

# Island of Ireland Symposium 2022

Quality higher education for all: Building back fairer and greener

25 May 2022

## Session abstracts

### Session 1, 11:05 – 11:45

#### Session 1a

##### **Empowering educators to design curricula today for graduates of tomorrow**

Colette Murphy, Ulster University

*Workshop*

Situating ESD competencies central to curricula is integral to achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and building the capacities of educators is seen as a priority action to realise this ambition (QAA/Advance HE, 2021; UNESCO, 2021). This workshop exposes participants to a specific enquiry-based learning pedagogy adapted within a CPD accredited module within Ulster University's MEd Programme. The workshop provides hands-on-experience of designing a holistic project-based learning approach (Dewey, 1963; Patton, 2012) to integrate and develop the ESD competencies of: integrative problem-solving, systems thinking, and future thinking.

#### Session 1b

##### **Embedding of core sustainability concepts among students and staff; overcoming the challenges**

Stanistreet, D.; Sullivan, C.; Kelly, A.; Marghani, M.; Hurley, S.; Haley, K.; Poynton, F.; and Gormley, K., Royal College of Surgeons Ireland

*Workshop*

How do higher education institutions ensure that both staff and students are able to develop core sustainability competencies? This workshop will explore the main challenges faced by HE institutions in embedding core sustainability. It will employ nominal group technique, a consensus method characterised by individual participant generation of ideas followed by discussion and prioritisation. The workshop will allow participants to reflect on current challenges to incorporating core sustainability concepts within their own institutions; to prioritise different approaches to addressing challenges; and to gain insight from different institutional approaches to addressing this issue.

### Session 2, 12:00 – 13:20

#### Session 2a

##### **Cross-disciplinary collaborations for embedding sustainability into teaching, learning and assessment at TU Dublin**

Dr Lucia Walsh, Dr Olivia Freeman, Alacoque McAlpine and Dr Cormac McMahon, TU Dublin

*Oral presentation*

Sustainability requires appreciation of system complexity beyond that traditionally taught in higher education. Solutions will not derive from conventional problem-solving routines but from innovative interdisciplinary approaches. To address the wicked nature of sustainability problems, we must equip graduates, as future change-makers, with competencies that span disciplinary silos. We will story-board excellence in practice emerging from a university-wide Community of Practice in sustainability literacy. We will showcase cross-disciplinary initiatives such as co-creations, open educational resources, integrated assessment and climate entrepreneurship. In a call to action, we hope to inspire participants, by our story, to apply ideas of interdisciplinarity in practice.

### **Session 2b**

#### **Assessing students' perspectives on remote learning of project-based undergraduate modules**

Dr Meei Mei Gui and Dr Panagiotis Manesiotis, School of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering, Queen's University Belfast

*Oral presentation*

The pandemic has accelerated the advancement of digital teaching technologies. Over the past two years, virtual classrooms have become the new norm for teaching and have been widely adopted across multiple levels of undergraduate education. Successful delivery of remote teaching requires active engagement from both educators and learners. This is even a greater challenge for modules that require collaboration amongst the stakeholders, such as group projects. This session aims to discuss students' perspectives on remote delivery of group-based modules that can help to pinpoint the weaknesses of this teaching method and to suggest possible solutions to improve students' learning experiences.

### **Session 2d**

#### **An interdisciplinary and cross-faculty approach to enterprise and sustainability for postgraduate students: The TU Dublin experience**

Dr Kevin Delaney, Dr Colm O'Kane, Jennifer McDonnell, Mark Ennis and Thomas Treacy, TU Dublin

*Oral presentation*

A core aim of Technological University Dublin is the creation of well-informed and proactive graduates who will lead in creating a more sustainable future for our planet. This involves embedding interdisciplinary collaboration, enterprise and sustainability into University programmes. A description of the approach adopted for postgraduate students taking cross-faculty modules in "Innovation and Knowledge Management" and "Entrepreneurship for Engineers" on Engineering programmes within the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment is presented. This project is aligned with a larger initiative within the European University of Technology (EUt+), an alliance of eight European partners.

## **Session 3, 14:20 – 15:20**

### **Session 3.1a**

#### **Sustainability applied: The perspective of giving students a voice in Sheffield Business School**

Dr Marc Duffy and Jo Watts, Sheffield Hallam University

*Oral presentation*

This session will bring sustainability and responsibility to life through applied case studies of real organisations and complex contemporary issues. We will foreground the value of student-led conversations in volatile and uncertain times, empowering students' voices through debate around career choice and their capacity to make an impact in sustainable and responsible business practice. We will frame how technology and padlet can be used to engage with learners, thus shaping debate in relation to live issues.

### **Session 3.1b**

#### **A collaborative initiative between Family Carers Ireland (FCI) and the Faculty of Lifelong Learning at the Institute of Technology Carlow to promote the engagement of family carers in higher education in Ireland**

Lindsay Malone and Nicola McEntee, Institute of Technology Carlow

*Oral presentation*

This presentation will give a detailed overview of the Family Carers Ireland project which has a measurable impact against the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 Quality Education and Goal 10 Reduced Inequalities. It is also underpinned by the three areas of Teaching, Outreach and Stewardship as it aligns to delivering on all key metrics through a Caring Employers Programme, Transition Programme for young carers, the delivery of certificates and diplomas to family carers in a conscious effort to promote inclusion, flexible and funded access routes to quality higher education and equality for family carers.

### **Session 3.1c**

#### **A Human Capital Initiative to support SDGs through the provision of micro-credentials through the Faculty of Lifelong Learning at the Institute of Technology Carlow**

Lindsay Malone, Aidan Mahon and Damian Rossiter, Institute of Technology Carlow

*Oral presentation*

This presentation will emphasise how the Centre for Insurance Risk and Data Analytics Studies (CIRDAS), a Human Capital Initiative, Pillar 3 funded initiative, is focused on teaching to the competencies required for those working in uncertain and complex environments. It will also demonstrate how our programmes deliver on the SDGs to ensure that all graduates develop core sustainability competencies that they can take into their future careers. It will also draw on an outreach focus by examining how CIRDAS focuses on the development of sustainability competencies of students who are working within local, regional, national and international industries.

### **Session 3.2a**

#### **A whole institution approach to sustainability in higher education**

Dr Maria Kirrane, Professor John O'Halloran, Mark Poland, Pat Mehigan, Ger Mullally and Paul Bolger, University College Cork

##### *Oral presentation*

University College Cork is ranked as the 8th most sustainable campus in the world (UI Green Metric and Times Higher Ed) and was the first outside of North America to be awarded a Gold STARS rating. UCC's Green Campus programme is "student-led, research-informed, and practice-focused". This session will describe the evolution of the sustainability programme at UCC, how bottom-up activism and top-down commitment combined to drive forward a sustainability ecosystem that has seen the University achieve a 52% improvement in energy efficiency (against the national public sector 2020 target of 33%), establish the country's first single-use plastic free café and University Farm-to-Fork programme, and integrate sustainability into all university processes and plans.

### **Session 3.2b**

#### **Environmental sustainable assessment strategy**

Dr Janet McKennedy, Technological University Dublin

##### *Oral presentation*

Each day sustainability becomes more important in our lives. Reflecting this, it gains importance in our curricula and our students lives. In the Curriculum framework for the sustainable development goals (Osman *et al.*, 2017) the principles of skills, knowledge, values and attitudes are emphasised throughout. These competences are not well assessed by the end of year exam model. In the school of civil and structural engineering at TU Dublin, alternative assessment methods were investigated and implemented in teaching water and environmental engineering modules to students from levels 7 to 9. This presentation will provide detail on the assessment methods that were used, how successful they were, and the feedback received from students. A mapping exercise was also undertaken to map to the UN sustainable development goals to the activity and thus provide an indication on how the curriculum and assessment were meeting education for sustainability requirements.

### Session 3.2c

#### Contribution of Early Years' Education to a sustainable future

Max Smyth, Saint Nicholas Montessori College Ireland

*Oral presentation*

SDGs provide a key opportunity for humanity to undo its negative impact on the planet. Evidence supports the introduction of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), to foster positive values and worldviews in children, from the earliest years. The role of the early years' educator is seen as pivotal in 'preparing young citizens to participate in creating more sustainable futures.' Research also indicates the spirit of the SDGs can be seen in many of the pioneers of early childhood, especially in the work and writings of Maria Montessori.' Can the Montessori principles of 'Global Citizenship' and 'Education for Peace' inspire teachers to research, promote and to develop the 'cognitive, socio-emotional, behavioural competencies' in children, needed to 'protect the planet and respect lives'?