

## Migration from the Traditional Apprenticeship Model of PhD Education to Development of a Structured Doctorate Postgraduate Research Training Programme, Ed4Life

**Sioban O' Sullivan**

*Cork Institute of Technology (Ireland)*

[siobhan.osullivan@cit.ie](mailto:siobhan.osullivan@cit.ie)

There has been a significant reform in the last number of years in the way graduate education is delivered in Irish tertiary education with a shift towards structured Masters and PhDs. These initiatives have been financially supported through PRTL I (*Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions*), The *Strategic Innovation Fund* (SIF), The Irish Research Council and the Health Research Board in partnership with higher education authorities. In 2008, the Irish Universities Association (IUA) published the Irish Universities PhD Graduates Skills' statement which detailed the desired learning outcomes and skills that PhD students may develop during their studies. This was followed by the development and continued revision and increased standardisation of policies, regulations and procedures of national guidelines of good practice in the organisation of PhD programmes in Ireland. These later initiatives have resulted in a marked movement away from the traditional apprenticeship model towards doctoral supervisory panels, the drafting and development of personalised professional development plans, clearer definition of a structured PhD and introduction of generic and subject-specific skills as an integral part of doctoral education.

Under PRTL I Cycle V, CIT received funding to establish and develop structured PhD education initially in Life Science (called *Ed4Life*) with the long-term goal of developing curricula for all students registered on a structured Masters or PhD, regardless of discipline. *Ed4life* is a collaborative project in the provision of research postgraduate education between three institutions, CIT partnered with the Alimentary Probiotic Centre in University College Cork and Moorepark Dairy Product Research centre.

In 2015, all students registered for a PhD in the institute must enroll on a structured program. In addition to the research question, the fundamental core of PhD training, students are now obliged to take an agreed number of accredited modules on generic, transferable and subject-specific skills such as research planning and methodology, research ethics, commercialisation, entrepreneurship as well as career planning, communication skills and teambuilding. With the recent development of these level 9 and 10 accredited modules comes an institutional shift in the way graduates are taught. The onus is on the supervisor and student to develop a personal development plan to map the learning taking place, identify deficits in learning to date, and plan to address these deficits by selecting modules the learning outcomes of which address any deficits. The *ed4life* programme was piloted in the academic year September 2011-2012 with a number of research students. Their experience of the programme was measured through interviews and focus groups.



International Conference  
**NEW PERSPECTIVES in SCIENCE EDUCATION**  
Edition 4

It is anticipated that this programme will impact significantly on education, training and employability.