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ISPC



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Professor Paul McSweeney, VP Learning and Teaching

## WELCOME

Welcome to the winter edition of the OVPLT newsletter. As always, it's been a busy few months for all of the units and centres within the OVPLT, which provide for an interesting read.

This edition rounds up events and news from our six units, the Centre for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning, the Centre for Continuing Professional Development, the Centre for Digital Education, the Exam Appeals Unit, the Language Centre and Adult Continuing Education.

I am also delighted to announce that the Skills Centre now joins OVPLT. The Skills Centre has made a wonderful start and is now well recognised across campus as a very valuable resource supporting our students' learning. Under the leadership of Kathy Bradley, I am sure it will make a great contribution to OVPLT and that it will thrive in its new home in the university's organisational structure.

In addition to the updates from our units, we are delighted to welcome new

staff members to the team. There is also a special profile piece on Dr Marian McCarthy, who recently retired as interim Vice President for Teaching and Learning, and an interview with Zoe Williams, new Director of the Language Centre.

In funding news, the OVPLT are to distribute 0.5 million in Learning and Teaching Enhancement Funding. The Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement Funding 2019 ('Developing Disciplinary Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment') is a joint initiative of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning and the HEA.

Many thanks to all who contributed to this issue. It couldn't be done without you.

We hope you enjoy our Newsletter, any feedback, queries or comments can be sent to Jacqui at: [j.churcher@ucc.ie](mailto:j.churcher@ucc.ie)

**Professor Paul McSweeney**  
Vice-President, Learning and Teaching

## News from the Centre for Continuing Professional Development



### Language Centre - CIRTL Summer School

The month of August started out very busy for the Centre for CPD, we were delighted once again to welcome and CPD certify over 50 visiting lectures and students to the annual Language Centre & CIRTL Summer School.

**Left:** Staff and Students with their Language Centre, CIRTL and Centre for CPD Certificates.



## Autumn CPD Activities

This Autumn saw number of new CPD activities taking place alongside the return of the always popular CPD1621 An Introduction to Clinical Pastoral Education for Healthcare Professionals. This course runs for 10 weeks, facilitated by Dr Daniel Nuzum.

[www.ucc.ie/en/cpd/options/medhealth/cpd1621/](http://www.ucc.ie/en/cpd/options/medhealth/cpd1621/)

The School of Applied Social Studies ran two workshops in early September, CPD1617 Practice Teacher Social Work, and CPD1721 Supporting Practice Teachers who manage placements that fail.

[www.ucc.ie/en/cpd/options/cacsss/appliedsocialstudies/cpd1617/](http://www.ucc.ie/en/cpd/options/cacsss/appliedsocialstudies/cpd1617/)

UCC'S ASSERT Centre ran a successful Anatomy of Complications workshop which was CPD Certificated on the 6th & 7th of September, with a further workshop at the end of the month on Fresh Cadaveric Surgical Training.



## New Team Member in CPD

Finally, the Centre for CPD has welcomed a new addition to the team; **Sarah Murphy Kearney** has joined us from the School of Nursing and Midwifery to work part-time and will be based with us on the first floor of the Library. We would like to Welcome Sarah to both the Centre for CPD and to the OVPLT Family.

## News from the Centre for Digital Education

### Canvas is Here!

Canvas has now replaced Blackboard as our institutional Virtual Learning Environment. We have come a long way from a Staff VLE survey in the summer of 2016, a six-month procurement process from the end of 2017, an Early Adopters release in January 2019, a formal Canvas launch on February 25th to where we are today – 7,571 Canvas courses with 31,099 student enrolments being delivered by 5,293 ‘staff’. We have delivered 98 training courses to over 892 different participants and presented at over 80 meetings across all four colleges. All of this has been achieved by close collaboration between the Centre for Digital Education and the Learning Technologies Unit in IT Services.

The decision to move to a world-class modern virtual learning environment is a direct result of staff feedback and allow UCC greater opportunity to share and publish content across disciplines in a richer, born-on-web, responsive, intuitive, accessible and more interactive platform. UCC staff and students have been provided with the tools to facilitate greater communication and collaboration, ultimately leading to more flexible delivery of academic content.

The Centre for Digital Education is excited by what lies ahead for UCC and Canvas. We are now open for individual consultations with all staff around the possibilities offered by educational technology. We invite you to book your session today and we look forward to helping you unlock the potential technology holds for your teaching and learning.

**Left:** Canvas information stand at the Boole.



## Digital Badges

Since 2016, through the Office of Vice President for Learning and Teaching, UCC has been engaged locally, regionally and nationally in designing, developing and delivering innovative digital badge pilot projects. The demand for digital badges within the University has increased year on year with 46 unique badges issued to date and 1220 earners in receipt of these. Several new applications are under consideration.

On April 16th, FITU in collaboration with Taste 4 Success Skillnet launched a new report focused on the potential of digital badges for the Irish food and agri-food sectors. This report was the first of its kind in Ireland to evaluate the use of digital badges in an enterprise context within the food and agri-food sector.

As part of this study, UCC awarded digital badges to two programmes for the agri-food sector in Food Processing Engineering and Artisan Food Marketing. 53 trainees from 47 Artisan/Micro/SMEs within the agri-food sector were successfully awarded digital badges for these programmes. During the official launch UCC staff, alumni, industry representatives heard how digital badges offered new and exciting opportunities in the context of learning and development. The research concluded that focus is needed on increasing awareness around the concept of digital badges. Key areas of potential identified were supporting continued professional development, providing alternate pathways to learning and assisting HR managers with recruitment.



## ASSET – Erasmus+ Project

As part of an ASSET Erasmus+ Project, CITRL in conjunction with the CDE team recently travelled to Tbilisi Georgia, to investigate the use of Open Digital Badges as a new means of assessment in the form of granular micro-credentials.

The ASSET Erasmus+ Project aims to use best practices of Formative Assessment tools and methods to evaluate students' life-long learning skills in student-centred learning environments and to adjust teaching to better meet student's learning needs. Over the course of the next six months, the project partners will pilot the use of Open Digital Badges in their institutions to determine whether the tool is viable as a means of formative assessment. If successful, the partners will formalise the use of Open Digital Badges.

**Above:** CDE team with colleagues in Tbilisi.



## Coffee Morning in aid of the ISPCCC

The CDE team in collaboration with the Boole Library staff held a coffee morning in aid of the ISPCCC on August 23rd. A total of €250 was raised for the charity. Thanks to all those involved!

**Above:** Moya Revins, Sophie Gahan, Tom O'Mara and Ríanna Peck of CDE.

## National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning

The CDE continues to support two National Forum projects - *Disciplines Inquiring into Societal Challenges (DISCs): Enhancing Teaching and Learning for Active Citizenship and A Profile of Skills for Teachers of Language in Higher Education.*



## IUA – Enhancing Digital Teaching and Learning

Tom O'Mara, Head of Digital Education represents UCC on the IUA project *Enabling Change: Enhancing Digital Teaching and Learning in Irish Universities*, funded under the HEA's HEA Innovation and Transformation Call 2018.

This project has two overall objectives:

- To enhance the digital attributes of all Irish university graduates.
- To enhance the educational experiences of all Irish university students through the mainstreamed and integrated use of digital technologies, including social media where appropriate, as part of the teaching and learning process.

In order to achieve these two objectives, a third objective is also necessary:

- To enhance the digital skills of those who teach in Irish universities.

Building on the work already undertaken at national and institutional levels, this project will develop and implement the following:

- Develop a Digital Teaching and Learning staff development programme to enhance the knowledge, skills, competences and confidence of academic staff in using available and suitable technologies, including social media where appropriate, and devices to deliver the project's objectives.

- Pilot and review this programme across a selected range of disciplines.
- Develop, pilot and review a train the trainers programme to ensure a significant multiplier, sustaining and mainstreaming effect.
- Roll out of the train the trainers programme across all university campuses.
- Roll out of the Digital Teaching and Learning staff development programme across all universities.
- Ongoing support for the adoption of digital initiatives across the Irish university sector, through the provision of support to staff for initiatives that use digital technology in new and innovative ways.

The project seeks to empower academic staff to become the drivers and key enablers of change themselves, by equipping them with the digital skills, competences and confidence to effect the transformation of teaching and learning in Irish universities, and to deliver

The project runs to the end of 2022 and is now entering a pilot phase. The project will deliver pilot training projects to the Departments of German, Italian, Drama and Theatre Studies and the School of Nursing and Midwifery before the end of 2019. All training will be linked to the European Union's DigCompEdu framework.



## Irish National Digital Experience Survey

The Irish National Digital Experience (INDEX) Survey provides a means of investigating the digital experience, engagement and expectations of students and those who teach across the Irish higher education sector. The Head of Digital Education represents UCC on the Steering Group and is the local co-ordinator.

The INDEX survey will be coordinated nationally by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. As of 20th June 2019, twenty-seven higher education institutions in Ireland have indicated their intention to conduct the survey during October-November 2019.

The INDEX Survey will enable higher education institutions and the National Forum to:

- understand more about students' digital experiences and create opportunities for meaningful collaborative engagement;

- explore the perspectives of those who teach on the institutional digital environment and use of technology for teaching, learning and assessment;
- identify and highlight what makes a difference to both students and those who teach with respect to digital infrastructure, digital skills, digital tools and digital literacies;
- gather current empirical evidence upon which strategic decisions about digital interventions and investments can be based, as part of the process of building digital capacity; and
- enable international benchmarking with other countries that have completed a similar survey (i.e., UK, Australia, New Zealand).

In UCC, the INDEX Survey ran from November 11th to December 1st, 2019.



## News from the Centre for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning



### OVPLT to distribute €0.5 million in Learning and Teaching Enhancement Funding

The Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement Funding 2019 (“Developing Disciplinary Excellence in Learning, Teaching & Assessment”) is a joint initiative of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning and the HEA. The funding aims to enable the development of a strong foundation for future enhancement of learning and teaching within Irish HEIs in line with local priorities. Through a competitive internal application process in UCC, 26 initiatives were nominated to the National Forum for funding based on their potential for significant and sustainable impact on student learning. The call has been administered in UCC by the OVPLT through the Centre for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning (CIRTL).

### CIRTL successful in Erasmus+ Capacity Building and Strategic Partnership initiatives

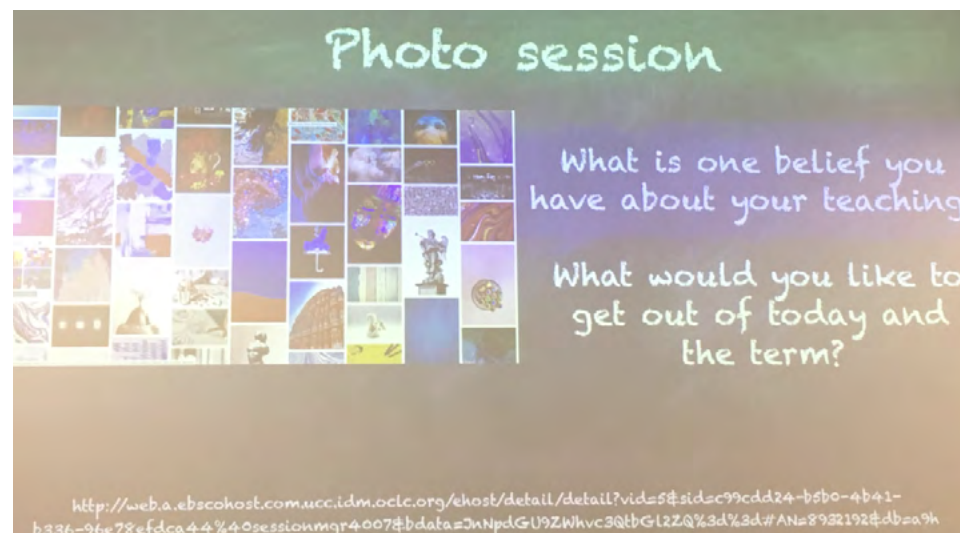
UCC was one of five universities to share in nearly €7m of European funding under the Erasmus+ Programme Key Action 2 Capacity Building in Higher Education. CIRTL will partner on the QuarSU project funded under this initiative. QuarSU will investigate best European practices in recognition of educational and professional qualifications and learning outcomes at Ukrainian universities.

CIRTL is also a partner on the “UNI-CO-leaRN: University-Community-Learning” project, funded under the Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education initiative. UNI-CO-leaRN will design and test a new mobility scheme for HE students that combines international mobility with a service-learning experience in the community.



# CIRTL host 'Spark Your Teaching' introductory event for Postgraduate Teachers

CIRTL hosted a one-day workshop for postgraduate teachers on the 5th September 2019. The day provided postgraduate students who teach with the opportunity to engage with some theoretical and practical learning before teaching began. The workshop also highlighted the significant role postgraduate students play in the learning and teaching environment of UCC, contributing to and supporting our mission of delivering an outstanding learning and teaching experience for all students. Attendees also participated in a workshop focused on appropriate responses to students in distress, hosted by Marian Browne, Student Health and Counselling.



**Above:** James Cronin opens the Spark Your Teaching event.



## New Staff member for CIRTL

CIRTL is delighted to welcome its new Executive Assistant, **Claire Devaney**. Originally from Mayo, Claire has been in Cork for 5 years. Claire was formerly Assistant Director of Studies at Cork English Academy on Hanover street following several years working as an English language teacher. Claire's primary degree is in English Language, Literature and Culture from NUI Galway and she completed a MA in Writing also at NUI Galway. She brings a wide array and great depth of experience to her role in CIRTL.



## Transforming Assessment Practices in Large Enrolment First Year Education

As part of their work on the TAP (Transforming Assessment Practices in Large Enrolment First Year Education) Erasmus+ Capacity Building Project, CIRTL were delighted to welcome a delegation of senior management representatives from several Palestinian universities and the Accreditation & Quality Committee to UCC in May 2019. The purpose of the visit was to share relevant UCC policies and practices related to learning, teaching, and assessment. The experience gained during this visit served as a catalyst for the creation of a Guideline Policy Document, which will guide and assist academic staff in assessing student learning in Palestine. The Guideline Policy Document was presented to the Minister for Higher Education and Scientific Research during the final dissemination workshop in Birzeit University on September 7th 2019. 150 university administrators, university teachers, university students from Palestinian universities in Gaza and the West Bank attended the workshop. Dr Marian McCarthy gave the keynote speech at this event on using new assessment for/as learning paradigms to empower learners and coach them to become independent, self-regulated learners.



**Above:** Colleagues from Palestinian HEIs and TAP consortium members meet with Professor Patrick O’Shea during their visit to UCC in May 2019.

**Left:** Guidelines Policy Document presented to the Minister for Higher Education in Palestine, September 2019.

## Building a Connected Curriculum – Curriculum Design Through Story Boarding



**Above:** CIRTl staff and colleagues from Humboldt University.

UCC's Connected Curriculum framework challenges us to re-examine our courses and programmes and to explore how we might forge connections with areas such as employability, civic engagement, sustainability. In these resource/time constrained times how can we design courses effectively and efficiently and help our time-pressured academics to do the same? The Learning Design workshop hosted by CIRTl on September 18th provides an answer. Developed by Clive Young and Natasa Perovic at UCL this highly interactive, 90 minute workshop engages participants in creating a visual story-board to map existing module design. The UCC participants were then prompted to consider how to align with UCC's Academic

Strategy and Connected Curriculum. Participants included representatives from administrative and academic staff across the University, and the session was facilitated by Clive Young, UCL, Briony Supple and Catherine O'Mahony, UCC. A further 'train-the-trainers' event was held in the afternoon of September 18th to support key staff across the University to roll out this approach. Furthermore, a cross-University team has been successful in a National Forum grant to support this roll out in the coming year building on the success of this inaugural workshop.

For more information on the story board approach see:

<https://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/abc-ld/>

## Staff Development in Research-Based Learning

CIRTl welcomed four members of the Bologna Lab in Humboldt University from September 17-19th as part of an Erasmus funded trip. The group, Kathrin Friederici, Laura Schilow, Tina Talman, and Wolfgang Deicke, organised a series of staff development activities in Humboldt University in support of research-based learning. While in UCC they participated in a curriculum design workshop and ran a session on supporting staff to embed research-based learning in their programmes. The resources shared by the Humboldt team will be converted into an open educational resource for staff to be hosted on the CIRTl resources page.

For more information on the Bologna lab visit: <https://bolognalab.hu-berlin.de/en>

## News from Adult Continuing Education

### ACE Certificate in Leadership in the Community welcomes 27 Traveller Women to UCC



**Above:** Group starting Leadership in the Community Certificate.

On Wednesday the 4th of September UCC welcomed 27 traveller women onto an ACE Certificate in Leadership in the Community. This is a one-year Level 6 part-time ACE programme which is anchored in Applied Social Studies. This cohort of traveller women come from all around Cork and North Kerry. They will travel every Tuesday and Wednesday to attend their classes.

This ground-breaking development is as a result of a partnership and collaboration with the Southern Traveller Health Network (STNH), with Access & Participation in UCC and with the SOAR Project, which is an Inter Institutional and Community Collaboration on Access to Higher Education. This is an excellent example of successful partnership across UCC departments with external partners and stakeholders.

On their first day to UCC this group of traveller women received a very warm welcome to UCC with talks from Dr Séamus Ó Tuama, Director at ACE, Anne Burke, STNH, Olive Byrne, Head of Access & Participation & Clíodhna O'Callaghan, Adult & Community Education Officer. The warm welcome was enhanced when President, Professor Patrick O'Shea, and Deputy President & Registrar, Professor John O'Halloran, were on hand to meet the group and wholeheartedly welcomed the group to UCC.



## ACE Sanctuary Scholarship Scheme welcomes 20 Sanctuary Scholars

ACE is delighted to welcome 20 Sanctuary Scholars to UCC this September 2019. These learners will be studying a wide variety of programmes, for example, Certificate in Health & Safety, Diploma in Social & Psychological Health, Certificate in Management Practice, MSc in Personal & Management Coaching, and Postgraduate Diploma in Trauma Studies. All these Sanctuary Scholars met the entry criteria for these programmes and are excited to commence their studies with ACE at UCC.

There is a fee waiver for these learners as well as support from the Language Centre in UCC. ACE is currently working on further resources for these Sanctuary Scholars and will arrange for an official launch of this scholarship scheme, alongside a short course on General Studies open to all, warmly welcoming our scholars to UCC in late October. Further details to follow.

## Tbilisi

The work of ACE Director Séamus Ó Tuama played a central part in the concert *A Human Race - 9 Vocal Sagas* which was staged at Tbilisi State Conservatoire in September.

*A Human Race - 9 Vocal Sagas* was presented as part of the Georgian International Festival of Science and Innovations 2019, which was organized by Ministry of Education Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia.

Georgian composer Tamar Putkaradze together with Georgian musicologist Nana Katsia, set out to create a new genre in classical music which they term as Vocal Sagas. The composition adopts an unique vocal genre based based around nine of Séamus Ó Tuama's poems.

It was performed by the composer Tamar Putkaradze in collaboration with pianist and vocalist Shio Abrakhamia. The central theme of the composition based on nine different narratives on love, life, men and women and the entire human race drawn from the poems: Summer Morning; Mysterious Rose; Coffee with Spoons of Love; House on the Ledge; God's Time is the Best; Drain; The Little Man ; Suantraí and A Human Race.

The composer adopted a range of compositional language such as aleatoric, undetermined score, allusion, genre of French motet, visual and verbal polyphony, sound and video recording, as well as artistic performances during the composition.

## Certificate in Practice Support in Social Farming



Adult Continuing Education (ACE) is delighted to now offer this new and innovative Certificate in Practice Support in Social Farming in Kerry as part of our Skellig Centre for Research and Innovation project (Partners: UCC, Kerry County Council and South Kerry Development Partnership). Kerry Social Farming is an incredible project in which people with a disability spend time every week in a farm/horticultural setting. This initiative is a locally-led, community-based voluntary scheme providing farming and social inclusion opportunities to people with a disability. The first cohort of ACE students are learning about the nature, extent and range of settings in which social farming

initiatives are being undertaken within Ireland and in the broader European setting. Students are also gaining coaching, mentoring and communication skills relating to working with people with a disability, the role of the environment in assisting in health and well-being and the legislation and policy surrounding disability in Ireland. Practical experience of these skills through application on a social farm and through highlighting how disability is understood in our society was experienced on a recent fieldtrip to Field of Dreams in Cork, the students investigated how this model compares to the Kerry Social Farming model (picture above) followed by a class in UCC.





## News from The Language Centre

### New Director

The University Language Centre has recently appointed a new Director, **Zoe Williams**, an academic manager and English language teacher from Britain. Zoe has worked in education for almost three decades, both in the public and private sector in the UK and in other countries. Her most recent position was at the helm of the sector-leading English Language Centre at New College Durham, a college of further and higher education.

Zoe took up post at the start of June, and since then has been getting to know the centre, its people and its operations. The Language Centre is located in the O’Rahilly Building on the main campus.

#### Why did you come to Cork?

I had been visiting Cork regularly for the best part of a year as my husband worked here and I really liked the attitude and confidence of the city. I think Cork is similar to home – Durham is in the north east of England and the region has a comparable sense of itself as being in no one’s shadow – as being a rival, not a subordinate to the capital city!

#### What did you know about UCC before you came?

I spent a long time peering in to UCC and the Language Centre before I decided to apply for the job. I like the unguarded nature of the information you can find on social media, and I am very interested in how the values of an organisation are expressed by its community. I obviously liked what I saw – there was an authenticity about the posts and a genuine and questioning relationship with the institution. I thought that this was a place that I would like to come to as a student.

#### What do you think of it now you’re here?

I love it! The Language Centre has made me very welcome and I can see enormous potential here. The team is very experienced, people are mutually supportive, and everyone has a personal investment in the unit. We have the ingredients for a real success story for the university, we just need to build a strategy and put resources where they can best work for us. What I like is the cooperation between the admin team and the academic side. I have never worked in a place where everyone is so versatile – the admin team understand what happens within the classrooms very well, and the teachers contribute to business and marketing planning. We are all really ambitious for the centre.

I understand that over the years, the LC has sat in various areas of the University (something really quite common in my experience). We have now found a happy home in the OVPLT.

The approach of the office is highly collegiate and there are a number of synergies emerging between the different teams which should prove fruitful in the future.

#### Do you speak a number of different languages?

No, in fact I am quite a poor language learner myself! It is a common misconception that all English language teachers are polyglots. We teach solely in the target language and we employ methods and approaches which support even the lowest levels of learners to survive in an immersive English experience. I realise that our name can be a bit confusing in that respect and we are looking to rebrand in the near future. One quick fix we have made already is to amend our Irish name on the website, so it is now ‘language’ singular and not ‘languages’ plural (from Lárionad na d’Teangacha to Lárionad Teanga!).

#### What are your plans for the centre?

Our mission is to provide ‘**pathways through English**’ (our new tag line for the Centre). We plan to develop twofold – firstly, to step more purposefully into our function at the heart of an international university – to support Goals One and Three of the University strategy, contributing to the recruitment package for international students and also supporting the internationalisation of the campus in general. The second target is to attract more overseas and resident students to our range of general and specialist English language, academic skills development and teacher development courses. I also want us to contribute expertise to our network of university English teaching practitioners nationally and internationally, working in a field which intersects applied linguistics, second language acquisition, language teaching pedagogy and academic literacy development.

## In LC News...



- Brendan Ó Sé, Head of Teacher Training: Our Teacher Development Centre recently launched a teacher refresher course which attracted experienced teachers and lecturers from all over Europe who came to upskill, share their own experience with their fellow practitioners and learn of the latest methodologies and innovations in language teaching. The programme ran over two weeks and covered areas such as language analysis, materials development, approaches to maximising student involvement, integrating technology into a modern teaching and learning context and ways to empower learner autonomy. Participants also had the opportunity to observe real-time English language lessons in the Language Centre. Nadia Butt from the University of Glessen, Germany said: *“I enjoyed all the sessions. It was pleasure to listen to the teachers and exchange ideas in a stimulating classroom environment. I would definitely recommend the course to colleagues.”*

**Above:** Participants on the Teacher Refresher Course.



- Kerry Platts and Julie Butters in August, preparing incoming international students for study at UCC with a pre-session course designed to introduce students to academic life in Ireland and to improve their ability in academic English language skills. The Language Centre is currently in the process of expanding its existing Pre-Sessional course offer and introducing longer formats from June 2020. Some of these programmes will be designed to link with conditional offers which are related to English language levels and will enable students to increase their IELTS levels by the requisite amounts. Further, the courses will provide students with the skills needed to succeed in their UG and PG studies at UCC. Course content will include areas such as developing critical thinking skills, writing coherently, improving active listening skills and giving effective presentations. Assessment of these courses will be both continuous and summative.

**Above:** Students on the pre-sessional course with their certificates.

- Sally Orren, Acting Director of Studies, developed a new induction programme called 'Fresher Start' this year for full-time intensive English language students in the LC. Timed to coincide with 'Faité Fest' and 'Freshers' Fayre', the intention was to encourage and support our LC students to embed more deeply into university life, and to prepare for studying a 'connected curriculum'. For those students enrolled on our 'academic track', this was a particularly important first introduction to the life of a first-year student and we hope will have confirmed for them their ambition to progress onto UG and PG programmes at UCC after completing their studies with us.



- Aoife Ní Mhurchú, Summer School Director of Studies, ran another highly successful 10-week International English Language Summer School this year. Attracting students from 20 countries across the globe, the programme included an active social programme, excursions to picturesque, cultural and historical locations in southern Ireland, and included guest lectures by experts in subject areas as diverse as Irish Food, Myths & Legends and Accents of English.

**Above:** Kerry Just with Summer School students.



- A summer school group of PhD students from Guilin University of Technology, who were taught academic English skills by the LC's Sanaa Khabbar.

**Above:** Summer School students from Guilin University of Technology.

- Inspired by the ideas of colleagues in ACE, the LC will launch its own Sanctuary Scholarships for 2019/20. The scholarships will cover tuition fees for the full time intensive English course, which enables students to prepare via an academic track for entry to UG or PG courses, and a general track for using English for professional and vocational life. The first scholarships will be offered from January 2020 with an application deadline set for November 2019. Details of this and other scholarship opportunities will be published soon.



- Brendan McEnery pictured here speaking to incoming Erasmus students 2019-20 about the supports offered by the LC. 451 UCC registered students attended a variety of credit and non-credit courses in the LC in 2018-19, with demand for places on courses growing year on year.

## CELEBRATING LENGTH OF SERVICE

On Friday 4th October, our Centre Administrator/Head of Marketing, Vivienne Lordan celebrated 25 years of service to the University Language Centre. Her colleagues celebrated this milestone by surprising her with gifts and a card filled with messages of thanks: these referred to Vivienne's hard work, competence, supportive management style, kindness, personal warmth and wicked sense of humour. Vivienne responded by saying, "It's been a fantastic journey thus far, never dull that is for sure, forever changing and developing. I am excited to be part of this new chapter for the Centre, to see it reinvigorated and staff rising to the

challenges that have been laid down over the last few months and to already see the fruits of everyone's labour begin to unfold this term. I very much look forward to seeing what the future holds for the Centre and to continue to push the boundaries and explore the many opportunities that lie ahead for us. The Centre, its potential, and the pool of resources that we have within our 'family' never ceases to amaze." Vivienne is the longest serving member of staff in the Centre and initially took up post to assist the then (also new to UCC) Director with the setting up of the Centre within UCC, just one day after it was officially established in 1994.



**Above:** Vivienne Lordan celebrating with colleagues.

## Welcome to the Skills Centre



**Left:** Kathy Bradley, Skills Centre Co-ordinator and team with Professor Paul McSweeney.

OVPLT is delighted to welcome the Skills Centre. The Skills Centre is a dedicated, active learning space that helps students improve their academic communication, so they can independently discover their own needs and improve their academic work and assessment outcomes, with confidence. Utilising an interactive, student-centred approach that engages collaborative learning and skills development, the Skills Centre team provide a

confidential and non-judgmental space for students so they can work towards scholastic improvement in a comfortable environment. The 2019/20 academic year is the third year of operation for the Centre which has gone from strength to strength.

The UCC Skills Centre is committed to excellence in learning and teaching. Dedication to exceptional customer service

and engagement makes the Centre more approachable to students and ensures that they are always made feel welcome and comfortable. Their curriculum design is based on a constructivist model of learning that is underpinned by a core set of tutorials to enhance written and verbal communication. Benefiting from a unique collaboration between a wide range of stakeholders across the University, the Skills Centre team facilitates the learning of a diverse, heterogeneous group of students who self-select to attend, seeking guidance through a myriad of personal and academic challenges. We are looking forward to further enhancing collaborations across the university, drawing on expertise across a wide range of disciplines to continue to create excellent resources for our students.

## Awards



**Left:** Dr Bettie Higgs receiving the Joanna Renc-Roe Award.

Congratulations to Former Acting VP for T&L; Dr Bettie Higgs and colleagues in School of BEES who won a prestigious award at this year's European Conference of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in June. The Joanna Renc-Roe Award is presented during each EuroSoTL conference to the contribution which distinguishes itself for pushing the boundaries of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). Scholarship of Teaching and learning is a growing movement. It is growing geographically, conceptually and methodologically, because of people contributing to the SoTL community. This year's EuroSoTL conference was held at the University of the Basque Country/Eusakal Herriko Unibersitatea. The Award was presented for a project entitled '*Enhancing student engagement through interdisciplinary, international field-based research that tackles global issues*'. Awardees were Dr Bettie Higgs; Dr Fidelma Butler; Professor Gavin Burnell; Mr Allen Whitaker; Dr Ruth O'Riordan, School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences.



Congratulations to Mary O'Rourke, Office of the VP for Learning and Teaching who was recently presented with an outstanding colleague award and also received the Frank McGrath Perpetual Award for Equality and Welfare award along with the UCC LGBT+ Staff Network Committee. The UCC Staff Awards ceremony took place on the 10th October in the Aula Maxima. The night celebrates the contributions and achievements of the staff within three categories; Staff Recognition Awards, Teaching Excellence Awards and Research Awards.

**Above left:** Mary O'Rourke with Professor John O'Halloran.

**Above right (l-r):** Professor John O'Halloran; Colleen Minihane; Diarmuid Scully; Mary O'Rourke, Laurence Davis; President Patrick O'Shea; Cathal Kerrigan; Fiachra Ó Súilleabháin; Joan McCarthy.



Professor Paul McSweeney; President Patrick O'Shea; Marian McCarthy.

Congratulations to **Dr Marian McCarthy**, former Interim VP for Teaching and Learning, who received the award for Lifetime Contribution for Teaching Excellence. Marian couldn't be at the ceremony as she was away at a conference but made a video call in to accept the award.

Marian retired in December 2018 but remains very active in various roles. In September, Marian kindly recorded an interview with Jacqui Churcher, Office of the VP Learning and Teaching. An extract of the interview follows. In her own words, Marian tells the story of her journey in Learning and Teaching.

### **TELL ME ABOUT THE STORY OF CIRTL AND HOW IT EMERGED AND EVOLVED?**

...I also remember occasions down at the Glucksman Gallery, a marvellous learning site, and bringing staff there, out of their comfort zone, inviting them to explore a painting they had never seen before. This was a rich, if

disconcerting, experience for many of them because it would draw them back into being students again; they were not sure what to say, nor what to think, nor how to stand, nor how to be comfortable with other people in this new setting. Many claimed that this had a knock on effect on helping them to empathise with their own students. Participants also learned much about appreciating Art and the role of the arts in education. I remember some great learning moments and group interactions: Dr Kevin McCarthy from the School of Engineering, for example, having a discussion with Prof Tony Ryan, who was then Professor of Paediatrics. I can still see them standing in front of a painting of a bridge, and, of course, Kevin as the engineer was much more interested in the span of the bridge and the technicalities of the bridge and Tony was more interested in the aesthetics of it and in what bridges do for us! It was fascinating, listening to them. It was also a good example of integrative learning as both brought new perspectives to understanding the bridge and to creating a new conception of and appreciation of it.

I think that part of the secret of the success of these sessions and the accredited programme related to UCC's culture of teaching and learning which developed gradually over time. As indicated earlier, UCC had the first Teaching Development Unit in the country in the 1980s and UCC's motto, 'Where Finbarr

Taught, Let Munster Learn', is, therefore, in our DNA, capturing the dynamic relationship between teaching and learning. I would go so far as to say that, as a result, we have an innate interest in Teaching and Learning at UCC and staff came to our seminars, even when there was no accredited course, because they wanted to develop their teaching and their students' learning. From 2004 onwards, with the development of the accredited programme, colleagues came for 6 lunchtime sessions of 2 hours duration and three Saturday sessions of 4 hours duration per term/semester, in order to complete each module, and to learn to document and develop their teaching. To be honest, those Saturday morning sessions were the jewel in the crown. We had time to think and talk and enjoy the stories of our teaching at the end of a busy week - UCC is a very different place on a Saturday! Our current Vice President for Learning and Teaching, Prof Paul McSweeney, who took the Postgraduate Certificate in those early days, would say that there was nothing quite like the interaction and liveliness of those Saturday face- to -face sessions.

However, as demands on colleagues' time grew and financial cutbacks impacted teaching and research workloads, we had to adapt. It was also the case that we could not have sustained the pace into the future with such few CIRTL staff. I became conscious that for sustainability



and flexibility I would have to make changes. I decided to put the Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma courses fully on-line, which was a mammoth task over three years. If I had only known what I was letting myself in for! I ended up working regularly about 14 hours a day and through three summers-since the courses continued to run face to face while I was re-designing and CIRTLL was also a busy place with other demands on my time. I think I took about three days holidays over those summers, but it just had to be done and it is now well worth it. I was very lucky to get the last of the IGOG funding, which supported income generating and new programmes, and to be able to draw on the support of TEL (our Technology Enhanced Learning Unit) which came on board in the form of a great instructional designer, Claire Fennell, who gave me every support. I must also mention the inspiration and encouragement of Patrick Kiely, who urged me to go online in the first place and with whom I had worked closely in CIRTLL before he joined TEL. It is also important to acknowledge my CIRTLL Fellows who took a leap of faith at this

time and supported the migration to the new programme. I was also reliant on the endless support and good will of Mary Clohessy, our wonderful EA, who recently retired herself. Mary was constantly urging caution and breaks – though I paid little heed- but was most grateful for her concern and practical help. Like Nuala, Mary was the backbone of the accredited programme, liaising with staff and encouraging and following up with them.

The process of creating an online version of the programme was like writing a book. I used the opportunity to share all I wanted to say theoretically and to provide resources I felt would be foundational and sustain staff into the future. I also included all assessments and rubrics we had already devised and extended these to include Discussion Forums and new pedagogies that opened up to us through new technologies. And I thoroughly enjoyed making introductory videos, first in the Audio- Visual Centre and later in the Recording Studio in the Boole Library. What's wonderful now is that there is a comprehensive archive that can be used, adapted, edited or updated by Briony and James, as the new coordinators of the programme, and by the rest of the team, as they see fit. It's also exciting to see the way technology has taken the course to another level for the design team and for our staff. The great advantage now is the flexibility of the programme - one could be doing this course in the middle of the night, if that suited! However, looking to the future, I think that a blended approach overall would be best and more

achievable on Canvas. It will be possible to incorporate a number of face -to -face sessions that can be accessible and recorded for all participants. Despite the great advantages of technology, there is nothing quite like the real presence and being in that Council room all together experiencing the cut and thrust of robust discussion and learning with peers!

To read the full story click this link:

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

## Other News

### Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

James Cronin from CIRTLL introduces a new series of youtube videos; 'one minute SoTL' in which he reduces big ideas in SoTL into one-minute videos for the benefit of the wider community. The first video is on 'active learning' and can be viewed [HERE](#)

### Technology Enhanced Learning

Byte-size training & TEL Practical sessions for staff around the application of technology to education will run throughout the year. More information is available [HERE](#)