HEI staff. Equally important is that employee professional learning and growth is undergirded by the Scholarship of Teaching to impact positively on students' experiences of success.

3.1 Staff Survey Design

The survey opened to all staff in LyIT on 4th November 2019 and closed on 23rd November 2019. A strategic promotion campaign for the survey included the survey launch by Paul Hannigan, President, a memo to Executive Board, email communications to all staff and Heads of School/Function, social media advertisements and reminders facilitated by Samantha Lynch, Marketing Officer, flyers and a coffee morning sharing preliminary results with all staff while the survey was live.

In order to create a robust, evidence-based, valid and reliable survey the design was informed by the extant research literature and also drew from pre-validated instruments. Some of the key research literature underpinning this survey is outline below:

- Bennett et al. (1992)
- Biggs (1999)
- Bourdieu (1988)
- Bovill et al. (2011)
- Burrage & Torstendahl (1990)
- Carey (2018)
- Donnelly (2016)
- Fullan (1999)
- Fullan (2001)
- Hargreaves (1994)
- Hargreaves (2016)
- Hargreaves (2018)
- Hargreaves (2019)
- Hargreaves (2020)
- Kay et al. (2010)
- Lambert (209)
- Mats (1995)
- Meyer et al. (2007)
- McLaughlin (1996)
- Nicholls (2001)
- Reeves, D. (2010)
- Sachs (2000)
- Shin et al. (2014)
- Slowey and Schuetze (2012)
- Slowey, Kozina and Tan (2014)
- Speck, M. & Knipe, C. (2005)
- Stenhouse (1975)
- Teichler and Höhle (2013)
- Teichler and Kogan (2007)
- Walker (2001)

The following policies, reports and frameworks informed, directed and undergirded the PROGRESS research:

- DES Irish Educated Globally Connected: An International Education Strategy for Ireland 2016-2020
- DES National Skills Strategy
- HEA Accelerating Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions: Gender Action Plan 2018-2020
- HEA Actions Plans for Education
- HEA Brexit and Irish Higher Education and Research: Challenges and Opportunities
- HEA Enterprise Engagement Strategy 2015-2020
- HEA Higher Educating System Performance Frameworks
- HEA National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019
- HEA National Strategy for Higher Education 2030
- HEA Strategic plan 2018-2022
- IUA Ireland's Future Talent – A Charter for Irish Universities
- LyIT Research Strategy 2015-2020
- LyIT Strategic Plan 2019-2023
- National Forum Disciplinary Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework (DELTA)
- National Forum National Professional Development Framework
- National Forum Reflecting and Learning: The move to remote/online teaching and learning in Irish Higher Education
- National Forum Roadmap for Enhancement in A digital World 2015-2017
- QQI Strategy of Quality and Qualifications Ireland 2019-2021

The research drew from the following pre-validated instruments, which were utilised to benchmark the findings:

- Digital Experience insights survey (JISC, 2019)
- EuroStudent (2013)
- GLOBE professional development survey for curriculum implementation (Penuel et al. 2007)
- Irish National Digital Experience (INDEx) Survey (National Forum)
- Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) (HEA, IUA, THEA, USI, 2018)
- Professional Development in Higher Education Survey (IA, Fusch, 2018)
- T4SCL: Time for Student Centred Teaching (ESU, 2010)
- Voices of Academics in Irish Higher Education: Perspectives on Professional Development (Slowey, Kozina & Tan, 2014)

3.2 Staff Survey Overview

The survey was designed to be completed in approximately 8 minutes. A total of 21 questions were included in the survey, 16 of which were direct survey questions, one question asked for consent to participate, one question offered an opt-in for a prize draw and the final two questions offered an opportunity for survey respondents to volunteer to participate in group interviews. The survey questions were distributed across six sections.

1. **Section 1: Personal Details** contained three questions about gender, ethnicity and disability.
2. **Section 2: Employment** contained four questions about length of service, the nature of employment, if lecturing/educating was part of a respondent's job, including a pathway question about the type of lecturing/educating involved.
3. **Section 3: Participating in Professional Development** contained four questions about when staff last participated in structured PD, institutional supports, sharing learning and recognition for participating in PD.
4. **Section 4: Professional Development Interests** included three questions related to areas of PD, formats of PD and timings of PD engagement.
5. **Section 5: Workplace Wellbeing** contained 1 question about areas of wellbeing using a 3-point rating scale of Very interested to Not Interested about eight wellbeing areas.
6. **Section 6: Professional Development Planning** contained 1 question about career planning using a 4-point rating scale of Agree to Disagree about five statements.

11 questions were multiple choice and five of these questions offered free text responses under an 'Other' category. These five questions were:

- Q.2 Gender
- Q.3 Ethnicity
- Q.6 Employment type
- Q.8 Lecturing/educating
- Q.10 Institutional Supports

Six questions were structured on a Likert-type scale, four of which were three-point and two were four-point scales. Neutral options were not included on the ordinal scales. Further free text questions were not included in the survey because the subsequent semi-structured group interviews with staff were implemented to gather in-depth qualitative data. The response rate to the survey was 58% with 220 staff completing the survey and 218 valid responses. Therefore, at a 95% confidence level the survey data had a confidence interval of 4.22. Findings of <1% of the respondents will not be reported on in this summary in order to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of all survey respondents.
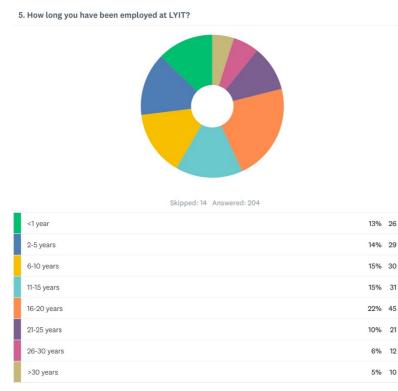
4. Findings

4.1 Survey

Section 1: Personal Details

The profile of respondents was generally representative of the institution's staff.
59% (n=126) of respondents were female while 39% (n=84) were male (Q.2) with 97%
(n=207) of respondents identifying as White/Caucasian (Q.3) and 7% (n=16) disclosed they
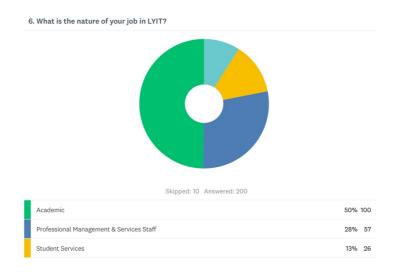have a disability (Q.4).

Section 2: Employment Information

Length of Service

Question 5 asked respondents how long they have been employed at LyIT. A total of 22%
(n=45) of respondents were employed 16-20 years, 30% (n=61) were employed between 6-15
years, while 6% (n=12) were employed 26-30 years and 5% (n=10) were with the institution in
excess of 30 years. On the other hand, 13% (n=26) of respondents were employed at the
institution less than a year and 14% (n=29) were employed between 2-5 years.

5. How long you have been employed at LYIT?

Skipped: 14   Answered: 204

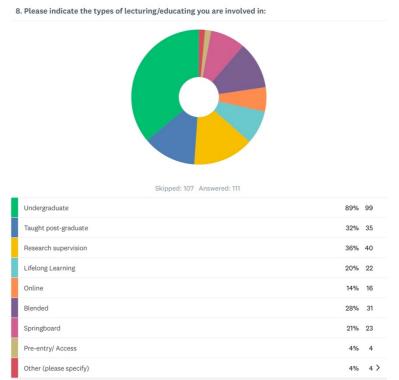|		
<1 year	13%	26
2-5 years	14%	29
6-10 years	15%	30
11-15 years	15%	31
16-20 years	22%	45
21-25 years	10%	21
26-30 years	6%	12
>30 years	5%	10

Nature of job

Q.6 asked respondents about the nature of their job. 50% (n=102) of respondents are academic staff, 28% (n=58) are Professional Management and Services Staff (PMSS) with 13% (n=27) in Students Services. Of those who completed the 'Other' option seven respondents identified as technicians/technical staff, one as Library staff, one as Catering, three as Administrative and one as Support Services. Three respondents identified as Research and Development. Therefore, when data in the 'Other' category is aggregated with the PMSS group the percentage is 38% (n=71).

6. What is the nature of your job in LYIT?

Skipped: 10   Answered: 200

Academic	50%	100
Professional Management & Services Staff	28%	57
Student Services	13%	26

Lecturing/educating

Staff were invited to detail if lecturing was part of their job (Q.7). 54% (n=111) of respondents agree that lecturing/educating is part of their job while 46% (n=93) disagree.

8. Please indicate the types of lecturing/educating you are involved in:

Skipped: 107   Answered: 111

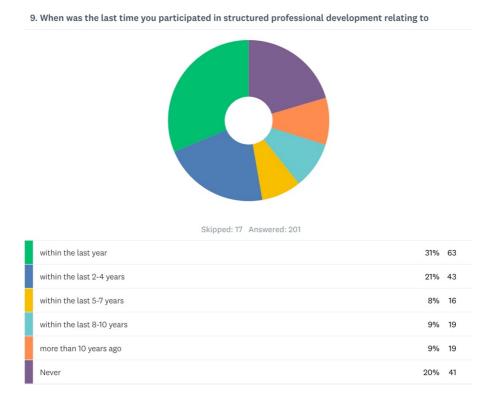|		
Undergraduate	89%	99
Taught post-graduate	32%	35
Research supervision	36%	40
Lifelong Learning	20%	22
Online	14%	16
Blended	28%	31
Springboard	21%	23
Pre-entry/ Access	4%	4
Other (please specify)	4%	4 >

A pathway question (Q.8) asked respondents to indicate the type of lecturing/educating they are involved in. Of those who considered lecturing/educating to be a component of their role 89% (n=99) were involved in Undergraduate programmes, 32% (n=35) in Taught Postgraduate

programmes, 36% (n=40) in Research Supervision, 20% (n=22) in Lifelong Learning, 21% (n=23) in Springboard while 4% (n=4) were involved in Pre-entry/Access. 28% (n=31) of respondent were involved in Blended programmes while 14% (n=16) were lecturing/educating Online.

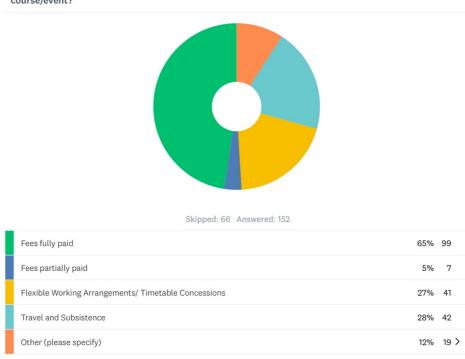*Section 3: Participation in Professional Development*

Previous Participation in Structured Professional Development
Staff were asked when the last time was that they participated in structured professional development relating to their job (Q.9). 31% (n=63) of respondents participated in structured

PD within the last year while 21% (n=43) within the last 2-4 years. However, all of those who participated in professional development within the last year have just been employed with the institution for less than a year. In the last 5-7 years 8% (n=16) of respondents participated in structured PD and similarly 9% (n=19) of respondents participated in PD within the last 8-10 years. It has been more than 10 years since 9% (n=19) of respondents engaged in PD while 20% (n=41) of respondents have never participated in structured PD.
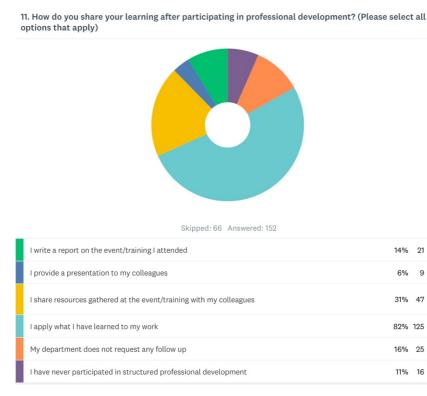
9. When was the last time you participated in structured professional development relating to

Skipped: 17   Answered: 201

within the last year	31%	63
within the last 2-4 years	21%	43
within the last 5-7 years	8%	16
within the last 8-10 years	9%	19
more than 10 years ago	9%	19
Never	20%	41

Institutional supports
Staff were invited to detail the supports that they have received from LyIT to complete a professional development training/course/event (Q.10). 65% (99) of respondents had their fees fully paid while 5% (n=7) had their fees partially paid. 27% (n=41) benefitted from flexible working arrangements/timetable concessions and 28% (n=42) of respondents were provided with travel and subsistence supports. Of the 12% (n=19) of respondents who completed the 'Other' option 14 respondents did not receive supports ('none' or 'never'), three respondents had just commenced with employment with the college, while one respondent's requests for supports were 'refused due to lack of training budget'.

10. What supports have you received from LYIT to complete a professional development training/ course/event?

Skipped: 66   Answered: 152

■	Fees fully paid	65%	99
■	Fees partially paid	5%	7
■	Flexible Working Arrangements/ Timetable Concessions	27%	41
■	Travel and Subsistence	28%	42
■	Other (please specify)	12%	19 >

Sharing learning

Staff were asked how they share their learning after participating in professional development (Q.11).

11. How do you share your learning after participating in professional development? (Please select all options that apply)

Skipped: 66   Answered: 152

■	I write a report on the event/training I attended	14%	21
■	I provide a presentation to my colleagues	6%	9
■	I share resources gathered at the event/training with my colleagues	31%	47
■	I apply what I have learned to my work	82%	125
■	My department does not request any follow up	16%	25
■	I have never participated in structured professional development	11%	16

The majority (82%, n=125) apply what they have learned to their work while 31% (n=47) also share resources gathered at the event/training with their colleagues but only 6% (n=9) provide a presentation to their colleagues following engagement in PD. 14% (n=21) of respondents write a report on the event/training attended while 16% (n=25) of respondents selected the option 'My department does not request any follow up'.

Recognition for Engaging in Professional Development
Staff were invited to agree with a series of statements about recognition for participating in professional development (Q.12). 63% (n=96) of respondents either Agree or Somewhat Agree that they feel LyIT formally recognises it when they engage in PD, while 37% (n=56) either Somewhat Disagreed or Disagreed with this statement. 67% (n=102) of all respondents either Agree or Somewhat Agreed that LyIT provides time and resources for them to participate in PD. 86% (n=130) of all respondents and 92% of female respondents either Agree or Somewhat Agree that their workload often stops them from participating in PD. 53% (n=80) of all respondents either Disagree or Somewhat Disagree that they can easily access information on PD opportunities in LyIT.

13. To what extent are you interested in the following professional development areas?

Row totals
Skipped: 28   Answered: 190

	Total Responses	Very likely		Somewhat likely		Not likely	
Teaching Methods	172	43%	74	26%	45	31%	53
Research related activities	174	47%	82	28%	49	25%	43
Technology / digital skills	187	72%	134	22%	42	6%	11
Leadership roles	171	44%	76	33%	56	23%	39
Administrative skills	168	30%	50	33%	56	37%	62
Equality, Diversity and	172	38%	66	41%	71	20%	35
Knowledge about your	181	75%	135	18%	33	7%	13

Section 4: Professional Development Interests

Professional Development Areas
Staff were asked to what extent they are interested in the PD areas in the table below on a 3-point Likert-type scale of Very Likely, Somewhat Likely and Not Likely (Q.13).

94% (n=176) of all respondents expressed that they are either Very Likely or Somewhat Likely to be interested in PD related to technology/digital skills. It is clear that the majority of respondents are interested in PD that targets knowledge about their specific role with 93% (168) of all respondents selecting either Very Likely or Somewhat Likely. 75% (n=131) of respondents are interested in research-related activities. 77% (n=132) of respondents are either Very Likely or Likely to be interested in PD engagement about leadership roles. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is another key area of interest to the majority of respondents (80%, n=137). Teaching methods and administrative skills are the PD areas of most interest to those who teach and those in administrative roles respectively.

Professional Development Formats
Staff were invited to state the likelihood of their participation in the PD training formats below on a 3-point Likert-type scale of Very Likely, Somewhat Likely and Not Likely (Q.14).

The primary PD training format that many respondents (40%, n=68) were not likely to participate in were discussion forums. The majority of staff were either Very Likely or Somewhat Likely to participate in Workshops (93%, n=173); Online (90%, n=165), Blended (82%, n=147), Mentoring (73%, n=124), Field work (86%, n=152), Self-study (84%, n=152) and Accredited courses (90%, n=167).

14. How likely are you to participate in the following professional development training formats?

Row totals
Skipped: 28   Answered: 190

	Total Responses	Very likely		Somewhat likely		Not likely	
Workshops/ seminar/	186	70%	131	23%	42	7%	13
Online	184	53%	97	37%	68	10%	19
Blended	179	39%	70	43%	77	18%	32
Mentoring	171	31%	53	42%	71	27%	47
Discussion forums	170	20%	34	40%	68	40%	68
Hands-on/ Field based	183	55%	100	31%	57	14%	26
Self-study/ reading articles/	180	48%	86	37%	66	16%	28
Accredited course	185	62%	114	29%	53	10%	18

Professional Development timing
Staff were invited to state the likelihood of their participation in the PD during a selection of times as outlined below on a 3-point Likert-type scale of Very Likely, Somewhat Likely and Not Likely (Q.15).

- During regular work hours
- After regular work hours and/or on weeknights
- Weekends
- Between teaching blocks
- During summer holidays

Overwhelmingly, all respondents were not likely to participate in PD training during summer holidays while the most popular options were either during regular work hours (87%, n=166) and after regular work hours and/or on weeknights (75%, n=136).

Section 5: Workplace Wellbeing

Staff were invited to state the likelihood of their interest in a selection of PD areas related to wellbeing as outlined below on a 3-point Likert-type scale of Very Likely, Somewhat Likely and Not Likely (Q.16).

- Counselling/Guidance services
- Physical Health
- Diverse Learning needs
- Equality and diversity
- Managing workloads
- Stress
- Switching off digitally from work

The wellbeing areas that all respondents are least likely to participate in is counselling/ guidance services with 34% (n=64) expressing they are not interested in this service. However, the majority of respondents expressed a high level of interest in the following wellbeing areas: mental health (82%, n=155); physical health (84%, n=157); managing workloads (86%, n=162), stress (89%, n=167) and switching off digitally from work (81%, n=152). Regarding the area of equality and diversity, most respondents (82%, n=155) are either Very Interested or Somewhat Interested in participating in PD related to this type of wellbeing. Further, most respondents (83%, n=156) expressed significant interested in PD related to diverse learning needs.

Section 6: Professional Development Planning

Staff were invited to state the extent to which they agreed with a selection of five statements relating to PD planning as outlined below on a 4-point-Likert type scale of Agree to Disagree (Q.17).

- Have a clear path for my career growth at LyIT
- I have a written professional development plan that has been agreed with my manager
- I have discussions with my manager about my professional development but nothing is written down
- I have never engaged in structured discussions with my manager about my professional development
- I feel I need more support from LyIT to structure and achieve my professional development goals

Most respondents (80%, n=148) feel that they need more support from LyIT to structure and achieve their PD goals. Further, the majority of respondents (80%, n=149) disagree that they have a written PD plan that has been agreed with their manger while over half of respondents (55%, n=102) do not have discussions with their manager about their professional development. However, just over half of respondents (54%, n=99) disagree to some extent that they have never engaged in structured discussions with their manager about their professional development. Further, slightly over half of all respondents (51%, n=95) also disagree to some extent that they have a clear path for their career growth at LyIT.

17. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your professional development planning?

Skipped: 32   Answered: 186

	Total Responses	Agree		Somewhat agree		Somewhat disagree		Disagree	
I have a clear path for my	186	14%	26	35%	65	23%	42	28%	53
I have a written professional	186	1%	2	6%	11	13%	24	80%	149
I have discussions with	186	9%	17	19%	36	17%	31	55%	102
I have never engaged in	186	33%	62	13%	25	19%	36	34%	63
I feel I need more support	186	47%	88	32%	60	11%	21	9%	17

4.2 Staff Interviews

Group interviews were facilitated for staff to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences of professional development at the institution.

For the staff, group interviews were conducted with respondents of the institution-wide survey who consented to participate by including their contact details at the end of the interview (Qs 20&21). All group interviews were semi-structured in format and were implemented to generate richer responses from participants about their priorities and aspirations for their professional growth at the institution (staff) and their experiences of the technology-enhanced learning initiative (students). Interview schedules were designed based on the findings from the survey data, thus enhancing the reliability of responses. Interviews with staff took place once the institution-wide survey had closed.

In total, 12 interviews were conducted with staff generating 7 hours and 30 minutes of audio data, and in excess of 230 full pages of transcripts.

The primary themes about professional development that emerged from the staff interviews were:
1. Cultivating an Institutional Culture of PD
2. Framework and Support Structures
3. Planning PD
4. Valuing PD

4.2.1 Cultivating and Institutional Culture of PD

Encouragement
Some of the key challenges for staff to engaging in PD included lacking a sense of encouragement from management and the need for more active, committed and goal-oriented support for PD from the top down. Most participants expressed a desire for regular progress meetings with their management team to help them to set their priority objectives for their PD and then to assess their progress and growth over time:

> 'I'm not being encouraged. I mean I publish at least two things a year and I had to go begging. You [need] objective[s]. [Management] agree the objective and next year, you didn't meet them or yes, you excelled them, great guy!' (65. /4A Academic).

> 'You know I myself would love to go on courses but I don't know would other people do that. So maybe if everybody had a chance to talk to their line manager specifically about their career (32. /4b Academic).

The management voice throughout the interviews acknowledged the importance of showing support for staff to participate in PD:

> 'And while you're doing it let's write a research paper for a national conference that you get a feel for what you're doing. So I think for me that's what I've been trying to do is not just for myself (and it's hard enough to find time to do my own) but then it is, right, what can I do with you, what can I do *with* you? (Mngmt 100)'.

Interview participants also expressed significant feelings of guilt about taking time off teaching to engage in PD and conveyed the stressful nature of trying to get classes/lectures covered in their absence:

> 'And you feel guilty by taking a day to go and do […] training. […] I look on the students kind of like I've a responsibility to them to be here for class. […] And I feel really guilty. It's like leaving your child at a child minder' (Academic 145).

The challenges that management face in terms of how to encourage staff to engage in PD were also discussed by interview participants. Staff, including Heads of Department/School recognised the difficult dichotomy between incentivising engagement in PD and enforcing stringent training and upskilling requirements upon staff:

> 'I wouldn't want to go down a forcing route' (Mngmt 501)

> 'You don't really want somebody looking over your shoulder' (Academic 626).

> 'But that sort of hammer approach just doesn't make any sense in that people then do it because they have to do it. And then that doesn't filter down' (Academic 324)

'It has to be tailored to what you need. And perhaps bigger incentives to do it such as you do not have to make up time when you do this course […] That's increasing your load even though you're training to help your post and the people around you. So yeah tailoring the training. […] And support that you do not have to make up time for a course that's deemed relevant' (PMSS 525).

Many participants alluded to the need for supportive performance appraisals that focused on agreed tangible deliverables from all staff in a connected manner.

'Because this is a new area to me, you and your line manager meets and they agree the topics. And then afterwards they get feedback, how did the whole thing go for you and where does it go from here, what point are you trying to make Erin, what outputs, and [how] can we help you to get there?' (Academic 574)

'And we all get the [appraisal] form afterwards saying this is what we agreed and these are the deliverables. That's what I want to see' (Academic 503)

Leadership

One of the key categories in how we endeavour to cultivate an institutional culture of PD is leadership. Participants shared their experiences of how a lack of leadership in the area of PD has resulted in their developing feelings of opposition towards career and professional growth. Some participants who have experienced this type of opposition from their management team feel a sense of servility and perceive that their PD objectives are out of step with the institution's approach to professional learning:

'That opposition, what's controlling that? […] That's not fair, like that the person's personality should be making me feel bad because I've done something that's very proactive for the college'(Academic 196).

'It's like I'm going against the flow of the top down policy. That's the way I feel. (Academic 256)

'Somebody should be chasing that down […] folks can I ask why are people not coming [to scheduled staff meetings]. Nobody asks us why they aren't even coming to meetings that they're organising' (Academic 603).

'And I always feel it's like I'm like a teenager looking to go to the Pulse, oh mammy, mammy. I just get that sense that I'm not really in step with what's coming from the top down' (Academic 254).

Staff Voice

Many participants shared their experiences of opposition at peer and management level to voicing their opinions. Further, one of the primary areas that participants would like to be addressed at institutional level is the perception of not being informed and not being listened to about key areas of professional development:

'But I suppose when you're trying to sort out when you're faced with how shall I say it, not pleasant reception when you do recommend things why bother. It's too much hassle' (Academic 448).

'Sometimes I miss the [institution committee] in some ways because I feel I know a lot less about what's going on. I don't know about new programmes' (Academic 510).

'So the issues I've raised at the recognised forum for such things have not been heard. I just feel that I'm not being listened to' (Academic 550).

'Well when you're given a task to do you like to do it to the best of your ability. And there's nothing worse than being asked to do something and you can't finish it, you've to go and ask somebody else going I've been asked to do this but I don't know how to do it' (PMSS 261).

Wellbeing

A significant area of interest and a particular challenge to meaningful engagement in PD for participants was wellbeing. Many participants suggested that an improved balance in their work/life routines would create pathways for them to engage in various professional learning. Participants shared their thoughts in relation to having to be switched on in the evening for work-related matters:

'And I should be doing other things in the evening times you know. I'd prefer to have those hours during the day, absolutely' (Academic 28)

Further, most participants recognised the benefits of enhancing professional knowledge and skills and competencies in order to be an exemplar for the students they teach and the educational environment they work in:

'Then work/life balance. Yeah by all means I think you know staffing education and learning environments like this should be role modelling their own learning on a continuous kind of growth and professional development is really important' (Academic 52).

4.2.2 Framework and Support Structures

Integrative Framework
Most participants suggested that in order to progress a culture of PD in LyIT an integrative framework with practical support structures needs to be designed and enacted at institutional level as soon as is feasible. Key findings suggest that in order to create a culture of PD within LyIT staff need to be engaged in the process in partnership with management and be kept informed of managerial approaches to cultivating and culture of PD:

> 'I think it [staff engagement with management] would be beneficial for
> both parties so the upper levels of management and ourselves. Because
> you could kind of, you know, air out your ideas so you can get other
> suggestions' (PMSS 214)

Most participants felt that a top down approach to PD is needed to an extent with management as drivers of PD in a positive, affirming and supportive manner:

> 'And so that has to be driven from the top […], and it's not. So we need
> to see something coming from the top but not being forced on you but as
> a beneficial thing that you should be engaging with' (Academic 478).

Generally, this is also echoed from the perspective of interview participants who in management roles:

> 'So practical structures, culture, management buy-in, strategic
> engagement and focus and foregrounding, all of those things need to
> come together. […] I do think for us as educational institutions
> something on professional development has to be in a strategic plan at a
> top level and buy-in from senior management across the board. And
> everybody has to be on the same page. […] if it's not spearheaded by top
> management in the institute it's not going to filter down unless people are
> highly motivated themselves. (Mngmt 416).

Staff Motivations for PD
Participants were asked to consider what motivates them to engage in PD with a view of how the institution can incentivise staff engagement in PD opportunities. Of significance to many participants was a desire for the institution to raise the expectations for staff to engage in PD:

> 'So all those kind of things need to be open I suppose in a way that you're
> not brow beating people and making people feel inferior or insecure or
> challenged. Then on the other side everyone's on a permanent job
> (Mngmt 380).

Further, many participants engaged in PD because of intrinsic motivations such as upskilling, participating in an accredited course of study (e.g. PhD) or to stave off professional cynicism:

> 'I might be able to do it [learning how to research] online you know but
> you know it's part of my research as well so it's going to tie. Only for
> that I wouldn't have put my name down for it until I had my PhD finished
> (Academic 153).

> 'And I tried. I done an online course or something just to get me out of
> that cynicism' (Academic 342).

Many of the participants from the Professional Management and Services Staff (PMSS) as well as Student Services reported years of experiences of having to create opportunities to engage in professional learning by organising their own PD with a lecturer:

> 'The last time they gave it to us [training course] [was] at Easter because
> the students were all gone and the lecturer was available and [lecturer]
> was willing to come in during [lecturer's] Easter holidays and train us.
> Now Easter is coming again now in April so we need to get on the ball
> straight away and see if [lecturer] is available again' (PMSS 81).

Strategic Pathways

Most participants shared their feeling of frustration at the flat structure of the institution because of the lack of professional learning and upskill opportunities, lack of job-related management or leadership roles and lack of career pipelines, particularly outside of academia.

> 'But that sort of stuff [leadership opportunities within your role] would
> probably feel like a step because it feels quite flat at the minute to me'
> (Academic133).

In order to create strategic pathways for professional learning and career growth, many participants expressed that the nature and description of roles in the institution were a contributing factor in its 'flat structure' that inhibit growth and progression.

> 'Well you have an assistant lecturer who sounds like they're assisting
> somebody in a lecture. But that's not how it is. Everybody is just the
> same' (Academic 267).

Support Structures

Many interview participants expressed feeling of being disconnected from colleagues and/or management. The impact of making connections with other staff members is a significant cornerstone of how the institution can support the personal and professional growth of employees. Many participants expressed the need for mentoring within the institution while many others acknowledged the positive impact of having a supportive network of colleagues.

> 'And that's probably what the senior lecturer should be. It should be
> helping the new people starting off so that if you're getting hours off your
> teaching time it should be to bring along others' (Academic 286).

> 'And we're very lucky we can lift the phone to somebody and say how do
> you do this and everyone kind of helps each other. It's that kind of
> atmosphere' (PMSS 55).

> 'Well it is because whenever I was in [function area] you did a certain job.
> But then when I moved to [function area] I found out very quickly that my
> Word skills were non-existent because I didn't type in [function area] so I

had to learn how to do documents and how to do indexes and I couldn't do it. And I had to go and get help. I just thought I'm going to have to get proper training. […] There are three experts that I constantly ring when I'm stuck' (PMSS 63).

'You need to be supported […] and to know then that the courses will be provided and the training will be provided without you having to fight for it as well' (PMSS 82).

In particular, many staff feel the impact of the physical isolation of being based in Donegal, away from PD opportunities that might be provided and readily available in the capital. This is an issue that has been recognised by management also.

'Whenever I asked about it before [management] said oh we can send you to a course in Dublin. And we said no we don't want to go to Dublin to be trained. We've lecturers in here who are experts. Can we not get one of our own lecturers to come and train us in-house here? I didn't want to go to Dublin. It's just ridiculous (PMSS 236).

'And when we're in Donegal you know it is very isolating you know and a lot of things are happening in Dublin and everything and you know it is awkward to get there. [It] makes things so much more awkward (Mngmt 353).

4.2.3 Planning PD

Progressing PD

Most participants felt frustrated at the inaction within the institution around the issues of progressing the professional development agenda, expecially in light of the findings from recent reports and policy in this field. Further, participants expressed a clear need for iterative cycles of professional development provision:

> 'The Hunt report came out in 2011. We're at this almost ten years. And a discussion, a framework, a structure could have been hammered home in a way and we would be so much further down the road' (Mnmgt 246)

> 'The report is quietly shelved […]. Instead of [management] saying yes this is an issue, let us now deal with it' (Academic 85).

> 'That's what we're going to look for. We're going to look now for a proper maybe full day[training] and we can have notes that we can take home with us again. Because you forget it unless you use it straight away' (PMSS 109).

> 'And then you might do something maybe on it twice a year and then you just forget the whole thing again. So we're going now to look again for another refresher course' (PMSS 49).

Tailoring PD

Requiring a tailored approach to the provision of professional development opportunities for staff is a key issue discussed by most participants. Participants suggested the need to communicate training requirements frequently to management (each year, each semester, etc.) and advocated the positivise impact of such a united and collegiate approach.

> 'Maybe […] if each semester […] that each department was requested to put forward what they think their training needs would be for the next six months or year' (PMSS 379).

> 'We had to look for training. I had to look for training for the administrative staff because the Word and Excel has changed so much over the years and we've never been shown. We've to ring each other, do you know, how to do this, do you know how to do that. So, I asked HR […] to organise some training for us during the Easter break or the summer break and one of the lecturers here came and did a couple of days training with us. That's the only training we've had in God knows how many years. And we had to nearly beg for it' (PMSS 31).

> 'The vast majority of staff [are] not interested in doing courses that are going to take them four years to complete. What we're looking for are short courses to just upskill our skills. There are some people who want to go off and do four year degrees and do a masters and whatever and it takes a long time. But the vast majority of staff are really only looking for help to give them more skill to do their day-to-day jobs' (PMSS 559).

'I think if there was kind of at least an annual review each year it could be asked well this is a suite of what we're offering, what would you be interested in or is there an area you'd like to get into and what are your professional needs if you were to do it (Academic 210).

'I think if […] you decide with [staff] okay what works for you, working on your own or working as part of a group, being part of a network or whatever and you kind of have to tailor it to everyone. And then that's hard to find everybody's individual map' (Mngmt 234).

'I think that whether it's HR or management need to ask the staff what do you need training in because we all have different training needs. We're not all at the same level. They need to ask what do you need and then see if it can support it. There's no point in saying we're running this course and you have to do it. And you're thinking no I don't have to do it, I already know that now, I'm skilled in that. They need to ask us what do we need' (PMSS 514).

In terms then of the mode of delivery for the professional development, most participants communicated their preference would be a face-to-face approach, while recognising and embracing the benefits of a blended mode of delivery.

'Because if you're online something else will distract you and whatever. So sometimes it's actually good to sit in a room for three hours' (Academic 427).

'I know that I've signed up to online courses, started them but having that self-motivation when you're busy can be tricky. Whereas signing up to two days and going those two days and I block them off in my calendar and I go right those two days are for my development and I'll go to a course' (Academic 76).

'I think you'd need the blended and you'd need a lot of face-to-face'(Academic 393).

Time and Cover

Most participants identified time as being a major barrier to engagement in professional learning opportunities. Participants expressed a desire for being afforded time during regular working hours to engage in professional learning. A significant factor regarding time that hindered participation in PD opportunities was the challenge of being required to make up the regular work hours that were utilised to engage in professional learning. The rhetoric of 'losing' work time that staff are then required to 'make up' is pervasive throughout the discussion about time and cover for participating in training and upskilling courses/events. Further, data suggest that there needs to be a suitable time slot allocated for all staff, including academic, PMSS and Students Services, to participate in job-related training or upskilling and professional growth opportunities. Some participants recommended that every department or function areas should have autonomy to plan their own tailored PD.

'And with only twelve or thirteen weeks in the timetable, you lose a week you're stuffed. Next week is going to be an absolute nightmare so it is because we lose three days'(Academic 310).

'I think it depends on timing as well. Because sometimes you're so busy in a semester that you feel you can't' (Academic 397).

'And then within a department [..] you can jig [the training] of course. That's where your autonomy comes in' (PMSS 282).

'If they would give us a Friday afternoon off even because there are no students being taught here on a Friday. Classes tend to stop around dinnertime or the latest one might be 3 o'clock' (PMSS 184).

[In relation to participating in a in training course]
'[staff member] is not getting any time off for that. You know [staff member] has to […] take leave. [staff member] is not granted any days off to do this […] course. [Staff member uses] own annual leave, which isn't right. So [staff member] is going to work all the hours possible [to] can get time off. It's quite exhausting' (PMSS 308).

Workload

Many participants emphasised the need to utilise work time efficiently and effectively in order to manage increasing workloads.

'And I would say a lot of people are too fatigued and too overworked that by the time the summer comes, it's either the wrong time to be doing training or they have absolutely no energy' (Academic 35).

4.2.4 Valuing PD

Formalising PD

The issues regarding defining what comprises and what counts as professional development arose frequently for many participants during the interviews. For some participants, informally collaborating with colleagues was not considered by them as PD.

> 'We are trying to develop ideas and collaborate outside of teaching time anyway. That does not count as professional development for me' (Academic103).

> 'You know you couldn't informalize it as in saying, right we'll all meet at the coffee dock at half 10. You know, because it's just like another thing on my list of to-dos (Academic 152).

Many participants who are feeling undervalued in their job raised the concept of positive appraisals and PD mapping in collaboration with their manager as a significant step towards how the institution values professional development of its employees.

> 'Then next year that form comes out and we look over it to say did we reach those objectives and why we didn't and where are the new ones and what went wrong with the plan. That's massive' (Academic 427).

Transparency and Consistency

Most staff expressed a strong desire and a need for transparency and consistency in approaches to the provision of professional development opportunities across the institution.

> 'So that would be one thing sort of the transparent framework, consistent framework across the institution for development' (Academic 148).

> 'We need management to say right, look here is the process, here's the training we can offer you. And everyone single person has the same opportunity to do it then. Then it's up to you' (PMSS 365).

Recognition & Remuneration

How the institution recognises its employees' meaningful engagement in professional development is a significant issue that was addressed by participants. Remuneration is a vital aspect of recognising the work and effort people invest in their jobs and their professional learning experiences, whether that is through promotion, leadership opportunities within disciplines and department or being remunerated for training provided to the institution.
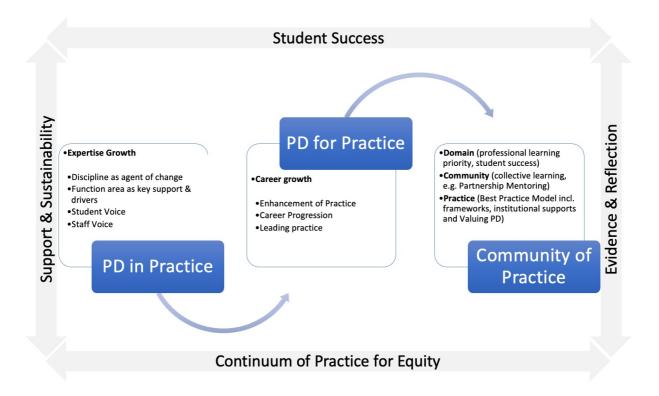
> 'I suppose maybe looking at more steps and opportunities you know where people can have acknowledgement whether that's digital badges or whatever where we can earn certain particular things you know and get recognition there' (Academic 148).

5. Impact and Sustainability

5.1 PROGRESS Model

Informed by research, the PROGRESS model is a robust model for supporting professional development planning at institutional level. This model is also a strategic institution-wide evidence base comprising survey data, interview findings and reflective journals and undergirded by policy, research literature, institutional strategic plans and research agendas and importantly a student success strategy.

The model can be implemented to plan for creating professional learning opportunities within LyIT and designing evidence-based integrated frameworks and associated resources. Of significance to planning for professional development across the institution is the creation of a continuum of practice for equity, ensuring that all staff have equal access to professional learning opportunities and pathways to career growth. Support structures at institutional level are of paramount importance for affording such opportunities to all staff and ensures the sustainability of the culture of professional development. The planning process should reflect on the evidence gathered from staff, students and the extent literature to inform the design of a robust learning framework for all staff, with the ultimate goal as an education provider to support, inform and champion student success.

The evidence suggests that the three pillar in the model can be utilised for planning professional learning as an institution-wide approach to learning rather than as a series of targeted courses for individual schools or function areas. (1) Professional Development *in* Practice champions growth in the expertise of staff, with particular focus on the discipline as an agent of change, the functions areas as key supporters and drivers of professional learning, informed by the staff voice and the student voice on how staff professional development enhances practice and learning for the institution's professional community. (2) Professional Develop *for* Practice

focuses on the career growth of the staff in terms of enhancing practice, career progression and creating pathways for staff to lead practice. Creating a (3) Community *of* Practice builds professional networks and a culture of shared learning among all staff as colleagues, each focusing on their priority domains for professional learning. The ultimate goal is to contribute to the design of best practice models, frameworks and resources that supports a culture of professional growth and that celebrates and values professional learning.

5.2 Cultivating an Institutional Culture of PD

Positive leadership of and for PD is vital to cultivating an institutional culture of PD. Leadership is needed to support and encourage different pathways to professional learning and to ensure a culture of scholarship and professional integrity is valued in order to stamp out those feelings of guilt, frustration, anxiety and feeling undervalued and unsupported within the institution.

5.3 Institutional Support Structures and Systems

Once the structures, resources and supports are set in place by the institution what is required are champions of professional learning who demonstrate and support the value of PD. Champions will act as conduits for the staff and student voice so that key messages are communicated promptly and professionally with senior management.

5.4 Valuing PD

Monitoring the progress of the institutional culture and provision of PD is vital as is monitoring of staff engagement with PD and reciprocal learning. This process is underpinned by the implementation of an evidence-based framework, monitoring processes, evaluations, appraisals and tangible deliverables. Of particular significance is engagement with external stakeholders (e.g. HEA, DES, THEA, National Forum and local industry) to underpin and inform strategic dialogue about the culture of professional growth being developed within the institution. Valuing PD through creating this culture of PD, listening to staff and students, providing varied pathways, financial supports, logistics, recognition and remuneration where appropriate.

5.5 Benchmarking

Internal and external benchmarking procedures that are carried out iteratively will contribute to the success and effectiveness of PD delivery and culture within the institution. National and international Surveys about PD and student success should be utilised as indicators of impact and success. Significantly, internal reviews of the institution's PD processes should be performed every 3-5 years iteratively, with the institution-wide survey rolled out preferably every 3 years as a primary benchmark.