



## Transitions: Lifelong Learning and Higher Education

# Conference Programme

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**Date:**

**Friday 7 December 2018**

**Time:**

**08.30 to 15.30**

**Venue:**

**Maynooth University, Renehan Hall,  
St Patrick's Pontifical College**



Time & Venue	Event
8.30 - 9.20 Pugin Hall	Registration Tea/Coffee
9.30 Renehan Hall	<p><b>Opening address</b></p> <p>Professor Philip Nolan, President, Maynooth University</p>
9.45 Renehan Hall	<p><b>Keynote address</b></p> <p>Professor John Holford, Robert Peers Chair in Adult Education, University of Nottingham</p> <p><b><i>Wider lives need wider education: lifelong education for 21st century citizens</i></b></p> <p>As the 21st century advances, so does the grip artificial intelligence has on our lives. Google, Facebook and Amazon often seem to know what we want better than we do ourselves. We demand – and consume – apps, games and other digital devices by the billion. Offices and people are reorganised or removed to suit the latest software. Robots, having taken over millions of blue-collar jobs, are now – so we are told – poised to pounce on professions. Social media connects us in new ways – yet many say they facilitate ill-tempered and strident exchanges.</p> <p>What kind of education will we need in the century ahead? AI brings new ways of finding out about ourselves, our cultures, our environment. It promises us leisure to learn for learning’s sake. Yet to many policy-makers it seems to call for narrowness in what we teach and learn: workplace skills rather than curiosity-driven learning for life as a whole. This is Philistine. It is self-defeating. And it casts aside a century and more democratic adult educational practice and tradition. Uncertain futures and complex societies call on us – as citizens – both to understand more deeply and to deliberate more calmly and collectively. We need a rich education that is not only lifelong but lifewide.</p>
10.40	Q&A
11.00 Pugin Hall	Break: Tea/Coffee
11.30 – 13.00 Loftus Hall 1	<p><b>Parallel Session 1 <i>Lifelong Learning and Higher Education (Policy and Practice)</i></b></p> <p>Dr Rory O’Sullivan, Principal, Killester College-Chair of the FE 2 HE Network.</p> <p><b><i>From FET2HE - Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning</i></b></p> <p>The transition from further education and training to higher education has been the focus of increasing attention within the policy landscape within recent years. Within the agenda of widening participation in higher education as well as facilitating the legitimate ambitions of FET students to continue their studies in higher education, national targets have been set for both FET and Higher Education Institutions in this regard. This presentation will outline the key issues within this debate and in particular outline the work of the FET2HE Project which involves four higher education institutions and eight Education and Training Boards. The presentation will conclude with a proposal for a way forward.</p> <p>Wendy Fowles-Sweet – University of the West of England</p> <p><b><i>Professional Sustainability: A lifelong career framework</i></b></p> <p>With over twenty years’ experience of providing CPD courses in Engineering, Wendy Fowles-Sweet and her colleagues Paul Head and Dr Robert Sheffield recognised that individuals wanted to take control of their professionalism by underpinning career planning with academic learning. In 2012, they developed a Masters module focusing on Professional Development: How to appraise and review the progress required and achieved throughout a career. The module concentrated on encouraging and</p>

supporting assessment for learning rather than teaching. Initially, this was undertaken as a work-based learning activity, but students found the process isolating and requested contact time, which was reintroduced in 2016/2017. However, students are not “taught” to develop their own careers; rather their independent learning is facilitated via workshops to enable them to develop their own conclusions. Two cohorts have now completed the revised module, and have found the process an opportunity to take “time out” of their roles, and reflect on their personal strengths and career implications as part of their wider Masters level learning. Students have embraced the challenge and have been very complimentary in their feedback. Employers and academe recognise this mode of learning as a professional sustainability framework for individuals and their organisations to plan and develop careers resulting in better focus for individuals, awareness and appreciation of the changing nature of careers, the relevance of lifelong learning and the opportunity to learn independently with structured support and facilitation.

Deirdre Goggin – Cork Institute of Technology

***RPL and lifelong learning in higher education***

This contribution will explore Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and lifelong learning in Higher Education in Ireland. The contribution will be based on the integrated approach adopted by Cork Institute of Technology. It will detail how RPL enables the institution to respond to the diverse needs of learners and external organisations. In building a sustainable institutional model for lifelong learning, academic policy and planning as well as staff capacity and capability must be considered. The contribution will also exemplify how RPL can be incorporated into the development of flexible and agile responses to skill shortages and the needs of industry.

**Facilitator: Michael Kenny**

11.30 – 13.00 Renehan Hall

**Parallel Session 2 *Experiences of Diverse Learners***

Professor Sabina Brennan - ADAPT Centre, Trinity College Dublin

***Learning and Living for Brain Health***

There are close to 50 million people living with dementia in the world today. That figure is set to double every 20 years reaching 74.7 million by 2030 and 131.5 million by 2050. These prevalence predictions and the absence of a cure make prevention imperative. After age, low educational attainment is the biggest risk factor for dementia in later life. Lifelong learning results in a range of positive outcomes including: improvement to quality of life and well-being, an overall increase in mental activity, acquisition of new skills and reduced risk of social isolation which, in turn, is associated with cognitive decline and increased risk of morbidity and mortality. Lifelong learning also benefits brain health, reducing dementia risk and increasing chances of living independently in later life. Education is the most broadly and consistently successful cognitive enhancer, better even than drugs or sophisticated technology. The brain is plastic, this means that it has the ability to change throughout life. It can reorganise itself by forming new connections between neurons. Neuroplasticity is the capacity of the brain to change with learning. Neuroplasticity occurs at the beginning of life, in response to brain injury and any time something new is learned.

Dr Patricia Doyle – Maynooth University

***Recovery Colleges: Atypical Students need Atypical Education and Vice Versa***

Both the addiction and mental health systems of care have much in common, not least of which is that historically, they both share a dark past which involved those living with either/or both disorders expected to “end up in the least favourable places in society, the gutter, prisons, asylums or morgues”. (Gagne et al, 2017)

On the contrary, it is currently being recognised that people can and do recover. Indeed, it is increasingly being recognised that people in recovery from mental illness and/or addiction disorders, are leading the call to change the current service systems of care to those that are recovery-oriented. This change is being driven by the demands of service user/survivor activists (McDaid, 2013). The Recovery College is an initiative designed to re-orientate services away from a traditional therapeutic approach towards an education-focused mode of service provision. The courses in these colleges are co-produced and co-delivered by those with personal and/or professional experience of addiction /mental health issues. In this presentation, it will be argued that the form of learning that is required for recovery and that informs the curriculum in Recovery Colleges, is the same form of learning that has as its aim, both personal and social justice.

Dr Amin Sharifi Isaloo – University College Cork

***Liminality of refugees and barriers in the Irish higher education system***

Through using the autoethnography research method and applying the concept of liminality, this paper will conduct an anthropological and sociological study of refugees’ access to the education system, particularly to the third level education, in Ireland. As a promising qualitative research method, autoethnography offers a way of giving voice to personal experience for the purpose of extending anthropological understanding of a social phenomenon. Autoethnography through exploring the self (experience) or self-observation in liminal periods will assist to understand and to detect the effect(s) of barriers in the Irish education system. Autoethnography is particularly very important when we are in liminality. The term liminality, which means being ‘betwixt’ and ‘between, refers to an inter-structural situation and process moving from one stage to the other stage. As refugees live in a liminal time or/and place, they are in a transition stage (liminality). Thus, liminality is inconsistent with ordinary day-to-day life. This concept will help to perceive the way in which barriers emerge as well as to find answers to the related questions. The aim of this paper is 1) to identify and analyse barriers that refugees encounter for accessing the higher education system, 2) to examine how these barriers can affect refugees’ life and their integration in Ireland. In turn, it will illustrate how an experience of past can be employed to adopt a strategy of prevention, and how liminality can best be managed to the benefit of refugees and our society.

**Facilitator: Josephine Finn**

11.30 – 13.00 Loftus Hall 2

**Parallel Session 3 Advice, Guidance and Information**

Dr Aoife Kerrigan – Inner City Renewal Group

***Adult guidance and lifelong learning: Navigating the system and embracing change***

Will focus in a general way on the profiles and circumstances of the adults who work with our guidance and employment service and on the types of personal, social and cultural challenges they typically face and have to work through in relation to accessing and pursuing educational, training and employment opportunities

Bernadette Walsh – Maynooth University & CareersPortal.ie

***Real People or Robots? Maintaining Personal Identity in Education and Guidance Provision***

This workshop will examine emerging labour market skills shortages and the fast changing nature of occupations in relation to life-long learning and guidance provision. Can we meet the needs of the learner and the economy?

Anthony Murray – Dundalk Institute of Technology

***Habitus and supporting learners through adult guidance***

Drawing on Bourdieu's theory of habitus this workshop will present an intimate autoethnographic account illustrating not only the complexities of social class but also the tensions associated with class mobility for non-traditional students. From a guidance perspective Bourdieu's theories offer practitioners the opportunity to broaden their perspective and understanding of the mechanisms that influence educational and career development

**Facilitator: Dr David McCormack**

11.30 – 13.00 Loftus Hall 3

**Parallel Session 4 *Alternative Routes to HE***

Damian Butler – University College Cork

***Addressing barriers for Mature Students***

This presentation will focus on the alternative routes open to non-traditional entrants to Higher Education, specifically, on entry routes to University education on a full-time basis, and the requirements and issues associated with the application process. By highlighting the barriers for mature students, we can develop strategies to aid in policy implementation at a national level. A lot is currently at play in this sphere and the HEA and Department of Education & Skills have recognised the reduction in participation to full-time undergraduate study. However, there is a need for the sector to engage with the multitude of reasons for the reduction in first time entrants. In this workshop, we will highlight the main issues and look for solutions to combat them.

Sarah Grimson - Trinity Access Programme

***Impacts of foundation programmes on transitions to Higher Education***

The Trinity Access Programmes Foundation Course for Higher Education for Mature students has been delivered on the campus of Trinity College Dublin for over twenty years. It offers another way to third-level education for mature students whose social, economic and cultural experiences have prevented them from going to college, by engaging them in an academic, social and personal preparation for degree level studies. This presentation will be practitioner focussed, and explore key aspects of the course which support the transition of students into Higher Education, and the impacts of this transition on the student cohort, university, and wider community. Finally it will explore how the course has developed over the years and adapted to changes within the university and beyond.

Dr Willy Kitchen – University of Sheffield

***Models of foundation programmes for diverse student cohorts..***

Willy's presentation will provide a very brief overview of the changing use of 'level zero' Foundation Years in English Universities over the past ten years. Such programmes have played a critical role in supporting effective transitions into HE study for a diverse cohort of mature or otherwise 'non-traditional' lifelong learners

at several English HEIs, yet the form and structure of these programmes remain specific to each institution, creating a diversity of provision as complex as the student cohorts which they set out to support.

**Facilitators: Dr Katriona O’Sullivan & Senator Lynn Ruane**

**13.00 – 14.00 Pugin Hall**

Lunch and Poster Session

**14.00 – 15.30 Renehan Hall**

**Panel**

***Lifelong Learning Reimagined – An Alternative Vision for Higher and Further Education***

Dr Fergal Finnegan – Maynooth University

***Equality, class and transformative learning: Reflecting on the power and the limits of higher education***

The aim of this paper is to spark a dialogue with participants about the role of higher education in achieving greater equality in society. Exploring education in relation to social class from an egalitarian, in particular and a critical realist perspective, drawing on critical policy studies, educational sociology and a decade of empirical research on students and graduates experience in higher education and in the labour market, Fergal will pose two questions:

1. What impact has higher education had on class inequalities?
2. What can higher education do well in a deeply unequal, and also fragile and interdependent world?

This will lead to an animated panel discussion taking into account what we know about the power and limits of education what might this mean for imagining a range of futures for lifelong learning?

Dr Mary Liz Trant – SOLAS

***Reflections on recent policy innovation in Ireland in the areas of apprenticeship, traineeship and work-based learning***

Over the last five years there have been significant changes in education policy in Ireland, with the objective of expanding work-based learning within further and higher education and training. In this panel address the speaker will reflect on progress to-date and learning along the way. A core plank of Ireland’s skills and work-based learning policy is expansion of the Irish apprenticeship system. Following a comprehensive review in 2013, a National Apprenticeship Council was established by the then Minister for Education and Skills. The Council has overseen expansion of apprenticeship into new areas of industry and leading to awards from Level 5 to Level 10 on the National Framework of Qualifications. As of the end of 2018 there are now over 40 apprenticeship programmes available in industry areas which include biopharma, ICT, finance and engineering, a number of which lead to awards at degree level.

Traineeship leading to awards at Levels 4-6 on the National Framework of Qualifications is also part of the expansion project in Ireland. Similar to apprenticeship, traineeship provision is strongly influenced by skills needs within industry. Within the past two years, the number of traineeships available have almost doubled. Education and Training Boards lead on development and provision of traineeships, in close partnership with local and regional enterprise partners.

In September 2018, a new policy framework Skills to Advance was launched to support upskilling of people in work, in particular those with few or no previous educational qualifications. Although at an early stage of implementation, Skills to

Advance is already providing a number of interesting insights on the education-enterprise partnership.

Professor Maria Slowey – Dublin City University

***Lifelong learning and higher education – facing the challenges facing societies?***

In considering alternative visions for the future of lifelong learning and higher education, one approach lies in discovering new ways in which research, education and civic engagement genuinely combine to better understand and address major challenges facing all societies.

To take just the single example of demographic change: On the one hand, factors such as globalization, war, poverty and climate change are leading to mass migrations of people across many regions of the globe – a scale of mobility unprecedented since the second world war. Simultaneously, the global population is growing older. This is particularly the case in the developed regions, but many countries of the global south are becoming ‘older before they become richer’ with gender and socio-economic inequalities underpinning all issues.

How might a re-imagining of higher education place these types of concerns centre stage of their missions?

Dr Bryan Maguire - Quality and Qualifications Ireland

***Quality assurance and qualifications in lifelong learning***

The Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999, introduced the National Framework of Qualifications. This is a tool to facilitate lifelong long learning through setting out how various qualifications delivered by different awarding bodies and coming through various education and training providers and systems, as well as coming from non-formal and informal learning, can be related to each other. A policy impact analysis of the NFQ was published in 2017. The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 took the idea of providing greater coherence across the education and training landscape a step further by integrating the bodies responsible for quality assurance and qualifications regulation into a single agency, Quality and Qualifications Ireland. QQI in turn has sought to reduce where possible institutional or sectoral distinctions in its approach to quality assurance. In 2016 QQI published a set of core quality assurance guidelines for all further and higher education and training providers. We also introduced a common set of criteria for those higher and further education and training programmes that we validate. Over the past twenty years there has been a steady progress towards removing procedural and institutional inconsistency in the qualifications system and associated quality assurance but these are only part of the overall picture.

**Chair: Peter Cassells – Maynooth University**

# Biographies

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## **Professor John Holford: University of Nottingham**

John Holford is Robert Peers Professor of Adult Education. A Sociologist who has spent most of his career in adult education, his research has focussed chiefly on the role of lifelong education in the formation of citizens, communities and social movements. His main current research interests are in adult learning of citizenship, especially in Europe, policy processes for the education of adults, especially in the European Union, and the history of adult education and citizenship in Britain. His earlier work has covered learning in trade unions and social movements, lifelong learning in South East Asia, the history of adult education in the British colonies, and the historical sociology of labour.

He is Co-ordinator of the Horizon 2020 research project, ENLIVEN (Encouraging Lifelong Learning for an Inclusive & Vibrant Europe: 2016-2019). He has been a partner in several previous EU research projects, including LLLight'in'Europe, LLL2010, Includ-Ed, and Etgace (which he also co-ordinated). As well as having written many books on the subject of Adult and Lifelong Education, he is Editor of the *International Journal of Lifelong Education* (Routledge).

## **Dr Rory O'Sullivan: Killester College of Further Education and FET2HE**

Rory has worked in further education in Ireland since 1986, and has been Principal of Killester College of Further Education, Dublin, since 2001. He has a great interest in inclusive education, and has been involved in several international projects. In 2011 Killester College became the first educational institution in Ireland to achieve the 'Excellence through Accessibility' award from the NDA. In May 2013, as part of a European project involving 28 countries, Rory was invited to speak at the European Parliament on the work being done in Killester College on inclusive further education. He was a member of the FETAC Council (2006-2012) and the National Council for Special Education (2007-2010) and is currently a member of the QQI Appeals Panel and the QQI Consultative Forum. He is Chair of the FET2HE Project Committee working on FET to HE progression. He is also a member of the PLC Programme Improvement Advisory Committee in SOLAS. In 2018 Rory graduated from Trinity College with a PhD in FET Policy.

## **Wendy Fowles-Sweet: University of the West of England**

Wendy Fowles-Sweet is the Director of Professional and Workforce Development in the Department of Engineering Design and Mathematics at the University of the West of England, Bristol. Previously she has worked as a principal engineer and change manager in the Aerospace sector; she is a Chartered Engineer, and member of the Royal Aeronautical Society. With an MSc in Engineering Business Management from the University of Warwick, she has worked at UWE since 2010, and is a Senior Fellow of the UK Higher Education Academy. Wendy develops material for and delivers professional development across the department, and has close relationships with a number of employers across the Advanced Engineering sector. She is currently involved in the development of Masters level engineering degree apprenticeships, whilst concurrently enabling undergraduate students to develop evidence-based portfolios to start their professional journeys.

## **Deirdre Goggin: Cork Institute of Technology**

Ms. Deirdre Goggin is currently a research fellow in the CIT Extended Campus, Cork Institute of Technology. Deirdre has been actively involved in the area of RPL in higher education in a research, development and lecturing capacity since 2003. She led the research reports on RPL in Higher Education in Ireland in 2015 and on RPL in FET in Ireland in 2017 completed with her colleagues in the CIT Extended Campus. Within CIT she supports staff capacity and capability building and policy development.

Deirdre engages with industry on RPL and workplace learning and in the internal infrastructures necessary to build sustainable validation systems and processes. Deirdre has pioneered the 'learning clinic' concept whereby the CIT engages with employers and staff on upskilling and reskilling opportunities at a time and place convenient for them. In addition to the external development work on RPL, Deirdre also supports senior staff in customised course developments in collaboration with industry partners responding to current and emerging industry needs and encompassing RPL and Work Based Learning.

## **Professor Sabina Brennan: Trinity College Dublin**

Sabina Brennan (PhD., C.Psychol.,PsSI.) is a psychologist, innovative public educator and experienced communicator with a unique skill mix acquired over her career working in the private sector, in media and most recently in academia. Professor Brennan attended university for the first time at the age of 42, graduating from Maynooth University in 2007, coming first in class with a first class honours degree in psychology. Her scientific research at Trinity College Dublin has focused on understanding dementia risk and protective factors to establish how decline in cognitive function might be prevented or delayed. She is passionate about engaging people in an educational preventative context.

Professor Brennan's public engagement projects include animated films which aim to increase the societal impact of scientific research by translating complex content into easy-to-understand resources for the general public and key stakeholders. Her films have been translated into multiple languages and viewed in more 140 countries. Films that address people's fears about memory loss and dementia are used for training and education by more than 40 hospitals and advocacy groups on four continents. In combination, her various resources have been used by more than 1.4 million individuals. Dr Brennan received an award from the Provost of Trinity College in recognition of her work for social impact in November 2017.

Professor Brennan has also engaged with wider society to the benefit of the public good by serving on numerous government, advocacy and advisory panels and committees (e.g. Alzheimer Society of Ireland, SAGE, support and Advocacy for Older Adults, HSE Expert reference group dementia friendly Ireland, Department of Health – Healthy and Positive Ageing and Department of Foreign Affairs Vulnerable older adults abroad). She currently serves on Trinity's Equality Committee and Chairs the Age Friendly Trinity Working Group. Dr Brennan is the founding director of Trinity Brain Health and Adjunct Assistant Professor, ADAPT Centre, Trinity College Dublin.

## **Dr Patricia Doyle: Maynooth University**

Patricia Doyle is an experienced lecturer/adult educator/researcher in sociology and in addiction/recovery and was awarded a PhD from Maynooth University in 2010, for her work in this area. Former chairperson of Recovery Academy Ireland, she is currently chair of the research committee whose projects include a collaborative partnership with TCD PPI Ignite project. She is an advocate for the rights of those in recovery from addiction and recognises that this is a group that is particularly at risk of social exclusion and marginalisation. She is currently in the process of setting up a Recovery College in the community, which aims to offer co-produced and co-delivered recovery education for those who live/work in the fields of addiction and mental health.

## **Dr Amin Sharifi Isaloo: University College Cork**

Amin Sharifi Isaloo has a PhD in Sociology and he teaches sociology in the Department of Sociology at University College Cork. He is the author of the book 'Power, Legitimacy and the Public Sphere: The Iranian Ta'ziyeh Theatre Ritual'. His fields of interest include politics, religion and culture, focusing on sociological and anthropological interpretations of symbols, images and ritual performances.

## **Bernadette Walsh: Maynooth University and CareersPortal.ie**

Bernadette is an experienced adult guidance counsellor with a background in adult and community education. She lectures on the Post-Graduate Diploma in Adult Guidance Counselling in Maynooth University. She has extensive experience in supporting marginalised groups including; long term unemployed, early school leavers, young Mothers, those affected by long term and enduring mental health difficulties, substance misuse and migrants to progress.

Bernadette works for CareersPortal.ie and delivers tailored staff training programmes to guidance counsellors and staff across the sectors, who support students, adult learners and clients in their career and education decisions. She holds a MEd in Adult Guidance Counselling and had a particular interest and expertise in integrating ICT careers information, tools and resources within guidance counselling practice. She has been involved in the development of the new MyFuture+ on-line adult guidance resource for adult learners, clients and jobseekers and is passionate about helping individuals to explore and realise their career potential despite their social economic situation.

### **Anthony Murray: Dundalk Institute of Technology**

Anthony is an experienced adult guidance counsellor with experience in HE and Supported Employment. Employed as Employability Advisor with Dundalk Institute of Technology, Anthony works with students from first year through to graduation in the areas of Employability and Student Work Placement to ensure that students and graduates of DkIT are self-aware, self-resourceful and work ready. Anthony is particularly interested in the areas of careers support and development of non-traditional students in HE, and the roll and impact of social class in relation to their HE outcomes and employability.

### **Dr Aoife Kerrigan: Inner City Renewal Group – Local Employment Service**

Aoife has worked in the adult education and guidance, community development, and addiction rehabilitation sectors since the 1990's. Currently working as career guidance advisor/counsellor and development worker in the Local Employment Service in the Dublin Dockland's Area, a designated area of social disadvantage. This role involves advising, guiding, supporting and facilitating the progression of adult clients towards apposite education, training and employment opportunities. It also involves guidance on social welfare related issues, community engagement activity, and working closely with different organizations and businesses - statutory, voluntary, community and private.

### **Damian Butler: University College Cork and MSI**

Damian graduated from Maynooth University in 2010 with a Bachelor (Hons) in Social Science (BSocSci). Leaving school with no formal education, he carved a career path in the hospitality industry that brought him to management level. He completed the Trinity Access Programme (TAP) for mature learners, in the 2006/07 academic year. Prior to becoming a mature student, Damian worked for a number of large hotel chains as part of their management teams, as Head Waiter in a Michelin Star restaurant and as a Facilities Manager in the Irish Management Institute (IMI). Following his degree, he merged his two worlds by designing and delivering a management structure for a successful chain of Indian takeaway restaurants. His ambition to help others to gain access to and succeed in education led him to take up a role with the national third level grant awarding authority – Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI). The opportunity to join UCC unfolded in February 2017, as the Mature Student Support Officer. Damian works closely with all departments within UCC in regard to student finances and the recruitment of mature and QQI/FET students. Damian has introduced and runs a number of retention initiatives in UCC and is an advocate of providing qualitative and quantitative data to enable informed national policy making for mature and lifelong learners. Damian is the current Chairperson of the MSI (Network of Mature Student Officers in Ireland) and sits on the Steering Committee of the HEA National Access Plan.

### **Dr Willy Kitchen: University of Sheffield**

Dr Willy Kitchen is Head of the Department for Lifelong Learning at the University of Sheffield. The department offers 30 full and part-time degrees with Foundation Year which enable direct entry to HE for mature students with non-traditional entry profiles. Willy is particularly interested in the support and development of mature learners studying in HE, and a firm believer in the power of inquiry-led learning. He is currently Chair of the UK-based [Foundation Year Network](#) and Treasurer of the [Universities Association for Lifelong Learning \(UALL\)](#).

### **Sarah Grimson: Trinity Access Programme**

Sarah Grimson has a degree in History and Ancient History and a higher diploma in education from Trinity College Dublin. She worked as a History teacher in St Mark's Community School, Tallaght for two years, before joining Voluntary Service Overseas in 2002. She worked as a teacher with VSO in the Far North of Cameroon until 2004, when she did a masters programme in education in Edinburgh University. She started to work in TAP in 2005, where she coordinates the Foundation Courses for Higher Education (mature students and young adults).

### **Dr Fergal Finnegan: Maynooth University**

Fergal Finnegan is a lecturer at the Department of Adult and Community Education, Maynooth University and is a co-director of the Doctorate in Higher and Adult Education programme. His background is in community education and adult literacy and research interests include transformative learning, biographical research, social class and equality and

higher education. He has edited books for Policy Press and Routledge and has recently co-authored a book *Access and Widening Participation in Irish Higher Education* for Palgrave Macmillan. He has just completed with Jerry O'Neill a three year European research project exploring the post-graduation outcomes of 'non-traditional' students.

Fergal is one of the editors the international *Journal of Transformative Education*. He has been active in European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA) since 2010 and is currently a co-convenor of the network on *Active Democratic Citizenship and Adult Learning* and a member of the steering committee and vice- chair of ESREA.

### **Dr Mary Liz Trant: SOLAS**

Dr Mary-Liz Trant joined SOLAS as Executive Director for Skills Development in 2015. Her areas of responsibility include expansion of apprenticeship and traineeship nationally; skills development of employees; technology-enhanced learning; and professional development of teachers and tutors within further education and training. Previously Mary-Liz held senior posts in the Higher Education Authority as Head of Skills and Enterprise Engagement and Head of the National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education. Earlier in her career Mary-Liz taught at both second and third-level. Mary-Liz holds a doctorate in Education; Masters Degrees in Education and in French; and a Higher Diploma in Education. She has published on equality of access in education; inclusive teaching and learning, curriculum development, assessment; and the liberal vocational ideal.

### **Professor Maria Slowey: Higher Education Research Centre, Dublin City University**

Maria Slowey is Professor and founding Director of HERC (Higher Education Research Centre) Dublin City University, where from 2004 to 2009 she also served as Vice-President Learning Innovation and Registrar. Her research and policy activities focus on comparative policy and sociological analysis of access to post-compulsory education and training over the life course. She has published widely on these topics and served as expert advisor at national and international levels to bodies such as the OECD, EU, UNESCO, the Scottish Parliament and the Higher Education Funding Councils of England, Wales and Scotland. Current projects include: the implications for lifelong learning of an ageing workforce, comparative approaches to adult education in Europe (*INTALL*): and comparative interpretations of social responsibility in a university context (*EUSRExcel* and *Engage Students*). She was previously Professor of Adult and Continuing Education in Glasgow University. and Head of the Centre for Continuing Education and Widening Access, Northumbria University. In November 2015 she was inaugurated into the International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame.

### **Dr Bryan Maguire: Quality and Qualifications Ireland**

Bryan Maguire is Director of Quality Assurance at Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). He was previously Director of Academic Affairs at HETAC. Bryan was Head of School of Creative Technologies at Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology, Ireland and previously lectured in Bangor University, Wales. Bryan holds a bachelors degree in psychology from University College, Dublin and a PhD from the University of California, San Francisco. He is a member of the Apprenticeship Council, the Dental Council of Ireland and the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications.

### **Peter Cassells: Edward M Kennedy Institute, Maynooth University**

Peter Cassells has overall responsibility for the development and management of the Edward M Kennedy Institute and engagement with the wider community. Peter is a former General Secretary of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and was a lead negotiator on five National Partnership Programmes. He stepped down as General Secretary of Congress in 2001 and for 10 years worked on the promotion of organisational change in the public and private as Executive Chair of the National Centre for Partnership and Performance. He is currently a member of the Governing Body of Maynooth University and the Board of IDA Ireland. He is chair of the Holocaust Education Trust and of Action Aid Ireland which focuses on projects in Africa (Kenya, Malawi, Uganda) and in South East Asia (Nepal, Vietnam, Cambodia). Peter was Chair of the Expert Group on Future Funding of Higher Education.

# Exhibition of Posters: Pugin Hall

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**Vanessa Long Hegarty: Trinity College**

## ***'Lived Experiences of Unemployed Learners Entering Higher Education Labour Activation Programmes in Ireland: A Springboard to Positive Outcomes?'***

The poster will give an overview of my doctoral research programme. It will focus on a particular paper "First steps of the unemployed learner" exploring the experience of embarking on their journey through higher education with the goal of upskilling and re-entering employment. Initially introduced for workers who had become unemployed during the recession, 'Springboard' provides part-time upskilling and reskilling within the higher education system in Ireland (HEA, 2016). Officially launched in 2011, Springboard represents one fifth of the Government's initiative 'skills to work programme' which includes 5 programmes of labour activation measures such as Springboard, JobBridge, Momentum, JobPlus and Skillnet (DES, 2015). Springboard is closely aligned to the National Skills Strategy goals of meeting future demands within certain sectors and enhancing the knowledge-based workforce. Initially offering 6,000 places in 34 public and private higher education institutions across Ireland, this opened opportunities to cohorts of unemployed who would otherwise be unable to enter higher education. Springboard, unlike traditional admission requirements for higher education, entry was not dependant on one's academic history. The desirable participants for Springboard are those who became unemployed during the recession and those without higher education qualifications (HEA, 2011). Following the 2008 recession, Ireland experienced unemployment rates as high as 15% (McGuinness, O'Connell & Kelly p.426, 2016). Furthermore, higher education is not only recognised as an exit pathway from unemployment, but the positive contributions to socio-economic outcomes and well-being are emphasised in current policies (National Strategy for Higher Education 2030). Gained 'predicted status' through education is said to provide security and well-being. Education is said to be the forefront predictor in the measurement of the trust, social involvement and social capital (Putnam & Helliwell, 2007). More recently, the OECD (2010) acknowledges that education facilitates improved mental well-being through the acquisition of social capital. The results of upskilling and reskilling through higher education is well documented in both Irish social policy and international level. Results from Survey of Adult Skills Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) state that not only does the individual benefit from employment opportunities, but one's social connectedness is enhanced or developed too (OECD, 2016). Existing literature concerning unemployment activation from education is confined to further education up to level 6. There is a need for evidence of lived experience within labour activation programmes within higher education (levels 7-9). This research adopts a mixed-methods approach and systematic literature review to gather data from both public and private higher education institutions across Ireland who offer Springboard courses.

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**Miriam O'Sullivan: myAccessHub**

## ***Increasing Accessibility for Students who are Neurodiverse***

Neurodiversity is an umbrella term that encompasses conditions such as; Autism Spectrum Disorders, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Dyslexia and Dyspraxia. Currently, 10% of our population are Neurodiverse; however, this figure is growing annually. With regards to Autism Spectrum Disorder, diagnosis is growing on average from 10-17% per annum. Therefore, the need for increasing accessibility for this population is all too prevalent.

People who are Neurodiverse face many barriers to accessibility within an environment which are attributed to the lighting, sound, layout, etc. within any given location. These are all elements that can be controlled with the implementation of tools or other initiatives. Controlling some of the variables within an environment will allow for the person to enter and maintain themselves without having to contest with both the environment and people.

In order to successfully increase accessibility for people who are Neurodiverse within a university or third level institute, a two pronged approach is required. A holistic approach is required in order for any initiative to be successful. Increasing accessibility for students with Neurodiversities can be achieved by: 1) completing a sensory environment assessment and 2) training.

A sensory environment assessment is an evidence based approach to the identification of barriers to accessibility for people with Neurodiversities within any environment. This assessment is completed on-site and by an appropriate professional who has the knowledge and skills to identify these barriers to accessibility. The assessment should encompass multiple elements of the environment and sensory stimuli that may be experienced by people when engaging with the environment. There are many elements to consider within a university or third level institution; however, this is important in order to support students to be able to remain in their environment and continue their studies. Once the environment has been evaluated and an action plan put in place it is important to commence the second element of the accessibility initiative; training.

Training is a fundamental element in the creation of awareness and understanding which is the foundation to creating an environment that is truly inclusive. Training should be rolled out not only to academic lecturing staff but also to administration, library and canteen staff. This will ensure that the principles of accessibility are ingrained into the culture of the institute. Ensuring that a holistic approach to increasing accessibility is taken will ensure greater chances of success and in turn provide support to students while also increasing student retention.

In conclusion, students with Neurodiversities face many barriers to accessibility on a daily basis; however, these can be easily overcome utilising a two step process. The role of the university or institute is to empower both the staff and students to reduce or eliminate these barriers to accessibility. A sensory environment assessment will identify and provide practical solutions to these barriers; however, it is the training that will ensure that a truly inclusive community is developed. By creating awareness and understanding the foundation has been laid to commence developing an inclusive community.

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## **Wendy Fowles Sweet: University of West England**

### ***Professional Sustainability***

For many years, graduates have been encouraged into learning by opportunities provided by their employers. Such sponsorship makes further learning attractive to individuals, whilst employers can encourage focus on the specific learning they require in support of their business. Such learning often takes the form of Masters level Continuing Professional Development (CPD), where students who have already gained a first technical degree study a particular subject for a short, intensive period culminating in an assessment and proof of competence in that field. Combining such CPD courses can result in enough credit being built up to achieve awards such as a Masters degree.

With over twenty years' experience of providing such courses in Engineering, the authors and their colleagues recognised a gap in the provision: an opportunity for the individual to take control of their professionalism

by underpinning career planning with academic learning. This resulted in a 2012 Masters module focusing on Professional Development: how to appraise and review the progress required and achieved throughout a career. The module concentrated on assessment for learning rather than teaching. Initially, this was undertaken as a work-based learning activity, but students found the process isolating and requested contact time.

From 2016/2017, contact time was reintroduced providing regular yet short, sharp bursts of workshops covering a range of topics from engineers in society and corporate responsibility to understanding one's own values, from creative problem solving to personality tests and their implications. At no time are students "taught" to develop their own careers; rather their independent learning is facilitated via the workshops to enable them to develop their own conclusions.

To structure these activities, the authors developed a Professional Sustainability model, which shows why education is important to both individuals and employing organisations. This illustrates how individuals can make use of lifelong learning, whilst also demonstrating to employers how the process can support their organisations' development targets.

Two cohorts have now completed the revised module, and have found the process an opportunity to take "time out" of their roles and reflect on their personal strengths and career implications, as part of their wider Masters level learning. Students have embraced the challenge and have been very complementary in their feedback.

Employers, too, have shown keen interest in this approach, to the extent that the module is now the "keystone" for the new Level 7 degree apprenticeships offered within the Engineering Design and Mathematics department. Its recognition by both employers and academe as a framework for individuals and their organisations to plan and develop careers has resulted in better focus for individuals, awareness and appreciation of the changing nature of careers, the relevance of lifelong learning and the opportunity to learn independently with structured support and facilitation.

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## **Marie Coady, Sophia Cogan, David Joyce, Danielle McGann & Declan O'Shea**

### ***An evaluation of the support services available to students with specific learning disorders (SLDs) in NUI Galway***

According to a recent study published in The Irish Times, there are 11,244 students with disabilities in post-Leaving Certificate education in Ireland comprising 5.2% of the overall third-level student population (Hilliard, 2017).

Initiatives like the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) offer reduced points places to school leavers who, as a result of having a disability, have experienced additional educational challenges in second-level education (Accesscollege.ie, 2018). In addition, legislation has been enacted that supports the concept of widening access to higher education (Government of Ireland, Universities Act, 1997; Education Act, 1998; Qualifications Act, 1999; Equal Status Act, 2000) (Shevlin \*, Kenny and Mcneela, 2004).

The Disability Support Service (DSS) at NUI Galway aims to provide tailored assistance for students with disabilities who have registered with the service and "are committed to the provision of an equitable learning environment" (DSS, n.d). The supports provided include assistive technology, exam accommodations, academic and learning supports, and personal assistants. Providing an equitable environment means ensuring that students with disabilities are enabled to achieve their potential.

DSS is available to students with specific learning disorders (SLDs), including dyspraxia/developmental coordination disorder (DCD), dyslexia and dyscalculia. According to the DSM-V, “The diagnosis requires persistent difficulties in reading, writing, arithmetic, or mathematical reasoning skills during formal years of schooling” (Cortiella & Horowitz, 2014). Students in this category cumulatively made up 47.5% of the total population of students with disabilities in Ireland in 2016/17 (Hynes & Ryder, 2018). According to Floyd (2012), it is crucial to provide meaningful supports to students with SLDs to ensure they persevere to graduation (Floyd, 2012).

Staff estimate there are over 1,000 students at NUI Galway registered with DSS as of September 2018, but as highlighted by Sylvia Nutley, assistant technical officer with the service, there are a considerable number of students not registered who would be eligible to avail of their support (Nutley 2018).

This study will evaluate the student and staff attitude towards DSS, specifically its strengths and weaknesses and what motivates students to avail of these services. Our task is to evaluate the effectiveness of these supports for students with SLDs and to examine to what extent they meet these students’ needs.

In this paper, 15 students are interviewed on their views of and experiences with the services provided by the DSS i.e. the initial information provided on registration, the process of registering with the DSS and their level of satisfaction with the service provided - whether their specific learning needs are being met or not. Five NUI Galway staff members will be interviewed and their views sought on the effectiveness of the services they offer to students to ensure they overcome the challenges they face. Suggestions on how the service could be improved will be sought from both students and staff.

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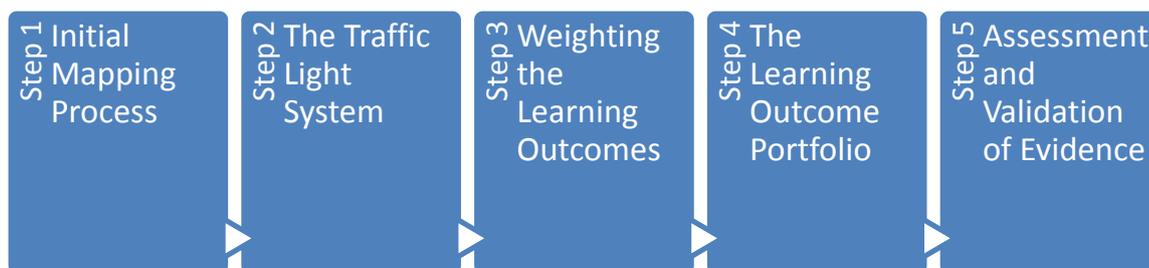
**Staunton, C., Gascoigne, B., O’Tuama, S., O’Neill, S., & Buckley, E. UCC**

***RPL at University College Cork: The West Cork Dairy Farmers’ Project***

Creating an inclusive learning environment for all is at the heart of the University’s mission statement (UCC Strategic Plan, 2017-2022). The present report outlines how 18 farmers from the West of Ireland gained access to and successfully completed UCC’s Diploma in Environmental Science and Social Policy (a Special Purpose NFQ Level 7 Award) through a recognition of prior learning (RPL) process. This paper details how the RPL method was developed and how it evolved organically to allow these farmers access a third level qualification based on the skills, competencies and knowledge they had gained outside of a formal educational setting. This process involved a close working collaboration between the Centre for Adult Continuing Education (ACE) and the Carbery Multinational Group which is headquartered at Balineen, Co. Cork.

Essentially, this RPL project involved the identification of learning by the farmers and the recording of this learning in a form suitable for assessment. A Learning Portfolio was created which was assessed by a number of suitably qualified individuals. As a result of the method presented, the farmers were granted exemptions on 40 credits (5 modules) of the Diploma by the ACE Academic Standards Board in December 2017. This is the first time that UCC has approved a group RPL portfolio and as the 40 credits constitutes 60% of the programme it is beyond the current UCC policy recommendation of a 50% limit. The farmers completed the remaining twenty credits (three modules) of the programme in a blended learning fashion.

There were five Steps which developed organically in the RPL Process as indicated in the diagram below.



This project has had a very powerful and positive outcome for the farmers who graduated with the full Diploma Award alongside the traditional cohort of students in November 2018. According to the Carbery Group Management, the project has added value in terms of profitability to the farmers, while at the same time minding and improving the environment. These farmers have already spread the meaning of sustainability which is now easily understood by all suppliers/farmers in West Cork.

The impact of this project highlights how a close collaboration between the University, a multinational business and a local community facilitated the farmers' progress in their learning journey from a sustainability project to a higher education programme. This was a test case for the University and it has resulted in the establishment of a sub-committee of the Academic Standards and Development Board (ADSC) to review the University's RPL policy. The present paper will describe the process and method that was developed in full including the quality assurance checks around the RPL procedures that were utilised.

### **Bernie Grummell, Josephine Finn, Camilla Fitzsimons, Maggie Noone**

'Integrating Cultural Diversity in Higher Education' (HE4u2) is an Erasmus + research project to integrate inclusive pedagogy into existing higher education curricula. The project intends to promote and support higher education staff in integrating inclusive and intercultural dimensions into their work with learners. Its innovation is the development of inclusive pedagogies for incorporation into existing curricula design to mediate obstacles for learners from migrant backgrounds and value their contribution as an integral dimension of learning for all learners.

We work with three main target groups: (i) staff in higher education connected to migrant learners and learners from ethnic minorities (e.g. counsellors, lecturers, advice and guidance staff, learning support staff, mentors, administrators, etc); (ii) migrant learners and learners from ethnic minorities and (iii) policy makers. The research partnership is led by EUCEN – the European University Continuing Education Network and seven European universities including Maynooth University Department of Adult and Community Education (IE), Université Catholique de Louvain (BE), Turun Yliopisto (FI), Aristotelio Panepistimio Thessalonikis (GR), Universidade do Porto (PT), Universitaet Wien (AT) and Johannes Gutenberg Universitaet Mainz (DE) This poster presentation will reflect on the learning from HE4u2 in terms of students' perceptions of their experiences in higher education across Europe (from an online survey completed by students in 8 European higher education institutions), staff reflections about their engagement in the pilot CDP programme and our reflections on the policy analysis across European higher education.

### **Bernie Grummell, Josephine Finn, Camilla Fitzsimons, Jerry O'Neill**

'Unlocking Freedom through adult education: The role of adult education in supporting the de-institutionalisation of people with disabilities in the community' (2015-2018) is a European Funded Erasmus

+ research project. Staff in the Department of Adult and Community Education, Maynooth University involved in the project include Camilla Fitzsimons, Josephine Finn, Bernie Grummell and Jerry O'Neill.

The project has three key objectives:

- To improve the life-long learning opportunities and social integration of people with disabilities through adult and community education;
- To bring local adult education providers together with local community based services/facility operators with the aim of devising or adapting curriculum to support their new role in including people with disabilities in their activities;
- To address the formal education needs of staff moving from institutional to community based provision in order to challenge the institutional culture of the organisation and to maximise their support to integrate people with disabilities fully into the community.

This project is led by Disability Federation of Ireland, with partners in Ireland (Maynooth University and Stewarts Care Ltd), Bulgaria (the Institute for Community-based Social Services Foundation), France (Universite Paris XII Val de Marne and Centre de la Gabrielle) and Finland (Kehitysvammaisten Palvelusaatio).

This poster presentation will give an overview of the project and our activities in developing a learning programme for community educators and service providers who supports adults moving to independent living in the community. This participative learning programme is co-designed and delivered by community educators and people with intellectual disabilities.

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The Higher Education Lifelong Learning in Ireland Network (HELLIN) is an all island body that advocates for the interests of the adult and mature student populations in universities and institutes of technology across the country North and South. Its aim is to inform policy relating to all aspects of adult education and lifelong learning whether these be Workplace or Work-based Learning, Continuing Professional Development, Recognition of Prior Learning, Adult and Community Education and older learners. We seek to establish Lifelong Learning and Lifespan Learning as the norm and to communicate with policy makers and the general public the idea that returning to education at different life stages for either personal or career development has benefits to both the individual and wider society that go beyond the mere acquisition of awards and qualifications but that continued study is reward in and of itself.



## **AIM**

The aim of HELLIN is to promote and advance Lifelong Learning and Continuing and Professional Education for adults within Universities, Institutes of Technology and other relevant bodies throughout the island of Ireland.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of HELLIN are to:

- Advocate for adult learners in higher education.
- Promote best practice in teaching and learning.
- Collaborate on research and innovation.
- Exchange and disseminate information and best practices.
- Promote quality in all aspects of provision.
- Liaise with other bodies on issues of common concern.
- Inform and advise policy makers of best practice.
- Promote the International Dimension for Lifelong Learning.

## **2018 Executive Committee**

- Chair: Dr Derek Barter, Maynooth University
- Vice-chair: To be confirmed.
- Ex-officio chair, Dr Ann Ledwith, University of Limerick.
- Dr Michael Tobin, Athlone Institute of Technology.
- Honorary Treasurer: Dr Clodagh Byrne, Trinity College Dublin.
- Honorary Secretary: Dr Nuala McGuinn, National University of Ireland, Galway.
- Member: Dr Seamus O'Tuama, University College Cork.
- Member: Dr Helen Murphy, Waterford Institute of Technology.
- Member: Dr Don Crowley, Cork Institute of Technology.
- Member: Josephine Finn, Maynooth University
- Member: Dr Rob Mark, Dublin City University.

**For Further Information please see [www.hellin.ie](http://www.hellin.ie)**