



Capacity for Change: Staff Development Driving Educational Transformation

**Dr. Niamh Plunkett, Maureen Haran, Patrica Henry
Atlantic Technological University (ATU)**

EUA Conference 2026

Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Lisbon, Portugal

Who are we?

Dr Niamh Plunkett –
Head of Teaching &
Learning

Maureen Haran –
UDL Centre of
Excellence Lead

Patricia Henry –
Teaching & Learning
Senior Support
Officer



Why UDL? Institutional Context and National Drivers

A large, diverse, multi-campus
Technological
University – formally
established in 2022

High proportion of
access, mature,
online & apprentice
learners

Strong national policy
emphasis on equity,
access & student
success

UDL Development 2017 to Present



Bottom-Up: Building Capacity and Ownership



INFORMATION
WORKSHOPS &
LOCAL ROLLOUTS



CPD PATHWAYS AND
DIGITAL BADGES



UDL WORKING
GROUPS AND
CHAMPIONS



MODULE AUDITS
AND ACCESSIBILITY
TOOLKITS



STUDENT VOICE AND
LOCAL INNOVATION



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**Teaching
& Learning
Centre**

Top-Down: Leadership, Structures and Resources

- Senior management buy-in
- UDL Centre of Excellence proposed & established
- Conditions for change
- Peer networks & Regional UDL Hub
- National Workshops & Conferences

Embedding UDL Through Strategy and Policy



ATU Strategic Plan 2024–2028



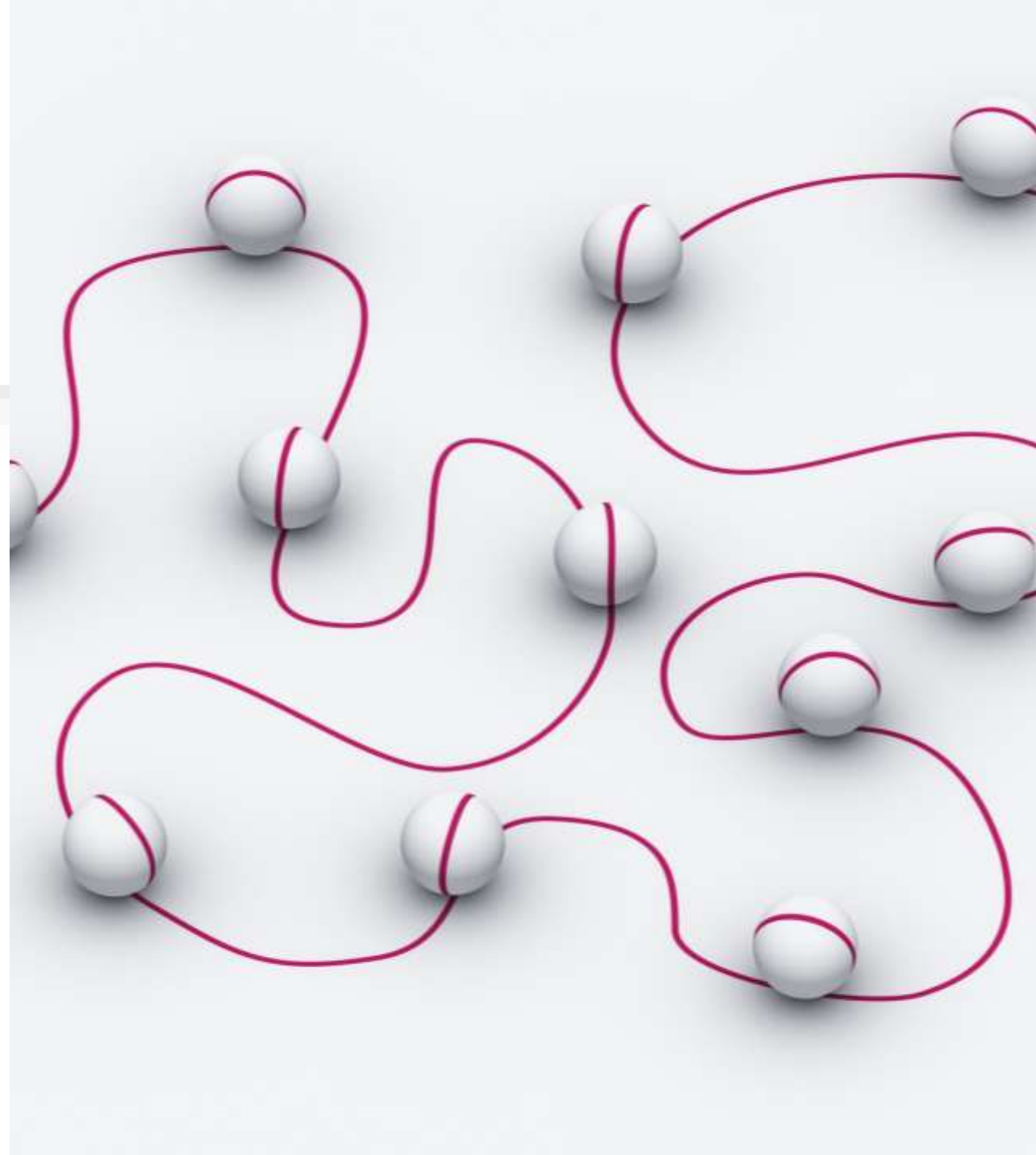
Learning, Teaching &
Assessment (LTA) Strategy
2026-2030



HEA System Performance
Framework & National
Access Plan

Bridging Strategy and Practice: A Dual Approach

- Top-down enables
- Bottom-up activates
- Leadership connects





From Development to Sustained Impact

- Long-term evidence informed change- Culture change, not compliance
- CPD & Recognition & Strategy = Sustainability
- Embedded in strategy, systems & practice
- Scalable and transferable
- UDL as Cultural Transformation



ANNUAL UDL CONFERENCES CLIMBING THE UDL LADDER



2021 - Building a Culture of Inclusion in Higher Education



2022 - Conceptualising UDL with the Student Voice



2023 - Overcoming Obstacles to Enhance and Sustain UDL Collaboration in Tertiary Education



2024 - Practical Approaches to Embedding UDL in Tertiary education



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**UDL
Centre of
Excellence**

ATU UDL Timeline



UDL FOUNDATIONS ESTABLISHED

- Workshops
- Roll Outs
- Working Group
- Pilot Study
- Module Audits
- Blackboard Ally

2017-2020



SATLE & STUDENT-VOICE PROJECTS

- Conceptualising UDL with the student voice
- Programmatic review resources on Moodle

2021



NATIONAL UDL CONFERENCE

- Inaugural CUA - UDL Annual National Conference
- 2021
- 2022
- 2023
- 2024
- 2025 - May 29th

2021-2022



ATU DESIGNATION & MAJOR UDL MILESTONES

- UDL Centre of Excellence established
- PG Cert & MA
- Recipients of John Kelly Award
- National Leadership on 3 UDL Path 4 Projects

2022



SECTOR CAPACITY BUILDING

- Peer Networks
- Student Empowerment Project
- National Workshop Series
- Regional UDL HUB with ETB's

2023



ALTITUDE LAUNCH & SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

- ALTITUDE Framework launch
- Student Digital Badge
- National UDL Conference 2024

2024



ALTITUDE BENCHMARKING & INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION & SECTOR SUPPORT

- Benchmarking ATU's ALTITUDE actions
- Collaborating internationally (EQUIP-HUMBER College)
- Supporting institutions adopting the framework

2025

Embedding UDL in Programme Development and Curriculum Design

Atlantic Technological University

Doc. No: AQAE004
Rev No: 002



Programme Design Policy

Document Area	Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement
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Author	Academic Quality Assurance & Enhancement Team qaet@atu.ie
Required Approval	Academic Council

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Internal Staff Portal / Hub	Yes (default repository)
Internal Student Portal / Hub	No
ATU Website	Yes
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Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

“ATU has subscribed to ALTITUDE, the National Charter for Universal Design in Tertiary Education. The PDT should consider how programmes can be designed to enable as many students as possible to undertake their programme of study by building programmes that nurture learner variability, choice, and flexibility, where reasonably possible.”

Academic Module Manager 4.5



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Login

Registered to Atlantic Technological University

Module Manager tool for curriculum design.

Inclusive Programmatic Review

How to use this toolkit:

Strengths - clear elements of inclusive design (Note: audit scores rated 3, 4 and 5 are considered strengths)

- ✓ In most cases Student feedback is gathered for each module and feedback reports are formally considered and action plans developed in response to this feedback. Specific issues for inclusion form part of the feedback gathered.
- ✓ Also in many cases information regarding accommodations/ supports for students with disabilities is communicated appropriately and discretely to those teaching these students, and these students are invited by teaching staff to discuss any individual needs with them.
- ✓ Learning is centred on problem-solving, engagement, and action, rather than memorising content.
- ✓ With the exception of 4 of the 19 modules audited students always have a choice or a variety of assessments e.g. a module isn't assessed using only one method such as midterm essay followed by essay-style exam questions/ answers. There are some exceptions
- ✓ Many modules claim that there are readily available published rubrics, marking criteria, and grade descriptors available to students.
- ✓ To a high degree Assessment strategies are aligned across a programme and student workload is taken into consideration when planning deadlines and exams.
- ✓ Assessment methods are provided that encourage students to learn from and support each other, creating a collaborative educational environment.
- ✓ Assessment load of students is considered in the programme stage, and module development - allowing

Gaps - areas to consider further inclusive methods. (Note: audit scores rated below 3 reveal gaps)

- ❖ Universal design of teaching and learning does not invariably form part of learning goals
- ❖ It was not unanimous that workload is balanced across modules of the same level and credit weighting.
- ❖ Not all teaching staff has all been trained in diversity and inclusion e.g. disability awareness, unconscious bias, or similar.
- ❖ Equality, quality, diversity and inclusion is not always visible in the curriculum/this is not clearly articulated. (e.g. decolonising the curriculum, gender balance, disability awareness, global class, adult learning principles, disparity of wealth, ageism etc.)
- ❖ In 58% of modules audited, students are not given the opportunity to be partners in their learning and have input in directing teaching content, assessment, and other processes.
- ❖ In a high number of cases it was reported that sample answers are not available to all students, showing a sample grade A and grade D piece of assessment.
- ❖ A glossary tends not to be provided when starting a new module or area of study.

Recommendations - options for further learning or training (Note: this is based on identified gaps)

- Revise learning goals to include universal design of teaching & learning
- Seek to balance workload across modules of the same level and credit weighting.
- Have all staff undertake training in diversity & inclusion
- Ensure quality, diversity & inclusion is made visible across the curriculum and is clearly articulated
- Consider giving students the opportunity to be partners in their learning and have input in directing teaching content, assessment, and other processes.
- Consider providing students with sample answers are not available to all students, showing a sample grade A and grade D piece of assessment
- Consider providing a glossary for students when starting a new module or area of study.

Inclusive Programme Reviews to drive cultural change



Faculty of Online Development

Postgraduate Certificate/Master of Arts in Universal Design for Learning (Online)

Course Code

Duration

1 year

Credits

90

NFQ Level

9

Now Open Internationally!

- **Options** – Students can exit with the Post Graduate Certificate (30 ECTS) or progress to the MA in UDL (60 additional ECTS).
- **Pathways** – Graduates of the UDL Digital Badge in Teaching & Learning can progress to the programme. Research publication opportunities for MA graduates with links to INCLUDE and UDL-IRN.

To frame this learning, the curriculum casts a view on global and national conceptualisation comprising of attitudinal beliefs and the ways in which underrepresented groups or facets of diversity and education have evolved. Through a UDL teaching and learning lens, educators will learn the value of human diversity and respect of varied talents and perspectives regarding education.



UDL Services/Highlights

Irish Independent News Opinion Business Sport Life Style Entertainment
News Sport Business Lifestyle Local Notes

ATU wins prestigious award for innovation in Teaching and Learning

John Kelly Award for Universal Design in Further and Higher Education



ATU's Niamh Plunkett and Maureen Haran accepting the UDL Excellence in Collaboration Award with John Kelly, Mark Glynn, Anna Kelly and Dara Ryder.

[Link to Award Presentation](#)

Initiatives & Events

[ATU UDL Website](#) has more information on the following events:

- Annual ATU – UDL Conference
- UDL Digital Badge Showcase – Webinar Series
- National Forum UDL Initiatives



UDL Academic Peer Network

- ATU UDL Centre of Excellence is collaborating with peer network across all campus's providing UDL initiatives, workshops, sharing best practices and growing community of practice.

UDL Digital Badges

- UDL Digital Badges in Teaching & Learning
 - National Roll Out - AHEAD/ UCD
 - Local Roll Outs – ATU UDL Centre of Excellence
(ATU has 24 UDL Digital Badge facilitators mentoring peers across further and higher education.)
- UDL Student Badge
- Beyond the Classroom - UDL Digital Badge for Professional & Supports Services Staff





ALTITUDE

THE NATIONAL CHARTER FOR UNIVERSAL
DESIGN IN TERTIARY EDUCATION

The 4 Pillars	Learning, Teaching & Assessment	Supports, Services & Social Engagement	Physical Environment	Digital Environment
Goal	Reduce barriers to learning by building more flexibility, accessibility, clarity, learner voice and choice into how programmes are designed and delivered	Reduce barriers to student success by ensuring student services and extra-curricular activities are flexible and accessible for all learners	Reduce barriers in the physical environment by ensuring they are accessible, welcoming, and sensory-aware spaces that support flexible use	Reduce barriers to digital engagement by ensuring digital platforms & materials are accessible, easily navigated & understood by all
Related Actions	Key staff across the four pillars collaborate to make incremental and sustainable progress on the following actions:			
Embed UD in...	quality assurance, programme design and programme validation processes	evaluation processes for support services, facilitating diverse learner input	procurement criteria to deliver accessible and user-friendly built environments	procurement criteria to deliver accessible and user-friendly platforms, websites & apps
Invest in...	instructional design resources and tools which support inclusive educational practices	tools which support ease of access to and use of supports and services	inclusive, sensory-aware spaces for learning, social activity, prayer, and sanitary purposes	digital tools & assistive technologies which facilitate inclusion & UD practice
Provide professional development in...	digital accessibility, digital teaching tools, UDL and the scholarship of learning, teaching, and assessment	digital accessibility, accessible communications & UD beyond the classroom	universal design and relevant national building standards concerning accessibility	digital accessibility, relevant international accessibility standards, & UD principles
Develop Communities of Practice around...	inclusive educational practices such as UDL	delivery of barrier-free learner supports and services through a UD approach	system-wide approaches to inclusion in the built environment	digital accessibility across the institution
Foster Cross Departmental Collaboration on...	the availability of core programme materials in accessible formats	managing the volume of communications sent to learners	flexible layout and use of learning environments	consistent use of the virtual learning environment
Support...	programmes to consider assessment load and embed inclusive educational practices such as UDL in design	student services to embed flexibility and options for engagement in how and when learners utilise services	development of clear mechanisms for learners, staff, and visitors to report physical accessibility barriers	development of clear mechanisms for students, staff, and visitors to report digital accessibility barriers
Nurture diverse student partnerships to support...	evaluation of course accessibility, co-creation of curricula & assessment design	promotion of accessibility & inclusion in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.	evaluation of indoor and outdoor spaces for accessibility, usability, and ease of navigation	the development and evaluation of digital platforms, websites & apps for accessibility and ease of use

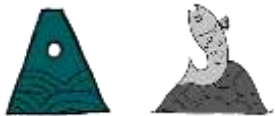
CPD to Support UDL Integration



Patricia Henry

T&L Senior Support Officer

ATU



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Teaching & Learning Support Centre

Various CPD Programmes available at ATU

- Universal Design for Learning



- Universal Design Beyond the Classroom



- Graphic Facilitation Digital badge



- ATU ENGAGE - Advance HE Fellowships Accreditation



ENGAGE



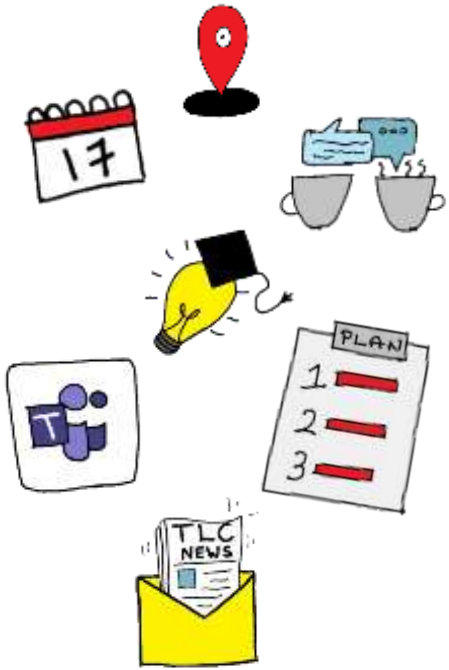
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My CPD: Graphic Facilitation to UDL Innovation

Digital. Badge in Graphic Facilitation

UD Beyond The Classroom Digital. Badge +1 Redesign



Essential Links & Resources

<p>Meet your lecturer</p> <p>Rosalind Walsh</p>	<p>Essential Module Info</p>	<p>Helpful Module Info</p>	<p>Week 1</p>
<p>Week 2</p> <p>Understanding Participation</p>	<p>Week 3</p> <p>Policy to Practice</p>	<p>Week 4</p> <p>Accessibility</p>	<p>Week 5</p> <p>Introduction to Universal Design</p>
<p>Week 6</p> <p>UDL: Disciplinary Context</p>	<p>Week 7</p> <p>Reading/Class</p>	<p>Week 8</p> <p>Recognising Diversity & Pedagogical Practice that relates to UDL</p>	<p>Week 9</p> <p>Production and Revision of a Final Presentation</p>
<p>Week 10</p> <p>UDL in the Global Context</p>	<p>Week 11</p> <p>Cognitive Design Annotations</p>	<p>Week 12</p> <p>Feedback</p>	<p>Student supports</p>



Visualise Your Message: Harnessing the Power of Graphics in Communication

Author: Rosalind Walsh, Teaching & Learning Support Officer, ATLU Sign
 Date: Rosalind.Walsh@atlul.ie

Introduction & Background

The Universal Design (UD) Beyond the Classroom Digital Badge, was awarded in September 2023 as a pilot initiative. The Digital Badge programme is designed to equip students with the skills and knowledge needed to deliver the UD synthesis beyond traditional classroom settings. The programme focuses on practical application of UD principles in diverse educational environments, emphasising inclusivity and accessibility in all aspects of learning. Through this badge, I explored innovative approaches to implementing UD, which are outlined in the attached presentation.

What was learned / reflections?

Universal Design is about creating a more inclusive and equitable society by considering the diversity of human abilities and needs when designing services, processes and products.

Equity
Flexibility
Inclusivity
User-centred
Collaborative

Data Gathering

- Module Paper for PG Cert in UDL Module 'Understanding the UDL Framework'
- associated graphics where possible on the landing page.
- Student feedback - 6 Short Questions using 5/5 forms.

Outcome

Use of UDL in the landing page
High quality graphics
Use of UDL in the landing page

Future Plans



My CPD: Graphic Facilitation to UDL Innovation

Continuing the +1 Approach

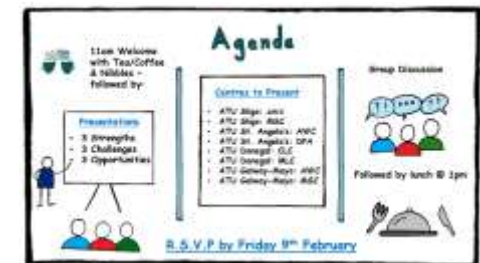
Teaching & Learning Centre
Sharepoint Landing Page



Monthly Teaching & Learning
Newsletter



Communication /
Information dissemination



Structures to Sustain Practice

Teaching & Learning Centre

- ATU ENGAGE Programme
- UDL Lunch & Learn
- ATU Academic Orientation
- TLC Staff Structure

Creating Communities of Practice Across Campus



Teaching & Learning Centre

ATU ENGAGE

AdvanceHE

The ATU ENGAGE scheme supports ATU educators in achieving an Advance HE Fellowship.

Who Should Join ATU ENGAGE? Fellowship is for academics with teaching responsibilities and professional staff who support learning in a wide variety of different contexts, as a guide:

- Student Support Staff (Associate Fellowship)
- Teaching 1 - 3 Years (Challenge)
- Teaching Experience / Influencing others (Senior Fellowship)
- Leaders with Strategic Impact (Principal Fellowship)

For More Information scan the QR Code



For further info contact: john.acaf@athinsgate.ie

ATU



UDL Centre of Excellence

UDL Lunch & Learn

ATU SLIGO

Join us on the Sligo Campus for our next UDL Academic Peer Network Lunch & Learn session on:

Date: Wednesday, 19 November
Venue: B1301
Time: 1-2 p.m.

Join Us
NOVEMBER 19TH
Room: B1301
@ 1PM

GUEST PRESENTER

MARY GARDIN (LECTURER, COMPUTING & ELECTRONIC ENGINEERING)

This talk will show how a small reflective activity with first-year engineering students at ATU Sligo developed into a SENI conference paper on inclusive assessment. Using Microsoft Sway, students reflected through text, video, images, and audio making assessment more engaging and accessible. It will also share practical tips for educators on turning their own classroom ideas into conference papers and joining wider conversations on inclusive and personalised learning.

All staff are warmly invited to attend, connect with colleagues, and take part in an open conversation about inclusive teaching and learning practice.



PLEASE REGISTER HERE BY 17 NOVEMBER: [UDL LUNCH & LEARN REGISTRATION - ATU SLIGO](https://www.atu.ie/udl/udl-lunch-learn-registration-atu-sligo)



ATU Academic Orientation

5-Week Online Interactive Programme

ATU Academic Orientation Overview of ATU Systems & Processes to support you in your teaching role!

- Interactive Sessions ✓
- Recorded Sessions ✓
- Resources Available ✓

Monday 19th January 1pm

For More Information email: patricia.henry@atu.ie

Enroll Now!



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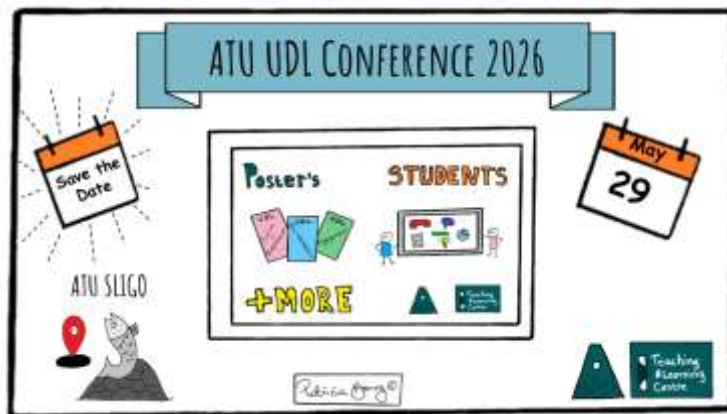
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Recognising & Celebrating UDL Practice

Celebrating staff success encourages wider adoption and validates innovation

ATU Teaching & Learning Centre Platforms for Recognition:

- ATU UDL National Conference
- Teaching & Learning Showcase
- ATU ENGAGE Celebration of Fellowships



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Save the Date!

Dr. Orla Flynn and Dr. Michèle Glacken will be in attendance to present recognition of achievements.

Join us in celebrating ATU ENGAGE / Advance HE Fellowships!

Where is it?
ATU Sligo Campus

When is it?
2:00pm - 4:00pm
Wed 4th June 2025

For more information on ATU ENGAGE

engage@atu.com

ATU ENGAGE / Advance HE Fellowships

Recognising & Celebrating UDL Practice

ATU Teaching & Learning Centre Platforms for Recognition:

- Monthly T&L Newsletter
- New Brendan McCormack UDL Awards

These platforms lift staff morale, demonstrate impact, and reinforce ATU's commitment to inclusive transformation.



From Strategy to Practice: Three Perspectives on Impact



Culture, Recognition & Sectoral Reach
Embedding UDL as institutional capability
and extending impact beyond ATU



Reflective Practice & Transferability
Engaging staff in critical reflection and
supporting transfer across contexts



From Framework to Action
Making UDL meaningful and practical for
those supporting students' day to day





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For more
information contact



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