Introduction to the Issue

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We are delighted to welcome you to our Summer 2021 issue. This issue comes at the end of what has been another academic year that has challenged all of us in higher education in many ways. Over the past three issues of AISHE-J, colleagues and students have shared their responses to and their experiences of adapting to emergency remote learning and teaching and the 'new normal'. Despite concerns about new COVID variants, the vaccination progress has contributed to a sense of greater optimism. There is a sense in which this is reflected in this issue: we have five interesting empirical articles spanning a wide range of disciplines and topics.

Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) is an art-based education programme increasingly used in the education of healthcare professions. In *Visual Thinking Strategies for Speech and Language Therapy Students,* Alice Lee, Sarah Cronin and Fiona Gibbon from UCC discuss a study which examined the effect of VTS in the context of Speech and Language therapy education, over five years. They found that VTS may stimulate more frequent use of linguistic features associated with critical thinking, reasoning and general observation skills in students. This improvement in observation and reasoning skills is significant, given that speech and language therapists implement these skills when interpreting and analysing assessment results, when devising treatment and management plans for patients or clients, and when working in cross-disciplinary teams.

In *An Overview of the Redevelopment of a Computer Science Support Centre and the Associated Pedagogy Impac*ts, Mark Noone, Amy Thompson and Aidan Mooney shine a light upon the impact of dedicated support for Computer Science students within the context of Irish higher education. They discuss the redevelopment and relaunch of the Computer Science Centre at Maynooth University. The evidence indicates that this has been very successful, with a dramatic increase in attendance. Significantly, those first-year students who used the centre performed better on average in programming modules than those who did not. These findings add to the evidence for the value of learning support. The authors conclude

by presenting some of the initial steps taken to develop nation-wide collaboration to enhance support for computing students.

In Ireland, Computer Science has very recently been made available as a Leaving Certificate subject. In *Lecturers' Perceptions of the Leaving Certificate Computer Science Curriculum and its Influence on Higher Education in Ireland,* Fiona Redmond presents findings from a qualitative study with six Computer Science lecturers. She found that lecturers were not very familiar with the Leaving Certificate Computer Science syllabus and were surprised at the level of overlap between this and some of the material they taught in higher education. She notes that '*While lecturers expressed full support towards adapting their pedagogy, if necessary, they showed concerns over the perceived syllabus overlap and teaching a mixed ability class*.' (p.180). The study highlights the need to raise awareness of the Leaving Certificate syllabus within computing departments.

Any form of learner handover (whereby information about students is shared between staff) must both benefit stakeholders and generate minimal risk. In *Medical School Staff Perspectives on Sharing Sensitive Student Information*, Clare Conway, Dervla Kelly, Sarah Harney and Helena McKeague from UL's School of Medicine report on a study which considered the duties and role dimensions of medical school staff in how they deal with sensitive student information in context of learner handovers. The authors identify and discuss four themes underpinning current learner handover practice: values, processes, personal approaches and contextual feedback, and outline some key recommendations for future practice.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is a field that has received a lot of attention in the popular discourse in recent years but Patrick Philips in Trinity College, Dublin found a dearth of academic consideration of this topic. In *A qualitative exploration of Postgraduate Students' Understanding of Emotional Intelligence and its Potential Impact on their Future Career Development*, the understanding of postgraduate students of business of the key concepts within this approach was considered and the contributions of the topic to the career paths of the students was also examined. Students were found to have a reasonable knowledge of EI with an expressed wish to know more, while EI was also found to be a vital contributing factor to students' on-going career development.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to our reviewers and of course, to all the authors who have shared their work in this issue. We hope you enjoy it, and we wish you all a safe and peaceful summer.