# *Introduction to the Issue*

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Welcome to volume 15 and the first AISHE-J of 2023.  We have an interesting collection of papers that deal with timely issues of wide relevance.

In our first article, Emer Connolly of the Technological University of the Shannon, Midlands, presents a study of students' preferences for academic writing support. As part of the study, students who used the Academic Writing Centre over a 3-year period, were invited to complete a survey that asked about their preferences for delivery of support and the nature of the academic writing support required. A key finding was that student delivery preferences changed across the 3 years: in 2019/20 there was a preference for face-to-face support, this shifted to a preference for online support in 2020/21, while in 2021/22 students preferred either face-to-face or blended.  As the author points out '…*It will be interesting to establish what preferences are expressed in forthcoming academic years, given that there has been a focus on more on campus delivery and less online learning and teaching and closely monitoring this'* (p. 13).

In next article, 'A critical approach to overcoming resistance to academic writing and building confidence in third level students',  Christa de Brún, South East Technological University, argues for critical literacy as a pathway to academic empowerment for an increasingly diverse student body: '*Academic writing represents a promising opportunity to rewrite cultural discourse and develop critical consciousness in third-level students, providing students with tools both to critically analyse the power structures that underpin societal conditions and to become more actively engaged in challenging oppressive societal conditions'* (p. 3).  The article draws on a wide range of theorists to analyse resistance and confidence in the context of student academic writing and concludes by offering '…*myriad possibilities for addressing inequity and the impact of this inequity on structures of writing, thus facilitating pathways for change and growth.'* (p.14).

In the final paper, Susan Flynn, Emmett Cullinane, Helen Murphy and Neill Wylie, South East Technological University, offer a very timely and useful discussion of micro-credentials. They

highlight the inconsistencies in terminology, distinguishing between micro-credentials and digital badges.  As the authors explain:  '*The appeal of these easily available, low-cost credentials is inclusivity; such awards are potentially available to large and hard-to-reach populations*' (p. 7). However, if these credentials are to achieve their potential, good design is essential and the paper discuss a number of specific learning design approaches in the context of micro-credentials and digital badges.  The paper concludes '*This article has attempted to illustrate how the affordances of digital badges are transforming and radicalizing how we conceive of academic credentialing, and educational assessment. We believe that microlearning will continue to be a feature of the educational landscape, and we hope to have contributed to an enhanced focus on the quality of these credentials.*' (p.15).

As always, I would like to thank all the authors who have contributed to this issue.  On behalf of the editorial team, I would also like to acknowledge the sterling work of our generous and committed reviewers.  AISHE-J would not be possible without their generosity.  Finally, I hope that you enjoy the issue.