Introduction to the Issue.

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We are delighted to welcome you to this last issue of volume 11. As 2019 begins to draw to a close, our thoughts turn to 2020 and we will shortly be issuing a call for contributions for a Special Issue (Autumn 2020) celebrating the work of the Centres for Learning and Teaching across the island of Ireland. These centres have played a very important role in enhancing learning and teaching and promoting professional development for all those who teach in higher education. We hope that this Special Issue will offer an opportunity to celebrate this work and critically consider its impact to date as well as future developments. We would like to include a wide range of perspectives in a wide variety of formats and full details, including dates and deadlines will be released shortly on the AISHE website https://www.aishe.org/ and will be circulated via the higher education networks.

Turning back to the current issue, we are delighted to present three diverse and interesting contributions that deal with critical thinking, digital badging and assessment and the role of digital learning in preparing for study abroad.

How do you teach students how to think?' This over-arching question for teachers of all disciplines forms the opening to *'Teaching Critical Thinking and Critical Consciousness through Literature in Third Level Education'* in which Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) lecturer Christa de Brun reflects on the means by which modern (twentieth century) literature can be a successful vehicle for promoting and teaching critical thinking in higher level. De Brun posits that for learning to be truly 'transformative', it needs to enable students to alter their points of view as well as their 'habits of the mind'. Using a variety of methods such as tutorials, literature circles and critical reviews, the author reports a shift in student perspective through the process of the work to a 'more inclusive world-view', with follow-on interviews with students giving positive feedback on their deepened understanding of the twin concepts of 'ideology' and 'hegemony' and a truly 'transformed' approach to learning. The resulting self-reported increase in assertiveness is one which could make all teachers undertake to develop the critical thinking skills of their student learners.

Digital badges are increasingly used to evidence learning in higher education and beyond. In '*Innovating with Digital Badges in Assessment: A Case Study using Digital Badges in an Undergraduate University Module*', Crystal Fulton discusses the use of digital badging to promote student engagement with a Social Media & Computing module. In the first year of implementation '…*badges were matched to individual skills*…' (p. 7) and while this was effective, there was a significant impact on staff workload. In the second year, the approach was modified and badges were awarded by themes. Fulton reports that this allowed students to engage more deeply with their learning and assessment. Student feedback was very positive. Fulton notes that '*Students valued the process of learning skills, with success marked by thematic digital badges.*' (p.9). The article includes useful advice for those interested in adopting digital badges in their own practice.

Marta Giralt, Liam Murray and Silvia Benini highlight the importance of preparation in ensuring that the learning potential of mobility periods abroad are fully realised and they offer a valuable insight into the role of digital learning in helping to achieve this. Their article '*Applying Digital Learning to Facilitate Student Transitions within Higher Education Mobility Programmes: Implementing the 'Digilanguages.ie' portal*'**,** provides a useful discussion of current trends in the area and focuses on the *Digilanguages* online portal. This initiative was funded by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning and '…*offers OER and activities targeting, inter alia, Third Level Institutions, first year students, students studying abroad, and in-service language teachers*.' (p.6) and it '…*serves as a support, personal development platform, and pedagogical repository for both learning and teaching languages*.' (p.6). The article reports on a pilot study involving second-year students taking an International Business Spanish module. Students responded very positively and the authors recommend that *Digilanguages* be used to prepare students for the period abroad, either as an autonomous online programme or integrated into traditional classes.

We hope that you enjoy these articles and find them useful. It has been a real pleasure dealing with our authors and reviewers and we would like to express our sincere thanks to all who contributed to this issue. Finally, we would like to remind readers that we are also accepting papers for consideration for the Summer 2020 issue and beyond. If you have an idea for a contribution that you would like to discuss, please contact us, or any member of the editorial team and we will be delighted to help.