



PPI IGNITE
NETWORK

IMPACT CASE STUDY

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“The PPI Digital Badge has hugely impacted how I approach research”: A free and flexible PPI educational resource

Who was involved?

- 7 Lead Sites
- 1 Network national office
- 1 national partner
- 1 PhD student
- 2 charities (not Network partners)
- 2 PPI contributors
- 3 NIHR representatives
- 3 representatives of other international PPI organisations

Summary

The [UCC Digital Badge in Patient and Public Involvement \(PPI\) in Research](#) is a free online micro-credential, validated by UCC. Learners can complete the course at their own pace, and it is open to researchers at all career stages and to PPI contributors. Any learner can earn this **professional qualification, at no cost**. The resource is flexible: completing the full PPI Digital Badge, including the assignments, is optional, ensuring that the Digital Badge can deepen the knowledge of learners already familiar with PPI, as well as serving as an introduction to beginners.

Learners in turn may become future PPI champions. It is evident from endorsements, testimonials, and quantified engagements, that the PPI Digital Badge is benefiting postgraduate and PhD students, academic researchers, higher education institutions, PPI contributors and the Irish PPI research ecosystem.



An image of the PPI In Research Digital Badge

Our work

Led by Dr Emmy Racine (PPI Programme Manager, UCC), throughout 2020–2021, the PPI Ignite Network co-created a suite of five online modules covering key knowledge and competencies needed to undertake PPI research. To develop the modules and disseminate the course, we took the following actions between 2021–2022:

- 1) Co-creation of key learning outcomes for the micro credential
- 2) Alignment of content, activities, resources, and online quizzes with each learning outcome
- 3) Collaborative co-creation of sessions with PPI contributors, organisations, researchers, and students
- 4) Incorporation of pilot test feedback prior to official launch

The Digital Badge was launched in 2022 by Professor Helen Whelton, Head of the College of Medicine and Health, UCC at an event attended by over 80 people, in conjunction with the national PPI festival. Prof Whelton reinforced her commitment to PPI and outlined the importance of the digital badge course, stating that:

“This course is an important step forward in the embedding of PPI in all the work that we do. For PPI to be meaningful, it must be normalised into academic training. Current and future generations of researchers need to understand PPI and how best to conduct and how to report and evaluate their PPI activities accordingly.”



Dr Emmy Racine standing at a podium launching the Digital Badge

Demonstrating cross-network collaboration, the course content includes webinars, lectures, podcasts, resources, and materials from all Lead Sites, as well as from PPI contributors Larry Masterson, Casey Donaghey, members of the Dementia Research Advisory Team and other patient advocates, and national/international connections (Warwick Medical School, International PPI Network, NIHR, and Evidence Synthesis Ireland).

The content is shared under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial No-Derivatives 4.0 International license. Since the launch in November 2022, 21 people have received a PPI in Research Digital Badge: researchers and students in UCC (13) and Munster Technological University (8), representing a significant expansion into the Technological Universities for the PPI Ignite Network. If you require further information, please contact ppi@ucc.ie.

Our impact

Formalising and validating PPI education

The development of the PPI in Research Digital Badge has increased access to PPI education in Ireland. Between Oct 2022 and May 2023, 68 people accessed the course materials, with 6,621 total views of the content. This resource is actively promoted across the national PPI Ignite Network.

PhD students and early career researchers have told us how they are benefiting through early career exposure to high quality PPI in research education:

“Completing the PPI in Research Digital Badge has provided me with valuable insights and necessary tools on how to incorporate and facilitate PPI in my PhD research, ultimately leading to more impactful research and meaningful outcomes.”

Paula Leocadio, PhD Candidate at UCC

“The PPI Digital Badge has hugely impacted how I approach research and the way I think about “involvement”. I have already found myself highlighting the need for PPI in the ideation phase of research projects and working groups. I am very excited to see how PPI can shape our future research projects”

Tamara Vagg, Postdoctoral researcher, UCC

“Completing the PPI in Research Digital Badge has helped me to understand the importance and benefit that meaningful PPI contributions can have on research and the research process. It has helped me in terms of providing me with practical guidance on how to incorporate PPI into my own research projects in ways to ensure that is not tokenistic and that the PPI contributions will help make my research more relevant to patients and the public”

Digital Badge Recipient

Growing the PPI Ignite Network

The number and range of local, national and international experts and PPI contributors involved in the co-creation of the course content validated the impact of collaboration across the PPI Ignite Network. Learnings from the development of the PPI in Research Digital Badge **laid the foundations and grew the Network** for subsequent collaborations. For example, over 40 people across the Network are now co-creating an accredited 5 ECTS PPI doctoral module, within Work Package 2.

Providing a useful resource for all across the PPI Ignite Network

The Digital Badge is a very useful resource at PPI support clinics, the PhD PPI Shared Learning Group (attended by over 100 PhD students) and at other PPI training events. The Digital Badge is also promoted to new staff who join the PPI Ignite Network. It is a resource for everyone in the Network and beyond.

“For me, I have found the Digital Badge brilliant, when I encounter people new to PPI in my support clinics, I give them a link to the UCC digital badge and advise them that it is an ideal place to begin their PPI journey.”

**Edel Murphy, national programme manager,
PPI Ignite Network**

Increasing PPI awareness across UCC

The addition of the PPI badge to the suite of digital badges available at UCC has increased the awareness of PPI across the University.

Promoting accessible education and valuing lived experience.

Adhering to the PPI Ignite Network’s principles of equality and inclusion, this free, flexible, accessible resource will contribute to the active **removal of barriers and creation of new entry points to PPI education**. The PPI contributors involved in the course content has led to greater awareness and acknowledgement of the **importance of the lived experience** in PPI research.