

# INCLUSIVE ASSESSMENT CONFERENCE, WEDNESDAY 17/4/24, RADISSON BLU

**CASE STUDY: REDESIGNED  
ASSIGNMENT FOR PERSONAL &  
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
(PPD) LEVEL 6**

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**CITY OF DUBLIN EDUCATION  
AND TRAINING BOARD (CDETB)**



Rathmines College of FE is a constituent college of the City Of Dublin ETB. We currently have over 700 learners, from more than 65 countries.



We offer QQI courses in the areas of business, accounting, journalism, media, administration, liberal arts, law and software development.



# My teaching 'herstory'

- ▶ I joined Rathmines College in 2000.
- ▶ For the first half of my teaching career, I exclusively taught journalism & public relations.
- ▶ The vast majority of learners in this cohort were ethnically white and Irish, and had fluent English.
- ▶ Then I was asked to (also) teach Personal and Professional Development (PPD) to learners on the HND in Business, and subsequently on the QQI Level 6 advanced business course.
- ▶ This started me on a parallel but very different teaching journey, with groups of learners who were more diverse, ethnically and linguistically.



# Rathmines College and UDL

- ▶ In September 2020, I was one of four teachers from Rathmines College to complete the 10-week AHEAD Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Digital Badge course for FE tutors.
- ▶ Subsequently, the principles of UDL were shared with teaching staff through staff meetings, staff newsletters and informal mentoring.
- ▶ The college's quality assurances processes were updated to support and encourage the implementation of UDL principles in QQI assessments.



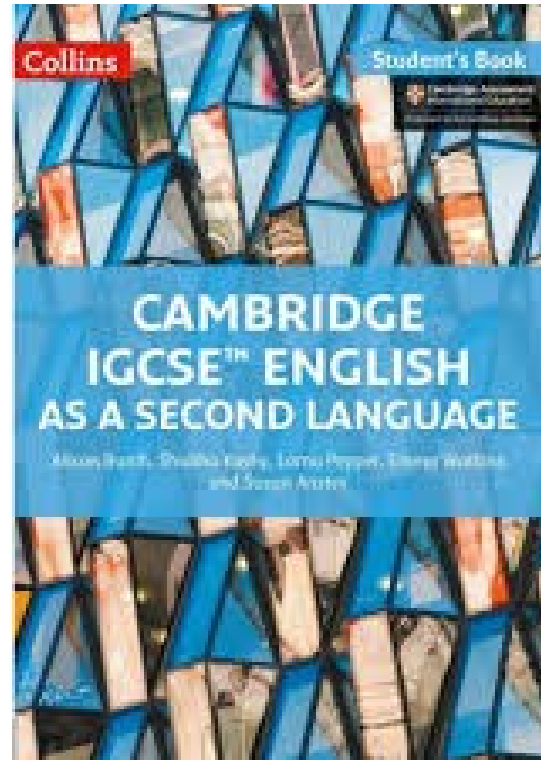
# The Redesign Activity: introduction

- ▶ As part of the UDL course, we were required to redesign a teaching / learning activity and report on it.
- ▶ This could be either a teaching activity or an assessment activity.
- ▶ I chose to redesign one of the assignments for the PPD module for the QQI Level 6 business students in 2020-2021.
- ▶ I have also gradually redesigned all of my teaching notes and resources since then. This is an ongoing process, updated and refreshed each academic year.

**Personal and Professional  
Development - QQI Level 6 -  
6N1949**

# The rationale for the initiative and the aim of the activity redesign

- ▶ English wasn't the first language for many of the learners in this advanced business class, so formal written assignments were especially challenging for that cohort.
- ▶ The aim was to enable the students in this group with poorer written English to have an alternative means of meeting the Learning Outcomes (LOs) and grading criteria in their first PPD assignment.
- ▶ The desired outcome was to ensure a fairer assessment for them, by removing a barrier which the fluent English speakers did not have.



# The Redesign Activity: implementation

- ▶ The previous PPD1 assignment brief, which addressed PPD theories and principles, but had only offered a single essay option, was redesigned.
- ▶ The new one allowed for a choice of either writing an essay or participating in a 'round table' group discussion as an alternative.
- ▶ This embodied the basic 'Plus One' philosophy of UDL, whereby an extra choice of assessment method was offered to all students, to remove the necessity of using formal written English for those students who may struggle with it.





# The how and when: methods and timeline of the redesign activity

- ▶ The two methods of submission were different, with the essay-writers submitting their documents via the online Moodle platform, and those who chose to partake in the group discussion/s having their work video-recorded by the tutor.
- ▶ The total timeline from the rewriting and issuing of the assignment brief to the submission deadline was a month.



# Outcome and impact of redesign activity:

- ▶ Out of the group of 18 learners:
  - ▶ One learner chose the essay option
  - ▶ Fifteen chose the round-table option
  - ▶ Two didn't submit anything
  - ▶ This assessment was less stressful for the learners in the second group.
  - ▶ Almost all of them received a Merit grade or higher in this assessment
  - ▶ I don't think many of them would have achieved this, had they had to write an essay instead.
- ▶ *“I personally think that this innovative idea was better for me because English is not my first language. Round table discussion provided me to know what other people are thinking and what is their point of view about the topic. In the round table conference all the participants had equal footings and in a better position to express and confront the issues.” - NK*

# ‘Less stress, more success’ (Kellie Harrington et al)



# Reflections on the redesign activity

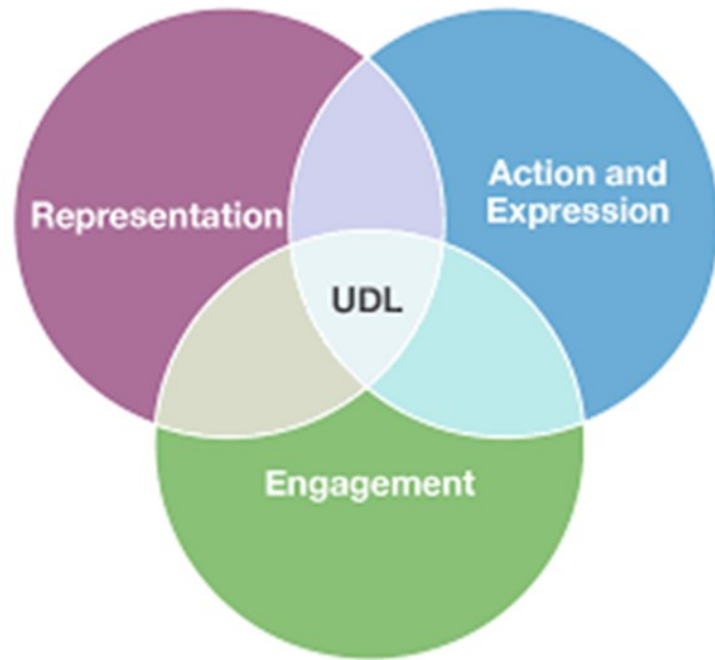
- ▶ *What worked well?*
  - ▶ Being able to offer an alternative assessment option for this PPD assignment resulted in a better grade for most students, and afforded less stress for them also.
  - ▶ For business students, a round-table discussion is probably a more sector-appropriate activity than an essay.
  - ▶ That way they can discuss concepts and learn from each other as well, as that student pointed out.
- ▶ *What were the challenges?*
  - ▶ The important first step is being creative about coming up with a 'plus one' idea.
  - ▶ Offering this 'plus one', however, does take more time, regarding:
    1. Redesigning the assignment brief
    2. Organising the assessment and
    3. Grading the assessment.
  - ▶ Of course more than one alternative can be offered.

# What did I learn?

- ▶ I think I learnt more about the importance of having an ‘even playing pitch’ for all learners
- ▶ My awareness of the impact of removing barriers to students’ achievement has also increased
- ▶ I find that having a **UDL mindset** shifts your thinking towards more creative teaching and assessment options, which ultimately suit more learners



## How UDL principles inform teaching & learning in Rathmines College of Further Ed



- ▶ Greater awareness of the benefits of a UDL approach to teaching and learning
- ▶ Providing multiple means of engagement, representation and action.
- ▶ More awareness of using examples and case studies that are culturally and socially relevant to our learners.
- ▶ Identifying barriers to student learning and aiming to reduce/remove them
- ▶ Two teachers have started the Masters in Diversity and Inclusion in FET through Trinity College and are feeding their learning back to the management team.
- ▶ Four members of the management team, including the Deputy Principal and the API for Academic Standards, completed the UDL Digital Badge in 2021 and are committed to building an inclusive learning environment.

## How UDL principles inform assessment in Rathmines College of Further Education



ASSESSMENT & MEASUREMENT

- ▶ There is an increased use of rubrics and consultation with students when designing assessments.
- ▶ All assessment briefs are internally checked before they are issued. This helps tutors to be confident that the assessment is meeting QA requirements.
- ▶ Pre-validation and internal verification of assessment briefs and graded learner evidence help ensure transparency and consistency in assessment.
- ▶ Staff therefore feel safe and supported, when using new UDL alternatives, and the burden on the learner is reduced.
- ▶ Graded learner work is moderated on a sampling basis, post-submission.
- ▶ External Assessors (EAs) are also embracing UDL initiatives in FE colleges

Thank you for your attention!

