

OVPLT eNEWS

Issue 19 | Autumn 2021

Office of the Vice-President for Learning & Teaching



Navigate stories

Welcome to the Autumn issue of OVPLT eNews

The President's Excellence in Teaching Awards 2021

Teaching Today in UCC

Meet Loretta Goff, Research Support Officer for Academic Integrity

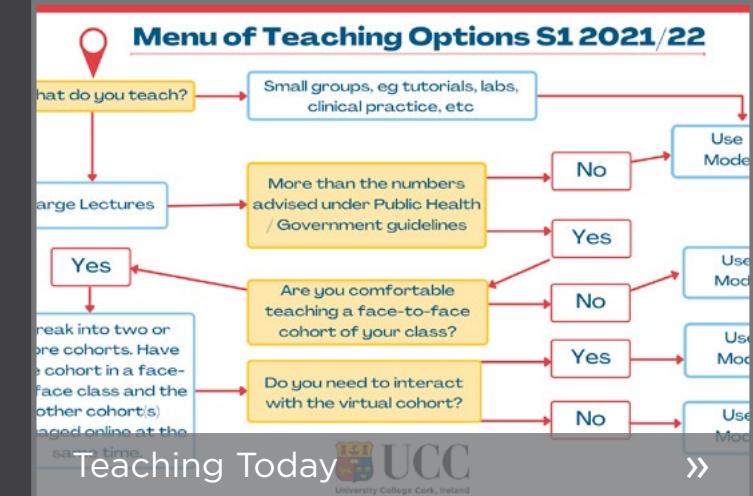
ASEM (Asia Europe Meeting) Life Long Learning Hub at ACE

The Centre for Digital Education and UCC 2022

Campus Event in the Honan Chapel for Culture Night 2021

Academic Integrity Project

Other news



Welcome to the Autumn 2021 edition of OVPLT eNews



Professor Paul McSweeney, VP Learning and Teaching

We are all delighted to be getting back to our beloved campus and to see students returning to student life again. Although, there are many changes and adjustments to be made as we work towards making the campus a safe space for both students and staff, we look forward to engaging with colleagues to make these adjustments as smooth as possible.

In this edition, we look forward to the annual Staff Awards which will take place in November 2021. Of these awards, the President's Awards for Excellence in Teaching applaud colleagues who make student centred pedagogy the central focus of their teaching.

We also bring you news of the many projects being undertaken by the Skellig Centre for Research and Innovation, we welcome colleagues to new roles and share updates from the UCC Language

Centre, the Skills Centre, the Centre for the integration of Research, Teaching and Learning and Adult Continuing Education.

We hope you enjoy reading our newsletter and welcome any feedback. For future contributions and feedback please email Jacqui at j.churcher@ucc.ie

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul McSweeney".

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

www.ucc.ie/en/teachlearn/



THE PRESIDENT'S EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AWARDS 2021

A variety of criteria are used to assess excellence in teaching including ability to engage students and improve student learning, the use of innovative pedagogies and technologies, research of teaching and assessment approaches and dissemination of good practice in teaching.

The award scheme is open to all UCC staff who teach or support teaching including academic staff, support staff, administrative staff, research staff, technical staff, postgraduate tutors and demonstrators. Staff may be nominated for an award through self-nomination or nomination by students, colleagues/peers or alumni.

In 2020, the University held the first ever and hopefully the last, virtual staff awards ceremony. While the ceremony was certainly enjoyable and special, it is hoped to return to an occasion which will be celebrated together with our colleagues in November 2021.

Last years awardees came from a diverse range of academic backgrounds including Law, Psychology, Chemistry and Sociology.

Calls for the nominations are now closed and the recipients will be announced very soon.

For further information on the Teaching Awards, we invite you to visit the OVPLT website www.ucc.ie/en/teachlearn/staffawards/

TEACHING TODAY IN UCC

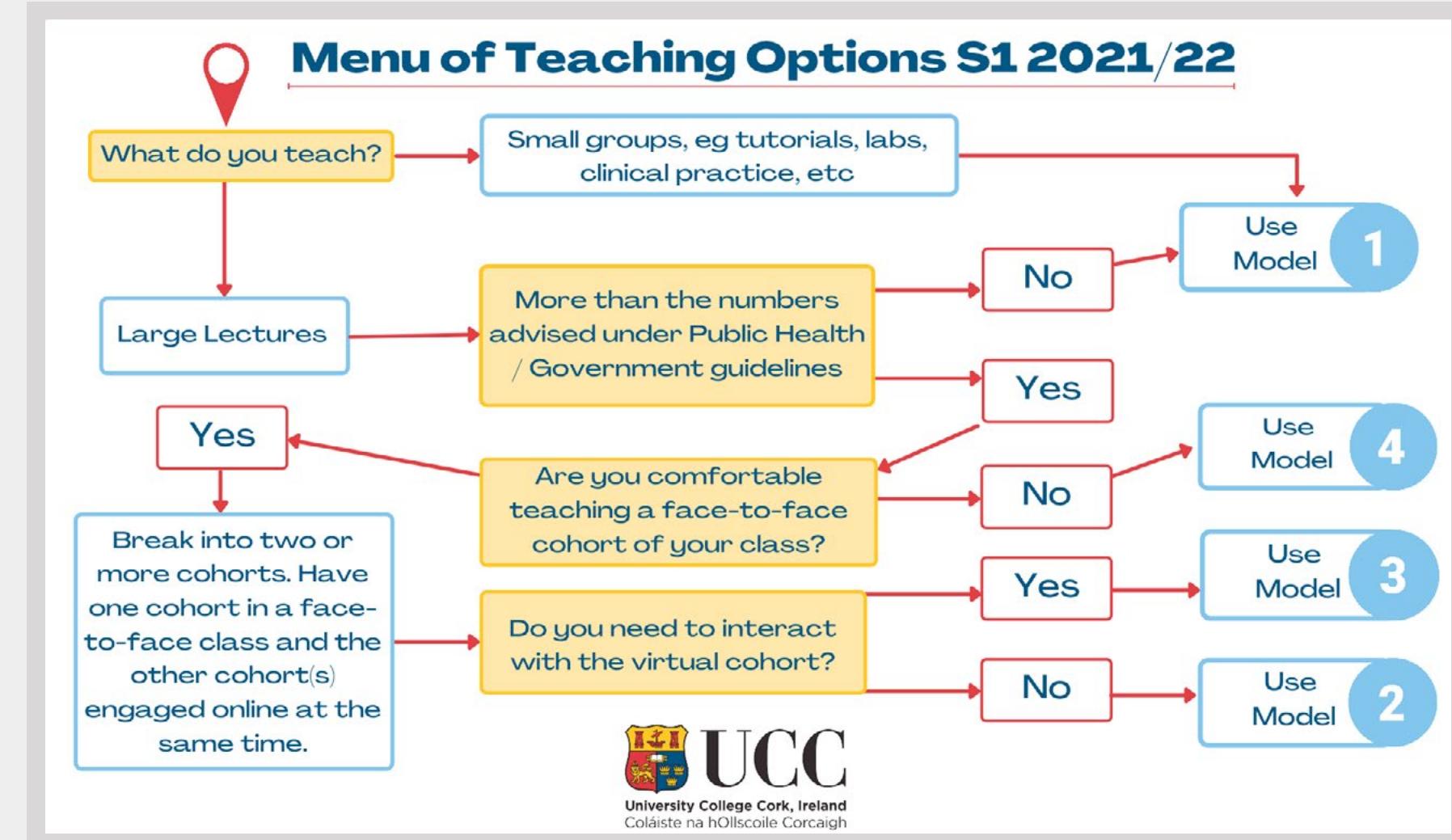
In mid-June, the CDE supported the work of the Teaching and Assessment Continuity Group by creating the new **Teaching Today in UCC** site. This site brought together useful resources from the last eighteen months around digital education and important teaching and learning considerations into one overarching site.

The site replaces the extremely useful Keep Teaching and Getting Started sites and provides up-to-date information for staff teaching in Semester 1 2021.

It includes **four suggested Blended Learning options** for teaching for staff to consider.

Staff are free to devise their own models, but we hope that the four models on Teaching Today provide a useful starting point for conversations around teaching practice as we begin to emerge from Covid and plan for a more on-campus experience for students.

The **four options**, including step-by-step guides to consider before and during lecturing, are:



- Option One - All teaching activities for all students delivered face to face with some content recorded for viewing afterwards (**Option 1 Step by Step Guide**)
- Option Two - Lectures split between live in-person and no interaction with online audience (**Option 2 Step by Step Guide**)
- Option Three - Lectures split between live in-person and online audience with interaction (**Option 3 Step by Step Guide**)
- Option Four - All Lectures Online (**Option 4 Step by Step Guide**)

We also update the **FAQs** section regularly, so please take some time to consider the questions and answers here.

VIT&L Month: Valuing Ireland's Teaching and Learning

From 8th to 30th November 2021, the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education are hosting Valuing Ireland's Teaching and Learning (VIT&L) month. The month aims to bring the higher education community together through local and national events to consider how we value teaching and learning, and what the future of education will look like for the students of tomorrow. VIT&L Events aim to enhance and challenge the higher education community's awareness, understanding and thinking about the value of teaching and learning across campuses. Keep your eyes peeled for details of UCC's programme of VIT&L events!



Above: Autumn on campus

ONGOING DIGITAL EDUCATION SUPPORTS FOR UCC STAFF

Some of our activities in support of these aims over the last number of months have included:

- Maintaining the [Teaching Today in UCC](#) site.
- Chairing the Teaching and Assessment Continuity Group.
- Continuing to provide training and advice to UCC staff around the application of educational technology to education. This includes our [consultation service](#), the [Teaching with Technology online course](#) with a new FAQs section and the [Teaching with Technology service](#).
- Running and recording [Teach Digi](#) sessions with UCC academic and professional services staff, as part of the IUA Enhancing Digital Teaching and Learning project. This includes our new Teach Digi Ag Caint sessions which have had over 500 views.
- Maintaining 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 MC2 (microcredentialling) project;
- Running the Digital Education for Teaching (DEFT) project, to run and be complete by the end of Q3 2021; and
- Initiating the Learning Analytics Lite project.



Meet Owen Jump, Centre for integration of Research, Teaching and Learning



Owen Jump is a Lecturer in Teaching and Learning Enhancement in the Centre for the Integration of Research Teaching and Learning (CIRTL) in University College Cork. His disciplinary background is in Applied Psychology and he has research interests in that area including; biobehavioural reactivity to experience in both laboratory and ecological settings, emergent devices and technologies that allow

for easily obtained information for fitness and life-logging used to monitor stress, health, and wellbeing. Owen has been working in Teaching and Learning enhancement since 2017 and his research in this area includes; The implementation of learning analytics in higher education, postgraduate teaching development, the use of technology in teaching and learning, and community based participatory research. Owen, along with colleagues, is a recipient of a National Forum Disciplinary Excellence in Teaching Learning and Assessment (DELTA) Award for their work in Learning enhancement using extended reality in science education.

Owen will be teaching on the Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning, Community Based Participatory Research, and PG Student teaching development in UCC in the coming academic term.

LAUNCH OF INCLUSIVE LEARNING PROJECT

On September 9th 2021 the Interim Registrar launched the **Teaching for All** staff course on Canvas. This course explores how staff can embed Universal Design for Learning in all digital content.

As part of the launch of this course, James Northridge, RSO, has been piloting a Cohesive Canvas project with staff from a range of disciplines across the University. Ten staff members were carefully selected to contribute to this project. Each will endeavour to make their teaching content on Canvas as accessible as possible throughout semester one. James has been working closely with Sophie Gahan from the Centre for Digital Education (CDE), to provide templates and accessibility standards for these contributors to meet. These standards have been mapped to the European Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).

Among the goals for this semester is for staff to meet a “Bronze” level of accessibility (as set out by James and Sophie). They may progress to Silver and Gold over time. It is envisaged that the cohort of staff involved will increase by semester two. Feedback from the initial pilot will be incorporated to further refine these standards and working practices.

Staff on the pilot programme will also have the unique opportunity of working with international experts on accessibility, to review and enhance their Canvas content. Wishing the very best of luck to all involved. We are excited to see this project paving the way for fully accessible course design across all UCC offerings in the future.

INCLUSIVE UCC



Loretta Goff

Meet Loretta Goff, Research Support Officer for Academic Integrity

The Skills Centre and the Centre for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning (CIRTL) are delighted to welcome Dr Loretta Goff as Research Support Officer for the Academic Integrity project. Loretta completed her B.A. in Communication Studies at Manhattanville College, her M.A. in Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies at University of Limerick, and her Ph.D. in Film and Screen Media at UCC.

During her Irish Research Council-funded PhD, Loretta published three peer-reviewed journal articles, presented at several international conferences, edited a special issue of *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media*, and acted as Co-Editor-In-Chief of *Aigne*. She also taught several tutorials and seminars across the School of English and the School of Film, Music and Theatre, including a Second-Year seminar that she developed from her research. In addition to this, Loretta was a core member of the tutor team during the inception of the Skills Centre. She contributed to the development of several of the Skills Centre

sessions, co-hosted the radio show “Write Here, Write Now”, and was part of the team that secured Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) funding to create the podcast series based off this popular show.

Since completing her PhD in 2019, Loretta worked as an Information Developer, writing technical documents, managing translations, and maintaining publishing websites. While in this role, Loretta also created accessible training videos and participated in company sustainability initiatives as a member of the Global Sustainability Network, Cork Chapter Committee. She was awarded a Certificate of Achievement for her work on product learning and development documents while in this role.

Loretta is excited to begin work on the Academic Integrity project and looks forward to engaging with students and staff on the topic in the coming months.

THE ACADEMIC INTEGRITY PROJECT

Work on the joint Skills Centre and CIRTL Academic Integrity project is now underway with the appointment of Dr Loretta Goff as Research Support Officer. The aim of the project, under the direction of Dr Catherine O'Mahony and Kathy Bradley, and funded by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, is to develop resources and educational opportunities regarding academic integrity for both students and staff across the University. These will include digital badge courses, webinars and workshops, short videos, and social media campaigns. Additionally, the use of lockdown browsers as an alternative solution to allow students to use their own devices in exam settings will be trialled.

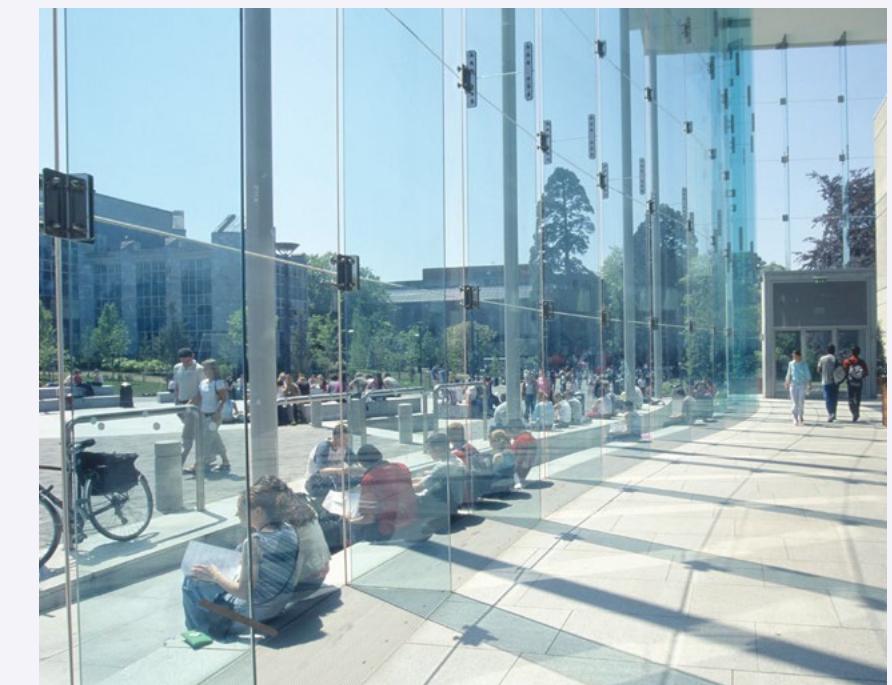
With the continued rise of contract cheating services such as essay mills internationally, embedding academic integrity into the University dialogue at all levels is increasingly important, and we look forward to engaging with the UCC community over the coming year. Students seeking help on assignments are often targeted by bots and pop-up ads promoting contract cheating services, claiming that they are legal and “100% plagiarism free”. Therefore, developing an

educational approach to academic integrity for students is vital, as is directing them to appropriate resources and assistance within the University. Important legislation was passed in Ireland in 2019 that allows for the prosecution of those who enable academic cheating, primarily these services. Raising awareness of the dangers and pitfalls of using these services and reporting them to Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) for prosecution, will help to combat them and maintain academic integrity.

Resources developed during the Academic Integrity project will introduce the six fundamental values of academic integrity (honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage) and explore how our actions can align with these, as well as the importance of these values within the University and outside of it. Additionally, the resources will focus on practicalities such as managing an academic workload, citations and paraphrasing, working with data, clarity of policies and guidelines, and authentic assessment opportunities. The project will map locally with UCC's Graduate Attributes Programme and the Connected Curriculum, nationally with the work of the National Academic Integrity Network

(NAIN), and internationally with the European Network for Academic Integrity (ENAI) and the International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI).

National Academic Integrity Week takes place the week of October 18th – 22nd, aligning with the ICAI Day of Action against Contract Cheating on Oct. 20th. Keep an eye out for resources that we will share during this week, as well as our series of workshops for students and staff. NAIN will host an additional schedule of offerings, focusing on assessment, during this week.



ASEM (Asia Europe Meeting) Life Long Learning Hub at ACE



Professor Seamus O'Tuama, Chair,
ASEM Lifelong Learning Hub.

The ASEM LLL Hub, established in 2005 and hosted by ACE UCC from 2020-2025, is an official network of Asian and European higher education institutions that work and learn together in order to achieve excellence in comparative research on lifelong learning, offer research-based education policy recommendation, and develop mutual understanding between Asia and Europe. It also facilitates researcher and student mobility and exchange within, and between, the two world regions.

Here are some of our highlights over the past year:

- Hosting a three-day virtual Forum attended by over 200 academics (October 13th-15th 2020) with welcoming speeches from Taoiseach Mr Michael Martin, Minister of State for Skills and Further Education, Mr Niall Collins and Secretary General of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Mr Niall Burgess.
- Formed two new research networks – “RN5: Lifelong Learning Transitions” and “RN6: Learning Cities and Learning Regions.”
- Co-hosted a pre-conference workshop alongside The Coalition of Lifelong Learning Organizations (COLLO) and European-North American Network



of Learning Cities at the Adult Education in Global Times Conference (June 3rd 2021).

- Worked alongside ASEM Education and ASEF to develop programmes such as ARC8 and the ASEFedu Summer University.
- Hosted multiple Council of Research Network Coordinators' meetings.



Recent events at the ASEM LLL Hub



Some important recent events for the ASEM LLL Hub included:

- The 8th ASEF Regional Conference for Higher Education (September 10th 2021)
- The ASEM Senior Officials Meeting (September 14th and 15th 2021)
- The ASEM LLL Hub International Advisory Council Meeting (September 16th 2021)
- The UNESCO Learning City Conference – Pécs, Hungary (September 23rd 2021)

We also have a new website that shows all these achievements, and much more:

**ASEM Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning
(asemllhub.org)**



Previous events at the ASEM LLL Hub

Introducing **Dr Patrick Holloway**



Dr Patrick Holloway is currently the Project Manager for the ASEM LLL Hub at ACE, UCC. He is responsible for coordinating the six Research Networks within the hub while also managing the projects among the networks. He is also in charge of creating new partnerships whilst strengthening existing ones. Patrick lived in Brazil for nearly a decade, where he ran his own English school for adults, while also teaching at university level.

He has a PhD with distinction and a master's degree with distinction in Creative Writing. He is also a prize-winning author of fiction and poetry. His research interests include Lifelong Learning, Memory and Identity, English as a second language. His aims within this role are not only to establish the ASEM LLL Hub as a platform for dialogue between researchers and policymakers but also to assist in the ongoing research into Lifelong Learning so that further education becomes accessible and viable for all types of students. Moreover, he aims to further the ongoing research into methods of teaching, learning and outcomes.

Introducing **Joni Hendrick**



Joni currently holds the role of Research Assistant for the ASEM Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning (ASEM LLL Hub) in Adult Continuing Education (ACE) at University College Cork. She is responsible for assisting with the growth and support of the Hub as well as the management and promotion of all Hub activities. Her core focus is to support and expand the Hub's six research networks and to assist with member's research projects. Joni holds a BA in

Economics and Psychology and a MSc in Management and Marketing, both from University College Cork. She is also the recipient of the UCC Works Award, which she received for her voluntary contribution to the Student's Union and Student Council throughout her time in university. Her main research interests include digital and content marketing, gender equality in education and the workplace, and lifelong learning. Her goal for the ASEM LLL Hub in Ireland is to establish its reputation as a network for adult learners of all ages and to attract more students to the Hub.

Skellig Centre for Research and Innovation (Skellig CRI)

UCC Outreach Centre, South Kerry

The Skellig Centre for Research and Innovation (Skellig CRI) is a unique higher education and community development partnership between University College Cork, Kerry County Council and South Kerry Development Partnership (SKDP) that was established in February 2017. The Centre is based locally in Cahersiveen, at the heart of the Skellig Region, is a space which is open to various universities and educational institutes both nationally and internationally and which is facilitating the delivery of higher education programmes, research, and practice locally in the Skellig Coast region.

The Skellig Coast region encapsulates all that our natural cultural and heritage resources can offer from our native language within the Gaeltacht, to the history of communication via telegraph from Valentia Island and the wonderous geology of Skellig Michael. The region is steeped in a natural resource of marine wildlife, archaeology, flora and fauna as a few field excursions to start with.

The Centre is managed in UCC through ACE under the guidance of by Dr Seamus O'Tuama, ACE Director and managed on

the ground by Belinda Gascoigne, ACE on behalf of the partners. The initiative has been received very positively by the community, local businesses and service providers across the many offerings of the centre which offers a diverse range of programmes, workshops, modules, fieldtrips, seminars, and research in locations across the Skellig Coast region. In the last 4 years over 2000 participants have attended these many offerings. In this time the initiative has not only offered educational opportunities but is also making a positive contribution to the local economy in the region.

Examples of some of the work has been the successful delivery of the Diploma in Environment, Sustainability and Climate with now over 30 students having graduated and the bespoke programme, the Certificate in Practice Support in Social Farming enrolling students now for a 3rd consecutive year and supporting the Kerry Social Farming Project delivered by SKDP.

From a regional perspective we offer regional relevant modules, in particular, the Introduction to Astronomy which supports the Dark Sky designation in the region



SKELLIG CRI

Skellig Centre for Research & Innovation

Ionad Taighde & Nuálaíocht na Sceilge

and with thanks to Professor Paul Callanan, Department of Physics, we have engaged with over 200 students on these weekend modules in Valentia Island.

Research forms a strong basis of the work in Skellig CRI, and we have through the Skellig Engagement Research Initiative with support funding, seen the following incredible projects undertaken to date:

- Bat Conservation and Species Survey - School of BEES and local schools and the community
- Geology and Skellig Michael - School of BEES
- Social Inclusion and role of Men's Shed - Dept of Geography
- Medicine, Hearing Loss Impact with Age - College of Medicine, ASSERT with Colaiste na Sceilge Transition Year students

Also, over the last four years and with thanks to the many colleagues across the University we have also delivered many workshops and seminars in subjects from mindfulness, coaching, genealogy, sports economics to food marketing, to mention a few.

Locally, Skellig CRI is closely aligned with community groups and a key strategic partner in regional projects including the following:

- Úibh Ráthach Task Force in support their organisational actions and educational needs in the Gaeltacht region including language.

- Skellig Coast Tourism Network
- LIVE Project UCC (Iveragh Peninsula Eco Museum) - Project Lead, School of BEES.

In 2019, we secured funding to install equipment and technology to further enable education delivery emulating a teaching space in UCC which is supported by highspeed broadband and gives the functionality to bring the University class into the community. This is available for use within the large teaching room in Cahersiveen Library where Skellig CRI is based.

Recently we were fortunate to have a visit from both Minister Heather Humphreys and Minister Norma Foley where a presentation on the work of Skellig CRI to date and an introduction to the exciting future developments for the Centre were made. We were also delighted to have in attendance Vice President for Learning and Teaching, Professor Paul McSweeney.

If you are interested in delivering a course, talk, workshop or educational based event, undertaking a fieldtrip or some research relating to the region then please get in touch with the Manager, Belinda Gascoigne at skelligcri@ucc.ie or belinda.gascoigne@ucc.ie

We hope to see you soon at Skellig CRI.



UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh



Comhairle Contae Chiarraí
Kerry County Council





The Centre for Digital Education and UCC 2022

The vision of the Centre for Digital Education is:

'...to empower staff to improve student learning through the best practice application of technology.'

We achieve this by Advising Staff, Training, Informing Policy Development, Evaluating Emerging Educational Technology, Outreach and National and International Collaboration.

www.ucc.ie/en/digital-ed/about/

All of the work of the CDE is aimed at supporting UCC achieve the actions set out in Pillar 1 (Learning and Teaching) of UCC 2022, specifically the following actions:

- 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.

www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/_strategicplanning/UCC_2022_Delivering_a_Connected_University.pdf



UCC Language Centre

The UCC Language Centre **mission** is to help students reach their learning, teaching and communication goals in English.

We offer expertise in:

- Language learning
- General, academic and specialist English
- University preparation course design
- Teacher training and professional development
- Summer school courses
- Custom-made courses for organisations and corporate clients
- Communication across cultures

Our **vision** is to be a leading language centre. Based in Ireland, but reaching out across the world, we will be recognised for our excellence and innovation in how English is taught, used and learned.



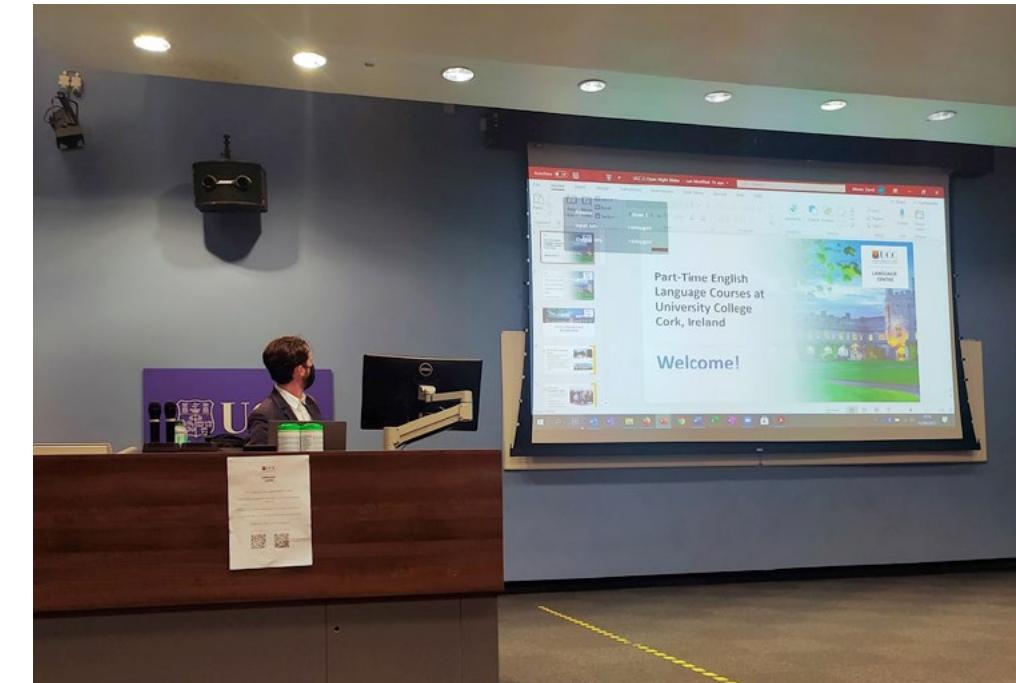
Campus Event in the Honan Chapel for Culture Night 2021

Left: Honan Chapel, the Sanctuary, copyright Honan Trust.

To mark the recent conservation work on the Honan Chapel, James Cronin (CIRTL) gave a talk and guided tour entitled "**Celtic Twilights: the place of the Honan Chapel in Ireland's Revolutionary Decade (1912-1922)**" on Culture Night, Friday 17 September, 7-9pm. The Honan Chapel, dedicated to St. Finbarr of Cork in 1916, is a unique Celtic Revival case-study illustrating the renewal of Cork craftsmanship in the first decades of the twentieth century. The chapel and its liturgical collection are products of the Irish Arts & Crafts Movement (1894-1925). This accounts for the overall unity of style. The designers were searching for a new sense of Irish national identity on the threshold of political independence.

This was expressed by looking back to the traditions of Celtic art and architecture and blending them with contemporary decorative styles. The story of the Honan Chapel did not end in 1916. New furnishings reflect revision of the liturgy since the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) and artistically express the vitality of the chapel as part of a living faith community.

Culture Night/Oíche Chultúir is brought to you by the Arts Council; it is a national moment, celebrating all that makes up the richness and diversity of culture in Ireland today, connecting people to cultural activities locally and nationally and aims to open up pathways to ongoing engagement. <https://culturenight.ie>



Annual Language Centre Open Night

UCC Language Centre held their annual Open Night on the 15th September. The presentation was hosted by our new member of staff, David Moran. Showcasing the range of courses on offer to help improve English skills, job prospects, and all English language communication needs in our University Language Centre, this was a blended event, attendees were able to participate in person and on Zoom.

Our part-time courses can now be attended ON CAMPUS or online! To see the full list of courses on offer follow this link: <https://bit.ly/3wGebPb>



Interview with Language Centre student, Tara Adams

I'm now trained and ready to teach in-person in a classroom as well as online
by ucclangcent

Tara Adams, an Irishwoman living in Boston, USA, recently completed a fully-online CELTA teacher training course. I caught up with Tara to learn about her experience on the course. Hi Tara, thanks for taking the time to do this interview. I know you must be glad of the downtime since the course finished. First of all, tell me a little about yourself.

Why CELTA? Why in a university?

After a little bit of research on ESL courses, it became pretty clear to me that a **CELTA certificate** would give me the best training as an English teacher, and the most recognisable qualification in the field. Doing it at a university, too, added to the appeal, because I feel it gives the certificate more clout with employers. It helps as well that UCC has such a good reputation.

Why did you choose to do the course?

I chose to do the course primarily because I'm moving to France and I want to be able to work in English while I get my French skills up to par. Aside from that I'm also very excited to have a career change and do something super interesting.

How did you go about applying for the course?

I found the course online after searching for CELTA programs in

Ireland (where I did my masters) and from there it was just a matter of emailing the course coordinator.

Is it as simple as just sending in an application form?

Initially, yes. Email the course coordinator, then complete the application form, and then get ready for your interview.

Do you need to prepare for the course? Are you given tips on what to do?

Most definitely. You're given plenty of material to work through online before you begin the course, and you're also given a reading list. I would recommend preparing thoroughly, especially improving your grammar knowledge, before beginning the program.

What was the first day like?

The first day was an orientation. It was the least intense day, but a lot of information is thrown at you, and

it prompts you to hit the ground running. You'll be teaching students really soon after, so it's important to get into the right mindset.

Teaching online must have been challenging. What was the experience like for you?

I think learning to be a teacher comes with its own challenges, and then learning to do it online is an additional challenge in itself. It's an exciting experience, and it's awesome when you get the hang of it, but it maybe feels a bit unnatural to begin with.

CELTA is known to be a very intensive course; is it really?

OMG, yes. It's perfectly manageable and doable, but just be prepared before you start the course and then get into the groove of it as soon as you can. Think of it like doing your exams in college from the very start until the very end. You won't have time for competing goals like work

for the duration of the course, so plan accordingly.

Is it true that you are teaching real students from the very start of the course?

Yep. We were teaching real students the first week of the course with an unassessed 15-minute teaching practice. This allowed us to get our feet wet and meet the students, and work out some of the nerves.

What are the students like that you are teaching?

They're all very nice, patient, and understanding, and generally they're just happy to have time with a native speaker even if you're a trainee teacher.

Tell us a little about the teaching practice? How is it assessed?

The teaching practices, or TPs, are either 40mins or 60mins long, and they're kinda at the core of your time on the CELTA course. You will start

preparing your lesson plan for your upcoming TP, then work with your tutor to tighten up the plan, then it's time for the actual TP, and finally you'll be given feedback on your TP and lesson plan by your tutor and fellow trainees. You're assessed on both the lesson plan and the teaching practice.

What else do you have to do in terms of assessment on the course?
Besides the teaching practices, there are four assignments to be completed for assessment.

If it is as intensive as they say, how did you balance the course work and your personal life? What advice would you give someone who is thinking of committing to doing a CELTA course?

It's very intensive, so what you need to do first of all is commit to it fully and make sure there are no competing interests like work getting in the way. Information and tasks are thrown at you, so it's important to keep on top of them as they come and not allow them to build up. I think getting enough sleep, exercising, eating well, and finding the time to rest and relax as needed is important. As a runner, I kept a good running routine going,

but I kept my runs short so I still had the time and energy to get back to my CELTA study.

What part of the course did you enjoy most?

I honestly got the most enjoyment from the intensity of the course. I got a thrill out of how much I had to push myself, and finishing the course was extremely rewarding. It was genuinely an amazing experience. Aside from that though, you form a tight bond with your fellow trainees and you get through the stresses of the course together, which is lovely.

What were the tutors like?

The tutors were incredibly resourceful. They're very experienced and have been training teachers for a long time, so they have a deep well of knowledge you can draw upon. They are all very supportive and want to see you succeed, but they will also be pushing you at every moment. I would recommend asking your tutors tons of questions; they were very available to answer questions at almost any time.

What advice would you give to someone starting the CELTA?

I think approaching the course with a positive attitude is crucial. You're

not expected to be a very capable teacher straight off the bat, but you need to take constructive criticism in stride and listen and adjust to the feedback from your tutors and fellow trainees.

What have you been doing since you got your CELTA qualification?

Since I finished the **CELTA** program a couple of weeks ago, I have continued studying the course units online just so I don't get out of the groove of teaching. Otherwise I've been getting things ready to make the move to France from the USA, and as soon as I get there I'm going to start looking for a job.

What would you have liked to have known before the course that you discovered as the course progressed?

One of the most important lessons I learned during the course was how to reduce my teaching talking time (TTT) by scripting what I need to say in advance. It can feel unnatural to be the teacher and not be talking, but it's so much better for the students (and you) when you only talk when absolutely necessary.

Do you have any funny stories to tell about the course?

I don't recall any specific funny instances, but there were many nice moments with my fellow trainees. Each time we were done with our teaching practice for the day and we had a moment to relax, it was lovely to be in each others' company and take the pressure off.

Is there any question I have not asked, but you would like to comment on?

I guess the only thing that comes to mind is whether I feel like I'm now trained and ready to teach in-person in a classroom as well as online. I believe I am, and I feel ready to teach online as well as online depending on the job situation.

Thank you so much, Tara. It was great having you on the course with us. Best of luck in France and do keep in touch.

If you are interested in getting a qualification which will allow you to work anywhere in the world, a CELTA course might be for you. All details [HERE](#).