

Essential information

about the call for applications

What is Community Engaged Research and Learning (CERL)?

Community Engaged Research and Learning (CERL) is an innovative approach which gives students the opportunity to participate in research and learning projects based on community ideas and needs, through the curriculum. CERL has been identified as a high-impact learning and teaching activity that educational research suggests increases student engagement and student retention.

The term CERL captures a wide range of different terms for community engaged research and learning. CERL can be taken to include community-based learning, service-learning, community service learning, community-based research, participatory action research, community-based participatory research, and science shop projects.

What is the CIRCLET project?

CIRCLET is the acronym for Curriculum Innovation through Research with Communities: Learning circles of Educators and Technology. This Erasmus+ project aims to strengthen the capacity of higher education, especially lecturers, to improve learning outcomes for students by rethinking curricula to incorporate CERL, enhanced by educational technology.

What is an (international Learning) Circle?

Learning circles involve people coming together to share and reflect on learning and experience as they address a particular issue – in this case how to rethink courses/modules to include CERL projects, enhanced by educational technology (online tools and strategies for collaboration and learning). The **local learning circles** will involve community partners, university staff and students with diverse disciplinary/ sectoral backgrounds. Goal is to co-design a proof-of-concept for transdisciplinary research and teaching through community engaged initiatives. The **international learning circle include** lecturers involved in the module and in the learning circle in the participating universities across Europe who come together online to share their experiences, ideas and questions, to learn together, in a structured way.

The exact format of the international learning circle will be shaped in collaboration with participants, and will draw on the learning from the local learning circles (for example the 2020-1 international learning circle involved a 'practice' track and a 'research' track). Potential outcomes of international learning circles are international publications by members about their process for rethinking courses to incorporate CERL, sharing and/or developing examples of CERL.

Are there minimum language requirements?

You will need a suitable level of English (written and spoken) to participate in the online module. Please see TU Dublin English language requirements [here](#).

For the learning circle, we foresee to use either Dutch or English, depending on whether non Dutch speaking people are participating.

Do I need to be experienced in reflection?

Not formally, as we will provide templates, supports etc. We are looking for people who already have some self-awareness and who look to learn from their experiences.

Do I need to be experienced in CERL/technology/module revision/design?

No – we will recruit participants with a mix of experience so you can learn from your peers as well as from the resources and facilitators. The project will also bring in expertise from relevant colleagues at institutional level, as well as community partners.

Where will I find community partner(s) for a CERL project?

Your local CIRCLET co-ordinating team will help you with this. We have ongoing relationships with a wide range of community partners, and ideas on file from the form projects with students across disciplines.

What criteria will be used to assess the applications?

- ◆ Interest in: CERL; revising modules/courses; and educational technology
- ◆ Potential to develop and sustain a CERL project in a course/module
- ◆ Clear personal goals for the module/Learning Circle
- ◆ Awareness of strengths and potential challenges.
- ◆ Enabling language ability for Learning Circle (English and local language)
- ◆ Support from Head of School/Department

For more detail see table in appendix 2.

Why are you asking for the support/consent of Head of Programme/Institute/School

We feel that making your manager aware of your application and interest in this area, and asking them about how they can commit to supporting you, will bolster you on your journey of implementing CERL projects.

Can I withdraw?

If at all possible, we would ask that once you have confirmed the offer of a place, you honour that commitment. As this is a competitive process, if you withdraw it means you have taken a place that someone else might have used to the full.

What happens if something goes wrong?

Please contact your local CIRCLET co-ordinating team as soon as possible, so they can work with you to provide support.

I still have questions, what do I do?

For questions about the online module: visit us online for our drop-in question and answer webinars about the Online Module: Monday 19th April 11.30 am-12.30pm Central European Time ([Click here to join](#)) and Tuesday 4th May 1.30pm-2.30pm CET ([Click here to join](#)).

For general or learning circle questions: Speak to your local coordinating team (Sarah Pardon and Linde Moriau) and/or contact us at info.cerl@vub.be.

If you need a more detailed comparison to help you decide between the learning circle and the online module, please see the table in Appendix 1 below.

Appendix 1: More detail on the differences between the Learning Circle and the Online Module

	Learning Circle	Online Module
Description	Regular scheduled meetings (in person and/or online), supplemented with independent and small group learning, in collaboration with local peers. Participants interested in collaborating with international peers can join the International Learning Circle too.	Weekly webinars with regular small assessments, individual and group work, alongside local and international peers. These lead to a final reflection and detailed proposal for a CERL project within a module.
Timing	Full academic year 2021/2022	Semester 1, Autumn 2021, with final assignment due early January 2022.
Planning and delivering your CERL project	Semester 1 involves planning your CERL project on the course/module, and semester 2 focuses on delivering it with the community partner. Peer and science shop support for your CERL project in both semesters in various forms and using various communication media.	The module focuses on planning for CERL project delivery. One of the module requirements is that participants must agree and sign a project timeline agreement form with a community partner, to run a CERL project in the following 12 months. Participants can choose to join the international learning circle in semester 2 to support their CERL project delivery.
Number of participants	Max 10 in each local Learning Circle, max 50 across all project partners	Max 20
Facilitators and contributors involved	Guest inputs from experienced CERL coordination staff will facilitate the process of collaboration and peer learning.	Experienced CERL staff will facilitate discussions in webinars, these will include presentations from participants, and guest inputs from experienced CERL stakeholders.
International dimension	Local learning circles will be connected internationally, offering collaboration opportunities for interested participants, where possible clustered around common interests.	Participants and facilitators from several European universities. Small group work will involve a mix of partners from different universities to allow participants to meet as many peers as possible.
What supports will I receive?	Your local CIRCLET co-ordinating team will support the Learning Circle participants in a variety of ways, from facilitating sessions to providing resources and feedback, as well as co-ordinating small group micro-learning circles. Participants who choose to take part in the international learning circle will also receive appropriate supports.	Weekly webinars from your own university as well as from TU Dublin, with technical support. A wide range of online resources. A designated drop-in weekly online 'office hour' for asking questions. Weekly feedback from peers and/or module facilitators. Online discussion boards for questions and answers. In each participating university, at least one face-to-face meeting of the local participants in the online module may be facilitated, to build the local support network.
What will I be expected to do?	Plan your reimagined course/module by the end of the first semester to include CERL and Technology-enhanced learning. Active reflection on the process. Deliver a course/module with a CERL project responding to a research question from a community partner.	Weekly reading/viewing of resources and regular assignment submissions, including reflection on learning, and group work assignments. These will require 4-5 hours per week. Co-design with a community partner the CERL project you will complete together within the next year and submit a co-signed timeline agreement form. Final assignment (30-40 hours' work across the semester into early January).
What optional elements are offered for me?	Participation in the International Learning Circle is optional.	There will be some choices within assignments given, but all assignments are compulsory and must be passed in order to successfully complete the module.

	Learning Circle	Online Module
What do I receive at the end?	Certificate of participation. (The CIR-CLET team is exploring the possibility of accrediting digital badges for participants.)	Certificate from TU Dublin confirming your 5 ECTS (subject to successful completion of all assignments).
Do I need particular technological skills and/or access to hardware/software?	Access to your own virtual learning environment (e.g. Moodle, Brightspace, Canvas), and to online meeting tools commonly used in your university (e.g. MS Teams).	Recommended browsers for Brightspace (the TU Dublin virtual learning environment): Chrome, Firefox, Safari. Internet Explorer is not suitable - (see Video 1 - Getting started in Brightspace as a student). Also access to your own virtual learning environment, to use technology to enhance your CERL project
How much time will I need to commit?	No more than 20 hours contact time and around 5-8 hours independent learning across 2 semesters. International learning circles will involve additional time.	9 weekly lunchtime webinars, with regular small individual and group assignments, requiring 4-5 hours per week. Final assignments requiring 30-40 hours across the semester. 100 learning hours are required for 5 ECTS.
Do I have to attend every session?	Yes, where possible, in semester 1. In semester 2 the sessions will address particular challenges, so you will have the option of attending some but not others.	Each participant must attend 9 webinars over 11 weeks. Two of the nine webinars will be repeated in different weeks, so participants can choose the most convenient date to attend.
Are the session times set?	These will vary in different partner universities, but will certainly be set before semester 1. Contact your local CIR-CLET representative if this is of concern to you.	Fridays from 1-2pm Irish/UK time, 2-3pm Central European Time.

Appendix 2: Rubric for evaluating applications.

	Not yet at level required	At level required	Above level required
Clear personal goals for the module/Learning Circle	No clear goals	Clear goals, related to module/learning circle	Very clear goals, very closely related to module/learning circle
Awareness of strengths and potential challenges.	Little or no articulation of strengths and potential challenges	Clear articulation of strengths and potential challenges, related to module/learning circle	Very clear articulation of strengths and potential challenges, very closely related to module/learning circle
Potential to develop and sustain a CERL project in a module (you should teach and assess the module)	Does not teach and assess a suitable module	Teaches and assesses at least one suitable module.	Teaches and assesses at least one suitable module with clear potential for sustainability
Interest in CERL	Interest not clearly expressed	Quite Interested	Very interested
Interest in educational technology	Interest not clearly expressed	Quite Interested	Very interested
Relevant experience/ interest in revising modules	Interest not clearly expressed	Quite Interested	Very interested
Additional locally specific requirements:			
Support from Head of School/Department	Not complete	Support expressed, no clarity re tangible form	Support expressed and tangible measures described
Enabling language ability for module: English	Not enabling enough for module requirements	Enabling enough for module requirements	Fluent
Enabling language ability for Learning Circle (English/ local language requirement?)	Not enabling enough for learning circle	Enabling enough for learning circle	Fluent
<p>Note we will select participants for maximum diversity (gender, level of teaching experience, subject(s)/ discipline(s) taught, level of experience (CERL, technology, developing courses/modules), university (CPD module only)).</p> <p>We also need to recruit a minimum number of participants with a level of interest in the transnational learning circle, as it is a requirement of our funding.</p> <p>To maximise sustainability, we may prioritise: programme coordinators; module coordinators; course leaders</p>			

