pal | Promoting Accreditation of Learning

DRUMCONDRA EDUCATION CENTRE

Continuing Professional Development

FRAMEWORK
for Recognising Champions of Learning

to support peer learning and sharing amongst teachers and management

www.palcpd.eu
www.ecdrumcondra.ie

Project Partners:

- Belfast Metropolitan College, **Northern Ireland** (Lead)

- City of Dublin Education and Training Board, **Ireland** (with support from the CDETB Curriculum Development Unit)

- Kaunas University of Technology (KTU), **Lithuania**

- Kodolanyi Janos Foiskola (KJF), **Hungary**

- University of Humanities and Economics, Lodz, **Poland**

©2016

Drumcondra Education Centre are delighted to work in partnership with PAL CPD in promoting PAL accreditation. In order to facilitate this, all practising teachers who attend courses in Drumcondra Edcuation Centre and who fulfill the necessary accreditation criteria are entitled to gain PAL accreditation.

pal@ecdrumcondra.ie

Promoting Accreditation of Learning (PAL)

What is PAL?

PAL is a professional development system designed to help recognise and reward the informal and nonformal[1] learning of professionals working in education.

Its key objective is to promote and strengthen peer to peer learning and sharing amongst teachers and management in schools, colleges and Education centres[2]. Building awareness of this form of professional development makes its value explicit.
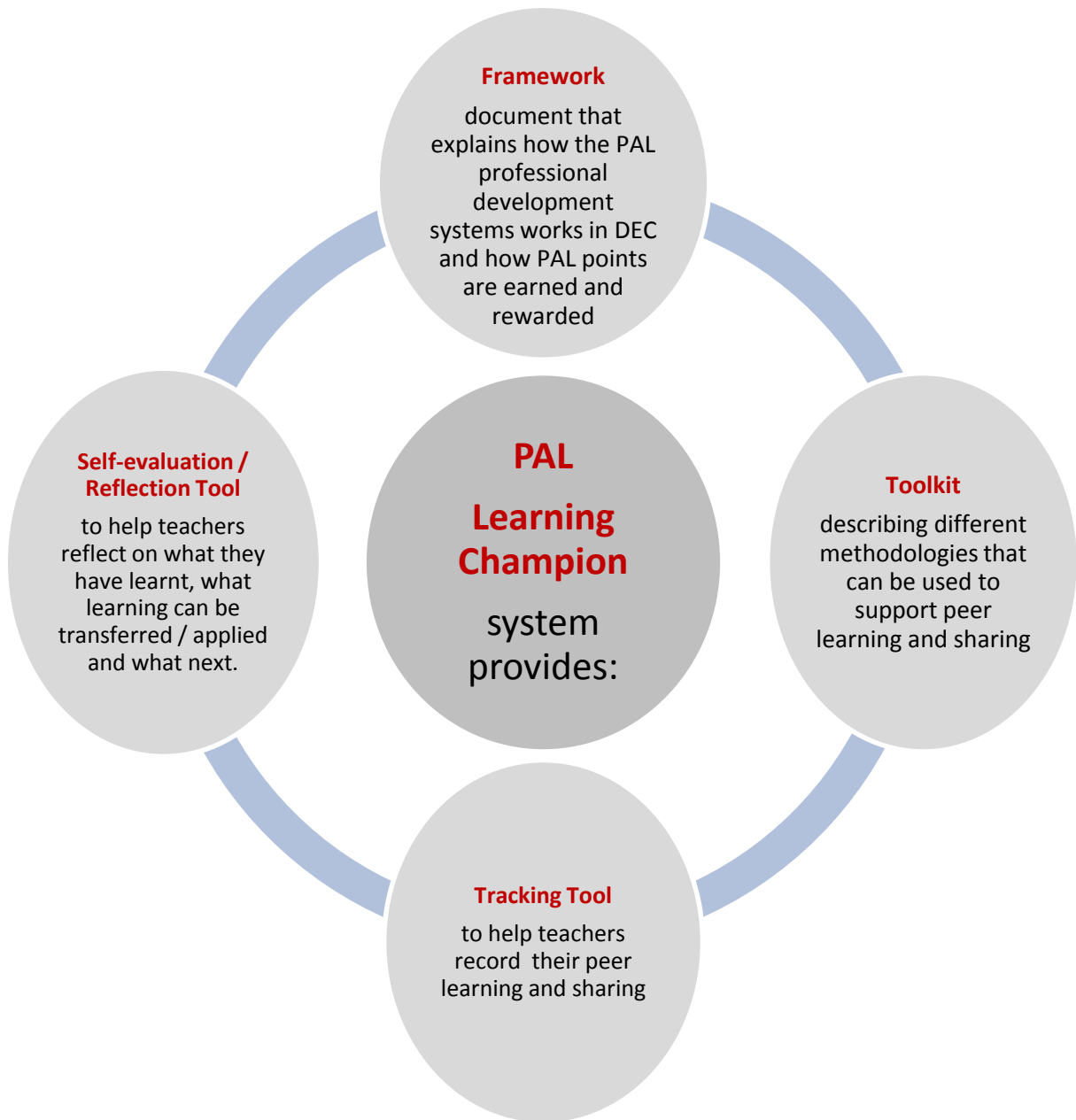
Professional Development itself has been defined as

> "Any process or activity that provides added value to the capability of the Professional through the increase in knowledge, skills and personal qualities for appropriate execution of professional and technical duties, often termed *competence*." [i]

The PAL system provides:

- a **Framework** document that explains how the PAL professional development systems works and how PAL points are earned and rewarded

- a **Toolkit** describing different methodologies that can be used to support peer learning and sharing

- a **Tracking Tool** to help teachers record their peer learning and sharing

- a **Self-evaluation / Reflection Tool** to help teachers reflect on what they have learnt, what learning can be transferred/ applied and what the next steps might be

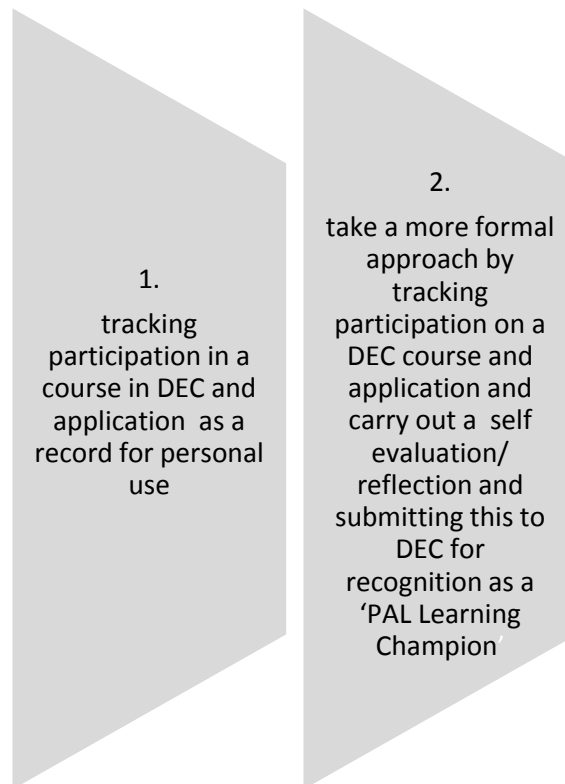- a **PAL Learning Champion** status to recognise when a teacher has completed the PAL professional development system

All available on www.ecdrumcondra.ie

PAL

Learning Champion

system provides:

Framework

document that explains how the PAL professional development systems works in DEC and how PAL points are earned and rewarded

Toolkit

describing different methodologies that can be used to support peer learning and sharing

Self-evaluation / Reflection Tool

to help teachers reflect on what they have learnt, what learning can be transferred / applied and what next.

Tracking Tool

to help teachers record their peer learning and sharing

Is participation in PAL Voluntary?

Participation in the PAL system is on a voluntary basis. A strength of the system is that it affords the professional the option to engage with it on one or more different levels e.g. Individuals can:

1.

tracking participation in a course in DEC and application as a record for personal use

2.

take a more formal approach by tracking participation on a DEC course and application and carry out a self evaluation/ reflection and submitting this to DEC for recognition as a 'PAL Learning Champion'

What is the value of the PAL System?

Informal learning takes place every day in colleges e.g. by sharing ideas, resources, expertise and strategies with others. The act of sharing or learning from others often goes unrecognised. In many cases individuals are not fully aware of the value of their contribution to the professional development of others, or their potential to support the professional development of others.

Teachers engaging with the PAL system have the opportunity to record, reflect on and transfer learning from peer learning experiences and have those experiences acknowledged, recognized and rewarded.

Drumcondra Education Centre (DEC) participates in the PAL System of professional development and recognizes the validity and value of informal learning and sharing as continuing professional development. Individuals who attend courses in DEC and who meet the criteria for the position of "PAL Learning Champion"[3] are accredited and recognized by DEC for their commitment to professional development within education.

How is informal learning defined in PAL?

Learning itself is a concept that is open to interpretation. Some measure learning by looking at the outcome while others emphasize the process or journey. It is not a simple task therefore to differentiate between and definitively define the three main forms of learning; formal; non-formal and informal. They can easily overlap; making it difficult to draw a clear line between where one ends and the other begins.

The Commission of the European Communities describes the different forms of learning as follows:

> European Commission. 2001. *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality.* Brussels: Commission of the European Communities (2001: 32-33)

---

[3] See p7 for definition of Learning Champion

The table below further illustrates how the three areas of learning compare based on the European Commission's definition.

	Context	Level of Structure	Learning Intentions	Certification
Informal learning	Results from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure.	Not structured in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support	May be intentional but in most cases it is non-intentional or 'incidental'/random	Typically does not lead to certification.
Non-formal learning	Not provided by an education centre	Structured in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support	Intentional from the learner's perspective.	Typically does not lead to certification
Formal learning	Experiences typically in an education centre	Structured learning objectives	intentional from the learner's perspective	Typically leads to certification

While the key focus of the PAL professional development system is on transfer and integration of informal learning, it is clear from the descriptions of each category of learning above that some of the learning and sharing encouraged and recognised by the PAL model goes beyond the informal learning category. Furthermore, efforts to recognise and validate informal peer learning experiences may move the learning out of the informal realm and into the non-formal realm according to this construct.

The intention of the PAL system is not to place greater significance on one form of learning over another, rather it offers the individual the option of having that informal peer learning experience validated. The PAL system also affords teachers the opportunity to have their PAL work formally accredited.

What is the purpose of the PAL Framework?

The purpose of the PAL model is twofold; to motivate teachers to promote and engage in informal learning, sharing and, to support Schools/Education Centres to recognize 'PAL Learning Champions' in their community who have demonstrated commitment to the professional development of their peers.

> 'PAL Learning Champions' are :
>
> "those teachers who undertake informal sharing of their resources, expertise & strategies with others and promote the value of learning to others. They act as PALS to others & act as role models / champions for learning".

In order to be recognised as a DEC 'PAL Learning Champion', a teacher needs to engage in a range of peer learning and sharing activities within their organisation. The emphasis should be on informal and nonformal learning and sharing activities.

What Resources orTools are available to support the implemetation of the PAL 'Learning Champion' model?

To support the implementation of the PAL professional development model and participants on a course working towards becoming 'PAL Learning Champions' there are a number of PAL Resources / Tools available to assist this process.

The PAL Resources / Tools are however not just limited to teachers working toward becoming learning champions. One or more of the PAL Resources / Tools can by used flexibly by a teacher or group of teachers to support informal and non-formal learning.

The PAL Resources / Tools include:

1. PAL Framework Document

The PAL Framework document provides an explanation of peer sharing of learning and a backdrop for understanding how the PAL Model of professional development works. It

outlines how to become a 'PAL learning Champion' and it includes supporting templates for logging PAL activities and reflecting on sharing and learning activities.

2. PAL Toolkit

The PAL Toolkit provides some ideas around methodology. It offers inspiration and guidance to staff and education centre tutors on practical strategies that can be used to support the process of informal sharing of learning .

The PAL toolkit recognises the vast experience that already exists amongst teachers and tutors within education centres and the fact that it is not always necessary to seek expertise from outside an organisation to facilitate CPD sessions for teachers.

Multifarious approaches can be used to support professional sharing of knowledge, skills, practice and experience amongst colleagues. The methods and collaborative activities in the toolkit are just a small example of processes that can be used to help to draw on and make explicit this wealth of experience, as such it should be regarded as a working document, evolving over time

This toolkit focuses on the 'process' and provides step by step guidelines to help to structure and facilitate CPD sessions for teachers where the key purpose is to create an environment where staff can share and learn from each other.

3. PAL Tracking Tool[4]

The PAL Tracking Tool is a recording tool to help teachers monitor and track their own peer learning and sharing. If recognition as "Learning Champion" is being sought, this recording tool can be submitted to DEC (pal@ecdrumcondra.ie) to assist with the process of verifying and recognising the participant as a 'PAL Learning Champion'.   Examples of completed tracking tools can be found in appendices 3 & 5.

4. Self-Reflection Template[5]

A summary self-evaluation template supports reflection during and at the end of the 30 point PAL cycle of sharing and learning. The Self-Reflection is only a requirement for those wishing to apply for Learning Champion Status. Examples of completed self-reflection templates can be found in appendices 4 & 6.

---

[4] See appendix 1
[5] See appendix 2

What are PAL Points and how are they earned?

PAL points are points that are allocated and accumulated for participation at PAL professional development events and activities in one's own organisation and for the transfer and integration of subsequent learning.

Some examples of the types of methodologies that can be used are detailed in the PAL Toolkit.

How many PAL points are needed to achieve the status of Learning Champion?

30 PAL points need to be achieved within an academic year at least 10 of which must come from facilitating an informal learning activity in your organisation at a sharing event in DEC. (see Category 2 below), Two categories of learning and sharing are relevant to the PAL Model and the awarding of PAL Points from DEC.

Category 1

Participating in a course run by DEC and reflecting on ones own learning. The reflection captures how learning could be Integrated into work practice (including incidental learning) **= 5 points each**

Category 2

Preparing & facilitating <u>and / or</u> presenting at an informal / non formal sharing activity with peers in ones own organisation or at a sharing event in DEC**= 10 points each**[6]

At least one category 2 activity must be included as part of the 30 PAL Points when making an application for Learning Champion status.

---

[6] It is intended that work associated with identifying a learning need, potential audience, suitable presenters and co-ordinating an event is valued and recognised in the same way that the work associated with presenting at a PAL event is. However, in many instances this will be the same person. A maximum of 10 points can be earned at any PAL event.

Category	Examples (this list is not exhaustive)	Recognition
1. **Participating** in a ciurse run by DEC recording how the learning was integrated into your work	Attending a two hour course run by DEC	5 PAL points
2. **Preparing & Facilitating** and/or **Presenting** at an informal/ non-formal sharing activity with peers <u>in your own organisation</u> & recording your learning	Professional development activities in ones own organisation or an event run by DEC where individuals prepare & facilitate and / or present to other peers in the organisation e.g. • Making a presentation to a group of peers in your organisation or at a sharing event on what you have learnt from your course • Making a presentation to peers / writing a reflective piece for the staff newsletter on a professional book that you have read following attendance at a course • Sharing learning with peers following attendance at a conference / training event run by DEC • Setting up a professional blog and facilitating an online discussion for individuals in your organisation • Giving a lightening talk or making a presentation at a 'show and tell event in your school or at a sharing event in DEC • Facilitating a table at a café style workshop for individuals in your school or dhsring event. • Demonstrating the use of a new ICT tool / new equipment to a group of colleagues	10 PAL points

	• Providing the opportunity for a colleague to shadow you with follow up discussion • Writing a set of resources and sharing these with colleagues	

What combination of activities can make up the 30 PAL Points?

The 30 PAL Points must include at least 10 PAL points that come from a Category 2 activity.

After that, the remaining balance of 20 PAL Points can come from any combination of Category 1 or 2 activities e.g.

30 PAL Points might be achieved in one of the following ways:

Category 1:Participating	Category 2: Facilitating	TOTAL
4 x courses @ 5 PAL Points each	1 x activity @ 10 PAL Points	**=30**
or		
2 x courses @ 5 PAL Points each	2 x activities @ 10 PAL Points	**=30**

Are there examples of the PAL model and framework in practice?

Case Study 1 - Joe

Joe has attended a course in Drumcondra Edcuation Centre on Conflict Resolution	Joe will gain **5 PAL points** for participating in this professional development activity organised though DEC
Joe then writes a blog on his experiences and facilitates an online discussion with his peers in the organisation on how this information could be integrated into their programmes. Joe includes an entry in his PAL Learning & Sharing Tracking Log and identifies how learning from the blog / sharing with peers has been / can be Integrated into his professional role / practice.	Joe will gain a further **10 PAL points** for facilitating & reflecting on this professional development activity that he has organised for peers in his school.
Total	**15 PAL points**

Case Study 2 - Jane

Jane attends a course in DEC on using Moodle with her students. She incorporates elements of moodle in her teaching approaches. She has gained positive feedback from her students. Jane includes an entry in her PAL Learning & Sharing Tracking Log and identifies how learning has been Integrated into her work with her students.	Jane will gain **5 PAL points** for participating in this professional development activity made available by her DEC.
Jane then organises to demonstrate how to use this tool with two colleagues and supports them in practising, using the EDIP model (Explain, Demonstrate, Imitate and Practice). Jane includes an entry in her PAL Learning & Sharing Tracking Log and identifies how learning from this peer sharing activity with peers has been / can be Integrated into her professional role / practice.	Jane will gain a further **10 PAL points** for facilitating & reflecting on this professional development activity that she has organised for peers in her college.
Total	**15 PAL points**

What are the deadlines for applying for Learning Champion status and how long is the status valid for?

DEC deadline for applying for Learning Champions is the 30th March

September to March	Ongoing participation in courses/ facilitation of PAL activities and completion of tracking tool etc.
By end March	Applications for Learning Champions status
April	Review of applications for Champion status
May / June	Certification / Awards Ceremony
Valid period	Learning Champion status valid for 1 year from Certification.
	This means that in order for the Learning Champion status to be maintained the cycle should begin again immediately following certificaton in order to have an application ready to submit the following year.

A sharing event will be held in May in DEC for other teachers

What process do I need to follow if I want to be recognised as a Learning Champion?

1. Potential Learning Champions will be required to attend an induction briefing facilitated by DEC. This will include an explanation of the PAL Model / Framework, PAL toolkit and participation in one methodology from the toolkit, demonstration of the PAL tracking tool and review of the PAL self-reflection template.

2. Following induction, potential Learning Champions will participate in courses in DEC and facilitate informal and / or non-formal learning activities and track these on their PAL tracking tool.

3. When 30 PAL points have been achieved within the academic year (at least 10 of which must come from facilitating an informal learning activity), the potential Learning Champion will submit their PAL tracker and completed self-reflection template for review.

4. Learning Champion status will be awarded by DEC and recognised through a celebratory event / PAL certificate.

5. Learning Champions may choose to be formally recognised by completing an accredited (certified) module (see appendix 7, *Developing and Evaluating Practitioner Skills in Training & Education*)

PAL LEARNING & SHARING TRACKING LOG[7]						
Name:			School/College/Centre:	Academic Year:		Date of Submission:
Date:	Title of Session / Courses	Category of Activity i.e. Category 1 = participating or Category 2 = facilitating		Professional Development intention for attending/ undertaking the activity	How was learning from the PAL CPD activity Integrated into your work practice afterwards (include any incidental learning)	PAL Points achieved Category 1 =5 points or Category 2 = 10 points
					Total	

For office use only:		
Date Received:	Reviewed by:	

---

[7] While an electronic tracking tool is available to individuals choosing to keep a record of PAL learning and sharing activities, it is also possible to capture each activity on the template above and transfer the information at a later stage to the e-tracking tool.
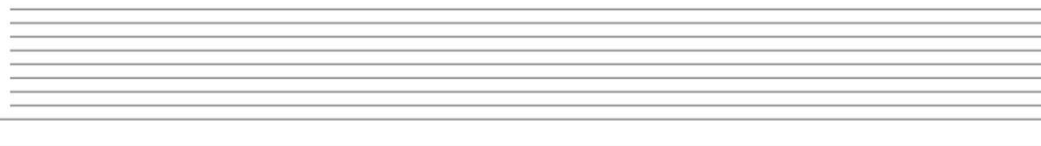
Summary Self Evaluation / Reflection[8]

One summary self-reflection should be submitted when the 30 PAL point cycle of activity has been completed.

Name: **Academic Year:**   **School/College/Centre Name:**

What? **What have I learned during the PAL Learning Champion period from:** **1. participating in a course?** **2. facilitating informal non formal learning activities?**	
Transfer? **What positive results have the PAL peer learning and sharing activities had for:** **1. my own performance?** **2. my colleagues?** **3. my students?**	
What next? **What do I plan to do next to:** **1. support / enhance my own professional development?** **2. promote peer learning and sharing within my organisation?**	

For office use only:	
Date Received:	Reviewed by:

[8] The Self-Reflection template is only required for individuals wishing to apply for Learning Champion Status.