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# Welcome to the Spring 2021 edition of OVPLT eNews



Professor Paul McSweeney, VP Learning and Teaching

It has now been more than a year since the COVID-19 crisis sent us from the beautiful UCC campus to work from our homes. In a year where the focus has been on the transformation to online Learning and Teaching, and remote working, the Centre for Digital Education has been busier than ever, supporting staff and students, developing new technology fixes and providing training. We are now moving towards planning for a post-covid University. To this end, the OVPLT recently held Townhall sessions for students and staff and we will have more information on these in our summer edition.

In this issue, the centres which are housed under the umbrella of the OVPLT, have had plenty to celebrate. Professor Louise Crowley, who was recently awarded a President's award for Excellence in Teaching writes about her work with the Family Law Clinic. We held the first online Parchment Ceremony for graduates of the PG Learning and Teaching programmes, Adult Continuing Education celebrated

their 75th anniversary and a number of units were recipients of the National Forum's 2020 Network and Discipline Fund. In addition, Dr Laura Lee of CIRTL showcases the successful initiatives resulting from Teaching and Learning Enhancement grants.

We hope you enjoy reading this Newsletter and would like to thank all our contributors across the OVPLT and the wider university, for further information or feedback, please contact Jacqui at [j.churcher@ucc.ie](mailto:j.churcher@ucc.ie)

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul McSweeney". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

**Professor Paul McSweeney**  
**VP for Learning and Teaching**

[www.ucc.ie/en/teachlearn/](http://www.ucc.ie/en/teachlearn/)

# Excellence in Teaching Award – Professor Louise Crowley

Louise Crowley is a Professor in the School of Law and in October 2020 was recognised with a President's Award for Excellence in Learning and Teaching for the innovative Family Law Clinic which she established in 2015. The Clinic provides students on the LLM (Children's Rights and Family Law) with an alternative forum for learning, to push them to consider family law principles and policies outside the lecture room, and to better understand the importance of access to information to ensure access to justice. Students have relished this new perspective of the law - *"The Clinic opened up my mind, and it never switched off."*

In 2017-19 Louise completed the MA in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education to explore the design, delivery and assessment approaches she utilised in the Clinic and to investigate their impact through the interrogation of the student learning experience.

The flagship piece of work of the Clinic is the family law information website - **www.familylawinformation.ie**, developed by Louise as Clinic Director, funded by the IRC 2013 New Foundations scheme, and supported annually by the students. It is a unique online resource which acts as a central hub providing a comprehensive information resource for the general public on all aspects of family law. Students are tasked with



Above: Family Law website

updating the site, crucially bridging the family law information vacuum that exists in Irish society. The website provides students with an insight into the challenges faced by citizens to access the law in order to understand and vindicate their own rights. The website is further supplemented with a topical blog post written by each student, providing an insight into a socially relevant issue of the day. From a pedagogical perspective it provides a novel, innovative assessment tool to engage students and allows them to explore issues of family law in an entirely different format, and to do so with a significant level of autonomy. In combining student learning and impactful civic and community engagement, the website delivers a vibrant and dynamic classroom learning and teaching experience.

The students are also tasked with conducting research for legal practitioners to inform court applications, or policy-based research. The projects respond to requests from practitioners, NGOs, support services and lobby groups and form a key element of the student learning whilst informing and enhancing court-based advocacy standards whilst strengthening UCC's connection with law in practice. Finally, students are required to maintain a learning journal where they document their activities and reflect on their learning journey. The learning journal provides the opportunity to move from the social, shared learning of the classroom to personal, more private reflections, enhancing self-awareness and inculcating a sense of awareness of their personal and academic growth.

It is evident from the qualitative research conducted to inform the MA thesis that the students' overall learning across the breadth of the LLM programme

is positively impacted by their Family Law Clinic experience.

*"The Family Law clinic provided a different type of learning from the lecture-based approach, in bridging the academic aspect of law with the practical application of law. The work I undertook at the clinic greatly enhanced my research skills, IT skills, presentation skills and co-working skills. I also learned significantly about law in practice on a day to day basis. The Clinic bridged the gap between theory and what happens in practice. It demonstrated to me that our work in UCC carries over to practice."*

*"Receiving the President's Award for Excellence was a meaningful and hugely appreciated endorsement of my work in developing the Clinic and demonstrates UCC's commitment to innovative approaches to learning and teaching in order to provide an outstanding student experience."* said Professor Crowley.



Above: Professor Louise Crowley, School of Law

# UCC SUCCESSFUL IN 2020 NETWORK & DISCIPLINE FUND

Learning and Teaching at University College Cork is set receive a funding boost this year, with a number of units named as recipients of the National Forum’s 2020 Network and Discipline Fund.

UCC’s Graduate Attributes Programme and Civic and Community Engagement Office, and the Green Campus Network feature in the latest funding announcement from the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.

A total of 17 networks and discipline groups across the higher education have been approved for funding, with this iteration of the Fund focused on ‘Shared Solutions to Common Challenges’. The Forum aims to support the chosen networks and discipline groups to work together to respond proactively to identified challenges in teaching and learning in higher education, including those that have come to light through the sudden move to remote teaching and learning.

Commenting on UCC’s representation on this year’s list, Professor Paul McSweeney, Vice-President for Learning and Teaching at UCC, said: “UCC are delighted to lead and partner on a number of new initiatives under the National Forum’s 2020 Network

*and Discipline Fund. The initiatives are a significant opportunity to further drive learning and teaching innovation and enhancement locally and across the higher education sector. The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic saw the HE sector responding to a variety of common challenges, and these initiatives will build on the innovation arising from the shift to online and blended forms of learning and teaching. We look forward to supporting the Networks in optimising the impact of their initiatives through integration with local and national priorities.”*

The Network & Discipline Fund is coordinated through the Centre for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning.



## INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGES ON TECHNOLOGY ENHANCED LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

CIRTL’s Dr Laura Lee and Dr Catherine O’Mahony were delighted to participate in the kick-start meeting for the “Developing and Implementing Technology Enhanced Learning at Georgian HEIs” (DITECH) in February 2021. This three-year project funded under the Erasmus+ Capacity Building initiative sees UCC working with colleagues in Lithuanian and Estonian HEIs to support the development and implementation of online and blended courses in eight Georgian HEIs. CIRTL will provide a quality assurance lens on the emerging courses and training offerings, sharing established good practice and innovations witnessed because of the emergency pivot to online learning.

## Dissemination Showcase for Teaching and Learning Enhancement Grants

Following highly successful reviews of UCC's Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement (SATLE 2019: National Forum, HEA) Grants, CIRTL are delighted to host a series of dissemination events to showcase our SATLE 2019 initiatives. A one-hour long live seminar will be hosted across each of the four Fridays in May 2021. The four seminars will invite initiative teams to speak to the outcomes of their work, the impact of this work on teaching and learning, and their future plans for the initiatives. Information on the seminars will be distributed via internal email. This dissemination showcase is coordinated by CIRTL Research Manager, Dr Laura Lee.

## Teaching and Learning Enhancement Initiatives Get Underway

11 new Teaching and Learning Enhancement initiatives, funded under the National Forum and HEA's SATLE 2020 fund, have gotten up and running in early 2021. The strategic focus of this call is *Transforming Teaching and Learning for Student Success*. Six enablers of student success have been identified, with each of the 11 initiatives responding to one or more of these enablers. Each initiative is supported by an initiative lead with support from a broader steering committee composed of relevant stakeholders from across the institution. Over the course of the next year, there will be a range of opportunities for staff across UCC to connect with these initiatives e.g. expression of interest calls, case study and resource development and piloting, and staff mentoring opportunities. The SATLE 2019 fund contributes to the €1.2 million Learning and Teaching funds currently active in UCC. SATLE 2019 is administered in UCC by the OVPLT through CIRTL's Research Manager, Dr Laura Lee.

## CIRTL participate in "Autism-friendly communication in Higher Education – Utilising a Universal Design for Learning approach" workshop

CIRTL's Dr Laura Lee was delighted to contribute to a joint UCC MTU workshop on the 16th April 2021. The workshop highlighted how Universal Design for Learning (UDL) can be utilised as a framework to support autism-friendly communication in Higher Education. Repeat sessions will follow, and will be advertised via internal email. Colleagues interested in learning more about UDL can engage in the Digital Badge in UDL, co-facilitated by Dr Laura Lee and Dr Brian Butler. The badge runs once per semester, and will be advertised again in September 2021.

## ACE and the ECOLHE Project

The aim of the project Empower Competencies for Online Learning in Higher Education (ECOLHE) is to examine the way in which the idea of an E-learning European Higher Education Area, in the broader framework of the Bologna Process, has been translated into practice at national level by academic bodies. Its purpose is to identify the ways in which the digital challenges to promote Lifelong Learning through ICT in Higher Education (HE) are shaped in specific contexts. It is an action research project that aims to create the ideal conditions for an exchange of best practices at European level in:

1. Teaching digital skills in HE.
2. Training courses for teachers and tutors for improving online teaching.
3. Recognition and validation of teaching competencies in HE.
4. Recommendations for academic bodies.

It involves the completion of six case studies (2 Italy, Spain, Greece, Ireland, Finland) and ACE at UCC is coordinating the Irish contribution to the project. One of its expected outputs is a comparative research report on 'Digital Technologies in HE: from the European vision to the university governance'. The project also intends to produce a training pilot for online teaching in HE, and a pilot project to generate tools for engaging students in the HE online learning environment. Led by ACE at UCC the ECOLHE project will also produce the report 'Symbiotic Learning Paradigm (SLP): Teacher Competences, Methods & Approaches in HE' and the associated tool for self-assessment of HE institutions and their professionals. It will be concluded by a comparative report aimed to underline the most important problems in teaching professionalisation for HE.

To learn more about the project please go to: <http://ecolhe.eu/>



## Centre for Digital Education Supporting UCC 2022

All of the CDE's work directly supports the uptake of digital technology for teaching and learning purposes. With the development of *UCC 2022 Delivering a Connected University*, our work is explicitly highlighted in Pillar 1 Learning and Teaching, where Action 1 is focused on Investing in Digital Education. The Head of Digital Education, Tom O'Mara is a co-lead on this Pillar, with Professor Paul McSweeney, Vice President for Learning and Teaching named as an action owner on 1.3. It is worth noting the specific actions relating to Digital Education:

1.3.1. Enhance the digital learning experience for on-campus and off-campus learners, by upskilling including via micro-credentials, through investment in simulation, virtual resources and flexible learning and assessment using technology.

1.3.2. Further enable *remote learning* through unique online programmes.

1.3.3. Prioritise investment in digital education through expanding our range of infrastructural resources to staff, deploy Instructional Design expertise in Colleges and Schools.

In support of these actions, the Vice President for Learning and Teaching ran interactive sessions with students and staff in February and March to gather feedback on what is needed to help deliver these ambitions. Please keep an eye out for future opportunities to provide feedback as this Pillar work develops.

## THE CENTRE FOR DIGITAL EDUCATION HAS BEEN BUSY

The Centre for Digital Education is primarily concerned with supporting Pillar 1 of UCC 2022 - Learning and Teaching. Specifically, we aim to enhance the digital learning experience for all learners, further enable remote learning and ensure investment in future digital education infrastructure is fit for purpose. Some of our activities in support of these aims over the last number of months have included:

- Providing ongoing consultation support to UCC staff around the application of educational technology to education - we provided in excess of 200 individual consultations to staff during 2020, answering specific queries on technologies such as Canvas, Panopto and Teams as well as pedagogical questions on approaches to remote teaching and learning;
- Running weekly training sessions under the **Teach Digi** brand, as part of the IUA Enhancing Digital Teaching and Learning project;
- Creating the **Assessment Hub**, to support the work of the Exams Business Continuity Planning group;
- Administering the **digital badging** in UCC and inputting into the newly HCI-approved MC<sup>2</sup> (microcredentialling) project; and
- Initiating a project on Learning Analytics.

## CONNECTED CURRICULUM DESIGN SPRINT

17 staff along with some of their students have been participating in an intense professional development initiative from 12th - 30th April 2021. The *Connected Curriculum Design Sprint* provides tailored support for staff in implementing the Connected Curriculum, while also facilitating student partnership in curriculum design. The Design Sprint focuses on two elements of the Connected Curriculum in this instance, i.e. 'Civic Engagement' and 'Sustainability', and participants engage in a range of interactive workshops and 1:1 mentoring as part of the initiative.

### Design Sprint

Further information:

[www.ucc.ie/en/cirtl/design-sprint/](http://www.ucc.ie/en/cirtl/design-sprint/)

The Design Sprint team is comprised of Dr John Barimo, Research Officer on the project to integrate Sustainable Development Goals in Higher Education, Dr Ruth Hally, Civic Engagement project coordinator and Campus Engage staff development programme coordinator, Patrick Kiely, Senior Instructional Designer and Institutional lead on Learning Design workshops, and Dr Catherine O'Mahony, the Institutional lead on implementation of Connected Curriculum and Director of CIRTLL.



**Above (l-r):** Dr Catherine O'Mahony, Director, CIRTLL; Patrick Kiely, CIRTLL; Dr Ruth Hally, CIRTLL; Dr John Barimo, CIRTLL

# Teach Digi Spring Training 2021: - Ag Caint

Teach Digi 'Ag Caint' is a UCC staff digital education training series organised by Clíodhna O'Callaghan and the team in the Centre for Digital Education (CDE) and is informed and underpinned by the student feedback as collated in the **UCC Students Union Survey, October 2020**. This feedback was summarised into five pillars, presented in the below graphic. The Teach Digi training series, in conjunction with the IUA 'Enhancing Digital Teaching & Learning' project, has as one of its four key pillars, 'Students as Partners'. Therefore, ensuring the student voice is front and centre to our training is vital and no better way to ensure this than to directly reference their feedback as a framework for our training. The staff led sessions were hosted by the IUA ECTL Project Lead, Clíodhna O'Callaghan and the student led sessions were hosted by our Student Associate Intern, Ms. Catherine Dawson.

'Ag Caint' is the Irish for 'chatting' or 'talking' and the format of this **Teach Digi training series** includes a short 'chat' with a lecturer and a separate session with a student/learner in UCC on each of the five pillars. This was informal in nature, however, it focused firmly on some practical advice for

staff on how they can adapt their teaching to incorporate some simple and accessible advice from the lived experience of both staff and students of online teaching and learning in UCC. A live Q&A session follows the pre-recorded content every Wednesday at 2 pm focused specifically on the student feedback pillar, for example, Clarity, Consistency etc.

Due to the positive feedback on the 'Ag Caint' training series received by Clíodhna O'Callaghan & the CDE team we will continue to record more conversations

with staff across the University specifically focusing on what is working / not working for them in the context of digital teaching and learning from both academic and professional staff. These will continue to be released on a weekly basis via the OVPLT weekly learning and teaching email. If you would like to be involved in this initiative or submit feedback for future staff training in the context of digital education, please contact Ms. Clíodhna O'Callaghan, Digital Education Officer & Project Lead for the IUA ECTL (Enhancing Digital Teaching & Learning) Project - **c.ocallaghan@ucc.ie**

**Students want clear organisation of the content (on Canvas).**

- Think of Clarity, Chunking, Communication and Consistency from our UCC Getting Started website resource.
- Keep navigation simple.
- Structure modules in the same way - consistency is key.
- Use the Canvas Calendar if you can.

**Students want regular, informal, interactions with their lecturer.**

- Create the opportunity for interactivity.
- Use a combination of pre-recorded and live lectures.
- Follow pre-recorded with live where possible.
- Check out the UCC 'Getting Started' website for information on different tools for interactivity.

**Students appreciate the flexibility that recorded lectures give them.**

- Use Panopto for pre-recorded content in the first instance.
- Next, run a live class and record it.
- Then upload a recording of the live class to Panopto.
- Our Teaching with Technology course explains how to use UCC's learning platforms for optimal delivery.

**Students need as much certainty from a timetable as possible.**

- Use the Canvas Calendar.
- Consider how many live lectures there are and when they are on.
- Stick to the timetabled hours.
- Any additional hours for Q&As should be reflected in the timetable.

**Students find long online recordings challenging.**

- This is true for both live and pre-recorded content.
- Please consider chunking content (recording content in short 'chunks' of time per topic/theme etc.)
- Recognise that one hour of recorded content may often take students longer to digest.

UCC SU Student Feedback & CDE Advice to Staff

## DIGITAL BADGES POPULAR AS EVER

The latest round of applications for UCC’s Digital badging initiative was concluded in February with several new badges being approved. The next round will be announced in early Summer, but meanwhile, if you have any queries about developing a new badge, please email [digitalbadges@ucc.ie](mailto:digitalbadges@ucc.ie) and we will get back to you as soon as we can. We are currently in the process of recruiting a Digital Badge Administrator, following the departure of Moya Revins to a more senior post in UCC.

There have been 86 different digital badges awarded to 2,693 earners in UCC since the start of the process in 2018. There are currently 74 active badges, with more to be added following the successful round of applications in February.

With the successful backing of the Towards a Multi-Campus Microcredentials (MC2) project through HCI Pillar 3 funding, we are excited to see how UCC’s long-running digital badges processes might fit into or complement this wider framework.

# THE ASSIGNMENT CALCULATOR – SKILLS CENTRE

Working with students as partners, the UCC Skills Centre has created and launched the **Assignment Calculator**. Addressing the time management issues that continually present for students when planning academic assignments, Yasmine Radwan, a final year Digital Humanities student worked with the Skills Centre to devise an online digital tool that supports the essay writing process. Following the Assignment Calculators’ ‘seven steps to essay success’, from understanding the essay title to refining the final draft, students can obtain direction to demystify any confusion associated with the planning and resourcing of their academic work.

To further clarify the process, this web application provides students with a unique schedule based on their individual deadlines. A student simply needs to input the date they wish to start their assignment (the start date) and the date they wish to complete their assignment (the end date). From here, the assignment calculator generates a set of dates for students to utilise as a schedule for efficiently carrying out each step of an assignment. We hope through utilising this online tool, that students can improve how they manage their time while transforming their approach to academic assignments to unlock their potential.



## Ask an ID

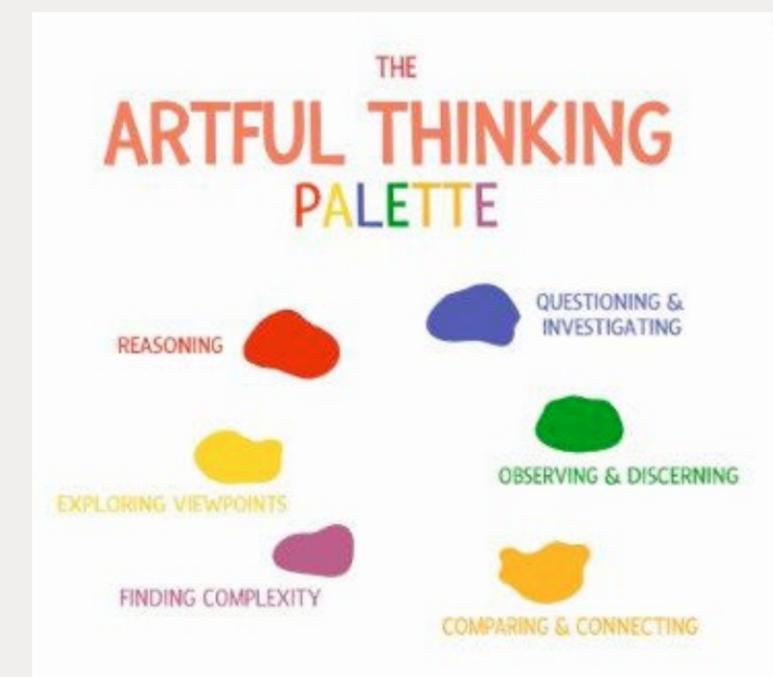
The CDE's new "**Ask an ID**" page launched on 26 February 2021. Growing out of a very successful question-and-answer session with post-primary teachers and principals coordinated by Niamh Dennehy in the School of Education and Dr Sarah Thelen in the CDE, the Ask an ID page provides a way for teachers, principals, and others to learn more about using technology in teaching and learning. Questions are submitted using an online **form** and Sarah answers a new one each week. To date, Sarah has answered questions about where to start when thinking about teaching online, best practice for sharing audio files, and approaches to online learning.

Anyone curious about using technology for teaching and learning are invited to submit their questions and new answers are posted to the Ask an ID page each Thursday. UCC staff are, of course, welcome to submit questions, but are encouraged to **request a consultation** instead to provide more specialised advice and support. Please do share the link to this page with anyone you think might be interested and contact **Sarah** with any questions.

## Unlocking the Potential of Prison Education by James Cronin, CIRTl

The coronavirus has restricted physical access in partnerships with educators in Cork prison, but CIRTl continues to collaborate with educators in Cork Prison to develop a learning toolkit based on Artful Thinking developed by the Project Zero Classroom focusing on Thinking Routines and Thinking Dispositions by using examples from artwork made in the Education Unit, Cork Prison. This will be a sustainable learning resource to be used by the Education Unit to develop future learning design in studio practice and to make visible critical thinking skills for educational progression to benefit educational engagement and student progression. The Artful Thinking "palette" consists of six thinking dispositions which strengthen students' intellectual behaviours. These dispositions are developed through Thinking Routines, which are easy to learn and can deepen students' thinking in the classroom. Higher education in a prison community context is a rare space for connection with others, for critical engagement with unfamiliar people, texts and theories, and a place where students are students rather than an assigned number, "an

inmate" or "an offender." The work of educators in the learning community in Cork Prison reminds us of the value of education as a transformative experience that has a value in itself. The coronavirus pandemic has revealed what students and practitioners have always known: an experience of college in prison does not just provide educational opportunities to earn either certification or a degree. Education in prison is a robust ecosystem where students seek belonging, support, community, engagement and challenges.



## REFLECTIONS ON STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Aoife Ní Mhurchú, English Language Teacher

the greatest challenge for me is figuring out how to engage my students. How can I maximise student engagement in my online (live) tutorials?

Many educators seem to be asking themselves the same question and, very helpfully, there have been a number of **webinars** about this in an Irish university context, including a recent **round-table discussion** at UCC facilitated by Clíodhna O'Callaghan (Centre for Digital Education), all of which have provided great insights into students' experiences of live interaction and given me lots of food for thought. The message they send reminds me strongly of the voices of my own tutors from my college days and which I now find myself repeating with my own student-teachers: *Clear instructions! Nominate! Decentralise early & often!*

But the one that rings out the loudest is: *Lower that affective filter!* The affective filter hypothesis (Krashen, 1982) highlights a strong link between affective factors (motivation, self-confidence, anxiety) and second language acquisition.

The theory is the lower the affective filter, the better the chances of acquisition and learning. Sadly, the affective filter has never been higher for so many students (and educators!) and means we have to work that bit harder at motivating students, boosting their confidence, acknowledging the anxiety-inducing situation we all find ourselves in, and helping to reduce that anxiety as much as possible. A high affective filter means low student engagement.

So how to lower the affective filter? On the teaching practicum module offered by the Language Centre to fourth-year B.A. World Languages students (LC3202), we talk a lot about rapport. Student-teachers quickly learn that the ability to establish & maintain rapport with and among students is a key pedagogical skill. With the aid of recorded lesson observations, they see how teachers achieve this, and incorporate these practices into their own teaching: smiling, using students' names, adding humour, asking the students about their interests and lives,

sharing something about their own interests and lives with the students. These are all things that I have had to remind myself to do a little more often in the online classroom but I believe they form the starting point for a low affective filter and higher levels of student engagement and interaction.

Lowering the affective filter for students when you're already trying to keep a lid on the frustrations that come with emergency remote teaching (Hodges et al., 2020) is an ask, to say the least. But the goalposts haven't changed: it's still about trying to create a positive and low-anxiety learning environment for students. Back in March 2020 at the LC, we created a Team (on Microsoft Teams) for each tutorial group. This has allowed students to interact with each other and staff outside of class time in a format similar to social media (via Posts), interactions that I wouldn't have otherwise had (like the time my student shared a photo of their first attempt at lemon & sugar pancakes!). We also identified a clear need for student training

on Teams from an early stage. As teachers, we were able to identify & address gaps in our own technological knowledge, but students, not knowing what teachers' expectations might be, were at a clear disadvantage, and many not as digitally literate as we had assumed. We set up regular 'Tech Checks' to walk students through some of the main features & functions of Teams so that they were technically equipped to interact and engage.

Perhaps, as language educators we are fortunate. Language learners tend to expect a certain level of interaction – some demand a high level of it – and the many functions & features of Microsoft Teams allow for this. Of course, it's not all plain sailing: cameras switched off continues to be a point of contention. But it's been a steep learning curve and things have certainly improved since this time last year. In fact, I'm starting to worry about how I'll readjust to face-to-face teaching without the instant gratification of students' emojis and reactions!



Aoife Ní Mhurchú,  
UCC Language Centre

I began working in language teacher education in 2008 and it's one of the aspects of my job as a University Language Teacher that I really enjoy. It's always an enlightening experience to learn about the challenges that face both new and experienced teachers and help them to find solutions. I have never been more challenged as an educator myself, however, than in the past 12 months. At times I've felt like a novice teacher all over again, having to learn a whole new set of skills. It's been utterly exhausting, but ultimately very rewarding. Initially, it was a case of grappling with the technology, trying to become familiar with all the new platforms and apps. But the challenges have evolved (thankfully!) and now

## How the Skills Centre can support staff

In conjunction with the academic community, the Skills Centre facilitates student learning through the provision of customised workshops and sessions. We invite UCC students to come and improve their study skills, writing technique and presentation skills through our group sessions, one-to-one appointments and drop-in sessions. Core learning is strengthened through the delivery of study strategies, providing the scaffolding and building blocks for independent and critical thinking. The **Information for Staff** webpage contains information on referring a student, arrange tailored skills sessions for class groups and Digital Badge hosting. There are a wide range of academic resources available.

## Workshop: Going all online - teaching practice, learning design and assessment

This 2-day workshop took place on 18th and 19th of March 2021 and brought together scholars of teaching and learning with lecturers of mathematics, statistics and machine learning. The former contributed with insight from state-of-the-art research on teaching in higher education. The latter demonstrated examples of best practice and lessons learned from a switch of face-to-face teaching/learning to blended and online delivery.

The event was organized by Dr Philipp Hoevel, the School of Mathematical Sciences (University College Cork) in collaboration with Dr Briony Supple from CIRTl and was funded as part of the National Forum Seminar Series 2020/2021. Keynote speakers at the event included Dr Claire McAvinia from Technological University Dublin, who spoke about the disruption caused by Covid and resultant changes to teaching practice, and Dr Naomi Winstone, Director of the Surrey Institute of Education, who presented a comprehensive overview of her research focused on e-assessment and feedback processes. Representing CIRTl, James Cronin presented a consideration of Ivan Illich's tools for conviviality for learning design in a post-pandemic pedagogy, while Dr Briony Supple

talked about 'Thinking with Things' and hands-on learning and teaching in the virtual context, utilizing methods such as Lego Serious Play. There were also many other contributions over the two days, the full list of abstracts can be seen here:

[www.ucc.ie/en/matsci/events/goingonline2021/](http://www.ucc.ie/en/matsci/events/goingonline2021/)

The event was well-attended and resulted in some very fruitful discussions on teaching and learning within the current challenges posed by Covid, and looking towards a post-Covid world.





## ACE'S SHORT COURSE PROGRAMME, REGINA SEXTON

Regina Sexton, Adult Continuing Education

Regina Sexton has been developing and managing ACE's short course programme since 2005. Launching an updated programme of 15 courses in the 2005 autumn semester and attracting 50 students, the programme has continued to grow considerably in its reach and in building a strong town-and-gown profile throughout the Munster region. Today the programme attracts over 1,000 each academic year with an ethos of providing educational and social experiences to participants with special interests and to students preparing to return to accredited programmes of study.

The short course programme for spring 2021 proved to be a record-breaking success in terms of student intake numbers and in the provision of academically stimulating courses and in the extension of socially enjoyable experiences to participants, most especially to those who were isolating through the third

Covid lockdown. Close to 700 students registered for the spring short course programme, which represents a 50% increase in the student numbers above the usual and standard spring programme intake rate. A total of 30 courses, drawn from across the disciplines, ran from late January to April. A number of new courses proved very popular, reflecting the interest in and importance of discussing emerging research findings in the areas of in gender identify, childhood trauma and in the application of digital cartography and map data to heritage mapping. The spring programme also offered the first opportunity for public engagement with the university's newly acquired manuscript The Book of Lismore. UCC staff joined with colleagues from TCD and the DIAS to offer the first exploration of one of the Boole Library's Special Collections and Archives unique holdings, The Book of Lismore.

## Summer in the Language Centre

The LC is gearing up for the summer season, which will be mainly online again this year. Applications are coming in for:

- **Pre-sessional programmes** designed to help students prepare for UG and PG courses, developing key skills such as critical thinking, dialog. These courses can be used to meet the English language requirement for progression to UCC degree programmes. For 2021 there are three options for students with a conditional offer of a place from UCC. These are 16, 12 and 6-week pre-sessionals, starting on 26 April, 24 May and 5 July respectively, with all three finishing on 13 August, with outcomes returned to respective admission offices. There is also a 2-week pre-sessional course planned for end of summer for international students who have secured a full offer for their chosen degree programme. This course will cover areas such as critical thinking, academic conventions, collaborative & dialogic learning, autonomous learning, intercultural communication and presentations.
- Applicants applying to UCC with a Duolingo English Test (DET) result in 2021 are referred to the Language Centre by admission offices for a free supportive **Skills Check** dependent on their scores. A Skills Check comprises a Reading, Writing and Speaking Check

and results are analysed by members of the Centre's pre-sessional teaching team and students are then guided as to which pre-sessional they may need to take, and the appropriate admission office is updated.

Enquiries regarding pre-sessional programmes at UCC Language Centre should be addressed to **academicenquiries@ucc.ie**

- **Summer Teacher Festival** – this year we will be joined by colleagues from School of Languages for a series of workshops for English language practitioners on Mondays and Thursdays between 12 July and 19 August. The workshops will cover such topics as Bringing Grammar to Life, Maximising Integration in Academic English and Demystifying the research process - finding your voice for presenting. The sessions will reawaken your passion for teaching English or using English as a medium of instruction in your particular context. Discounts will be extended to any UCC colleagues who are interested and who may be working with students whose first language is not English or Irish.

Enquiries should be addressed to **TandD@ucc.ie**

## CIRTL PARCHMENT CEREMONY

The annual CIRTL Parchment Ceremony took place in February with the event held online for the first time in the centre’s history. For the academic year 2019/2020 there were 102 new graduates of the Postgraduate Certificate and 32 in the Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. These graduates are based in UCC and across other Irish HEIs across Galway, Limerick and Dublin. There was also representation from some international universities in the US. As OVPLT we recognise the dedication and sacrifice of all of these graduates especially in a year like the last. An enjoyable ceremony was had by all with video messages of congratulations posted by the interim President Prof. John O’Halloran, Vice President for Learning and Teaching, Prof. Paul McSweeney, Heads of Colleges and family and friends alike posting messages to their loved ones on the live Pubble Wall. A round of applause to the graduates on their ongoing commitment to teaching and learning.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=8xl4wnwFLeo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8xl4wnwFLeo)



## English for Academic Purposes (EAP) – Event on Precarity and Professional Identity

Colleagues from the Language Centre on behalf of EAP in Ireland contributed to an event on precarity and professional identity in the English language teaching and English for Academic purposes disciplines. The event was facilitated by two members of the Language Centre team Julie Butters, and one of our teachers, Aoife Ní Mhurchú, who spoke about her PhD research on teacher professional identity. The event was very well attended, with participants sharing stories in break out rooms of working without contracts for many years of their professional academic careers, and it highlighted how precarity has become even more visible in an uncertain world. UCC University Language Teachers showed solidarity with colleagues and spoke about the importance of collective action surrounding the serious issue and damaging effects of precarity. For more information regarding this two part event, follow this link:

<https://eapinireland.org/workshopswebinars/>

### EAP in Ireland event

EAP in Ireland believes that it is essential as an educational organisation to question the foundation of our discipline. To do this, it would be very difficult not to question the serious issue of precarity that is rife in English Language Teaching. All of us, including all contexts of ELT/EAP and

all levels, have been or are faced with the damage that precarity does to the reputation of the discipline, and the effects on the well-being and mental health of practitioners.

Covid has made the extent of the injustices surrounding precarity visible, and now we cannot continue ignoring it. A serious issue with precarity is that it can silence those who are in precarious working environments due to the insecurity of holding onto a job. Therefore, EAP in Ireland wants to create a platform to bring ELT/EAP practitioners together in solidarity and to give a platform to share different perspectives on how precarity affects us all.

Julie Butters, UCC Language Centre



UCC Language Centre



# 75th Anniversary for Adult Continuing Education

The academic year 2021-22 marks the 75th anniversary of the Centre for Adult Continuing Education in UCC. Established under then UCC President Prof. Alfred O’Rahilly in 1946, an initial offering of a Diploma in Social and Economic Science for Trade Union members had by 1953 grown to 17 Diploma courses across centres throughout Munster. Today, ACE offers 175 courses to over 3,000 students through a wide range of Diploma, Bachelors, and Masters programmes, with a focus on diversity, community outreach, and lifelong learning. To

celebrate this important milestone, a programme of events will be held throughout the year. A documentary film will be released in autumn 2021 which focuses on the development of ACE since 1946 and our current activities. ACE will also commission the development and publication of the history of ACE to be launched in spring 2022. An autumn series of public lectures will also be held to celebrate the ethos of diversity and community focus that underpins Adult Education at UCC. For more information, please visit our website [www.ucc.ie/en/ace](http://www.ucc.ie/en/ace)



**Pictured top:** 1950 Diploma Economic Science. **Above:** Ace celebrated its 70th anniversary with a Family Day at Fitzgerald’s Park in 2016

## The Continued Integration of Sustainability into the UCC Curricula

In support of the Sustainability element of the Connected Curriculum, CIRTL staff initially conducted 4 workshops with a total of 40 teaching staff near the close of semester 1. These workshops included all skill levels and were designed to help staff map their curriculum to individual Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Methods were demonstrated for surfaced existing SDG connections in existing curriculum and further aligning SDG coverage with learning outcomes, activities, and assessments consistent with the Connected Curriculum Self-Evaluation tool. The 5th workshop was also presented on 8 March as part of Green Week for 22 participants which included staff from UCC, Sligo IT, Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, and Tralee IT.

Invitations were extended by GMIT to participate in their National Forum Seminar Series on Sustainability and also by Technical University Dublin with both events serving as staff professional development in sustainability. The teaching enhancement design processes of this SDG toolkit and workshops were also the subject of a presentation at the 2021 European Universities Association Forum on Learning and Teaching. Lastly, funding was just secured from the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning and the Higher Education Authority to expand these workshops into a Digital Badge in Teaching and Learning with Sustainability and the SDGs which will tentatively roll out in the next academic year.



**Left:** Word clouds created at the start of the SDG workshops

## 2021 Centre for Global Development Lunchtime Seminar Series Success

This semester's 'Centre for Global Development' lunchtime seminar series is based on the theme '*the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Science and the Social Sciences: Engaging with the Wider Community*'. This is in line with UCC's strategic goals which links UCC's development research work with the wider UN SDGs, to enable UCC's strategic goals be aligned with UN targets for 2030. UCC is playing its part by inviting the University community as well as outside guests to showcase their research using the CGD seminar series platform. The CGD also invited guests including consultants, specialists and NGOs to participate. The CGD seminar series has been well attended by staff and students, as well as members of the general public. It has covered a diversity of areas including: 'Introduction to the UN SDGs, and Education (SDG 4) as a Humanitarian Response' (R. Griffin, UCC), 'A Dynamic Framework for integrating the SDGs across the curricula' (J. Barimo, UCC); 'The Impact of Covid-19 on Concern Worldwide' Health (SDG3) and HIV Programmes in 2020' (B.

Gahan; Concern Worldwide); 'Acceptability and sustainability of using mHealth technologies in the management of childhood illnesses in the rural communities of Malawi' (G.B. Chirambo, Malawi), 'Improving Food Crops in the context of addressing SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 13 (Climate Action)' (B. Doyle, UCC); 'Education Aid -Reflections from the Field' (M.O'Sullivan: Power Teachers). The CGD Lunchtime seminar series has been Chaired by Board members of the CGD committee. Earlier in the series, the focus was more on SDG environmental topics, giving a platform to those working on EU Green Deal funding proposals prior to funding deadline. Topics included H2020 Renewable Green Energy Topics with G.Dalton (MaREI/UCC); 'Embedding the Gender Dimension into H2020 Projects - Lessons Learnt' (C. Ní Laoire, C. Gaffney & C. Linehan, UCC) and 'the SDGs and Social Responsible Research' with E. Jensen (RRING/ICORSA) amongst others. The seminar will continue to run until the end of April 2021. For all enquiries, please email series convenor Dr Rosarii Griffin: [rosarii.griffin@ucc.ie](mailto:rosarii.griffin@ucc.ie)

## Dr Ciara Staunton, in conversation with Journalist Stephen Barry, about her courses on Forensic and Criminal Psychology

Having contributed to a podcast series on one of Ireland's first serial killers, numerous newspaper articles on serious violent crimes, and radio appearances on high profile cases, Ciara Staunton's insights into criminal psychology are always in demand.

That applies to her courses too, The Psychology of Criminal Behaviour and The Criminal Mind short course, which sees students sign up every year to understand the workings of the criminal mind.

The two-year diploma attracts many professionals working in the area of criminal justice; Gardaí, outreach and youth workers, prison and probation officers, juvenile liaison officers, psychiatric nurses, teachers and doctors, but also the armchair psychologists.

"The short course on The Criminal Mind often attracts those who have no background in psychology or academia but read all the crime books, watch the TV shows and movies right through to the professionals, and everyone in between." says Ciara.

"People assume we need to look at the Ted Bundy's of the world but in my course, we look at very contemporary people. My students are required to keep up to date with the news and we always talk about the cases as they happen because that's exactly the nature of the material we're covering."

The general interest in contemporary cases is huge while the subject matter can be heavy. The impacts on those who study it can be enormous, not just in terms of job promotions and further study options, but in criminal investigations too.

"I have a great example of a detective who developed a deeper understanding of the traits of psychopathy," says Ciara. "She was interviewing a suspect of a crime but the interview was going nowhere and the police can only hold somebody for a certain period of time. This Detective knew enough from the course that the suspect was unlikely to admit to what he was being charged with but she knew if she could keep him talking long enough and get him to weave enough lies into his version

of events, she could then prove those lies through corroborating evidence. That was a magnificent insight into her ability to change her interviewing methods on the spot."

It also improves professionals' understanding of vulnerable individuals, how to spot subtle indicators and refer appropriately so they can get the help they need. It covers the influence of trauma on individuals and what childhood trauma looks like as an adult. And for those working in youth justice, it offers an insight into brain development and why tactics they might be used to utilising don't always work with young people.

The course attracts an impressive range of guest speakers, including the retired assistant Garda commissioner, the retired head of the Irish Prison Service, chartered forensic psychologists, and barristers.

And while students will transition back to the classroom post-pandemic, Ciara says the successful move to online learning this year can broaden the pool of potential guest speakers, and students, in future.

"We're in the mindset of being so localised you forget that we could start marketing around the world if you can get the online system up and running. To me, that's very exciting.

"I've had to really rethink how we deliver these programmes because a three-hour session online is not the same as a three-hour classroom experience so I've totally reinvented how the course runs and what it feels like for the students."

"My hope is that if we resume classes on campus, we still can attract individuals who can log-in live while you're delivering it in a lecture hall. I'm hoping we develop the blended capacity to do that."



Dr Ciara Staunton, Adult Continuing Education



## NEW MEMBER OF THE CDE

Michelle Donovan, CDE

The Centre for Digital Education was delighted to welcome Michelle Donovan to the team on March 15th last. Michelle will be working as Research Support Officer for the Learning Analytics LITE project. Michelle graduated with a B.Eng in Electrical and Electronic Engineering from UCC in 2015.

In her previous roles, Michelle was responsible for the day to day running of an Enterprise Ireland HPSU mobile applications start-up company. While studying in UCC, she volunteered with a local Lego club teaching robotics and developed an educational board game for the Year of George Boole. In her final year, Michelle was a runner-up in the Joe Gantly prize for engineering while working on her final year project U-play2, a smart toys platform.

Since graduating, she has been busy running her own company **TAPSTAK** - a mobile engagement platform that consolidates transactional interactions for smartphone users.

The Learning Analytics LITE project, which is supported under the National Forum SATLE 2020 fund, runs until March 2022. It aims to build a Community of Practice around the topic of Learning Analytics. The project will gather case studies from contributors around the university, who were carefully selected as part of an Expression of Interest call in early April. The project team also includes Instructional Designer, Sophie Gahan from the CDE and Research Support Officer, Owen Jump from CIRTL. For more information on the Expression of Interest call see our webpage **HERE**



Sally Orren, UCC Language Centre

Sally Orren, Senior University Language Teacher, UCC Language Centre was appointed 21st January 2021

Starting in the University of Cape Town, where she is from, Sally completed her B.A. (Hons) in Modern English Studies at the University of Cardiff, achieving the top grade in her year. She started her career in office management in Wales before developing her English teaching qualifications with a move to Catalonia where she joined the teaching staff of an English academy. Here she developed the curriculum and assessment policy as well as teaching. Sally taught in Catalonia and France before moving to Ireland, where she worked in private language centres in the fields of language teaching, teacher training and

development, and curriculum development. She completed her Cambridge Diploma in English Language Teaching in UCC and joined the Language Centre teaching team in 2010, becoming a full-time University Language Teacher in 2017. She has worked closely with the Language Centre team and is now delighted to be part of the project to refocus the Language Centre's role in UCC in her new position of Senior University Language Teacher; in particular, she is looking forward to the further development of programmes to support students in their education journeys at UCC.



## UCC'S STUDENT ASSOCIATE INTERN

Catherine Dawson,  
Student Associate, CDE

I graduated with a joint-honours in Applied Maths and Physics in 2019, and I will admit to anyone I wasn't the best student. However, I was very involved in other student life areas, like societies and student politics. I loved my course and loved the content taught, but it became apparent that such a heavily exam-based course mightn't give me the best grades as that isn't how I learn. Through my work in Societies, even becoming Chairperson of the Disability Activism and Awareness society, it became evident that there are groups of students who also have real barriers to their education.

I decided to run for Education Officer of the Students' Union because I knew my time in UCC wasn't done. I wanted to work with the university to improve students' academic lives and help students who were struggling like me. Boy, was it a learning curve to learn the academic structures of the University! However, I really fell in love with representing students. During the pivot, the 'student voice' became vital in decision

making and making sure no student was left behind. So much change could be done to ensure that students were getting the best chance to learn possible.

Following that experience and the drive to keep representing students, I now work with the IUA on their Enhancing Digital Teaching and Learning Project as UCC's student associate intern. I work very closely with staff and the CDE team to ensure that online teaching and learning have the students' voice at its heart as we move back to a blended approach. I work with UCC students and the Students' Union, and the other student interns around the country to ensure that the advice and feedback I give represent the entire student body. I am now completing my MSc in Mathematical Modelling and Self-Learning systems and finding this new experience challenging but rewarding. I now use my everyday experience to push for better student welfare and ensuring that staff are aiding students to learn.

## GOOD LUCK TO MOYA

The CDE wishes the very best of luck to Moya Revins as she moves from our team to a more senior role as Business Continuity Officer in the Student Records and Examinations Office. Moya joined the CDE as a Senior Executive Assistant in February 2017 and quickly became a valued colleague and key member of the team. As well as supporting the CDE team in the organisation of events, training and the running of the centre, Moya redesigned the CDE website, ran a uOnline online safety and security seminar with 12 schools, two Next Generation Learning Spaces seminars, managed our social media accounts, kept the Library Studio running, and managed all digital badge applications and awards! She did all of this and a lot more and was a permanently positive, helpful and friendly colleague. She will be sorely missed and hard to replace.

Thanks for everything Moya and we look forward to seeing you back on the campus some day soon.