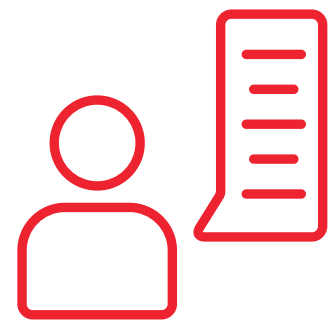


## Title: The Spirit of the University: Graduate Attributes; the mark left on the alumnus' mind; Understanding the Quality of Student Experience during Liminality, Crisis, and Transformation

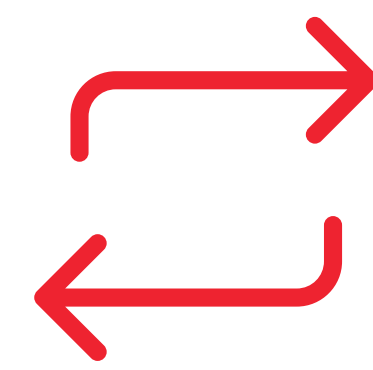
Presenter: Verdi Ahern, Student Experience Office

Supervisory Team: Prof. Kieran Keohane (UCC) | Prof. Maggie O'Neill (UCC) | Dr Ian Pickup (UEL).



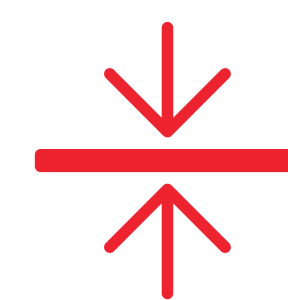
### Case Study Synopsis

At the heart of this PhD is a proposal to 're-invent a tradition'; specifically, a new rite of passage, a 21st century matriculation ceremony. 'Matriculation', which used to be an important rite of passage, has now largely been forgotten. It effectively initiated new students entering University, enabling their identifying with the culture, values, and ideals of the institution. It acted as a 'stamping experience' through which graduate attributes were inculcated more effectively. The theoretical paradigm within which the project is formulated is the classic work in Anthropology by Arnold van Gennep (1909) Rites of Passage, and Victor Turner (1967) "Betwixt and Between: the Liminal Stage in the Rite of Passage". This paradigm explains the fundamental and universal importance of the rite of passage in structuring and integrating individual experiences as cohorts in historical, cultural and social reproduction.



### Intended Changes

That we no longer initiate new students upon entry is problematic and may explain the current societal malaise. It is important to understand (a) why Rites of Passage are so important to humanity, (b) why have we left them behind and (c) how can we reimagine them meaningfully in today's world? A socio-anthropological lens allows for a deeper understanding of the transition experience in terms of the ritual structuring of liminal stages, which can be improved & strengthened by well placed & well timed 'interventions', overseen by competent guides. The goal is to assist students to engage, to increase their sense of community and to prepare them for their role within society.



### Area of Alignment

Teaching & Learning  
People & Organisational Culture  
Research & Innovation



### Key Impacts

- The impact thus far has been overwhelmingly positive with all participants reporting an increased feeling of belonging and a greater understanding of a university education as a prolonged Rite of Passage.
- Covid has posed just one of many threats in the age of the Anthropocene. Indeed, there is more to come, such as global warming, rising ocean levels, species extinction, deforestation, and other unknowns. The University can prepare initiates for this by formally setting out the reciprocal nature of the 'contract'; that this prolonged rite of passage allows for both personal and societal transformation.
- Humans have a natural need for ritual. The function of a well-designed ritual such as matriculation is to effect changes deep in the psyche that cannot be achieved by educational means or other didactic methods and is often beyond the understanding of the initiate.
- It is incumbent upon the university to showcase a model that possesses a strong moral and ethical purpose as a guiding vision that goes beyond competition, individual gain and profit. The model proposed is situated within a harmonious meta narrative that includes, affirms, and interrelates all of humanity to the global ecosystem and each other.



### Additional Information

A pilot matriculation ceremony was held on Monday 12th September 2022 in the Aula Maxima as part of the 'performance & practice' element of the PhD. Sociology & Criminology 3rd years & postgraduates were invited to participate to investigate how it affected their sense of belonging in UCC post covid.



### Video Links | Graphics

**Matriculation Programme:** [https://uccireland-my.sharepoint.com/personal/v\\_ahern\\_ucc\\_ie/Documents/Verdi%20PhD/Matriculation%20Ceremony%20Schedule%20120922.pdf](https://uccireland-my.sharepoint.com/personal/v_ahern_ucc_ie/Documents/Verdi%20PhD/Matriculation%20Ceremony%20Schedule%20120922.pdf)

