

## ***Introduction to the Issue.***

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As editors, we are delighted to welcome you to the June 2022 issue of AISHE-J. Earlier in 2022, we co-edited and co-published our special issue with the National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP) focusing on student engagement and partnership. This special issue contained a wonderful collection of invited, collaborative, and reflective pieces highlighting recent developments and successes in this field. We were particularly delighted to see so many students amongst the authors and also how the special issue was, and continues to be, received by the sector.

As another academic year begins to draw to a conclusion, we now have the opportunity to pause and reflect, to consider how we returned to the classroom and our vibrant campuses this year, how we began to meet colleagues again and enjoy attending in-person conferences once more. A lot of success; however there remains a continued need to be mindful of our learnings from recent years and ensure we move forward with a new lens for teaching and learning. Our students have experienced impactful changes also. The majority of learners sat in-person exams this past month for the first time in several years, while at the same time they have been trying to build friendships, engage and self-motivate as best as possible. Together, as a community, we have made great strides this year, however looking out for, and supporting, each other, while continuing to foster an inclusive and accessible culture of learning will be essential to sustain.

This issue of AISHE-J contains 7 articles, across wide-ranging topics and disciplines in the Irish higher education sector. In our first article, Mark Noone and colleagues nationwide provide a review of the supports available to programming students in Irish higher education. They present six examples of the supports available, in addition to a survey of support of Irish higher education institutions. They found that support typically takes the form of tutors or centres and is focused on the earlier stages of study. They make a number of recommendations that will be useful to those in the field and beyond.

Collaborative research between TUS-Midlands and ATU-Galway City, from Theresa Costello, Pauline Logue and Kate Dunne, implemented and evaluated the impact of pre-laboratory activities on student engagement in a computer engineering module. The authors engaged in

an action research-based methodology, focused on improving student engagement, and for their evaluation, a mixed-methods approach combining student surveys, a student focus group and the lecturer/researcher's reflection journals was employed.

Yvonne Finn, Siobhán Smyth, Martin Power and Caroline Hills at NUI Galway present their insightful study on developing an effective mentoring programme in the undergraduate health sciences. Employing the nominal group technique, a structured consensus group method, their research determined the ten most important recommendations of effective mentoring programmes in this space.

Support for academic writing is a perennial concern in higher education. In their article on academic writing support for staff Roisin Donnelly and María-José González present their research on this from the perspective of academic staff. The study focuses on a professional development module designed both to support writing for publication and to develop strategies to support students' academic writing. The findings show that academic writing support and practice is highly valued and staff feel that more time should be spent on this and highlight the benefits of the strategies used in the module. This paper will be useful to anyone with an interest in supporting and enhancing academic writing.

Large group teaching (LGT) poses many challenges, including sustaining student engagement, catering for diversity, and effective classroom management. In their article, Siobhán Smyth, Timothy Frawley, and Louise Murphy from National University of Ireland Galway and University College Dublin present a LGT experience with a focus on planning, preparation, and delivery. Building on lessons learned from this class, as well as their previous teaching experience, the authors share the comprehensive best practice guidelines that they have developed to aid novice educators when preparing for LGT.

In their article 'Clinical skills in undergraduate Nurse education: Transforming and harnessing student engagement through problem-based learning using a blended learning approach', Martin Gooney, Heather Jennings, Sara Kennedy, Ruth Maher, Mary Moylan and Geraldine Purcell report on how they promoted student engagement during the emergency remote teaching and learning response to COVID. They discuss the challenges inherent in teaching clinical skills in an online environment and highlight the potential of problem-based learning in addressing these.

Finally, Susan Smith, Janice Priestley, Michelle Morgan, Laura Ettenfield and Ruth Pickford provide a very interesting discussion of the use of a pre-arrival academic questionnaire to inform

support for new students at Leeds Beckett University. They concluded that '*The [survey] has been a useful tool for us particularly in terms of induction preparation, accelerating learning support at key transition points and catalysing projects to embed highlighted areas of concern and anxiety.*' (p.20).

We hope you enjoy reading the issue. Many congratulations to all of the authors, and huge thanks and appreciation to our dedicated reviewers. Reviewers never fail to impress us, taking precious time out of their busy schedules to support the AISHE-J community, providing helpful suggestions and constructive critique, all geared to promoting the quality and robustness of the journal. We are deeply indebted.

To our readership, our members, our authors, our community – have a wonderful summer, hopefully with some in-built recharge and relaxation time. Our next issue will be published in October, and our invitation for new reviewers or editors remains open. Feel free to [contact us](#) should either of these roles be of interest to you.