

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

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Welcome to this, the second issue of 2023, which includes a selection of timely and thought-provoking papers that address a range of current issues. I would like to tell you also about some changes to the editorial team. Dr Gina Noonan, South East Technological University is stepping down as co-editor. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the significant contribution Gina has made to AISHE-J and to thank her for her long-standing and ongoing support. I also have the great pleasure of welcoming two new members of the team: Marie O'Neill, CCT College and Jane Buggle, Institute of Art, Design and Technology, Dún Laoghaire, who have recently joined us and bring a wealth of experience and expertise. We are very much looking forward to working with them!

The first two articles in this issue are direct responses to issues raised by the shift to emergency remote online teaching during the pandemic. In 'Applying Kane's validity framework to online OSCEs', Duana Quigley and Julie Regan focus on a key form of assessment in medical and health-related fields, the Objective Structured Clinical Examination, or OSCE. They discuss the challenges and the advantages of developing online approaches to this well-established assessment method and highlight the need '*...for their validity to be evaluated more robustly*'. (p. 4). The paper goes on to outline the design and development of online OSCEs for Speech and Language Therapy and explains how they applied a specific framework to test their validity. This will be very useful to anyone teaching and assessing health and allied disciplines, and beyond, as it provides a template for producing a 'validity argument' that can be widely applied.

The second article, 'Placement during a pandemic: Exploring the experiences and perspectives of students completing education placement during the COVID-19 pandemic' deals with the impact of school and college closures on the professional placement experiences of student teachers. Andrea Lynch and colleagues report findings from their survey of the experiences of 204 students. The findings highlight how '*[c]ompleting placement during the COVID-19 pandemic clearly placed multiple demands on student-teachers while often consuming all their time and energy*' (p.14). The authors make a number of recommendations and they highlight

the importance of reflecting on what has been learned and whether '*...whether any of the emergency measures implemented, such as online and hybrid teaching, remote placements and alternative assessments, should be retained in post-pandemic ITE, and in teaching and learning within the early years and primary sectors.*' (p.14).

Student engagement is another key focus of concern post-pandemic. In their paper 'Conceptualising student engagement as a theoretical framework for innovative higher education practices: A literature review', Connie O'Regan and colleagues discuss their innovative work on the Designing Futures project at the University of Galway. The project aims '*... to enhance and develop the provision of a range of student engagement initiatives which focus on supporting students to design their own personalised learning journey, equipping them for both their future lives and careers.*' (p.2). The paper considers (i) whether student engagement theory can provide a theoretical framework to underpin the project, (ii) higher education practices that foster engagement and (iii) approaches that can be used to explore these practices. The authors explain how they have used this evidence to develop a conceptual model that guide and scaffold the project initiatives. This paper will be useful to anyone concerned with student engagement.

The next article, 'An analysis of the impact and efficacy of an online mindfulness-based intervention as a support for first-year university student' is concerned with how to provide effective support to students making the transition to higher education, as issue of significant interest to all who work with students. Wyndham Chalmers and colleagues present an evaluation of an online 5-week, mindfulness-based intervention (MBI) to first-year students. The findings '*...support the idea that participation in a brief mindfulness intervention can be beneficial in the reduction of stress, increased awareness and increased levels of resilience*' (p. 13). These are encouraging findings and the authors recommend further research, particularly in regard to MBI delivery methods for this cohort.

Our final paper, by Michelle Share, Caitriona Delaney and Rory McDaid deals with the writing experiences of post-graduate research students. 'How Do Doctoral Students Experience Writing and Thesis production? Qualitative Analysis of the Irish National Survey of Postgraduate Students' reports on a qualitative thematic analysis of open-ended responses (n = 928) to questions on the 2019 Postgraduate Research (PGR) StudentSurvey.ie. Three main themes were identified: a zone of uncertainty, writing and the role of the supervisor and institutional

responsibilities. The authors highlight unmet student needs and the important of strong institutional supports. This paper provides an incredibly valuable insight into the experiences and needs of doctoral students in Irish higher education.

As ever, I would like to thank all the authors who have contributed to this issue – it has been a pleasure working with you all. On behalf of the editorial team, I would also like to pay tribute to the wonderful work of our generous and committed reviewers. We are very grateful to you. If anyone reading is interested in reviewing for AISHE-J, please do get in touch - we are always interested in hearing from potential reviewers.

This brings me to our current call for contributions to a Special Issue 'Universal Design in Tertiary Education'. We are delighted to be working in partnership with AHEAD ([Home - AHEAD](#)) on this. The issue will provide an to share experiences, perspectives and foster dialogue on Universal Design (UD) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in Irish tertiary education. The issue will be published this time next year, June 2024. There are a choice of two submission dates: 30<sup>th</sup> October 2023 (decision February 2024) and 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024 (decision April 2024). Further details are available here [Joint Special Issue with AHEAD: Universal Design in Tertiary Education | AISHE-J](#). Please get in touch if you would like to discuss an idea for a paper for this Special Issue, or indeed for any general issue, and/or if you are interested in reviewing for this issue. Please note that we accept general contributions at any time - deadlines only apply to Special Issues.

Finally, I hope that you enjoy our Summer 2023 issue.