

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

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We are delighted to welcome you to the final issue of 2022. We have a diverse and interesting selection of research papers in this issue that address a wide range of issues in higher education. We would also like to take the opportunity to say goodbye to a departing editor and hello to a new one. Dr Ronan Bree, Dundalk Institute of Technology, has stepped down as co-editor. Ronan will be missed. He has made a significant contribution to the journal throughout his years as co-editor; we wish to thank him for this and wish him the very best. We would also like to welcome Dr Gina Noonan, SouthEast Technological University, Carlow, who will be joining the editorial team shortly. We are very much looking forward to working with Gina!

To return to this issue, our first paper by Blathnaid McGeough, Romy Leitch and Francis McGeough explores the ways in which higher education institutes (HEIs) operationalise community engagement. They interviewed staff responsible for community engagement in 14 HEIs. The findings highlight the need for a strategic approach so that community engagement becomes a core, rather than an 'add-on' activity. They argue that '*... the signing of agreements, charters or priority listings of CE that are aspirational is not enough, but ongoing visible actions, as identified in the key factors outlined here need to be actively embraced by senior management in order to operationalise CE fully and effectively.*' (p. 14).

Despite the increasing diversity of the student population in Ireland little research has addressed the experiences of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) students. In her paper 'Belonging in Irish higher education for black and minority ethnic students: The 3 Ps of an inclusive campus –place, pedagogy and power', Fionnuala Darby uses critical race theory to explore belonging and inclusion as experienced by BME students at one Irish campus. She found that while students felt their campus was inclusive, there were complexities rooted in a normative assumption of whiteness. She draws on the findings to make a number of recommendations to promote a more inclusive environment and concludes that '*The governance of a campus where we all belong and are included is everyone's responsibility.*' (p. 17).

Emotional Intelligence (EI) in higher education is the focus on the next paper by Eoghan Guiry and Aiden Carthy. This qualitative study explored the motivations and expectations of lecturers who participated in EI coaching programmes. The authors report that participants were motivated both by a desire for personal development and a desire to help fellow researchers. They found that *'...even before commencing the intervention, the research participants were on-board with the process and felt that there could be real benefit to them as individuals but also to those around them'* (p. 10). They also highlight the need for EI training for lecturers and for further research in this area.

In their article 'Exploring pedagogic and practical intersections of academic writing support for students in higher education' María-José Gonzalez and Roisin Donnelly report a study of student perceptions of the effectiveness of the support provided at a university Academic Writing Centre. They conducted a survey of students who had engaged with the support and make a number of recommendations based on these findings that are likely to be of wide interest. They also highlight the need for academic writing to be considered in the curriculum and conclude that *'The role of feedback and reflection within a collaborative approach motivates and encourages students to successfully engage with the written task and potentially enhance their learning about writing and their overall writing competence.'* (p. 16).

Clive Earls, Emma Riordan, Aine Furlong and Colin Flynn provide a fascinating account of language teaching in Irish higher education in their paper 'The Complex and Changing Face of Higher-Education Language Teaching in the Republic of Ireland.' They consider the languages offered, where language provision is located and who teaches languages. Their research has uncovered a complex picture nationally and identifies key challenges including leadership, structure and career development opportunities, highlighting that *'Although language learning is a substantive part of many students' degree programmes, language teaching does not seem to be highly valued within the system.'* (p. 17).

In their article 'The Journal Club: A Pedagogy for Postgraduate Research and Education', Lucia Carragher and Bernadette Brereton discuss findings from their research into postgraduate students' views and experiences of learning in an interdisciplinary journal club. Students reported that participation in the journal club increased their awareness of knowledge gaps and improved their research knowledge. There was also an increase in deep approach and a decrease in surface approach to learning for some students. The authors conclude that the

journal club “[P]rovides an authentic learning environment suitable for postgraduate students from different disciplines to listen, cooperate and generate new ideas.” (p21).

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a key pedagogical approach for promoting inclusive and equitable education. There is extensive literature available on UDL principles and how they can be used to promote inclusivity; however there is less research in relation to UDL practice from a student perspective. In *A Critical Evaluation of The Integration of a Universal Design for Learning Approach into a Module Using An ePortfolio: A Student Perspective* Lucia Cloonan aims to address this gap by presenting research into students’ perspectives of evaluating the integration of a UDL approach into a brand management module using an ePortfolio. She concludes that “[A]pplying the UDL principles, enabled by digital technology, has been perceived by students as engaging and motivating. Students embraced the flexibility of choices offered through the range of ePortfolio tasks, and expressed themselves in unique ways, both individually and in groups. They developed their reflection skills and took more autonomy over their own learning through peer assessment.” (p18).

We would like to thank all the authors who have contributed to this issue. We also wish to pay tribute to those who reviewed papers for this issue – your generous contribution is grateful appreciate – thank-you! We hope that you enjoy this absorbing collection of papers.