

Enhancing Mobility for Access Students Ireland

Case Study

Title: *Enabling Breakthroughs in Global Industry through International Placement*

Overview: A highly esteemed programme, preparing students for a truly global industry meets the challenge of giving international experience to students at a socio-economic disadvantage.

Case Study Background/Context: LIT is ranked in the World Top 50 for Fashion Design programmes. The Industry is global and students benefit greatly from placement in the fashion houses of Europe – a challenging ask in the context of 60%+ of LIT students receiving state grants to attend college.

Summary:

Limerick Institute of Technology has the Limerick School of Art & Design within its Faculties, with programmes amongst the World's elite in their sector – LIT Fashion Design Degrees are ranked within the World Top-50.

A compulsory, mandatory, credit-bearing placement in industry forms part of the programme in the third of its four years. Naturally, in a global industry, global experience is highly valuable and – for these students – the major fashion houses of London, Paris and Rome are calling – along with many boutique studios right across Europe.

A City of Culture in 2014, Limerick is fighting back from an historic position of economic disadvantage, compounded by recession in recent years. Approximately two-thirds of students at LIT are in receipt of grants from Student Universal Support Ireland (or SUSI) – a means-tested grant to enable families with income challenges to access to Higher Education.

Internships, as a mandatory part of an educational programme, are typically either unpaid or not very well paid. The thirst of the creatively skilled LIT Fashion students for development in the testing environment of the global fashion industry is therefore

attended - in many cases - by the economic challenge associated with getting out to that all-important international traineeship.

Measuring Success/Outcomes of Case: *(Please provide 3 measures of success for this project- if no formal evaluation has taken place, it can be anecdotal but we would encourage specific and measurable)*

More than half of LIT's student mobilities supported by the Erasmus+ programme are accounted-for by the LSAD fashion students undertaking these placements.

In their final year, fashion students design and produce garments that collect into complete ensembles and 'looks' for a full and live catwalk exhibition – a key element of their overall honours degree marking. The benefit of gaining the broadest possible 'hands-on' experience of the fashion world, through their placements, is therefore a huge support to students in addressing the challenges of their final year.

In addition to developing their hands-on skills and experience in the most developmental environments, overseas placement is personally developmental for these students.

Graduate employment rates at LIT generally are over 80% and internship plays a key role in this.

Quote about the programme/initiative i.e. Senior Champion, Staff member, Student on programme etc. (optional)

“Students typically return from overseas placement in the fashion world with skills that have been sharpened through practice – but not alone that. They return with substantially boosted personal confidence, a greater trust in their capabilities and their own creative thoughts and instincts. They come back as stronger people with broader horizons. We really welcome the way that Erasmus+ support can enable someone on limited means to avail of that opportunity.”

- *James Greenslade, Head of School, Limerick School of Art & Design, LIT.*

“The International Office of LIT is conscious of the fact that so many of our students need financial support and help to avail of the full suite of opportunities that Higher Education offers. We would be delighted if everyone at LIT got the opportunity to undertake course-related travel as an element of their learning. The benefit of this to our fashion students in particular is a beacon to all students at LIT – a shining example of the best developmental outcomes from internationalisation, supported by Erasmus+ funding.”

- *Cliona Campbell, Director of International Affairs, Limerick Institute of Technology*

Three tips from your institution for other HEIs:

- 1) To encourage mobility, look first to programmes that develops skills or knowledge for which the market is truly global and where international experience is of greatest benefit.
- 2) Nobody will be an ambassador for mobility like those whom have successfully undertaken mobilities. Showcase the success - achieved through the mobility - of students from backgrounds of disadvantage and it will provide leadership and create a culture of mobility.
- 3) Engage International, Access, Disability and other student services with your mobility opportunities to create a hunger for these opportunities amongst the groups at risk of disadvantage. International mobility may be a challenge for students engaging with these services but it can also be the very experience that builds their confidence, their personal self-belief and that builds advantage for them.