



# 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 international learning circle include lecturers involved in the module and the learning circle from 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.

### 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.

### 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.

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

Your local CIRCLET co-ordinating team will help you with this. They have ongoing relationships with a wide range of community partners, and ideas on file from them for 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.

*For more detail see table in appendix 2.*

### Can I withdraw?

If 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?

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

### Has this initiative run before in Queen's University Belfast?

Yes this initiative ran for the first time in 2020-2021. 10 educators took part in the QUB Learning Circle and two took part in the Online CPD Module. The disciplinary mix was wide with participation from all three Faculties. Feedback was generally very positive, with educators highlighting the importance of sharing expertise and experiences from different academic areas and with international colleagues. Several CERL projects are currently running as a result of this work, with more in the pipeline

### I still have questions, what do I do?

Online module Q&A sessions (drop-in): Monday 19th April 10.30 am– 11.30 pm (Irish and UK time) ([Click here to join](#)) and Tuesday 4th May 12.30-1.30pm Irish and UK time ([Click here to join](#)).

Come to an information session: Online briefing and Q&A about the project and opportunities available with Emma McKenna, the QUB Co-ordinator on Tuesday 30th March 1-2pm ([click here to join](#)) or Wednesday 14th April 1-2pm ([click here to join](#)) or contact [science.shop@qub.ac.uk](mailto:science.shop@qub.ac.uk)

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.



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

	Learning Circle	Online Module
<b>Description</b>	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.
<b>Timing</b>	Full academic year 2021/2022	Semester 1, Autumn 2021, with final assignment due early January 2022.
<b>Planning and delivering your CERL project</b>	Semester 1 involves planning your CERL project on the course/module, and semester 2 focuses on delivering it with your 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.
<b>Number of participants</b>	Max 10 in each local Learning Circle, max 50 across all project partners	Max 20
<b>Facilitators and contributors involved</b>	Guest inputs from both university staff and experienced community partners. 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.
<b>International dimension</b>	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 to meet as many peers as possible.
<b>What supports will I receive?</b>	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.	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.
<b>What will I be expected to do?</b>	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).
<b>What optional elements are offered for me?</b>	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
<b>What do I receive at the end?</b>	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).
<b>Do I need particular technological skills and/or access to hardware/software?</b>	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 - <a href="#">Getting started in Brightspace as a student</a> ). Also access to your own virtual learning environment, to use technology to enhance your CERL project
<b>How much time will I need to commit?</b>	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.
<b>Do I have to attend every session?</b>	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.
<b>Are the session times set?</b>	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
Interest in revising modules	Interest not clearly expressed	Quite Interested	Very interested

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)).

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.

To maximise sustainability, we may prioritise: programme coordinators; module coordinators; course leaders