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HIGHER EDUCATION

Speakers at International Women's Day Conference in the University of Limerick in March 2018: r-l Marie Connolly, Head of Equality and Diversity, UL; David Wallace, Bank of Ireland; Brid Horan, Steering Committee member, 30% Club.

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Brian Mooney

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EDUCATION
MATTERS

IRELAND'S YEARBOOK OF EDUCATION 2018 2019
Editor Brian Mooney
EDUCATION MATTERS

This Higher Education Chapter is part of
Ireland's Yearbook of Education 2018 2019

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A global university is one that is home to students and staff from all corners of the world, and has academic partnerships, dual and joint degrees, and opportunities for student and staff exchanges worldwide. But it is what our alumni do that matters in the long run. As a global university, Trinity College Dublin continues to extend its reach through education, research, and innovation activities.

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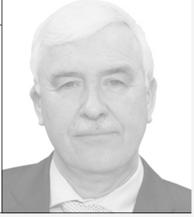

Establishment of Ireland's first Technological University marks a milestone in the higher education landscape but also poses challenges for it, not least in a country with a small, open economy recovering from deep recession. This article looks at the development of TUs in Ireland, what it means for the sector, and what the future may hold.

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NUI GALWAY APPOINTS NEW ADJUNCT PROFESSOR OF JOURNALISM

Renowned RTÉ journalist and broadcaster **Sean O'Rourke** has been appointed as an **Adjunct Professor of Journalism** at **NUI Galway**.

Mr O'Rourke, who presents the 'Today with Sean O'Rourke' show on **RTÉ Radio One**, will take up his new role in January 2019. The role is honorary and Mr O'Rourke will continue to work in his current capacity with the State broadcaster, RTÉ.

Speaking of his new appointment, Sean O'Rourke said:

I'm greatly honoured by this appointment, having worked as a student journalist in NUI Galway long before the university began to offer courses in journalism. So much has changed since then in the way journalism is practiced and received, but at its core it is still about two things: asking questions and telling stories. I look forward to working with today's students, learning from them, and sharing ideas about how to serve the public."

NUI Galway opened a new digital newsroom and completed a new dedicated radio broadcast facility in 2018. A new BA in Journalism, and Ireland's first MA in Sport Journalism and Communication, will be launched in 2019. New television facilities are also planned for 2019.

OVERVIEW OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Professor Mark Rogers
Registrar and Deputy President, University College Dublin

I am fairly certain that the Education Matters Yearbook is read mainly by educators and education policymakers. As a sector, we span early childhood, primary, secondary, further education and training, higher education, and across to research. We have the privilege and the responsibility of guiding our children to become the next generation of society, and of developing the lifelong aspirations of more and more adult learners.

Around 104,000 people work in the education sector in Ireland. We are in the sector predominantly because we believe in the value of education and are passionate about our chosen subjects. So in writing the introduction to this section of the Yearbook, I could stop here – because *education does matter*.

REFORM AND RENEWAL ARE IMPORTANT

Before I became deputy president and registrar of University College Dublin, I was dean of science, with responsibility for the largest undergraduate science programme in the country, educating about 2,000 undergraduate students.

A decade ago, when I had the role of dean, science (and STEM in general) was globally perceived as a turn-off. With the possible exception of medicine, the 'smart' drive was towards the commercial professions. The global economy was booming. Interest in and applications to science were falling. This was not a UCD phenomenon. Indeed, it was not even an Irish issue. It was a global trend. Universities, Institutes of Technology, and employers were all bemoaning the dearth of students, and consequently graduates, coming through science, computing, and technology.

Before we could go out and promote the opportunities open to our graduates, we had to look at why students had opted out of science studies.

At the same time, UCD was conducting a major university-wide curriculum review. This led to a reforming of our degrees into a modular teaching and learning system that concentrated on learning outcomes rather than proscribed inputs.UCD Horizons, for those of us who remember its introduction, was a massive change in mindset that required our faculty to reassess how they teach, how they assess their students, and how they measure their impact – bringing research into the class environment in a structured way.

In science, we embraced the value of choice and flexibility but guided our students along pathways so that we could nurture and encourage them as well as teach technical skills and expertise. We quickly saw a positive response, as more and more students chose science, computing, and other STEM degrees on their CAO top preferences. Consequently, the CAO points required to study science have increased by 200 in the past decade. The outcome is that many of our students choose to take science at university because it is such an interesting and mind-expanding topic. Of course, we know that employers are pleased and that they would encourage us to increase places in STEM degrees, but the real winner is society: many graduates take their science degrees into other realms and bring their learning, training, and interests into wider society.

The effort and achievement we have made at third level have spread into secondary and primary education. Not only are young pupils 'talking science', but we have specifically targeted and tackled teacher training in maths and other sciences.

LEARNING FROM ONE AREA HAS APPLICATION IN ANOTHER

With this experience, I find myself most interested in the Government's Languages Connect strategy, which takes a whole-system approach to achieving a high level of multi-language competence nationally.

The primary elements of the Government's ambition are to increase uptake in eight key languages from their present Leaving Certificate exam levels; to introduce a curricular specification for new learners of Mandarin Chinese for Leaving Cert and curricular specifications for heritage speakers for Polish, Lithuanian, and Portuguese; to increase the number of post-primary schools offering two or more foreign languages and increase the number of students sitting two languages for state exams; and to increase the proportion of the higher education cohort studying a foreign language as part of their course, in any capacity, to 20%.

> I recognise the importance of multilingualism for our children.

Although sadly a monoglot myself, I recognise the importance of multilingualism for our children. We may make a virtue of soon being the only major English-speaking nation in the EU, apart from Malta, but our partners in the Netherlands, Scandinavia, Germany, France, and further east all have high levels of English language competence that reduce our linguistic trading advantage.

Currently at UCD we send 17% of our undergraduates overseas as part of their studies, but we take in twice as many Erasmus and international exchange students. As a small open economy, Ireland has, since the late 1950s, recognised the importance of international trade. It is, of course, two-way. We send our graduates out to conquer international markets, and multinational corporations come to Ireland to tap into our hard-working labour force, our can-do attitude, and our strong foreign direct investment strategy.

As Ireland has become a much more diverse society, it should be easier for us to encourage and facilitate broader language learning.

WHAT DO DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL MIX REALLY LOOK LIKE?

Multilingualism feeds into the widening participation agenda too. Although children from non-Irish or dual-citizenship families tend to have good or very good English language skills,[1] statistics from the 2016 census show a higher proportion distributed among socio-economic groups D, E, F, and G, compared with Irish families.[2]

One of the key system objectives set out in the Higher Education System Performance Framework 2018–2020 is to improve the equality of opportunity through education and training and to recruit a student body that reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland's population. Any educational strategy that encourages and rewards multilingualism therefore has the potential to directly benefit these students.

The higher education sector has introduced various measures and supports to enable socio-economically disadvantaged students to participate in and succeed at third level. The national HEAR access route has streamlined these measures, and although, along with many of my fellow registrars, I am proud of the service we already provide, I am committed to creating a university that truly reflects the diversity of society in Ireland, a university where neither socio-economic circumstance nor disability affects your chance of access to higher education.

The resources we provide enable both disadvantaged students and those with disability to succeed in their study. Alongside the increase in international student numbers, these students reflect a very welcome growing diversity and social mix on our campuses.

I am committed to creating a university that truly reflects the diversity of society in Ireland.

BANG FOR THE BUCK

Supporting such initiatives and State objectives requires funding. The arguments put forward by the higher education sector are as well rehearsed as those of the early education, primary, secondary, and further training sectors. We also compete with 'big spending' health, housing, transport infrastructure, and social protection departments for central government funding.

This year's budget estimate for the Department of Education and Skills is €10.8bn, up 7% on the previous year. Preschool, primary, and secondary education account for €7.4bn, up 5%; higher education comes in at €1.6bn, up 1%. The two areas with larger percentage increases are skills development, at €436m (up 16%) – funded in part by the National Training Fund levy on employers – and capital services, at €852m (up 23%), of which €150m has been allocated for capital investment in higher education, further education and training, and research.

The higher education sector points to its relatively poor public funding position in international terms, and we argue that our output – in terms of the quality and number of graduates we educate – has a direct impact on Ireland's economic prosperity.

The seven universities, through the Irish Universities Association (IUA), have committed to a charter to grow and develop the Irish university education system for this and future generations of students. This charter – Ireland's

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[1] www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp7md/p7md/p7se/.
[2] www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp7md/p7md/p7sea/.

Future Talent – commits to transform capability and performance across a range of key criteria to deliver a sustainable system for Ireland's foreseeable needs.

And so I come full circle to the reason that education matters at each stage. Our Government rightly recognises the importance of apprentice and skills training, of expanding and building new schools for a growing population of primary and secondary pupils, of increasing the number of teachers and special needs assistants. Equally, State investment in higher education brings societal benefits in terms of widening participation, cultural enrichment through creativity and innovation, and economic prosperity through productive output. It really is time for Government to show its commitment to these objectives through genuine support and adequate financial funding.

***

Trinity is first in Europe for producing entrepreneurs

Graduates from Trinity College Dublin have founded more venture-backed companies than graduates from any other European university over the last 12 years, according to PitchBook*.

In September 2018, for the third year in a row, Trinity was ranked first in Europe by the private equity and venture-focused research firm, PitchBook. It is the only European university within the top 50.

"Our graduates have raised $2.372 billion in funding across 201 companies in the last decade," said Chief Innovation and Enterprise Officer at Trinity, Dr Diarmuid O'Brien.

"This is a testament to the fantastic students coming through Trinity, the competitiveness of the Dublin innovation eco-system, and the role that Trinity plays for Ireland in enabling our best entrepreneurship talent."

**Universities Report: https://pitchbook.com/news/reports/2017-universities-report*

TO BE A GLOBAL UNIVERSITY

Juliette Hussey
Vice-President for Global Relations, Trinity College Dublin

Patrick Prendergast
President and Provost, Trinity College Dublin

Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin, has a global footprint that has waxed and waned over the 427 years of its existence.

Founded as the English monarchy was extending its dominance in Ireland, Trinity was the first university established in a colony. The initial impulse was to create new commercial activity around the medieval city of Dublin. Later, the importance of training young men for the professions, particularly as clergy for the Church of Ireland, became the focus; later again, in the 1800s, education for the British colonial service became the dominant theme. In this period the outlook was not national but global, with this sense continuing until recent times, with alumni from the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s being spread throughout the world.

A period of rapid expansion in the 1980s and 1990s brought Trinity into alignment with the needs of a growing State and a concomitant reconsideration of what it meant to be ‘global’. This commitment is articulated in the Strategic Plan (2014–2019):

> Geographical diversity in our student community is critical in developing an educational milieu which fosters cross-cultural understanding and prepares all students for a life of global citizenship. It allows for a coming-together of different educational, cultural and personal perspectives. It is also a key factor in introducing students to a global dialogue on their areas of academic study, and in building a global Trinity community by creating lifelong, personal, academic, and professional relationships across the world.[1]

We continue to extend our global reach through our education, research, and innovation activities. Evidence of our success is our diverse staff and student body: 40% of academic staff are from outside Ireland, and 26% of students hail from more than 100 countries worldwide. Trinity has research collaborations across all continents, student exchange agreements with leading universities globally, a growing number of academic partnerships leading to joint programmes of study, and alumni worldwide.[2]

EDUCATION

The number of students studying in Trinity from outside of Europe has increased significantly over the last five years, from 1,552 in the 2011/12 academic year to 2,874 in 2017/18. Students from outside the EU are now approximately 16% of the total student body.

This growth is due to the sustained engagement by the Global Relations Team and academics from all parts of the university. The US open days continue to an important part of the annual schedule, and in addition to representation from academic departments and student services, Trinity alumni have played an important role in advising potential students and their parents on the value of a Trinity education.

Traditionally, direct recruitment focused on the US, Canada, Asia, and the Middle East, in schools where students completed secondary school examinations that led to direct entry to Trinity. To increase the diversity of the student body and attract students from other areas, it was decided in 2015 to launch a Foundation Programme, which is delivered in our associated college Marino Institute of Education.

In the Foundation Programme, students from countries whose final secondary exam is not sufficient for admission can take a foundation year, and if successful they are admitted to Trinity in a course of their choice. This has been very successful, and currently the programme has students from Bahrain, Bulgaria, China, Egypt, Hong Kong, Kuwait, Oman, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Tanzania, Turkey, and Ukraine, sponsored by their national government scholarship bodies.

Research output is the major determinant of a university's reputation.

RESEARCH

Research output is the major determinant of a university's reputation. Since what is taught to students is the product of research, education and research are intimately linked. In the best universities, they merge into a common activity for students and staff together. Resources to conduct research must be sought globally, as well as nationally. Trinity draws significant funding for research from the EU, with contracts worth €89.4m for 149 projects under Horizon 2020 to date.

Research publications are one measure of the output of research, and an analysis of published research papers shows that co-authors of Trinity researchers include more than 130 countries.

United Kingdom	697	Switzerland	115	Norway	55
United States	465	China	104	Poland	51
Germany	322	Belgium	95	India	44
France	212	Denmark	91	Finland	43
Italy	191	Austria	66	Czech Republic	40
Australia	181	Portugal	63	Israel	34
Netherlands	172	Greece	61	South Africa	34
Spain	171	Brazil	60	South Korea	29
Canada	161	Russia	59	Turkey	28
Sweden	131	Japan	57	Singapore	27

Top 30 countries for joint publications in calendar year 2017, indicating the very diverse geography of collaborative research activities. Total

number of countries for joint publication was 130 with 4,429 publications. Source of the data is Scopus.

THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE IN A GLOBAL UNIVERSITY

A Trinity education aims to develop global awareness. Studying with students from all around the world promotes a global way of thinking and prepares graduates for their lives ahead. In addition to a diverse classroom, a global university will also give students an opportunity to study outside of Ireland as part of their degree programme. An expected component of a degree in a leading university is the opportunity to take a semester or year abroad in another leading university. Many students also participate in elective clinical or research placements.

> Studying with students from all around the world promotes a global way of thinking and prepares graduates for their lives ahead.

Around 30% of undergraduates currently engage in some form of international experience, and the aim is to increase this to 50% over the next five years. Implementing the Trinity Education Project will help students on almost all programmes to take up such opportunities. Since 2016, Trinity is part of the Centre for Advanced Studies Abroad (CASA),[3] a non-profit consortium of nine leading research universities in the US, including Harvard, Brown, and Columbia. It was established to facilitate student mobility internationally, through study centres around the world.

Being a global university also means having partnerships for joint programme delivery.

i. The first such partnership for Trinity was with Singapore Institute of Technology, which involves Transnational Education. Commencing in 2012 with the delivery of programmes in Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy, it extended to Diagnostic Radiography and Radiation Therapy in 2014. In 2016 a joint degree in Physiotherapy was launched. To date, there are over 700 graduates from these programmes.
ii. A relationship with Thapar University in India was signed in 2015. In addition to forty students per year entering year 3 of Engineering and Computer Science, the relationship is built around capacity-building in research-led teaching.
iii. Significant partnerships with universities in China have arisen from intense research collaborations and sustained engagement over the last five years. These include the University of Science and Technology Beijing (UTSB) in Physics, and Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU) in Humanities and Social Sciences.
iv. The most significant and wide-reaching university partnership to date has resulted in a dual degree with Columbia University in New York at undergraduate level. Collaboration between Trinity's Faculty of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences and Columbia's School of General Studies has led to dual degrees in English, History, European Studies, and Middle Eastern Languages and Culture. It is intended to widen such offerings to other programmes.

ALUMNI RELATIONS

Trinity has 130,000 alumni in 130 countries worldwide. Alumni in countries abroad provide practical assistance to the university by supporting student recruitment locally, acting as mentors for Trinity students when they take up student exchanges, providing internship opportunities in companies abroad, and funding travel bursaries to enable exchanges to take place. Alumni are a tremendous source of support for the global university concept, extending the university community into every corner of the globe.

CONCLUSION

What does it mean to be a global university? The simplest answer: It is one that does the things mentioned above: one that is home to students and staff from all corners of the world, and one that has academic partnerships, dual and joint degrees, and opportunities for student and staff exchanges with leading universities around the world.

Paradoxically, we can do all these activities and yet become less open as a society. It is what our alumni do that matters in the long run – and this means our alumni living in Ireland as well as those living abroad. Their receptiveness to new ideas – to global ideas and global relationships – and how they influence their fellow citizens through participation in social and political institutions, are the best measures of having been part of a global university.

FOOTNOTES

1 Trinity College Dublin, Strategic Plan, November 2014: www.tara.tcd.ie/handle/2262/71761 (accessed 11 November 2018).

2 Provost's Annual Review 2016–2017: www.tara.tcd.ie/handle/2262/82059 (accessed 11 November 2018).

3 See the Consortium for Academic Study Abroad website at: https://casa.education/ (accessed 11 November 2018.

* * *

Sally McHugh, doctoral candidate in the School of Education at the National University of Ireland, Galway, received a Fulbright-Creative Ireland Museum Fellowship 2018-2019 at the American Ambassador's Residence, Dublin in June 2018. Sally will carry out a place-based learning project at the Exploratorium Museum in San Francisco for 3 months in early 2019. The research will feed into Sally's PhD which explores children's creative engagement with local cultural heritage using constructionist technologies.

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an léinn
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bright.ie
CERTIFICATE of AWARD
Ms Sally McHugh

Sally McHugh is presented with her award by **Dr Sarah Ingle**, chairperson of the Fulbright Commission Board.

Dr Joseph Ryan
CEO, Technological Higher Education Association

THE ADVENT OF TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITIES

Maintaining a diverse, cohesive sector that makes a distinctive contribution to Irish higher education

A signal day in the life of the technological sector was marked in summer 2018 by the announcement by an Taoiseach Leo Varadkar and three members of his cabinet that the first technological university (TU) – comprising Dublin Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology Tallaght, and Institute of Technology Blanchardstown – was to be designated following an evaluation and recommendation by an international panel.

That decision to approve Technological University Dublin marks a very significant enhancement of the higher education landscape but also poses challenges for it. The development in the capital is being followed by work on forming three further technological universities: in the south-east, in Munster, and in Connacht/Ulster. These necessarily involve the merger of institutions, and the result will be a more diversified sector with greater scope and opportunity for learners.

These developments have long been in gestation, dating back to the January 2011 publication of the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030. This also reflects the challenges that such major change poses. What emerged from that strategy was an elective facility whereby institutions could seek TU status, but only when they satisfied published criteria. There was no compunction to undertake such a road, but should one have that ambition it required a merger with at least one other like-minded and, given the attendant practicalities, contiguous institution. It did not allow for merger with traditional universities; the sense was that the country wished to maintain a diversified character for the provision as it applies in higher education.

Naturally the opportunity sparked considerable debate. It elicited reasonable arguments that questioned the wisdom of such a path; counterpoints were equally reasonable, not least those centred on sustainability and the future competitiveness of our institutions internationally. Advocates foregrounded the need for Ireland to build the capacity to compete in Europe or globally, and the corollary that this would require institutions of greater scale and scope.

Against this was the fear that institutions already well connected in their regions and with a role essential to those regions' social cohesion and economic well-being could find their focus diluted by an attempt to serve a much larger area. Students cited the intimate and supportive character of the institutes familiar to them, and highlighted the fear that larger entities might entail some loss of student supports and quality of the student experience.

Communicating the possibilities to committed staff across busy institutions was itself challenging, and any resulting vacuum was likely to incubate fears that change would realise less than what might be lost. Considerable discussion has taken place in the intervening years. Winning the battle on sentiment, and painting the potential of a more diversified sector, with greater capacity, were key to attaining the political support necessary to see the enabling statute enacted in early 2018. The support of staff and their representatives helped progress the policy: change of this magnitude is contingent on inclusive ownership.

The years since publication of the strategy have seen efforts crystallise into four consortia focused on attaining TU status. The successful application of TU Dublin has been the pioneer, and it is followed by the prospect of applications from the Technological University of the South East (TUSEI), comprising the institutes in Carlow and Waterford, and the Munster Technological University (MTU), comprising Cork Institute of Technology and the Institute of Technology Tralee. Work is also progressing on the Connacht–Ulster Alliance (CUA), which, like the Dublin model, currently comprises three members: the institutions in Galway/Mayo, Sligo, and Letterkenny.

A key and challenging question is whether the sector can maintain a common centre if certain members remain institutes of technology (IoTs) while others are designated TUs. There are distinctions between size and standards, and between standards and public perception. All of our institutions are striving to meet the quality metrics published as prerequisites for consideration as a TU. Attaining those metrics does not of itself mean that the best interests of the locale or the strategy of the institution must be to merge with another; governing bodies have much to consider in arriving at such a determination.

> All of our institutions are striving to meet the quality metrics published as prerequisites for consideration as a TU.

But it is likely that the simplified external perception will equate size with standards. A larger institution will, at least at national level, trump a smaller one in public perception unless there is a conscious and dedicated focus on foregrounding the quality and character of the smaller entity's contribution and programmes. There are also institutions with singular character in the scope of their provision, for example the creative arts offerings in the Institute of Art, Design and Technology in Dun Laoghaire.

Other independent institutes have fashioned their offerings over decades to support the enterprise of their immediate region. In some cases, the prospect of uniting with another institution whose mission has developed differently may not win the support of local stakeholders and communities. Because application for consideration as a TU was always an elective decision for each autonomous governing body, it is legitimate for an institution to decide it can best deliver on its mission and responsibilities by remaining independent.

For institutions that have embraced the opportunity provided by the Technological Universities Act 2018, the path is onerous – not least in melding the aspirations and cultures of separate organisations, each with pride in its existing legacies and current contribution.

We are fortunate in this country to have a fine traditional university system. But it is not homogeneous: there are distinctions between the members at least as great as those between the traditional universities and the technological sector. This should be regarded as a strength. Having such diversity in a small country means that learners of all ages and aptitudes can find the ideal learning path and environment in which to pursue their ambition, and this need not entail disproportionate geographical disruption.

We are likely, at very least, to experience a transitionary period when the technological sector comprises TUs along with independent IoTs. As a society we need to embrace this as offering the fullest range of possibility, one sensitive to learners' different needs, but which also sponsors institutions connected to the needs of their region. There is a challenge to educate public perception to maximise the benefits from the diversity we have carefully crafted. And this will take time.

We have the local lesson from the history of the National Institutes of Higher Education and their transition to university status, and the time this took under a judicious management. A similar dynamic can be anticipated for the technological sector. There may never be a time when we reach a steady state, and indeed it can be argued that a dynamic environment is perhaps always necessary in higher education.

> There is a challenge to educate public perception to maximise the benefits from the diversity we have carefully crafted.

Attention has been given to clarifying and promoting the role of professional higher education in the diversified higher education systems across Europe. This comprises links to other educational sectors and includes flexible arrangements for realising lifelong learning and fostering permeability between vocational education and training and higher education. The European model of University of Applied Sciences as a unique expression of professional higher education is characterised by a wide range of learning and teaching activities, with a very practical focus and always informed by applied research. They are also notable for their engagement with enterprise and their role in regional development.

What is often lost sight of is the role of regional institutions in supporting social cohesion. Social fabric and economic sustainability are greatly enhanced if an area has support from a higher education institution. It is worth looking back on the past half-century to consider how the IoTs have contributed regionally and nationally to our country's economic well-being. What began modestly has grown exponentially, and the innovation and adaptability characteristic of the sector are now focused on providing relevant programmes, research, and flexible learning for a digital society.

Through all of this, our community has remained focused on individual learners' development. This is affecting delivery norms and pedagogical approaches, and calls to mind the annual fiscal statement of 2019 which shows that even more innovation and flexibility are demanded of institutions to make Ireland still more competitive.

There are challenges for the technological sector that go beyond the form of the institutions themselves. For example, recent trends in the CAO processes suggest that the popular perception of level 6 and 7 programmes is a factor in the worrying decline in demand. This runs contrary to the demands for enterprise, which continually voices demand for a labour resource with specific technical aptitudes.

The same may be said of the branding of apprenticeships. The innovative dual-learning approach inherent in a new generation of apprenticeship programmes that span the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) has not been distinguished from the traditional apprenticeship model. Again, this points to a fissure between perception and reality; in respect of the diminishing interest in levels 6 and 7 it could also undermine the integrity of the NFQ. Ireland is not alone: professional higher education across Europe is now focusing on recognising short-cycle higher education as a qualification level in higher education, with much greater attention to integrating short-cycle programmes in the system, including recognition of achievements and the necessary supporting quality-assurance provisions.

The recent increases in the National Training Levy have widened the fiscal space for education and training but mean that enterprise reasonably seeks a greater say in the outcomes. The conversation between the technological sector and enterprise representatives will be especially important in this regard, as academia needs to better understand the longer-term needs of enterprise.

Inevitably, funding remains of the heart of this enterprise. Government has yet to make a determination from the fine expert review of the future funding for higher education chaired by Peter Cassels, which identified a need for significant additional investment. Our ambition as a sovereign nation is contingent on such investment. That this decision comes when we have had a minority government means that a determination was always going to be a challenging call, especially if it entailed an increase in the contribution from the learner.

Creating institutions of scale and scope to compete internationally is not a recipe for saving money.

Making technological universities cannot be done on the cheap. Scale can bring savings in certain areas, but creating institutions of scale and scope to compete internationally is not a recipe for saving money. That a small, open economy recovering from deep recession is not best placed to fund such ambitions fully and immediately is a realistic position appreciated by all reasonable commentators. But equally, if we embark on this path, we need as a society to fund it at least to the extent that the TUs created can, during their initial years, grow with a capacity that can uphold our international reputation.

The developments in Ireland are not unique: they echo similar changes in other jurisdictions. In Flanders, some twenty-eight institutions have now been realigned to create thirteen larger entities. The technological sector regards this as a time of great opportunity. It is a time when we can reinforce our connection to the regions and to enterprise, and – given the scale of the emerging technological universities – when we can grow and enhance our focused research capacity for the betterment of the communities we serve.

THE PROPOSED NATIONAL LEARNER PROTECTION SCHEME

Professor Diarmuid Hegarty
President, Griffith College

A new education bill before the Oireachtas (The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Bill 2018) proposes, among other things, a national scheme of protection for learners in the event of a course discontinuing midstream due to financial insolvency or other reasons.

This article describes different forms of learner protection arrangements. It details those currently in place in Ireland in member colleges of the Higher Education Colleges Association (HECA), the provisions of the new bill, and the arrangements currently in place in Australia. It recommends further consultation with learners and providers to ensure that the wider merits of the existing HECA system are not lost in the transition to the proposed system.

DIFFERENT FORMS OF LEARNER PROTECTION ARRANGEMENTS

Current learner protection arrangements are prescribed in the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012. Section 65(1) requires the provider of a programme of education and training of three months or longer to have one of two types of learner protection in place for students who have paid fees where a programme does not run or discontinues.

The preferred type of protection is 'academic bonding', whereby the learner gets the opportunity to complete their chosen programme of study. This involves an arrangement between the provider of the programme ('the Protected College') and at least two other providers ('the Protecting Colleges').

In practice, two different cases are envisaged here. In the first case, students may transfer to a similar programme of the Protecting College. This is called Similar Programme Enrolment. A slightly different case of academic bonding is Accredited Programme Completion, where the Protecting College does not already provide a similar programme but undertakes to complete the existing programme of the Protected College in cooperation with QQI. In this case, learners are entitled to a refund of fees as an alternative.

The second type of learner protection arrangement permitted is 'financial bonding'. It involves a refund of fees (monies most recently paid) to the students or to persons who paid on their behalf. This commitment is usually backed by an insurance policy or a parent-company guarantee.

Current legislation confines the obligation to provide learner protection to non-public-sector institutions. This ignores the historical reality of college failure or course discontinuance in the public sector; for example, a supervisory management programme left unfinished by Plassey Management Technology Ltd (owned jointly by University of Limerick and Shannon Development), a computing course stopped mid-stream by the Institute of Technology Tallaght, and incomplete programmes offered in Celtic Studies and Haute Cuisine.

THE ARRANGEMENTS IN PLACE IN HECA COLLEGES

All HECA colleges provide learner protection in compliance with the 2012 Act. Some HECA colleges operate refund arrangements backed by an insurance policy or by a parent-company guarantee. Most members provide academic bonding through the HECA Protection for Enrolled Learners Scheme (HECA PEL), which can be summarised as follows.

Each participating member of HECA PEL has set up a trust fund governed by a trust deed. They pay 2% per annum of fee income from QQI-validated courses into their respective trust until that college's trust fund reaches a value of 30% of annual fees. The 2% and 30% are subject to regular review and can be varied by a 75% majority with approval of the PEL Oversight Committee.

An auditor's certificate by the following 31 March is required to support the adequacy of each college's annual contribution. The trust funds of all HECA PEL members are pooled and managed as a single fund by one fund manager, appointed by trustees approved by the HECA PEL board, retaining part in cash to cover operating costs, which are apportioned among the trust funds in proportion to commencement year value.

The preferred type of protection is 'academic bonding', whereby the learner gets the opportunity to complete their chosen programme of study.

If a Protected College ceased to provide an accredited programme, the funds in its own trust would be applied to cover the academic bonding or refund costs. Its learners would contribute any outstanding fees for the year of discontinuance. If there were insufficient funds in the college's trust to cover these costs, the Protecting Colleges' trust funds would be used at the same rate to cover the remainder. If there were insufficient funds in both trusts, the remaining HECA PEL members' trust funds would cover the remainder at the same rate.

To protect other colleges against excessive academic bonding costs, each Protecting College providing academic bonding must first submit a detailed breakdown of the proposed costs to the PEL Oversight Committee. Where no breakdown is provided, or where the committee considers the proposed costs excessive, it can seek competitive quotes from other colleges.

The contractual arrangements setting out the relationship between the funds of Protected Colleges and Protecting Colleges are in a learner protection framework agreement. Each college agrees that, if a trigger event occurs, the Protected College shall grant to the Protecting Colleges access to the premises and records and all reasonable assistance to enable academic bonding in accordance with an action plan. A trigger event includes withdrawal of validation or of accreditation, insolvency, winding-up, or course discontinuance for any other reason. The Protected and

Protecting Colleges must agree an action plan and keep it up to date, to detail how best to provide for academic bonding.

The action plan provides for copies of the records to be placed with an independent custodian and updated at least every two months. The custodian has irrevocable instructions to release the records to the Protecting College(s) if a trigger event occurs, but only for the purposes of the HECA PEL scheme. The action plan will also indicate which Protecting College will provide the academic bonding. In the event of uncertainty, the Protecting Colleges will agree within seven days which programmes are to be delivered by which Protecting College.

The collaborative agreement reached by the HECA colleges has worked well. The scheme is transparent and works in the interests of learners. Through the providers' commitment to compliance and their shared funding of their collective responsibility, they have established a reserve fund of €1.5m to date. Most importantly, unlike insurance-based costs, this fund continues to grow and remains available to support learners. Decisions about its allocation also remain under the control of the Protecting and Protected Colleges involved.

All HECA colleges provide learner protection in compliance with the 2012 Act.

While any college may withdraw from the scheme with one year's notice, this is without prejudice to existing, ongoing protection commitments at termination.

COMPARING THE BILL WITH ARRANGEMENTS IN AUSTRALIA

The new bill provides for obligated providers to pay an annual charge into a national Learner Protection Fund. From the Fund will be paid the cost of programme completion, and transfer to similar programmes – or, if these two are impracticable, the refund of fees to the learner and the administration costs of learner protection.

Obligated providers must inform QQI of any course discontinuance within two working days, and QQI must make all reasonable efforts to secure programme completion for affected learners. The Minister for Education and Skills will make contributions into and receive repayments from the Fund as it accumulates.

Public sector bodies, including some bodies such as the Royal Irish Academy of Music in receipt of public funds, will be completely exempt from the annual charge.

The Australian Scheme on which the proposed Learner Protection Fund is supposedly based requires all higher education institutions recruiting international students, whether private or public, to contribute. This is presumably on the basis that all such institutions benefit from international student recruitment and must contribute equally to their protection. The effect of confining the contributions to private sector institutions will be to increase very significantly the contribution per student, imposing a further burden on their international students.

The new bill also provides that fees received more than forty days in advance of a programme are to be placed into an escrow account and retained there until the course begins.

CONCLUSION

Extending the protection given to learners is to be welcomed. In a national scheme, there is a strong case for such protection to be given to learners in all institutions, both public and private. It is fully understood and accepted that this shared commitment and responsibility requires a financial contribution from providers.

The HECA PEL scheme has shown that provider institutions can provide academic and financial protection for learners and can establish related funds that do not lead to permanent insurance-based annual commitments and increased tuition costs for learners. Much of this effectiveness arises from the providers' shared responsibility and privilege from their dual roles as both protected and protecting institutions.

It is important that the proposed national scheme is informed and managed by the providers of the intended protected learners. A scheme based on ongoing insurance premiums determined by non-participating provider institutions is unlikely to serve learners well.

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UL leads in Gender Equality

UL has long been a leader in Gender Equality across Irish higher education institutions with the highest percentage of female professors of any HEI at 33% and as one of the two first institutions in Ireland to be granted Athena Swan Bronze award in 2015 for advancing gender equality.

Since then five individual UL departments have also been awarded Athena Swan awards including the Department of Biological Science, Department of Mathematics and Statistics, PESS - Department of Physical Education and Sports Science; Physics Department and the School of Education (first School of Education to receive the award).

Dr Desmond Fitzgerald, President of University of Limerick (UL).

The senior Leadership at UL represents significant gender equality with eight out of twelve female members of the Executive Committee, a female Chancellor and two female Vice Presidents. 50% of UL's Faculty Deans are women, 41% of Heads of Department are women and 53% of UL's Assistant Deans are women.

In addition, 60% of UL's Governing Authority sub committees are chaired by women.

UL President Dr Des Fitzgerald appointed a Special Advisor on Gender and Equality in 2017.

Aidan Moran
Professor of Cognitive Psychology and Director of the Psychology Research Laboratory, UCD

THINKING FOR YOURSELF AT UNIVERSITY

What it means and how to do It

> *Many people would sooner die than think. In fact, they do.*
> *—Bertrand Russell, philosopher and Nobel laureate*

In August 2017, a group of distinguished professors from Harvard, Princeton, and Yale wrote an open letter to students who were about to begin university life. It contained a simple yet inspirational message: 'Think for yourself!' But what does this really mean? What is 'thinking' anyway? And how can we master the skill of *critical thinking*?

WHAT DOES 'THINKING FOR YOURSELF' MEAN?

For psychologists, 'thinking for yourself' has two components: an attitude and an ability. On the one hand it requires a sceptical *attitude* or an eagerness to question ideas, especially those that seem sacrosanct or inviolable. The Greek word *skeptomai* means 'I consider thoughtfully', so scepticism is rooted in active reflection. On the other hand, thinking for yourself involves the *skill* of critical evaluation or the ability to form independent conclusions based on a rational evaluation of available evidence. But what exactly is 'thinking'?

Thinking is best understood as a mental ('cognitive') process by which we use our knowledge and imagination to go beyond what is immediately obvious in order to see how things could be different. For example, look around the room you're in. The fact that you can see furniture beside you doesn't really qualify as thinking – it's just perceptual awareness.

But imagine what the room would look like if you rearranged the furniture. This activity involves a cognitive leap beyond the obvious – a mental step that constitutes 'thinking'. Thinking is a process that enables us to *transform* a situation mentally. It happens whenever we use what we know or can imagine to explore something in our head.

WHAT IS CRITICAL THINKING?

Every day, we face a variety of complex and controversial questions. For example, do people have the right to choose to end their lives? What is the optimal age of digital consent? Unfortunately, because weighing up the evidence on these questions takes considerable mental effort, we take the easy way out by relying on shortcuts like intuition ('gut feelings') or accepting other people's views mindlessly and uncritically.

But thinking for oneself involves *critical* thinking. This is a form of intelligent criticism that helps people to reach independent and justifiable conclusions about their experiences. What makes critical thinking especially valuable is that it is based on *active reflection* – working things out for oneself – rather than passive reproduction of other people's ideas. So how can you improve your ability to think critically? The secret lies in systematic questioning.

IMPROVING YOUR ABILITY TO THINK CRITICALLY: BECOMING SYSTEMATICALLY INQUISITIVE

Perhaps the best way to improve your ability to think critically is to ask a series of questions about things that you hear or read. Here are some useful questions to ask.

1. *What exactly is the claim or conclusion that I am asked to believe?*

The first step in critical thinking is to identify the claim or conclusion that you are asked to believe. This task is quite easy for written material, because authors often tell you explicitly what their 'take home' message is in the subtitle, preface, or conclusion. For example, Ericsson and Paul's (2017) book *Peak: How All of Us Can Achieve Extraordinary Things* condenses its main message in the subtitle.

2. *Who or what is the source of this claim or conclusion?*

The next step is to establish the *credibility* of the source. Not all sources of information are equally trustworthy or impartial. So be cautious about accepting the claims of people who lack verifiable expertise in the topic they're talking or writing about. Also, be sceptical of people (such as social media 'influencers') who may endorse something purely for financial gain.

Thinking for yourself involves the skill of critical evaluation, or the ability to form independent conclusions, based on a rational evaluation of available evidence.

3. *What evidence is used to support the claim?*

The third step in critical thinking involves looking for relevant and valid evidence. Evidence based on intuition ('I have a gut feeling that …'), appeals to authority ('according to Professor X …'), and anecdotes ('someone I know told me that …') are highly selective, biased, and untrustworthy.

If you read about a spectacular plane crash, for example, you might overestimate the danger of flying. In fact, travelling by car (which you probably do every day) is about 100 times more dangerous than travelling by plane. In general, evidence based on systematic research is reliable, because it is based on data collected using objective and repeatable procedures.

4. *How valid is the evidence cited? Identifying weaknesses in people's arguments*

The fourth step in critical thinking involves evaluating evidence systematically. To help you with this task, here are some useful questions.

(a) Is the claim based on accurate information?

A claim may be based on inaccurate information. Consider the widespread belief that spinach is unusually rich in iron. This belief is mistaken: research suggests there is more iron in eggs, liver, brown sugar, or pulses than in spinach.

(b) Is the reasoning valid?

Imagine you are a scientist who has received criticism for your theory that extrasensory perception (ESP) exists. In a public debate, you make the following argument: Pasteur's idea that diseases were transmitted by microscopic germs was dismissed as false during his lifetime but has since been accepted as true. Since your theory has also been ridiculed by the scientific community, then it must in fact be true. Is this argument valid? Of course not, but it could convince some people that your ideas are correct.

(c) Are the assumptions valid?

A weakness of many arguments concerns shaky foundations or questionable assumptions. This problem is especially likely when figurative language is used. For example, the traditional metaphor of seeing our long-term memory as a container is flawed, because a container can be filled beyond its capacity and can overflow. Although this model seems intuitively plausible, research shows that there is no known capacity limit to our long-term memory. Put simply, the more we know, the more we can remember!

What makes critical thinking especially valuable is that it is based on active reflection – working things out for oneself – rather than passive reproduction of other people's ideas.

(d) Does the argument 'beg the question' or assume its own answer?

A fourth flaw in an argument arises when it 'begs the question' or takes its own conclusion for granted. Consider the proposition that 'telepathy exists because I have had a number of experiences in my life I would describe as telepathic'. This begs the question, because its conclusion ('telepathy exists') is based on evidence that requires you to already accept that the claim is true.

Here's another example of this fallacy. Imagine hearing a teacher addressing a parents' meeting with the words: 'As a mother myself, I know a lot about child development.' Where is the evidence that being a mother equips one with a lot of knowledge about child development?

Interestingly, a controversial claim about motherhood caused a political furore in the UK in 2016 during a contest for leadership of the Conservative party. Candidate Andrea Leadsom had to apologise to her rival, Theresa May, for a comment in which she implied that being a mother gave her 'a real stake in the future of our country' – unlike May, who does not have children. A popular and damaging inference from Leadsom's remark was that May and other childless people don't care what happens to the UK. The claim that being a parent is a qualifying characteristic for running a country is clearly nonsensical. Leadsom resigned from the leadership race after her ill-judged remark.

5. Are there alternative explanations for the evidence provided? If so, how plausible are they?

What you see depends on the view from where you are standing. In other words, there are always alternative ways to interpret something. Indeed, the possibility of identifying rival explanations for an agreed set of circumstances is the cornerstone of our legal system. If a defence counsel can prove there is at least a 'reasonable doubt' about their client's involvement in a crime, then the case against this person may be dismissed. By implication, if you can establish an interpretation of the evidence that is at least as plausible as that favoured by the theorist, then you have shown a capacity to think for yourself.

6. Check your assumptions before drawing conclusions

The final step in learning to think critically is to make sure you check your assumptions before drawing any conclusions. This reminds me of the ABC abbreviation beloved of crime scene investigators: assume nothing, believe nobody, and check everything. This is a good example of critical thinking in action.

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JP McManus All Ireland Scholarships Awards 2018

Pictured at the JP McManus All Ireland Scholarship Awards 2018 at the University of Limerick are (l-r): **Gerry Boland**, Trustee; **Brian Mooney**; **Mary Mitchell O'Connor**, Minister for Higher Education; **JP McManus**, Sponsor; **Roger Downer**, Trustee; **John Kiely**, Manager, Limerick Senior Hurling Team (all Ireland 2018 champions)

TAKING THE FOREIGNNESS OUT OF MODERN LANGUAGES

Language learning in higher education

Michael Brophy
Professor of French and Francophone Studies, University College Dublin

In November 2017 I had the pleasure, with HE Patricia O'Brien, Ambassador of Ireland to France, of addressing some 140 attendees who had gathered in the Irish Embassy in Paris for the launch of the UCD Alumni Chapter in France. However enthusiastic the turnout, this was but a modest representation of the estimated 1,500 alumni living in that country. Many had studied French or another language as part of their primary degree; others had not. While most had roots in Ireland, some hailed from far beyond its borders. The business executive, architect, engineer, translator, public administrator: each had their own story to tell, all of them carving out home in another language and culture that had given them new personal and professional opportunities.

It is clear, where language learning is concerned, that the paths travelled are multiform, flexible, and open-ended: from the executive just off a TGV from Geneva who recalled her determination to stick with French after a trying first year of Arts studies, to the BComm International alumnus who spoke of the lasting impact on him of Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le Noir.*

With the heightened linguistic awareness it brings, and the critical and creative thinking it nurtures, language acquisition is also, by its nature and as exemplified by this gathering, always potentially life-changing. Strengthening human reserves of adaptability and resilience, it supports an outward-looking mentality hemmed in by neither borders nor divisions, always ready to embrace difference and to further personal growth through dialogue with others.

Some days after this event, Minister Bruton launched *Languages Connect: Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Irish Education* 2017–2026 [see Breda Naughton's article in the present *Yearbook*, Second-Level section]. The Strategy seeks to address Ireland's low levels of language competency, mainly by increasing uptake of languages across the education and training sector, extending the range of languages on offer, encouraging greater student mobility, ensuring the provision of qualified teachers of languages, and raising employer engagement.

The Strategy is to be commended for its scope and ambition, notwithstanding the limited focus on preschool and primary levels. One of its real strengths is that it draws on the public consultation that preceded it and is shaped by the views of stakeholders across sectors. Indeed, in its ability to gather and stimulate dialogue among a range of interested institutions and bodies, the process bears witness to a unity of purpose that must prevail if the Strategy itself is to gain societal traction and tackle effectively the nation's languages deficit over its achievement timeline of ten years.

While the Strategy fittingly puts considerable emphasis on the need to raise awareness of the importance of language learning, and advocates for 'a significant change of mindset', its insistent use of the epithet 'foreign' to qualify 'languages' runs counter to the very change it seeks to effect. 'Foreign' derives from another language, as is so often the case in a lexis of any 'native' tongue: in this instance, the Latin adverb *foras* or *foris*, meaning 'outside', based on the noun *fores*, meaning 'door'. By placing languages on the outside, beyond our own door as it were, 'foreign' inadvertently underscores how far removed we are from 'languages connect'. The word enforces a demarcation at odds with the 'changing, multicultural and multilingual Ireland' that the Strategy depicts, a country where the 'native' language of a growing portion of its citizens is no longer English or Irish.

Recognising the 'inherent value' of learning and using a language other than the mother tongue, and promoting a society where such ability 'is taken for granted', the Strategy surely aspires to remove or reverse the damaging disjunction its own use of the epithet perpetuates: the strange is to be converted into the familiar, what was previously regarded by many as extraneous or peripheral is to be fostered from within and to become an indispensable feature of the culture. Without such shifts, global citizenship will remain a woolly aspiration, and the benefits of plurilingualism will continue to elude us.

Its [Strategy for Foreign Languages] insistent use of the epithet 'foreign' to qualify 'languages' runs counter to the very change it seeks to effect.

We are currently witnessing, in the form of the Brexit crisis, just where perceptions of foreignness and extraneousness can lead. Those perceptions have had considerable impact on the state of modern languages disciplines in Britain over the past decades. As Michael Kelly notes, the appetite for language degrees in the UK can be correlated over the years to the level of public enthusiasm for the European project. Dwindling student enrolments, closure of language departments, and a marked decrease in the number of universities offering language degrees all reflect a recent history of disengagement with languages and ensuing disciplinary decline – and this in spite of repeated calls by influential bodies to prioritise language learning in the educational system.

The 'vicious circle of monolingualism' identified by the British Academy continues to impede economic development and competitiveness. The British Council's warning that the UK's limited language capability must be remedied for it to become a truly global nation is to be measured simultaneously against its observation of 'the vulnerability of language provision in many schools and universities'.

Ireland has not suffered from such a collapse. While one of the principal aims of the Strategy is to increase from 4% to 20% the proportion of students studying a modern language at third level as part of their degree, Higher Education Authority statistics reveal that, in recent years, there has been no serious deterioration of the established base of students engaged in language learning. The main challenge has come from elsewhere: like other higher education disciplines, modern languages have had to absorb cuts to government funding of the sector, and to weather downward trends in resource provision that place forward planning on a precarious basis from year to year.

In its review of the allocation model for funding higher education institutions, the expert panel notes 'anecdotal evidence from institutions of reduced laboratory exposure or levels of practice-based teaching due to staffing pressures which clearly impact upon the learning experience'. As a previous head of a university school of modern languages with responsibility for budgetary management, I, no doubt along with many others, can weigh in on this 'anecdotal evidence'.

It is clear that strategic government focus on language and intercultural competence outcomes in higher education must be accompanied by countering certain misconceptions that prevent modern languages disciplines from becoming embedded in Irish society as non-foreign fields of knowledge and learning – or, to use the French classification, as *langues vivantes*, living, evolving entities whose mastery is bound up with life itself.

> 'Languages Connect' presents an exciting opportunity... to build language competence that will allow more of our graduates to break down boundaries and flourish in the wider world...

Language learning is a laboratory subject. It is resource-intensive. It requires small-group teaching. The 'content' modules that explore the literatures and cultures of the target language extend and deepen this learning as they advance linguistic immersion, enhancing cultural understanding and negotiation of cultural difference through complex encounters with language in different periods, settings, and formats.

The fiscal crisis may have generated efficiencies in education, but beyond anecdote it may be appropriate for the government to evaluate the continuing discrepancy between resource allocation and strategic goals in order to ensure effective implementation of policy. Otherwise, with staff reductions, fewer teaching contact hours, erosion of small-group teaching, shrinking curricular breadth, and the continued pressure to do more with less, modern languages as research-led disciplines will not thrive as catalysts of much-needed change in a country that still struggles to meet the growing need to communicate with the rest of the world in languages other than English.

Languages Connect presents an exciting opportunity, from within our own evolving culture, to build language competence that will allow more of our graduates to break down boundaries and flourish in the wider world as fully participative citizens. Although the Strategy does not discount lower levels of proficiency, it wisely prioritises among graduates the 'Independent User' standard as defined by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). Furthermore, its emphasis on quality of language teaching at all levels, and on alignment of courses with CEFR outcomes, should obviate the risk of ill-conceived training packages that promise far more than they can ever hope to deliver.

Curiously, at the time of submitting this piece, the body set up to oversee and monitor implementation of the strategy, the Foreign Languages Advisory

Group (FLAG), has no representative from a third-level modern languages department or school – despite its commitment to 'bring together key stakeholders to provide advice from a range of perspectives'. We still wait to connect. We are more than ready to come in.

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University of Limerick Campus Safety Campaign

A campus safety information campaign was launched this year by the University of Limerick in conjunction with An Garda Síochána and UL Student Life.

The *Campus Watch Booklet** is part of ongoing collaborations to raise awareness and provide information on campus safety to students.

The booklet, which is available to read on the UL website, has been published in five languages and is designed to allow quick reference to important student topics. Physical copies can be obtained from An Garda Síochána.

Sgt Kevin Balfe, Community Policing; **Sgt Ber Leetch**, Crime Prevention Officer; **Insp Ollie Kennedy**, Community Policing with UL; international students **Emmad Hydari** - Iran; **Disha Upendra Mandalia** – India; **Sabine Charles** - France.

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* *https://www.garda.ie/en/crime-prevention/garda-campus-watch-2018-english.pdf*

Dr Katriona O'Sullivan
Maynooth University

Dr Gareth Burns
Maynooth University

TURN TO TEACHING
Diversifying Initial Teacher Education

In 2017 Maynooth University launched the Turn To Teaching project, a unique three-year programme that aims to support 100 students from marginalised backgrounds to move into Initial Teacher Education (ITE). The programme, funded by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and Maynooth University, aims to address the academic, social, and personal challenges faced by under-represented groups in the teaching profession. It will offer meaningful pathways into ITE for students from the Traveller community, migrants, mature students, and students from schools listed under the Department of Education's Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) programme.

BACKGROUND

ITE in Ireland has changed significantly in the last ten years. In 2012, an international review panel chaired by Professor Sahlberg emphasised the importance of developing 'innovative strategies so that Ireland can provide a teacher education regime that is comparable with the world's best' (Sahlberg, 2012, p.9). This resulted in ITE providers becoming university-based, and led and underpinned by research.

Further to this, in 2013 the Irish Research Council funded the Diversity in Initial Teacher Education (DITE) longitudinal research project. It recognised that despite growing diversity in Irish society, the teaching population has remained homogeneous. DITE recognised that collecting comprehensive data on those applying to and entering ITE would be crucial in informing ITE policy and practice.

IRELAND TRENDS

The DITE programme of research has revealed significant commonalities among pre-service teachers in Ireland: they tend to be overwhelmingly white, female, settled, Catholic, and middle-class (Keane and Heinz, 2016), and their exposure to diversity is very limited (Leavy, 2005). They are less likely to be mature students (Keane and Heinz, 2015), and the numbers of students with a disability remains low in all higher education (HE) courses compared with the general population.

Even schemes that aim to support diversity in HE, such as the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) and Higher Education Access Route (HEAR), have had limited success in 'hard-to-reach' degree courses like ITE. Byrne et al. (2013) found that while greater numbers of HEAR- and DARE-eligible applicants were accessing professional courses in 2010–2012, education courses (ITE) were the exception.

The issue of diversity is most obvious in primary ITE courses, where students are more likely to be socially advantaged, less likely to have attended a DEIS school, and less likely to be in receipt of a higher education grant or to have entered through an alternative route (Darmody and Smyth, 2016).

BARRIERS TO ITE

Under-representation can be explained by myriad individual, economic, institutional, and cultural factors. Discourse that emphasises individual barriers explains differential rates of participation on the basis of attitudinal factors, implying that non-participation is due to lack of expectation or 'low aspirations' (Bruce and Bridgeland, 2014).

Others say academic achievement is the main barrier to HE participation (Jones and Thomas, 2003), with large disparities between the educational attainment of socioeconomically disadvantaged students and their more affluent counterparts (McKnight, 2015). In Ireland the high points entry requirement for primary ITE programmes, and the Irish language requirements, are considered significant academic barriers (Keane and Heinz, 2015).

More complex explanations use cultural reproduction to explain inequalities in student mobility (Donnelly and Evans, 2016). According to this paradigm, each class has a different habitus that determines the possession of core values, practices, and beliefs that are played out in behaviour and actions. Students do not always have the 'navigational capital' to support progression to ITE, as they lack experience of the 'norms' associated with HE and ITE. These norms can include knowledge about courses on offer in different institutions, grade requirements for specific courses, and familiarity with the institutions and professions themselves. Often these factors intersect, resulting in a lack of aspiration and reduced academic performance (Reay, 2005; Reay et al., 2008; Reay et al., 2009), leading to reduced likelihood that students will progress to ITE.

> Pre-service teachers in Ireland tend to be overwhelmingly white, female, settled, Catholic and middle-class.

Turn To Teaching

Turn To Teaching comprises three educational interventions designed to address these barriers to ITE and support the participation of the most marginalised to become teachers:

1. A one-year pre-university foundation course, 'Think about Teaching', which will prepare twenty-five students annually who have experienced deep educational inequality for entry to ITE degrees.

2. 'Rising Teachers, Rising Leaders' aims to (i) build the capacity of twenty teachers to understand their role in creating a school culture that supports students from diverse backgrounds to aspire to a career in teaching; and (ii) equip forty students in DEIS schools and communities that are under-represented in teaching, with the skills needed to access ITE directly.

3. ‘Tar linn ag Teagasc’ gives all participants access to a tailored Irish-language competency-based module, to help them reach the required entry standard for ITE and to encourage participants to become future teachers of Irish.

Think about Teaching

Foundation courses are a way of supporting targeted groups to transition into university. They are intended for those without the formal entry qualifications for their chosen degree and are designed to prepare students for degree-level study (O’Sullivan et al., 2018). In Ireland they have traditionally been delivered in university, and they generally target under-represented student groups. For the socioeconomically disadvantaged learner or mature learner, the supports offered are generally designed to develop their social and cultural capital alongside academic skills and subject-specific content.

The courses recognise the complex challenges facing such groups in HE, supporting peer relationships, academic growth, and confidence, preventing students from feeling under-qualified compared to their peers, and aiming to give them access to bridging capital that supports transitions and retention in HE (O’Sullivan et al., 2018). A review of these programmes in Ireland showed their effectiveness in supporting students to progress into HE (Murphy, 2009). Evidence from Trinity College Dublin found that retention and graduation statistics were in line with those of direct-entry students (Share, 2013), even in courses considered elite or hard to access, such as medicine and law.

The [Think about Teaching] course structure and ethos recognise that the Irish education system unfairly favours students from affluent backgrounds.

The Maynooth University ‘Think about Teaching’ ITE foundation course is the first of its kind in Ireland. It offers students from under-represented groups the opportunity to prepare academically, culturally, and socially for primary and secondary teaching degrees in the university. Accredited at level 6, and externally evaluated, the course aims to supplement students’ prior learning by preparing them to undertake a degree in HE.

The course structure and ethos recognise that the Irish education system at present unfairly favours students from affluent backgrounds, and that Leaving Cert points are correlated with the level of cultural and academic capital in a student’s home and schooling (Byrne and McCoy, 2013). Thus students who are marginalised, lack access to extracurricular supports, or attend DEIS schools may not perform well in the Leaving Cert, despite having the potential to be excellent teachers.

Based on this ethos, the ‘Think about Teaching’ ITE foundation course gives students meaningful opportunities to develop the skills necessary to:

- successfully study in university
- feel like they belong in university
- succeed as a primary or secondary school teacher.

Rising Teachers, Rising Leaders

'Rising Teachers, Rising Leaders' is a school outreach programme that supports the teaching aspirations and the social and academic development of forty senior-cycle students (Rising Teachers) from DEIS post-primary schools. It also provides twenty teachers (Rising Leaders) from under-represented groups in teaching with a suite of funded university accreditation or CPD options to help develop their leadership capacity and career progression. Developing culturally responsive mentoring and teaching skills will be prioritised.

The student and teacher participants will embark together on a two-year leadership journey. Core elements will be jointly delivered to allow the Rising Teachers to meet and be mentored by the Rising Leaders. In partnership, the Rising Teachers and Rising Leaders will be given an opportunity to create a powerful national campaign about the need for diversity in teaching.

In partnership, the Rising Teachers and Rising Leaders will… create a powerful national campaign about the need for diversity in teaching.

CONCLUSION

In line with international concerns (Keane and Heinz, 2016), and a strong evidence base that highlights the benefits and desirability of a more diverse and representative teaching force (Santoro, 2009; Villegas and Irvine, 2010; Keane and Heinz, 2015), there have been consistent calls to diversify the teaching population in Ireland (Conway et al., 2009; Teaching Council, 2011). The policy response has included HEA funding of initiatives that support access to ITE for specific groups.

It is critical to evaluate the influence of Maynooth University's Turn to Teaching project, and the various programmes outlined here, on student participants' capacity to progress to and succeed in ITE, as currently the evidence on which policy can draw is limited. By strengthening the evidence base and supporting these students to see themselves as the teachers of tomorrow, it is envisaged that Turn to Teaching will contribute to national and international policy discourse on equity of access to ITE, and to the objectives, curriculum, and structure of ITE.

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REVIEWING PEER PLACEMENT IN INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION

Cleamhnas, pre-nuptial agreements, and the seven-year itch

A peer school placement experience, part of the revised Bachelor of Education programme at Maynooth University, was reviewed seven years after being introduced. In conjunction with Teaching Council policy (2011), this study represents a year-long reflective process, culminating in the design of a 2018 strategic plan for development of the peer-placement aspect of the related university module.

As part of the critical evaluation of preparation for peer placement, this paper explores interconnections between personal and professional aspects of emerging teacher identity. The structures for establishing peered pairings for school placement (SP) are compared to a *cleamhnas* (arranged marriage), combined with associated 'SP prenuptial agreement'. To present an evidence-based approach, literature from national and international sources is consulted, providing a lens through which to view merits and challenges of the approach.

REVIEW OF PERTINENT LITERATURE

Studies by international researchers on peer placement (Bullough et al., 2002, 2003; Smith, 2002; Baker and Milner 2006; Nokes et al., 2008; Gardiner and Robinson, 2009, 2010; Goodnough et al., 2009) have suggested that pairing two student teachers with a cooperating teacher provides a more supportive and collaborative context in which to learn than the traditional single-placement model. The collaborative aspect of peer placement is consistently noted in literature as enhancing the quality of the learning.

However, research on this suggests that productive collaboration can be challenging to attain, that tensions between collaborators are inevitable (John-Steiner, 2000; Achinstein, 2002; Grossman, Wineberg, and Woolworth, 2001), and that typically, student teachers' prior experiences do not necessarily prepare them to be effective collaborators (Putnam and Borko, 2000; Glazer and Hannafin, 2006).

Based on this research, collaborators may need sufficient time to collaborate, a commitment to sustaining their joint work, and a willingness and ability to analyse, evaluate, and deliberate on complex events and ideas (Wenger, 1998; John-Steiner, 2000). Student teachers, asked to name the sources of tension, identified a lack of time to collaborate, and a lack of shared norms for communication, such as how to agree, disagree, and provide feedback (Wenger, 1998; John-Steiner, 2000; Grossman et al., 2001). Studies consistently conclude that in peer placements, student

Dr Tríona Stokes

Lecturer in Drama Education, Maynooth University; co-delivers Personal and Professional Skills for Teaching and Learning at Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education

Dr Ruth Forrest

Lecturer in Research Methods and Personal and Professional Skills for Teaching and Learning at Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education, Maynooth University

teachers plan more innovative and dynamic lessons and ease the challenge of lesson implementation by assisting or redirecting pupils and managing materials.

Researchers also speculate that the multiple perspectives that peers bring forth can help to design more creative lessons (Bullough et al., 2002, 2003; Baker and Milner, 2006; Nokes et al., 2008; Gardiner and Robinson, 2009, 2010; Goodnough at al., 2009). The fact that a peer can assist with the teaching and learning makes student teachers more confident in attempting complex, student-centred instruction (Bullough et al., 2002, 2003; Smith, 2002; Baker and Milner, 2006; Nokes et al., 2008; Gardiner and Robinson, 2009, 2010; Goodnough et al.,. 2009).

> "... Pairing two student teachers with a cooperating teacher provides a more supportive and collaborative context in which to learn."

Interestingly, research indicates that due to the equal status of both of the student teachers, as opposed to the perceived imbalance of power between one student teacher and the cooperating teacher, the feedback tends to be more thorough, frequent, and open-ended (Smith, 2002; Gardiner and Robinson, 2009). These researchers conclude that peer collaboration provides more opportunities to reflect on and analyse experiences and to determine ways to improve teaching.

While the evidence is overwhelmingly positive on the benefits of peer placement and teaching for student teachers, some drawbacks are identified:

- Peer placements do not reflect the 'real world' of teaching – a world of autonomy and isolation (Gardiner and Robinson, 2010).
- There is often excessive competition between peers (Smith, 2002; Goodnough et al., 2009).
- Student teachers do not have a framework for how to interact, and end up stepping on each other's toes during instruction (Smith, 2002).
- Pairing sometimes fails as a result of a wide gap in abilities, expectations, and approaches, which results in peers maintaining a joint placement but working individually (Gardiner and Robinson, 2010).

Each of these perceived challenges is addressed arising from feedback from associated stakeholders from 2011–2018, which inform the ensuing 2018 strategic plan.

THE PROCESS: MATCHMAKING OR *CLEAMHNAS*

To actualise the process of peer teaching on school placement, the head of education in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education at Maynooth University works with a school placement committee member to 'match' the students for placement based on their geographical location and a list of five people with whom they would like to be paired.

There are multiple permutations in the allocation of partners, for which an algorithm has yet to be created. But the essential criteria are: (1) geographical location, (2) whether the student has already done a placement in the school being assigned (or in a school of comparable ethos and structure), and (3) both students having nominated one another. The head of education also ensures an optimal match in suitability on personal and professional grounds. That they can assess this suitability is significant, as this is increasingly challenging in terms of knowledge and management in universities or colleges with a large student population.

The Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education, through the module *Personal and Professional Skills for Teaching and Learning* (PPSTL) 2, introduces students to working teaching partnerships and co-teaching (Walther-Thomas et al., 2000; Friend and Cook, 2014). Student teachers are introduced to different models of co-teaching as they establish a partnership and prepare to work closely with their appointed partner.

The philosophy and practice of critical friendship are presented, with a view to preparing student teachers for peer teaching. The concept of critical friendship is introduced, and the work of Schuck and Russell (2005) has proven very useful in this regard. A critical friend is likened to a 'sounding board', asking challenging questions, supporting 'the reframing of events', and joining in 'the professional learning experience' (ibid., p.3).

In addition to the critical friendship and its associated bounties for student teachers, merits for teacher educators in adopting the critical friendship approach are enumerated, along with the potentially rich learning to be gained by higher education institutions about their student teachers' learning and development. A rationale for peer teaching is elicited first from student teachers on their early stage of development as pedagogues.

Students instantly recognise the potential learning from observing others' practices in the classroom, particularly their behaviour management styles and practices. This reflects one of six key classroom teaching qualities, referred to as 'managerial competence' by Kyriacou (1997, p.78), as managerial responsibilities are assumed incrementally in and outside of the classroom.

The philosophy and practice of critical friendship are presented, with a view to preparing student teachers for peer teaching.

In addition to concerns about the organisation of the classroom and its learners, students are generally still grappling with the mechanics of teaching at this stage. For example, they are typically still learning how to introduce new learning content in an active, engaging, and age-appropriate way, and are eager to see how others do this. Lesson pacing and the timing of lesson stages can be demanding for the novice teacher. The beginning, ending, and pacing of lessons have been identified under the six qualities grouped as 'performance' by the Stanford Teacher Competence Appraisal Guide (Stones and Morris, 1972).

At this embryonic stage of lesson planning, the development of learning content is introduced. Its thorough exploration can be a challenge for student teachers. After the role of assistant to a classroom teacher for a term, they have led the teaching of just two to three lessons per curricular subject area and facilitated play centres for three weeks in their first year of the programme. In terms of planning preparation, in their first school placement of second year, students attempt fortnightly scheme planning in their pairs for the first time. This tends to be very much favoured by the student group and makes welcome the timing of the peer-teaching experience in Maynooth University's Bachelor of Education programme.

As part of their preparation to peer-teach, a seminar, as part of B.Ed. module PPSTL2, facilitates the introduction and completion of the Peer-Teaching School Placement Agreement (dubbed by students as the SP pre-nup!). Student teachers work through a shared contractual agreement, whereby they deliberate and try to reach consensus on their own approaches to teaching matters, from behaviour-management strategies to planning practicalities such as photocopying duties.

The form was designed by the authors of this paper to ensure that a discussion would be tabled between the partners weeks before the placement, so that potential difficulties could be pre-empted. It was also created in response to literature, which asserted that many challenges on peer placement are due to insufficient awareness about how to collaborate, give feedback in a positive way, plan in a collegiate way, and divide the work equally. These questions are posed with the aim of prompting thoughtful consideration and negotiation among pairs, and of providing a positive learning experience – primarily for the children in the classroom but also for the student teachers and the cooperating teacher and principal of the host school.

...many challenges on peer placement are due to insufficient awareness about how to collaborate, give feedback in a positive way, plan in a collegiate way, and divide the work equally.

Students take an hour, initially, working with their partners discussing issues, including:

> Where and when are they going to do their planning each day after lessons? What time will they 'call it a day', in terms of finishing co-planning? By what mode do they each prefer to be contacted (phone, text, e-mail, Facebook, WhatsApp, etc.)? How will they ensure consistency in their approaches to classroom management? What tolerance of noise do each of them have? What is an acceptable level of tidiness/untidiness in the classroom? Who will be in charge of displays of work? Who will do the photocopying? Will they both do equal amounts? What will the person do while the other person is teaching the lesson? What type of feedback will they give to one another and how should it be given? (Forrest and Stokes, Peer-Teaching School Placement Agreement, 2011)

Only two lessons are co-taught each day, with the other lessons shared equally. The partners come to agree on many of these issues, and they each sign the contract, acknowledging the discussions and agreements reached. The form is completed outside of the seminar session, after consideration and negotiation. While this is naturally only notional, according to student feedback it appears to consolidate the visions and plans that both partners have for the professional relationship, though like any evolving relationship, it may require some renegotiation as the placement unfolds.

After school placement, the students discuss the merits and challenges of the process. This is recorded in summary form by the course facilitators, who are the authors of this article. The process and administration of the SP prenuptial agreement (Forrest and Stokes, 2011) are explored, and this ongoing evaluation has led to a synthesis of seven years of reflective feedback from stakeholders. Reflective practices conducted by the module leaders since 2011 inform the conclusions and recommendations below.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following conclusions and recommendations are drawn from the past seven years of practice and informed by the literature outlined. They mainly concern matters of reflecting and disseminating practice and its implications for policy.

Language in co-teaching and team-teaching must be critically examined with reference to the Irish Teaching Council Guidelines on School Placement (Teaching Council, 2013, p.6), to contextualise the theory and practice of peer teaching. In the glossary, *team-teaching* refers specifically to 'teachers teaching the same learners at the same time, and working together to plan, conduct and evaluate the learning activities'.

We suggest that peer teaching is a unique form of co-teaching, in that equity is implied by the fact that the student teaching pair represents the same stage on the continuum of teaching and learning. To enhance understanding of the continuum of teacher education, the nature of peer teaching might be delineated by future policy documentation using such initiatives as the one documented here, as an evidence-based approach to interpreting and enacting policy.

Some students could present at Féilte (The Festival of Education in Learning and Teaching Excellence) on their experience of the paired school placement, to inform future research and policy on Initial Teacher Education. This would also allow the views of the key stakeholders – the student teachers themselves – to be illuminated.

A recommendation is that students be given opportunities to engage in peer teaching in preparation for engagement in Droichead.

An alternate recommendation is that students be given further opportunities to engage in peer teaching in preparation for engagement in Droichead: The Integrated Professional Induction Framework, so that the merits of paired critical reflection-on-practice become further embedded in everyday practice. An additional benefit of this approach is that the cooperating teachers and student teachers understand the context in which teaching and learning take place and that this is observed over an extended period. This, ideally, presents a realistic view of the ongoing teaching and learning that are occurring in the school environment, as opposed to obtaining a 'snapshot' of practice, which, before the introduction of Droichead, was the method of investigation, inspection, and evaluation of early-career teachers.

Through Cosán: Framework for Teachers' Learning (Teaching Council, 2016), there are opportunities to examine peer teaching with respect to 'practice and collaboration' as an identified teacher learning process, as well as under the mentoring/coaching strand of reflective practice. These may provide meaningful opportunities for sharing knowledge, expertise, and experience, in order to realise co-planning and reflective practice as the norm among professionals along all stages of the professional development continuum.

ADDITIONS TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN

In terms of the Strategic Plan for 2018–2021 and beyond, the following elements have been added as objectives for the PPSTL2 university module:

- The drawbacks identified in the bullet points above will be presented to the School Placement Committee of the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education, in order to address issues at policy and procedural level.
- More emphasis will be placed on professionalism in communication, in particular to any use of social media in relation to school placement. Appropriate observation of posting protocols will be explored and agreed as part of the revised peer-placement contract between partners and their teaching and learning environments.
- The newly introduced GDPR requirements in May 2018 on data protection and storage will be emphasised in peer-placement preparation in conjunction with Maynooth University and departmental protocol.
- Fourth-year B.Ed. students will be encouraged to research peer teaching as a potential focus of their Self-Study Action-Research dissertations, as key stakeholders of peer teaching, with a view to informing not only university practice but also, potentially, Teaching Council policy.
- Shared components of students' e-portfolios will be explored as a vehicle for meaningful and appropriate sharing of resources, evaluations, and examples of learning outcomes. This will be aligned with the growing international emphasis on the desirability and necessity for forums in which professional development is presented as evidence and for recruitment and promotion, where appropriate.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The merits of the peer-placement programme and its associated challenges and limitations have been presented. The strategic plan 2018–2021, arising from the review of literature and feedback from students and stakeholders in Initial Teacher Education, has been revised, so that best practice as determined nationally and internationally can be incorporated and embedded. The use of such an evidence-based approach, it is hoped, will inform the future direction and nature of the ongoing development of teachers, particularly those in the early stages of their teaching careers.

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Dr Michael Barrett
Head of Faculty of Business and Social Sciences, Institute of Technology, Sligo

APPRENTICESHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Insurance Practitioner, a modern apprenticeship for a diverse industry

An apprenticeship is a programme of structured education and training which formally combines and alternates learning in the workplace with learning in an educational setting. This is an important definition, as it differentiates an apprenticeship from other work-based programmes such as internships and work placement.

The apprenticeship system in Ireland is governed by the 1967 Industrial Training Act, and all statutory apprenticeships are recognised by this Act. When a new apprenticeship is created, it is protected under the Act by means of a statutory instrument which outlines the specific occupations for which the apprenticeship prepares the apprentice. All Irish statutory apprenticeships are on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) as major awards at level 5 and upwards.

Before the review of apprenticeships in 2013, there were 27 apprenticeship programmes in a variety of occupations; these were traditional craft apprenticeships lasting four years. In recent years there were typically around 3,500 new registrations annually, and these were heavily male-dominated, despite bursaries to encourage female registrations.

CONCEPT AND DESIGN – THE EVOLUTION OF A MODERN-DAY APPRENTICESHIP

In 2013 a major review of apprenticeship provision was carried out. It made several key recommendations, including better collaboration between enterprises and education and training providers, the creation of rewarding careers, and provision of job-ready graduates for a large segment of the population.

Following the review there was a call for new apprenticeship proposals, with the condition that they had to be at least two years long and on the NFQ at level 5 or higher. While these new apprenticeships conformed with the legislation, there are some key differences from the statutory (trade) apprenticeships:

- SOLAS no longer paid the training allowance; rather, the funds were used to support the development of new apprenticeship programmes.
- At least 50 per cent of the learning would be work-based.
- The new occupational profiles would be confirmed by statutory instrument, and the 1967 industrial training act would apply to these new apprenticeships.

THE INSURANCE PRACTITIONER PROGRAMME – A MODERN APPRENTICESHIP FOR A DIVERSE INDUSTRY

The Insurance Practitioner apprenticeship programme is industry-led. The initial proposal was submitted to the apprenticeship council by Zurich Insurance, and while the apprenticeship council endorsed the concept of the Insurance Practitioner apprenticeship, it recommended that there be broader industry representation and that the apprenticeship be available to a broad range of employers. The Insurance Institute of Ireland (III) developed the programme proposal on behalf of the industry, developing the learner specifications and setting up the initial consortium steering group (CSG).

The III approached Institute of Technology Sligo (ITS) to help design, validate, and deliver the programme to the occupational profile specified by the industry CSG. The CSG appointed ITS as the coordinating provider, with the brief to develop a national programme using distance learning technologies. The strong industry representation was key to successful implementation, with the focus on a programme which met the needs of the insurance industry: preparing future leaders in the industry.

Also key was the involvement of SOLAS, the Higher Education Authority (HEA), Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), and the Technological Higher Education Association (THEA), who advised in the start-up phase. The programme includes embedded insurance qualifications, leading to professional designations required to show competence in a regulated industry. As the apprentice grows in their role and achieves industry designation, they perform higher-order tasks. On completion, they must demonstrate competence in one of three areas of the insurance industry: direct client advice, underwriting, or claims handling.

The students are employed by insurance companies and undergo online and blended learning from their home base.

The brief to deliver a national programme was achieved at launch in September 2016, with the launch of a three-year BA (honours) in Insurance Practice, with sixty-seven apprentices employed by almost forty employers, and an apprentice in every Education and Training Board (ETB) area. The students are employed by insurance companies across Ireland and undergo online and blended learning from their home base, with mentoring from senior executives. They achieve a consistent delivery and assessment, supported by ITS, who also oversee the quality assurance of the programme, and by the III, with regular face-to-face days when the apprentices can meet with their lecture team.

The intake of new apprentices is divided almost equally between CAO students, career changers, and graduates, all of whom were employed on three-year apprenticeship training contracts. The CSG provides strategic direction to the programme and ensures that it is sustainable in the long term by forecasting demand for the programme, making recommendations to expand it, and making other strategic decisions on its operation – in a similar way to SOLAS for traditional apprenticeships.

In September 2018, the third intake of recruits was enrolled, with an average annual intake of seventy-five apprentices over the three years. In 2017 the CSG proposed the expansion to include companies who provided life insurance. The Life Insurance Association (LIA) is now a delivery partner and plays an active role on the CSG.

A further example of programme expansion considered by the CSG is the expansion of the apprenticeship to higher levels (9 and 10 of the NFQ). The CSG made an unsuccessful bid for a level 9 apprenticeship in the summer 2017 call for new proposals. While the rationale for not approving a progression route for the graduates of the BA (honours) programme remains unclear, the CSG remains committed to exploring further apprenticeship proposals and developing progression and entry pathways for the graduates of the level 8 programme.

PROGRAMME DELIVERY

The CSG, guiding ITS and III, designed the programme within the framework constraints for new apprenticeship proposals, exploiting the changes to the funding regime. For example, the Insurance Practitioner apprenticeship operates a day-release alternance model, which means the apprentices take their ITS classes on day release rather than the block approach adapted by traditional employers. This was designed to compensate for removal of the training allowance from the apprentice, and delivers a more cost-efficient delivery for both employer and apprentice. The use of online technologies allows a truly national programme of scale to be developed, with large global players and small brokers among the employers providing apprenticeship opportunities.

> The use of online technologies allows a truly national programme of scale to be developed.

The involvement of the III and LIA as industry representatives has a number of advantages. As educational organisations, they understand the challenges of delivering and validating a work-based programme, and they were key in activating the industry to recruit apprentices. The III apprenticeship portal www.earnandlearn.ie has become a key tool in developing an accessible talent pool for the industry and in making this talent available to employers.

LESSONS LEARNT AND RECOMMENDATIONS – OVERCOMING OBSTACLES AND WHERE NEXT

With the recruitment of the third intake in September 2018, and looking forward to the first graduates in October 2019, the partners reflect on a programme that has achieved a truly national spread, with apprentices in a large variety of companies – from household names in national and global companies to local brokers in towns and cities around Ireland.

The strengths of the industry partnership and the guidance of the CSG have ensured a sustainable apprenticeship delivery model, which provides capacity for development in the regions, and have substantially increased the national uptake by female participants in apprenticeship programmes, representing over 40 per cent of each intake.

The development of the Insurance Practitioner apprenticeship provides the blueprint for a sustainable apprenticeship with national reach and industry engagement. This development was challenging, as there are many bodies and instruments involved:

- QQI, with the welcome development of Topic-Specific Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines and Topic-Specific Statutory QA Guidelines developed by QQI for providers of statutory apprenticeship programmes, which provided a roadmap and framework for development.
- SOLAS, who assisted with the statutory instruments, marketing and coordinating the authorised officer networks.
- HEA, who fund the programme with the support of SOLAS.
- Authorised officer network in the ETBs who support the apprentices and companies on the ground.
- The development by SOLAS of tools to help plan and roll out an apprenticeship programme is welcome. The apprenticeship council strategically manage the statutory apprenticeship programmes.

Nationally there apprenticeships available in new and exciting areas, such as finance, ICT, engineering, hospitality, and logistics. In December 2017 a further twenty-six new apprenticeships from level 5 to 10 on the NFQ were approved for development by the apprenticeship council, and the number of new apprenticeships registered in 2020 is planned to more than double, to 9,000.

Several papers were accepted at the International Network on Innovative Apprenticeship (INAP) conference in October 2017, where the Insurance Practitioner apprenticeship attracted much interest. It was unique and relevant worldwide in a couple of respects. The apprenticeship was delivered in the workplace by a higher education institute. In countries such as Germany and Switzerland, with established apprenticeship provision, education was provided at sub-degree level in training colleges, and students who progressed to degree-level studies did so when they had completed their apprenticeship and entered traditional universities.

The statutory basis of the apprenticeship, and the protection provided to it by SOLAS by the authorised officer network, also received positive comment. Many countries did not have such a statutory basis for their apprenticeship provision. The concept of delivering the off-the-job training by distance in the workplace was also unique.

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Rebecca receives UCD Academic Achievement Scholarship

Rebecca Carter's appeal of her Leaving Cert results and her subsequent successful High Court action in September 2018 inadvertently led to the total reorganisation of the State Examinations Commissions appeals process.

In conversation with Brian Mooney, Rebecca indicated that she is totally enjoying Veterinary Medicine in UCD, and engaging fully in college life. However, she continues to be surprised and disconcerted to find that everyone she meets knows her name and her story… the price of courage!

MAKING LINKS

Career Development and Employability in Higher Education

Dr David Foster

Director of Career Development and Skills, and Director, Career Development Centre, University College Dublin

This article outlines how University College Dublin is engaging students in their career development and employability during their time at UCD. It describes the political, strategic, and policy landscape that is shaping and influencing this work, and it highlights the connectivity between the university, students, employers, faculty, and professional support areas. The career development and employability landscape is multifaceted and developing quickly at UCD. Making what is offered relevant has been achieved through cooperation and consultation across levels and functions within the university, and this is seen as essential for success to continue.

POLICY AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Govender and Taylor (2015) pointed to an employability agenda that has emerged in recent years in higher education systems around the world. This agenda is said to be led most often by policymakers, but resonates with various stakeholder groups such as higher education providers, parents, students, and graduates.

In the Irish context, discourse and policy on the nature of higher education and the hard and soft skills needed for an effective and vibrant economy are evident in the country's strategic framework. The National Skills Strategy 2025, the Action Plan for Education 2018, the Action Plan for Jobs 2018, and the National Strategy for Higher Education 2030 provide a robust framework in which higher education providers may address employability initiatives in education and learning. This is important, as graduate recruiters generally seek educated talent that is flexible and adaptable – not someone who has been trained to a certain skill set, job function, or role.

At UCD, the international discourse on students' career development and employability is reflected in a broad range of strategic and policy positions that give students' the educational, personal, and professional development they require to contribute meaningfully to the economy and society. UCD educates future national and international leaders by providing an educational and student experience that addresses academic, personal, professional, and career development. It equips students for success beyond the university experience, irrespective of discipline.

The UCD Strategy 2020, objective 2, says the university will 'provide an educational experience that defines international best practice'. The UCD Education Strategy 2015–2020, priority 2, says UCD will 'provide students with opportunities to develop interpersonal, intercultural and life skills within and outside of the classroom'.

Both strategies have been helpful in framing dialogue on the role of a university in education and in helping students to acquire, practice, and enhance skills. To explore students' career development and employability further, in 2018 a working group of senior academic and professional staff was formed to undertake significant consultation with stakeholders (faculty, professional and administrative staff, students, and employers). It took a triangulated approach to data collection:

- Questionnaires were issued to all UCD students and faculty.
- Focus groups were held with professional and support units across UCD.
- Focus groups were held with employers.
- Based on data analysis, the working group developed an Institutional Strategy on Career Development and Employability that has five core priorities:
- Incorporate career development and employability-related activities in discipline-appropriate ways within programmes.
- Enhance and develop employability attributes in our students and graduates.
- Establish and maintain excellent working relationships with our key stakeholders.
- Provide opportunities for students who want to develop their creativity, innovation, enterprise, and entrepreneurial interests.
- Communicate our strategy to prospective students and key stakeholders.

Adding a strategy specifically for students' career development and employability provides a focus on the development and expression of career identity and employability skills. This is central to UCD's educational mission. It complements and personalises the national framework on graduate skills, employability, and career development. This new strategy was welcomed at UCD, where there is a genuine focus on the student experience.

QS has ranked UCD at number one in Ireland for graduate employability in 2018 and 2019.

UCD's focus on students' career development and employability is also evidenced on the international stage. UCD is a research-intensive university with global reach and is ranked by QS University World Rankings in the top 1% of universities worldwide. This showcases the calibre of the faculty and their research outputs, and the quality of teaching, learning, facilities, and the student experience.

Further, QS has ranked UCD at number one in Ireland for graduate employability in 2018 and 2019. The QS Graduate Employability league table ranks UCD at 74th in the world. No other Irish university, north or south, is ranked by QS in the world's top 100 universities for graduate employability. In developing this ranking, QS seeks data on four core questions:

- How well reputed are the institutions among employers?
- Are the institutions nurturing high-achievers?
- How connected are institutions to employers?
- How attractive are an institution's recent graduates to employers?

UCD thus continues to evidence, on the world stage, a strong commitment to the educational and student experience delivered by academic and professional experts across a student's lifespan at UCD. It has a track record of excellence in student recruitment, engagement, and progression across the broadest possible curriculum, offering students choice in breadth and depth of academic experience.

Commitment to challenging and developing students starts early, and many academic programmes encourage students to do modules outside of their core discipline. This exposes them to different styles of thinking, learning, studying, and communicating. These experiences build qualities and skills needed by the economy, including flexibility, adaptability, and critical thinking, which are central to future career success and to enriching campus and student life. This promotes diversity and mutual learning. There is clear recognition at UCD of the critical role played by universities in the personal and professional development of students alongside intellectual challenge and academic enrichment.

MAKING LINKS: INTERNSHIPS AND UCD

The importance of internships cannot be overstated, from both the educational and career-development perspectives. A decade ago, Knouse and Fontenot (2008), commenting on the situation in the USA, found that employment opportunities evolved directly from the internship experience and that students' employability more broadly was enhanced by the experience of being in the workplace. A National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) survey of internships and cooperative education in the USA (2016) reported in similar vein, finding that job opportunities evolved from internships and that employers saw internships as a primary talent pipeline with an explicit organisational goal to convert as many interns as possible into full-time employees.

> The importance of internships cannot be overstated, from both the educational and career-development perspectives.

The situation in Ireland replicates this. Gradireland's 'Graduate Salary and Graduate Recruitment Trends Survey 2018' reported 80% of employers in Ireland offering internships, with 54% recruiting up to 50% of their graduate intake from their interns. This is becoming more commonplace across businesses and sectors of the economy.

In a survey of 1,639 UCD students, carried out during development of the institutional strategy on career development and employability, preparing for the future and developing the skills that employers want feature high among students' expectations of the educational experience. The main themes from the expectations identified by students are as follows:

Transferable skills, practical skills, experience

Help in establishing what is needed or wanted by employers

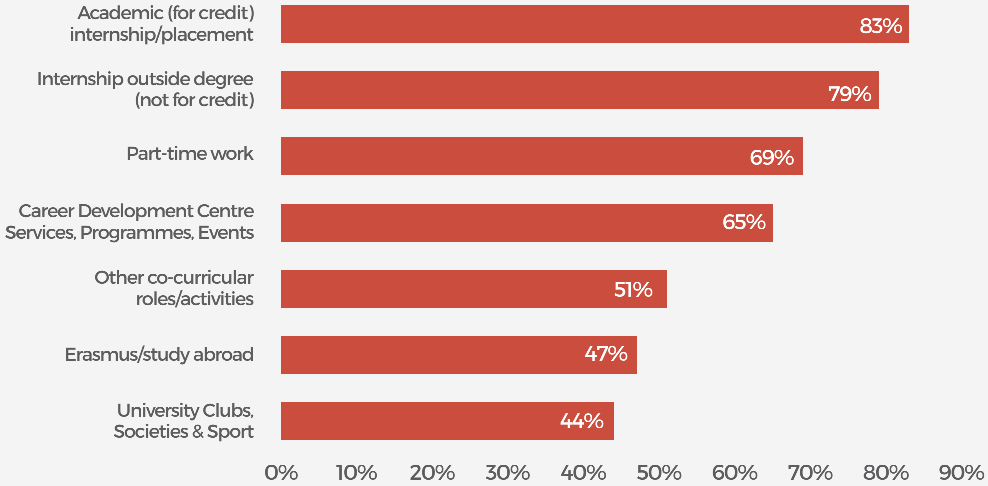
Focus on developing skills attractive to employers, rather than choosing a career path

Students' comments show a stated need for workplace exposure and skills enhancement:

> *Getting real-life experience in the working world during the college education programme and workshops to gain real-life skills and techniques before leaving college.*
>
> *Gaining the skills and knowledge that will be useful in industry. Having practical skills to deal with real-life employment.*

Connecting with the workplace is clearly important to students, and internships are an increasingly popular and effective way to achieve this. The chart below, of what contributed most to employability, illustrates just how important internships are to students (n = 1,639) (Clarke, 2018, p.28):

Q. How important do you feel each of the following elements is in preparing you for employment? (1 = very important, 5 = not at all important)



Scores 1 & 2 (Very important & important)

Other aspects of the student experience also featured highly, including the role of the Career Development Centre and co-curricular activities.

From the student perspective, internships – whether for credit or not – appear critical to their thinking on career development and employability. With UCD's growing offering in this space, students' expectations and needs are increasingly being supported by the faculty and professional staff. A wide variety of programmes in UCD now offer internships at undergraduate and graduate levels.

Operating a hub-and-spoke model, internships are managed locally by college- or school-based internship managers, who engage industry and students, facilitate the recruitment of students to a range of internships across disciplines, and administer preparation, placement, and progress through the internship. Career and skills consultants from the Career Development Centre are often engaged to help students prepare for internships, and to reflect on their experience upon return to UCD, integrating new skills, thoughts, and abilities into their career plans.

Internship managers have a reporting line to the university internships manager located at the Career Development Centre – a staff-facing role, working primarily with internship managers on dissemination of best practice, for example, and with academic staff seeking to develop and introduce internships to ensure a consistent approach across UCD in systems, processes, and best practice.

As academic internships grow at UCD and employers become more diverse in recruiting across disciplines, one of the challenges the university faces is how best to minimise the number of touch points employers have when recruiting across disciplines.

MAKING LINKS: COLLEGES, SCHOOLS, AND SUPPORTS

The breadth of UCD's strategic landscape is perhaps indicative of a pan-institutional commitment to students' career development and employability being shared across UCD faculty, professional staff, and those offering opportunities for students to engage in volunteering, clubs, societies, sports, international experiences, and work-related activities.

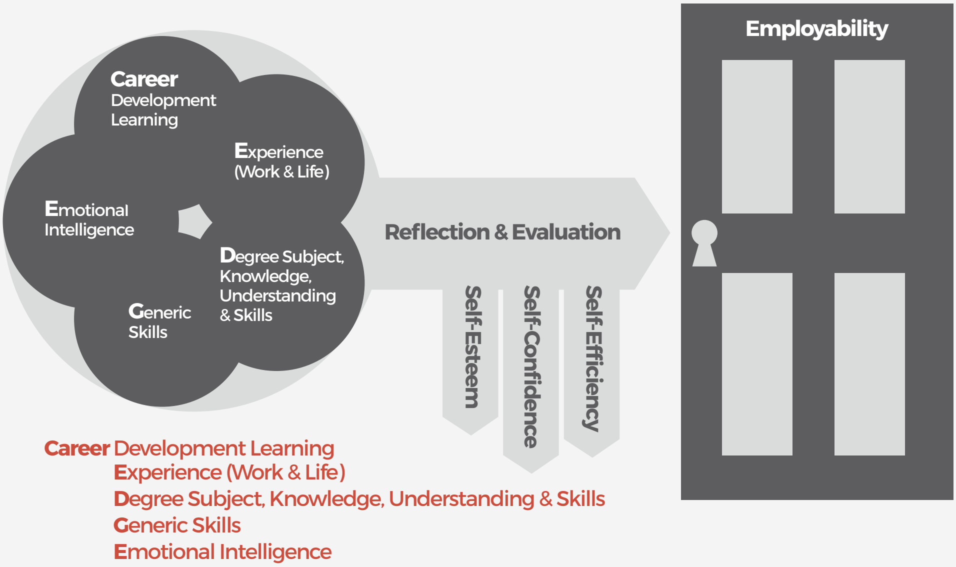
The Career Development Centre has been expanded and now has eight professional career development practitioners.

The university is also developing a life-span approach to students' career development and employability, evidenced by recent changes in resourcing such support. The Career Development Centre has been expanded and now has eight professional career development practitioners: six college-facing career and skills consultants, and two specialist posts for graduate research students and postdoctoral researchers.

Student engagement can now be planned and delivered from the first year of an undergraduate programme through to the final year of a PhD or beyond into engagement with early-stage researchers. Development of the team and inclusion of two specialist positions supporting early-stage researchers exemplify UCD's global position as a research-intensive university, contributing to objective 7 of the UCD Strategy 2015–2020, which is to 'develop and strengthen our university community'.

Adding value to the student experience is central to the mission of the Career Development Centre, which plays a key and clearly defined role in supporting the university in the career development and employability of students and early-stage researchers. The Centre seeks to offer a range of initiatives, including credit-bearing modules and not-for-credit programmes of personal and professional development, industry immersion events (such as week-long interactive study visits), and bespoke provision at school and college level.

The Centre is cognisant of current and emerging research in its areas of professional practice. It considered various models of career development and employability before situating its work in CareerEDGE, a theoretical, peer-reviewed model of employability. Adopting the CareerEDGE: Key to Employability model (see image, from Dacre-Pool and Sewell, 2007, p.281) has provided an evidence base for situating work undertaken in the wider personal and professional development arena and not only in supporting students' job search and transition into work or graduate study. CareerEDGE has helped link career and professional development to academic disciplines, to the broader context of student learning from work and life, and in developing higher-order critical thinking skills such as reflection and self-confidence.


Career
Development
Learning
Experience
(Work & Life)
Emotional
Intelligence
Degree Subject,
Knowledge,
Understanding
& Skills
Generic
Skills
Reflection & Evaluation
Self-Esteem
Self-Confidence
Self-Efficiency
Employability
Career Development Learning
Experience (Work & Life)
Degree Subject, Knowledge, Understanding & Skills
Generic Skills
Emotional Intelligence

A metaphorical model of employability

Partnering with faculty in colleges and schools has developed organically to meet the needs of students, faculty, and staff. Introduction of career liaison academics roles in the College of Science, some schools in the College of Engineering and Architecture, and at the UCD Sutherland School of Law has been a catalyst for programmes in career development and employability. Career liaison academics may act as a conduit between the Centre and the School. They can review the work of the Career Development Centre through the lens of the School and identify specific student needs. A plan can then be developed to meet these needs and actively encourage students to engage.

This approach has had success. For example, during the 2017/18 academic year, career and skills consultants delivered 158 career development workshops and interventions across UCD colleges, attended by 6,026 students. Of these 158 bespoke interventions, 86 workshops attended by 3,529 students were delivered in the College of Science and the College of Engineering and Architecture, where career liaison academics exist. The career liaison academic network has helped bring key messages to students and staff and to build bespoke, informed interventions.

In addition to college- and school-based interventions, during 2017/18 career and skills consultants delivered 2,792 one-to-one career consultations. In the Career Development Centre's experience, embedding programmes into the curriculum in the form of group work tends to generate demand from students for more one-to-one consultations. Combining interactive group work with one-to-one consultations has been effective in engaging students in career and professional development.

Career and skills consultants also delivered credit-bearing modules and part-modules:

Full modules:

- Career Development in Psychology
- Career Development for Arts and Humanities (new 2018/19)
- Prepare for your Future Career (Science).

Part-modules:

- Legal and Professional Skills (Law)
- Creativity in Design (Engineering)
- Innovative Leadership (Engineering)
- Human Learning (Education, new 2018/19)
- Internships: Work Experience and Career Development (Education)
- Professional Career Development (Science: Biotechnology)
- Professional Career Development (Science: Biological Systems & Regulatory Affairs and Toxicology)
- Economic Sociology (Economics)
- Entrepreneurship and Plant Biology (Science)
- Social Work Theories and Methods (Social Sciences)
- Internships in Social Sciences (new 2018/19).

MAKING LINKS: THE CO-CURRICULUM

The Education Strategy 2015–2020: Our Students' Education and Experience refers to giving students opportunities to develop through co-curricular activities. UCD has over 100 clubs, societies, and sports to choose from. It encourages contribution to the community through volunteering locally, nationally, and internationally, and participation in Erasmus and Study Abroad semesters and year-long placements. Students are involved in many other activities, such as being a campus ambassador, peer mentor, or access leader. All are important in the student life cycle, and all give students excellent developmental opportunities.

During 2017/18 career and skills consultants delivered 2,792 one-to-one career consultations.

The Education Strategy helped frame work that was undertaken in 2016/17 to develop non-credit-bearing awards of the university to recognise the development of students' skills, attitudes, competencies, and qualities through engagement in co-curricular activities. Two awards were introduced and are currently being piloted. They are administered and managed by the Career Development Centre on behalf of the university, and they allow students to submit the learning and development from co-curricular engagement for an award of the university. The awards are:

- Embark: developed as an engagement award targeted at first-year students to help them adjust to university life, get involved, and start their own personal and professional journey.

- Advantage: a more significant award requiring students to engage across a broader range of activity, with more significant reflection required by the student.

Both awards focus on themes central to the UCD Strategy 2015–2020: they enhance the educational experience, strengthen our university community, and help attract and retain an excellent and diverse cohort of students. The awards may be achieved through evidence of engagement and assessment of a reflective account that must demonstrate:

- personal and professional development
- engagement with UCD and the wider community
- cultural engagement
- health and well-being.

The awards proved popular with students in the first year of the pilot and are anticipated to grow further in the 2018/19 academic year.

In addition to Embark and Advantage, UCD Career Development Centre and UCD Alumni Relations continue to enhance a Career Development Mentoring Programme, linking students from the College of Arts and Humanities and the College of Social Sciences and Law with alumni from their discipline and related areas. Learning outcomes focus on developing occupational awareness and labour market intelligence through networking and mentorship, developing employability skills, and enabling students who may be undecided about their career to imagine themselves in a graduate career linked to their discipline. The most recent programme of alumni mentoring concluded with a completion rate more than double that of the previous year.

Engaging students in project planning, delivery, and evaluation provides an important learning opportunity.

A leading success factor at UCD in the area of career development and employability has been the ability to leverage expertise available across UCD: career development and employability are seen as a shared responsibility. Supporting students in their own development and also the faculty and staff is important. Staff–student projects that enhance the UCD environment and community or contribute to the wider community may receive set-up funding under the Supporting Partnership and Recognizing Change (SPARC) programme. Engaging students in project planning, delivery, and evaluation provides an important learning opportunity. Since projects are organised in the context of social entrepreneurship, they have contributed significantly to students, staff, and communities.

Other co-curricular programmes include career development study visits that immerse students in the workplace for a period, and undertaking business games and case studies to help apply academic learning to the workplace, make connections, and secure internship and graduate jobs. Co-curricular engagement goes right across the university, giving students opportunities to follow their interests, hobbies, dreams, and aspirations. Students may use this to show the significant career development outcomes from all disciplines – not just those with an explicit link to the workplace.

MAKING LINKS: CAREER COACHING, CAREER DEVELOPMENT, AND EMPLOYABILITY

This article illustrates initiatives and benefits from embedding career development and employability in the curriculum. This can be either for credit or not; what is important is the recognition of a co-curricular track to the curriculum that sits in parallel to the academic experience. Embedding career development and employability in the student experience does not reduce demand for centralised career supports such as career advisory consultations – indeed, it has increased such demand. Many students still want to talk though what their experiences in the classroom or co-curricular engagement meant for them and their future.

As an approach to students' career development, embedding it in the educational experience is therefore a strategic decision to maximise the student experience, and not a resource-saving exercise. While a member of staff may work with more students in a one-hour class than they could on a one-to-one basis in the same time, the process of engaging students in personal and professional development leads to further exploration and service demand.

There is little doubt that delivering career development and employability through partnership with the curriculum works better than stand-alone offerings. Embedding increases student engagement and faculty buy-in to the importance of career development and employability. It allows employers to be more meaningfully engaged in student development. It leads career interventions to be better tailored to module and programme outcomes – and better connected to students, who now expect a more personalised experience than previous generations did. At UCD, the growth of curricular and co-curricular engagement is set to increase and to have a positive impact on the student experience right across the curriculum.

We know now that a qualification in itself is unlikely to lead to personal and professional success.

MAKING LINKS: STUDENTS AND ENTERPRISE

UCD is well connected to professional bodies and employers locally, nationally, and internationally. In particular, engagement with employers is designed to have an impact on knowledge and learning, student development and progression, and the significant contribution made by UCD to local, national, and international communities. At a university the size of UCD, there are many ways that the university, faculty, and staff engage with employers as the educational experience is developed and delivered. Broadly, however, engagement falls under three headings:

- research and development
- talent development
- corporate social responsibility.

We have noted the importance of internships (talent development) to career development, curriculum enhancement, and meeting the economic needs of employers. Many opportunities are created for industry and enterprise to meet future employees. There is still however a demand from employers and students for large-scale, recruitment-targeted events, and the Career Development Centre is actively involved in delivering these.

In 2017/18, for example, the Centre delivered four large recruitment fairs covering business, finance, management, law, science, engineering, technology, and internships. The fairs were attended by 192 national and international graduate recruiters and 4,438 UCD students. A further 89 employer-led presentations and workshops were delivered on campus between September 2017 and April 2018, attended by 1,693 students.

Students' journey through higher education rightly has acquisition of knowledge and qualifications at its core. But we know now that a qualification in itself is unlikely to lead to personal and professional success. Unpacking the wider higher education experience, bringing it to students' attention, and engaging them actively in education and studentship are what works well in preparing global leaders. This is not only about helping students achieve job success or secure a place on a graduate programme. It is not only about meeting employers' talent needs. What we want to achieve is the flourishing of graduates who will lead the sociopolitical and economic global climate.

Automation and artificial intelligence mean that some jobs will reduce or disappear altogether while others, not yet created, will emerge. To prepare students for an uncertain and continuously changing career landscape, institutional approaches to their career development and employability should avoid any temptation or pressure to train students for work but should take every opportunity to educate students to adapt, manage, and influence the world of work as it unfolds throughout their lives.

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Dr Cornelia Connolly

Joint Programme Director (Education), Lecturer, and Chair of the Research Committee at the School of Education, NUI Galway

COMPUTATIONAL FLUENCY FOR OUR FUTURE

Steps being taken at Schools of Education

An important factor of globalisation has been computerisation and related technological developments. Just as the printing press enabled the spread of reading and writing, so computing and computers help to spread computational thinking (Wing, 2006). The educational benefit of being able to think computationally is unquestionable: the use of abstraction, for example, to enhance and reinforce other intellectual skills, and which can be transferred to any knowledge domain. Science, society, and the economy will benefit from the discoveries and innovations produced by a workforce trained to think computationally.

Computational thinking, or computational fluency as it is sometimes referred to, is a universally applicable attitude and skill set that every citizen should be eager to learn and ready to use. Computational thinking is a fundamental skill for everyone to acquire: as Wing (2014) wrote, ‘to reading, writing, and arithmetic, we should add computational thinking to everyone’s analytical ability’. Further, it is expected that many more disciplines – such as biology, finance, and education – will make scholarly advances through the use of computing (Yadav et al., 2017).

As educators in Ireland, it is therefore important to consider that in trying to secure meaningful employment in the twenty-first-century workplace, much will depend on how effective people prove to be in working with and understanding intelligent machines. Computational fluency is the underlying problem-solving process that drives Computer Science and connects it to every other domain.

Computer Science is the discipline that makes the use of computers possible, thus driving innovation in nearly every sector and industry. It is the study of computers and algorithmic processes, including principles, design, applications (both hardware and software), and their impact on society. By introducing Computer Science at senior cycle at post primary level, the Department of Education and Skills is addressing a contemporary educational necessity, helping to ensure that learners develop new ways of thinking, creating, and problem-solving. The twenty-first-century competencies are not just of value to our future workforce: they are also necessary for the changing nature of work, study, and society.

The launch of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) Computer Science specification at the beginning of 2018 was a landmark development in Irish education, the first time that Computer Science will be an examinable subject at upper-second level in post-primary schools. Along with the two highly innovative junior cycle short courses (100 hours each) in Coding and Digital Media Literacy, which were introduced as part of the systemic reform of junior cycle in Irish schools, the introduction of Computer Science at senior cycle is visionary. The Computer Science senior cycle specification is currently being piloted in a select number of schools nationally, and the first cohort of students will sit the Computer Science Leaving Certificate exam in June 2020.

Many higher education institutions (HEIs) are developing initial teacher education (ITE) programmes for the new subject, among them NUI Galway. NUI Galway has a BA Education (Computer Science and Mathematical Studies) programme starting in September 2019 to recognise and harness the close conceptual relationship between Computer Science and Mathematics. This four-year concurrent ITE programme will prepare for the future need for highly educated and suitably qualified Computer Science teachers, who can only be enhanced in their capacity to teach Computer Science by having Mathematics in its broadest sense as their second subject.

The programme design builds on the successful Google-funded project at the School of Education, 'C24M2: Creative Coding for Maths Makers'. That project and series of workshops facilitated and promoted the integration of mathematics and computer science. Through engagement in the workshops, participants (both pre-service teachers and schoolchildren) developed an understanding of the design of innovative mathematical concepts using coding interfaces, then rendered their virtual models physically in the university MakerSpace.

The MakerSpace in the James Hardiman Library at NUI Galway is the only facility of its kind in an Irish university. Purposefully designed to facilitate engaged teaching and learning, the MakerSpace fosters a culture of creativity and innovation and gives students access to knowledge and technologies – such as 3D printing, which can otherwise be prohibitively expensive. Such exposure and experience are of immense value to pre-service teachers replicating innovation in STEM and industry.

> In trying to secure meaningful employment in the twenty-first century workplace, much will depend on how effective people prove to be in working with and understanding intelligent machines.

From the first computer program developed by Ada Lovelace in the 1840s to the innovative ideas uncovered by Seymour Papert (Papert, 1980), computing and computational thinking have dramatically shifted our learning and way of life. The creativity and problem-solving incorporated in the senior cycle Computer Science specification should be recognised not only as the necessary skills for employment, but also as highlighting the relationship that computational fluency has with creativity, design, and development, which are of immense importance to twenty-first-century competencies across all domains.

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NUI GALWAY HOSTS INTERNATIONAL ISDDE CONFERENCE

The 2018 International Society for Design and Development in Education (ISDDE) conference was hosted by NUI Galway School of Education. This was the first time the conference was held in Ireland.

ISDDE was formed in 2005 with the goal of improving educational design around the world. Educational design is a general term used to cover both curriculum design and learning design processes.

The theme of the 2018 conference was 'Culture and Educational Design', reflecting the importance of the broader social, cultural and physical environs in the participatory and principled design of educational innovations and technologies.

Organised and chaired by Dr Tony Hall, Dr Cornelia Connolly, Dr Eílis Flanagan and Jim Lenaghan of NUI Galway School of Education, the four-day conference hosted delegates from across the globe, including the US, Australia and Europe.

Chairs of ISSDE Conference 2018, hosted by the School of Education, NUI Galway: **Dr Tony Hall**, **Dr Cornelia Connolly**, **Dr Eílis Flanagan-Monahan**, **Mr Jim Lenaghan**.

During the conference, two NUI Galway staff members were elected Fellows of the Society: Dr Eílis Flanagan and Dr Cornelia Connolly. NUI Galway staff member Dr Tony Hall has been a Fellow of ISDDE since 2016.

UCD STUDENT ADVISERS

A Unique Model of Student Support

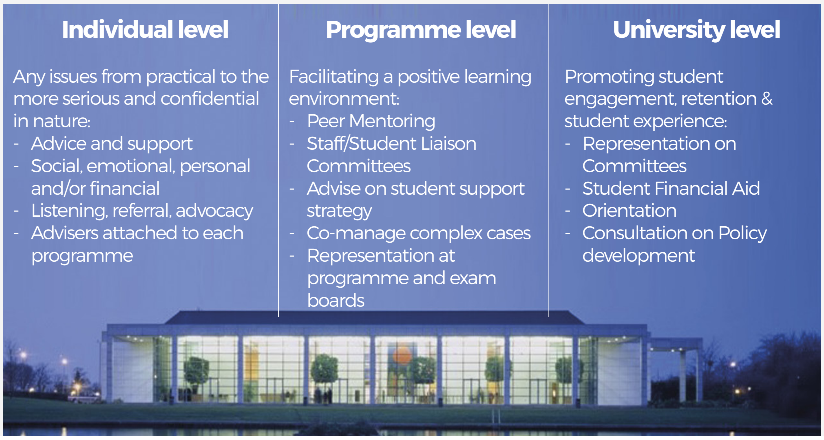
Professor Jason Last,
UCD Dean of Students

Dr Niamh Nestor, Catriona Keane, Jacqueline Levine, Aisling O'Grady, Kathleen Kiely, Colum Cronin,
UCD Student Advisers Communications Working Group

The mission statement of the UCD Strategy 2015–2020 describes the provision of a 'supportive community in which every member of the University is enabled to achieve their full potential' (UCD, 2015). Our strategy places the student at the core of our university, and points to the holistic education our students receive, 'instilling in them a desire to learn and create, to question and reason, to innovate and to contribute to society at all levels' (UCD, 2015b).

As our students progress through their programmes and research, we acknowledge they will face significant challenges, and some may need support. We recognise that across the higher education sector, nationally and internationally, stressors are rising and supports need to flex, grow, and adapt (Grant-Vallone et al., 2004; Robotham and Julian, 2006; Robotham, 2008). At the same time, student numbers are growing (HEA, 2018) and educational experiences are progressively digital, with many interactions occurring not between individuals but through an electronic interface (Concannon et al., 2005; Hiltz and Turoff, 2005; Jones and Shao, 2011; HEA, 2012; O'Donnell and Sharp, 2012).

These factors can make for a depersonalised experience. At UCD, we are meeting students' support needs through our academic community, programme administrators, maths and writing support centres, Access and Lifelong Learning team, careers centre, registry teams, health and counselling teams, chaplains, collaboration with the Students' Union, and a university-wide peer mentoring programme. We have also developed a team of student advisers located individually alongside programme areas but who also work together, joining with the university's many other supports. Here we describe the development of this unique model.



Individual level	Programme level	University level
Any issues from practical to the more serious and confidential in nature: - Advice and support - Social, emotional, personal and/or financial - Listening, referral, advocacy - Advisers attached to each programme	Facilitating a positive learning environment: - Peer Mentoring - Staff/Student Liaison Committees - Advise on student support strategy - Co-manage complex cases - Representation at programme and exam boards	Promoting student engagement, retention & student experience: - Representation on Committees - Student Financial Aid - Orientation - Consultation on Policy development

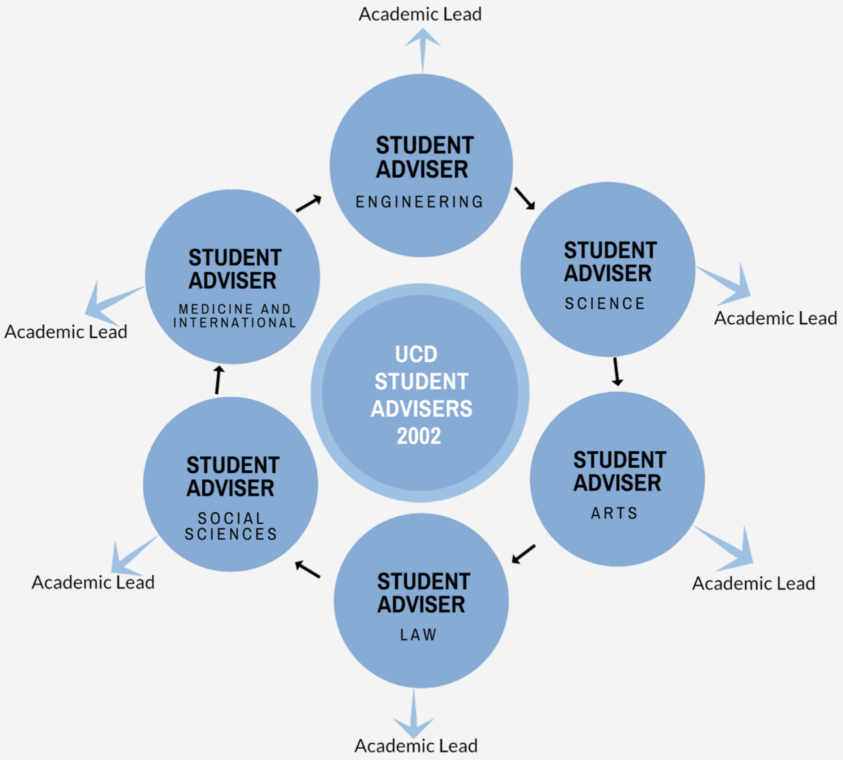
CONTEXT AND HISTORY OF THE UCD STUDENT ADVISORY SERVICE

The role of student adviser was established in 2001 by the then registrar, Dr Caroline Hussey, who had identified a gap in the student support structure at UCD. Whereas students who had academic concerns could speak to their lecturers, and those with personal or health concerns could speak to a health professional, there was little opportunity for students to speak to someone in their own programme about how their studies were being affected by other aspects of their lives.

> The principle underpinning the creation of the UCD Student Advisory Service was the belief that our students needed to be supported as people.

The principle underpinning the creation of the UCD Student Advisory Service ('the Service') was the belief that our students needed to be supported as people, and that this could be achieved most effectively at a local level, where programme-based knowledge could be combined with personal support in a way that ensured every student was given the best opportunity to succeed.

Student advisers became embedded in the wider support structures of the university and began to work closely with these to provide cohesive and seamless support for all students. This innovative approach meant that students now had someone who could not only give them a space to articulate their concerns but could also work with faculty and staff to ensure their issues were given appropriate practical consideration at programme level. Students easily identified their student adviser as part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STUDENT ADVISER ARTS
STUDENT ADVISER SOCIAL SCIENCES
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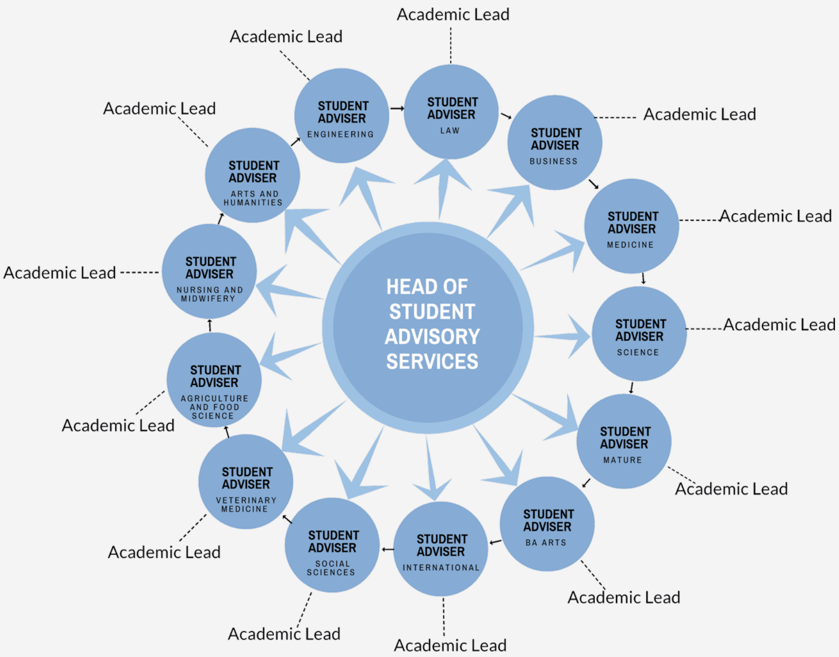
STUDENT ADVISER LAW
Academic Lead

of their programme but also knew their conversations were confidential, absolutely insulated from their academic record.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STUDENT ADVISER INTERNATIONAL
STUDENT ADVISER SOCIAL SCIENCES
STUDENT ADVISER VETERINARY MEDICINE
STUDENT ADVISER AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SCIENCE
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UCD student advisory service model

A CENTRALISED AND DISTRIBUTED MODEL

The Service has grown over the past sixteen years, from an initial group of six to a team of fourteen. In 2016, it was restructured from a decentralised to a hub-and-spoke model. There are now eleven programme-based student advisers, two student advisers who support specific cohorts (international students and mature students), and a manager. This model allows the service to benefit from key aspects of centralisation, such as cohesiveness of strategy and provision of training, while maintaining individuation in delivery. In this way, student advisers provide strategic input to student support and its evolution in UCD while simultaneously remaining embedded in programmes, ensuring targeted support for students' specific needs.

> In the 2017/18 academic year, the student advisers recorded contacts with over 12,000 students, in contexts defined by the students themselves.

VALUES

The key values of the Service are integrity, fairness, and commitment, underpinned by respect. Student advisers have a significant and positive impact on students' educational experience and are often the first port of call when students need support, leadership, knowledge, and direction to help them complete their programme successfully and enjoyably.

Student advisers support students in identifying and achieving their academic goals by empowering them to manage the various life challenges they may encounter. They promote the integration of students into the

UCD community by identifying and addressing their personal and social development needs. Offering one-to-one support and acting as the interface to other UCD support services are key to the role.

Student advisers work closely with administrative and academic staff in programmes and across the university to ensure that students are supported in a way that minimises the impact of their circumstances on their academic performance. They foster a sense of belonging in the UCD community, encouraging student engagement and connection with their programme and with the UCD community.

IMPACT

In the 2017/18 academic year, the student advisers recorded contacts with over 12,000 students, in contexts defined by the students themselves. This is a unique and vital aspect of the Service: students drive the queries, set the context, and interact with this support in ways that meet their individual needs.

UCD registrar **Professor Mark Rogers**, with the 2017/18 recipients of a University Teaching and Learning Award, including **Dr Niamh Nestor**, student adviser in the UCD School of Veterinary Medicine, who won an award for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning.

Student advisers use their unique insight to help formulate UCD policies and procedures, such as the UCD Extenuating Circumstances Policy, Mental Health Policy, Fitness to Continue in Study Policy, and Fitness to Practise Policy. They advise academic programme boards on issues affecting progression and retention in individual student cases. They have a key role in supporting and advocating for students during disciplinary or other UCD processes. They are regularly nominated by students for UCD Teaching and

Learning Awards, and in 2017/18 a member of the team received one for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning.

KEY FUNCTIONS OF THE STUDENT ADVISERS

Support

A core function of the Service is to provide individual support to students. Student advisers help students navigate challenges, from day-to-day issues to more complex and serious concerns, including failed modules, academic non-progression, stress and well-being, bereavement, illness, financial distress, and family breakdown. They create a safe space for students to articulate and explore their concerns and begin to address them. Student advisers' in-depth knowledge of UCD policies and procedures enables them to respond to students' needs in the context presented.

A core function of the Service is to provide individual support to students.

Students can self-refer to a student adviser or be referred through a recommendation from staff. Student advisers work on the principle of accessibility and have an open-door policy, making themselves available to students who drop by or make an appointment.

Orientation

Managing the transition to higher-level education is a key determinant in the successful academic and social integration of students, and an important factor in student persistence (Tinto, 1975, 1993, 1998, 2002; Astin, 1993; Tinto et al., 2001; Tinto and Engstrom, 2003; Wilcox et al., 2006; National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 2015). Student advisers play a vital role in organising and delivering orientation to first-year students, and they help manage, organise, deliver, and support orientation in each UCD undergraduate programme. They also work closely with the central orientation team to ensure that related activities run smoothly.

New UCD students enjoy some downtime with their peer mentors during orientation

Peer mentoring

UCD student advisers help to manage and run the UCD Peer Mentoring Programme, which was initiated by three student advisers in 2006/07. The pilot programme, with 25 peer mentors and 250 mentees, was coordinated and managed by student advisers, and peer mentors were drawn from a pool of more senior students who each mentored a group of incoming first years. After a very positive evaluation, the programme was rolled out to all incoming undergraduates, each of whom is allocated a peer mentor from their academic programme.

The main aim of UCD Peer Mentoring Programme is to support new students' successful transition to university life.

The main aim of the programme is to support new students' successful transition to university life. It has been refined since its inception and now has a well-developed philosophy consistent with best practice. Peer mentors share their experiences, insights, and challenges of being a student and also offer guidance, practical support, advice, and referral information about UCD support services.

Tinto (2002) notes that the more involved a student is in the academic and social aspects of their university experience, the more likely they are to graduate; succinctly put, 'involvement matters' (Tinto, 2002, p.3). The peer mentors support this by fostering a sense of belonging and community for the new students, helping strong friendships to develop, and supporting the new students as they transition to life at UCD. Through this informal network, routine problems experienced by first-year undergraduate students are identified and addressed in a timely manner.

Peer Mentor
UCD
ORIENTATION

UCD peer mentors during their training course before they meet their mentees during orientation

Student advisers and financial support

Financial difficulties can affect student persistence and general well-being (HEA, 2016). At UCD, students have access to financial supports, and student advisers can help students apply for these funds by helping them to prepare the paperwork and to write personal statements, and by writing letters of advocacy.

Student advisers' close involvement allows for other issues to be explored that may be affecting the student. Often, a student will present with financial issues but disclose related concerns affecting their lives and studies. This process guarantees a continuum of support across financial and personal issues.

Student advisers have been involved in initiatives aimed at fostering community engagement and a sense of belonging.

Community engagement

The student advisers are involved in the more celebratory aspects of student life, such as student orientation and induction, awards, peer mentoring, conferring, and career advancement. The UCD Education Strategy 2015–2020: Our Students' Education and Experience (UCD, 2015a) underlines the importance of students becoming members of societies and clubs and engaging in socially integrative activities. This is important to the student experience in terms of successful transition to university life, the formation of friendships, and ultimately student retention.

Student advisers have been involved in initiatives aimed at fostering community engagement and a sense of belonging; for example, the building and developing of UCD Purl Jam, a craft/creative community established by two student advisers in September 2017. It brings staff and students together and produces multiple hand-crafted items for donation to charity. Other key projects include collaboration with the HSE to bring their #LittleThings mental health campaign to UCD, a monthly PhD meet-up, and a walk-and-talk initiative to encourage staff and students to connect with and benefit from nature. These activities encourage staff–student interaction and enhance outreach with the broader community.

UCD Purl Jam Craft and Design Exhibition flyer

STUDENT ADVISERS AS A PROFESSIONAL GROUP

Continuing Professional Development

International NACADA Conference at UCD, 2018. From left: **Professor Jason Last**, Dean of Students, UCD; **Dr Debbie Mercer**, Dean of the College of Education, Kansas State University; **Professor Andrew Deeks**, President, UCD; **Dr Colleen Doyle**, Student Adviser, UCD; **Amy Sannes**, NACADA; and **Dr Charlie Nutt**, Executive Director, NACADA.

Since the Service has become a hub-and-spoke model, a framework of professional development has been identified. All UCD student advisers receive training in applied suicide-intervention skills, child protection, and solution-focused brief therapy as part of their continuing professional development. They have also received training from the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre to guide students to the appropriate services after a sexual assault.

Student advisers are given the opportunity to avail of external supervision on a monthly basis. This is supportive in terms of discussing student cases, deepening understanding of students' needs, and determining how best to respond. Supervision is also part of self-care for student advisers as a preventative measure against burnout.

A monthly 'Lunch and Learn' event brings the student advisers together to share and discuss relevant information, best practice, and research.

Communications

A student adviser communications working group acts to ensure that key messages about the Service are delivered to students at appropriate times, using social media, instant chat through the student adviser website, traditional media (including UCD student newspapers), health and well-being campaigns, and exam-support campaigns. The use and repetition across all communications of a clear, concise message – 'Remember that your Student Adviser is available for advice and support' – means that students know who they can turn to.

Research

Research is an ongoing and important aspect of the role. The student adviser research working group has three main functions: to evaluate the work of the Service, to conduct research in student support, and to regularly host 'Lunch and Learn' events to share best practice within the team.

An important part of the advisers' work is to evaluate their practice for its impact on students, and how this practice can be improved. They engage in ongoing research and disseminate the findings to the wider national and international student-support community through attendance and participation at conferences, including Student Affairs Ireland (SAI; formally the Confederation of Student Services in Ireland (CSSI)), European First Year Experience (EFYE), Association of Managers of Student Services in Higher Education (AMOSSHE), and the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA).

This year, over 300 delegates from around the world attended the NACADA International Conference hosted in UCD by UCD student advisers. NACADA is a global community for academic advising based at Kansas State University. Topics covered included student academic support, student retention, supporting under-represented students in higher education, using peer supports, and first-year student seminars.

Finally, a monthly 'Lunch and Learn' event brings the student advisers together to share and discuss relevant information, best practice, and research.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE UCD STUDENT ADVISORY SERVICE

The central and unique importance of the Service has long been recognised by UCD students, faculty, and staff. UCD president Professor Andrew Deeks and UCD registrar Professor Mark Rogers have committed to continued growth of the Service over the next three years, in parallel with increased investment in the UCD counselling service. This will help ensure the Service remains relevant and flexible in the face of students' changing and complex needs, increasing student numbers, the growing diversity of the student body, and the continued societal challenges that face the student community at UCD.

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