

Adult Continuing Education



UCC

University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Facebook: @ace.ucc
Twitter: @ACEUCC
Instagram: @ace.ucc
Email: ace@ucc.ie
Phone: +353 (0)21 490 4700
Web: www.ucc.ie/en/ace/



ADULT CONTINUING EDUCATION AT UCC

Adult Continuing Education at UCC

2020 Edition



Martin Coppinger in full flight winning the Munster Senior Road Bowling Championship final in Dunmanway, Co. Cork 2012. Courtesy of the Irish Examiner Archive.
Picture: Des Barry

Martin's reward right up there with All-Ireland wins

Martin Coppinger and Séamus MÓ Tuama's paths had often crossed along the rural roads of Cork but never in the halls of UCC.

Martin, a Bantry-native and four-time All-Ireland road bowling champion, and Séamus, from Lisgoold, the Director of UCC ACE and road bowling correspondent for the Irish Examiner. Two road bowling fanatics and two men who left school after their Leaving Certs to go working on building sites.

Both followed very different paths back to third-level, Séamus using agricultural college as a tentative

stepping stone which turned into a springboard to his life's calling, and Martin entering the gates of UCC after almost two decades out of education to take on a Diploma in Management and Team Development.

So when Séamus was performing his roll-call duties on the day of Martin's graduation, of course, he couldn't let the moment pass without giving Martin his full fanfare.

"There's about 1,000 people in the hall, and Séamus made a big thing out of me getting my one. In front of everyone, I nearly died!

"At times, I felt like packing it in but I'm glad I stuck with it. The day we got our certs, it's all worth it then.

Hard to comprehend

"Completing a course in UCC was something I wouldn't have dreamt of so to be getting a diploma there was hard to comprehend. You'd just never think of going back to school or even being given the opportunity, so doing the course was a good challenge and a great achievement."

That diploma is now framed on the wall of Martin's home – an

achievement he ranks alongside any of his All-Ireland titles.

"It's right up there for the journey of it. I'd never imagined getting anything out of UCC. Even going to UCC, doing a course, it was a big thing.

"To graduate out of there – and I've my diploma here, framed and all – it was right up there with anything I've done really. It means an awful lot."

Martin's future had been more influenced by his dad introducing him to road bowling, aged 10, than

Continued on Page 7

How ACE Transformed A UCC Stalwart's Experience Of Education

Pat Cotter had spent almost three decades working in UCC and a lifetime living next door to the college, seeing the benefits of education for the thousands of students who passed by every day, without considering the impact it could have on him.

He had an appreciation of the transformative power of education, how those who left with their degrees in hand found it a leg-up in life, while fearing it himself – a legacy of schooling where children were rebuked rather than encouraged. He left to start work at 16.

Before he started studying with UCC ACE, Pat says he probably wouldn't have done this interview. He would've found a reason to say no.

But having completed a Diploma in Youth and Community Work, Pat has gone on to do a Certificate in Disability Studies before undertaking a Masters in Voluntary and Community Sector Management. "It's something I never thought I'd see myself doing and that's down to ACE introducing me back into education again," he says.

Well into his second year of that "unbelievable" course, he's enjoying every step of his educational journey and articulates all the benefits he's felt along the way with a new-found confidence to say yes to things outside his comfort zone.

A Summer's Evening on the Quad

After all, you won't find someone more knowledgeable about the

Continued on Page 5

"My Kids saw me picking myself up"

Direct Provision Scholarships

Page 8

"It was a battle in my head, but I deserve to be here"

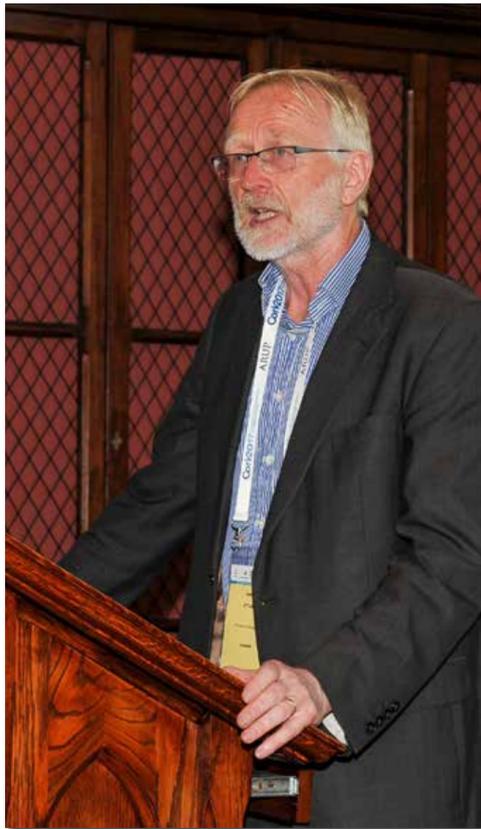
Moving forward by returning to education

Page 16

"I wanted to do something preventative"

Mental Health in the community

Page 18



Navigating Uncertainty & Change Through Lifelong Learning

Séamus Ó Tuama, ACE at UCC Director

As I write this from my home, we are all still in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. We don't know when restrictions will be lifted. We don't know if there will be a second wave of the pandemic. We don't know if Covid-19 will become endemic.

Let that not cloud how we see tomorrow. We live in an incredible world, full of hope and opportunity. There is joy in the future, there is hope in the future. But it is important too to reflect on now. To consider where we are and to imagine how we can shape a better future together.

Many of us have lost loved ones. We have seen the death and devastation that this virus can cause, the speed at which it can travel and the upheaval it has brought to virtually every aspect of our lives. It has caused us to reflect on our personal lives and to fear for those around us. It has pushed us to consider what the future may hold, not just for ourselves, our families and friends, but for wider society and indeed the whole world.

Coronavirus has projected a glimpse of the kinds of huge challenges that lie ahead, to cope with those challenges we need to learn well and learn fast.

We learn by reflecting on where we are now. Learning is in developing the knowledge, skills and understanding for our new reality. It is also about developing the skills to learn in dynamic and creative ways. This is often described as cognitive flexibility, being able to perceive, process and respond to situations in novel ways.

Lifelong learning can be a catalyst for cognitive flexibility. You don't have to come to university to be a lifelong learner,

but remaining open to learning throughout your life is good for your wellbeing, it helps you participate socially and economically, and the whole of society benefits from your learning.

Lifelong learning was never more important. We are in a world that is undergoing unprecedented change. We are in a shift of epoch akin to eras like the Renaissance, the Reformation, or the French Revolution.

Our world is at an existential tipping point, not because of Coronavirus, but because of Climate Change and the onward drive of new technologies. Like those previous huge changes this one is full of opportunities, but we will have to learn to crest the wave rather than allow it submerge us.

The opportunities for lifelong learning offered by ACE at UCC (and other educational providers) is part of an emerging tapestry of learning. We are just one tiny part of that tapestry. We hope the stories in these pages inspire you, give you confidence and give you food for thought on things you want to learn now and in the future.

Coronavirus will not always be a dark cloud over our lives. We will have many happy days ahead. Learning is part of the joy of that future. I hope you find things in these pages to ignite your quest for that joy in learning and a bright new tomorrow.

'Coaching University' helping others towards their Olympic potential

Colette O'Sullivan calls the decision to join ACE as Finance and Operations Manager in 2018 "one of the best I've ever made", and not just because of the job.

She has been working as an accountant in UCC since 2002, going from the Research Office, to the Finance Office, to the Faculty of Medicine for the building of their Brookfield Complex, to the School of Business and Law.

But upon her return from maternity leave, she got a call out of the blue from ACE director Séamus Ó Tuama with a proposition of a new role. She was ready for a change, even beyond the job itself.

"I went back to education and now I'm training to be a coach," says Colette, "and who's to say any of these things would have happened if I stayed in my old role."

Being in ACE had her more attuned to the potential courses she could take and the positive feedback made her mind up.

"I just wanted to do something I was personally interested in and what kept coming up on my radar was the coaching programmes, the mindfulness programmes.

"These are hugely successful programmes in ACE. Mindfulness started off as an eight-week short course and now it's a very successful Master's. So I was very aware of these programmes and the positivity from both staff and students, and anyone who'd actually done

them."

She signed up for the Certificate in Personal and Management Coaching, run by Pat O'Leary, and soon found herself viewing UCC from a fresh perspective.

"I've been in UCC since 2002 but it's my first time as a student and it's lovely to see the University through that lens. There are great resources there.

"I had to go back to basics because I hadn't written an essay in over 20 years. I had to learn all about referencing and go to library tutorials. For me, it was a steep learning curve but I loved every minute of it.

"The resources that are there for students are fantastic. What Kathy Bradley and her team in the Skills Centre are doing is amazing. The library has great tutorials and resources. The support is just great."

Colette was joined on the course by people from a variety of backgrounds, from HR to psychology, from teachers to finance. "There are 15 people in the class and I'd say everyone is from a different area."

That variety only expanded when her 50 hours of practical coaching saw her take charge of five coachees, including an accountant, a teacher, a UCC staff member, and a potential Olympian.

"That's when it becomes very real, when you're dealing with real people and you're

not just practicing with the person next to you in the classroom.

"But that didn't faze me. I remember my first session, I knew I was in control, and I knew I had the skills from what we'd learned and practiced. I knew I could do this.

"It's incredibly rewarding. The difference you'd see from the first time you meet your coachee to after three or four sessions with them, it can be transformative. The coachee is doing the work, the coach is just facilitating, but it's very rewarding to be a small part of that.

"It's the potential that we all have, and just to have somebody guiding you to it, it really is incredible."

Plus, of course, unlocking the potential within the coaches themselves.

"It definitely improves your critical thinking, you're thinking more skilfully, and it's something that enhances working life, home life, across the board.

"It's just something I'm delighted I did. I'm part of a lovely community, I've happily sat in the classroom and would stay on. There was no part of it I didn't enjoy."

Now, Colette wants to progress to the Master's course and from the summer, she'll be on the UCC coaching panel – an initiative, led by Anne Gannon, to develop UCC's coaching culture and transform the College into a 'Coaching University'.

"If any staff member, say, is in any difficulty, there's a ready-made panel within the University available to UCC staff.

"It's very different to finances. For me, that makes things more interesting and it'll be a lovely aspect of my working life."

Something for everyone at a very Cork festival



Róisín O'Driscoll, Shandon, getting a helping hand playing Connect Four at the Healthy Cities' "Road Open For Play" initiative as part of the Cork Lifelong Learning Festival. Picture: Michael O'Sullivan / OSM PHOTO

Siubhán McCarthy had expected to be overseeing the final preparations for the Cork Lifelong Learning Festival last March. Instead, she found herself redeployed to the HSE's Inter-Agency Emergency Management Office, co-ordinating the fight against the coronavirus.

For 2020, there will be no festival but when it returns next year, communities will once again come together for the almost 600 events that make it the largest festival of its kind in the world.

The index for the 2019 festival runs from 3D printing events to Zumba. Under the letter 'c' alone are events categorised by the headings card playing, ceramics, chess clubs, childcare, choral events, coaching, community, community TV, computers, conversation, cookery, craft, creative writing, crochet, and current affairs. There's no hierarchy in the programme – all events are promoted equally and all events are free of charge.

"There's something in it for everyone," says Siubhán. "No matter what you're in to, you'll find something."

"The premise is lifelong learning is good for you. It's good for you individually, to challenge yourself, it's good for your family, and it's good for your community, and basically, something to be embraced and encouraged. Regardless of the level of learning, regardless of what your interests are, it's a good

thing to continue to learn throughout your life.

"Every event is free, which, personally, is hugely important that nobody has to have money in their pocket to go and learn or experience something.

"For people who are unemployed or thinking of reskilling, it's invaluable that you can go and try these things for free."

The festival has grown from 65 events in 2004, largely focused on how to use your smartphone or laptop, to an incredibly expansive offering, with some showcase events bringing together 20 or 30 different providers from that community. Based on surveys of the event hosts, Siubhán estimates that 25,000 people, from all ages and backgrounds, are impacted by the festival across the week.

It's not like any festival she's organised before, either, pulling categories of events together that range from aromatherapy to barbering, dementia to flower arranging, green matters to mental health, otters to quilting, and stagecraft to Traveller culture. Often, it allows community groups, like Meitheal Mara, who work with vulnerable people and on cross-border initiatives, the opportunity to spread the word to a wider audience.

"It's been a strange model for a festival in that I've managed a couple of festivals, like Ocean to City and Cork Craft Month, but in both of those, I was responsible for

the programming of the festival. Whereas in this instance, I'm purely a coordinator. I just pull together what everybody else does and make it into a festival.

"It brings huge diversity to it and it's really uncurated. Anything that comes towards me that has some piece of learning is acceptable as an event in the festival. Really, there's learning in everything. There's learning in making a cup of tea in the morning. There's nothing that really can be turned away because there's something to learn everywhere."

Siubhán emphasises how the festival is built on volunteerism, and supported by the likes of UCC, CIT, Cork City Council, the HSE, and Cork ETB.

"Nobody gets paid to be in the festival. I don't pay for any of the venues. So in order for it to be free, they have to put it on for free. Some people have difficulty wrapping their head around that but it's a brilliant thing because people are passionate about what they're doing and what they want to share.

"That's why the festival has grown so much and it's so solid in the psyche. We rely heavily on volunteers and if they didn't give of their time, there would be no festival."

Letters

After a hiatus of over twenty-five years I restarted my college education in 2018 when I joined the Higher Diploma course in Coaching and Coaching Psychology in UCC. I wanted to re-engage with academic learning and open up opportunities for my own self-development and more importantly to bring new expertise and knowledge to my organisation that would benefit my colleagues and the parents and families we support. In the weeks leading up to the course I regularly found myself questioning my decision to go back to education and if I had made the right decision to do so. More importantly, like many people who are considering a return to education, I pondered if I had the level of commitment required to complete the course.

They say that hindsight is 20/20, but I know now that I made the right choice. I can only describe the year that followed as a transformative journey of discovery in both my work and personal life. I joined a class group where the sense of community and collegiality was always to the fore. All elements of the curriculum were insightful and the lecturers were hugely supportive while they challenged and inspired you in equal measure. I gained new knowledge and understanding of how coaching and coaching psychology could add real value to people's lives and help them to build their self-awareness, self-belief and enhance their performance and enjoy a more rewarding and fulfilling life. I found that these evidence-based coaching approaches were applicable in multiple settings across both personal and business domains and the course equipped me with the skills and knowledge I needed to become an effective and caring coach. The course also gave me an opportunity to develop a new service for our organisation where I had an opportunity to apply those new skills in a real world setting to support the parents of children with autism in managing the many challenges they face in their lives.

From a personal and professional perspective, I would have no hesitation in recommending the Coaching and Coaching Psychology programme in UCC. With the constant support of the lecturers and the encouragement of my classmates, it gave me a wonderful opportunity to learn and grow as a person. More importantly it challenged my thinking, it pushed me to challenge myself and ultimately to see how coaching can help to unlock some of the vast untapped potential of the people in the world around me.

Kieran McAuliffe

General Manager, Shine Centre for Autism (Cork)

What I enjoy most about the course in Development and Human Rights is the diversity of subjects covered."

They range across human rights, politics, history, geography, economics, development, climate change, feminism, philosophy and more. All are delivered by lecturers who make each topic entirely accessible for a very varied group of students.

Christine,

2nd year ACE student, Development and Global Human Rights

I can highly recommend the MSc. Mindfulness Based Wellbeing, Teaching Mindfulness in Schools course. From the very first lecture I immediately felt at home. It is heart warming to be among a group of people who share the same passion and who are embarking on a mindful journey in Mindfulness based Wellbeing. A warm and caring environment is created by the extraordinary, skilled and inspiring lecturers. Their knowledge and wisdom guide you in a steady and supportive way. This training has a very strong focus on supported experiential learning and deepening ones own personal practice. This course has further ignited my passion for integrating mindfulness into my day as a teacher, both in school and outside of school. It has greatly enhanced my sense of well-being and that of my class pupils.

Madeline Carrane,

Primary School Teacher, MSc. Mindfulness Based Wellbeing; Teaching Mindfulness in Schools

It took me over 10 years to find a course that prompted me back to further education. The MSc in Personal and Management Coaching was exactly the course for me. It offered evening lectures and weekend workshops to accommodate a full time job. The diversity of the modules offered something for everyone and the quality of the lectures made it easy to go from work to UCC.

There was a fantastic camaraderie within the class. Very quickly we knew we were on a learning journey together and we all helped each other along the way. The learnings from open discussions are so applicable and relevant to every aspect of life. This course equipped me with the skills and confidence to truly use a coaching approach in my workplace helping my team to reach their potential.

Simon Keegan,

Manager at Eli Lilly



Colette O'Sullivan, Finance and Operations Manager at ACE at UCC



Pat Cotter, UCC General Services Duty Officer and co-founder of A Summer's Evening on the Quad. Photo: Michael McSweeney/ Provision

“They invest in the people”

Cover Story Continued

operations of UCC. A Duty Officer in the University's General Services team, he's worked under five different presidents in his 33 years on campus. And for the last 15 years, he's been the driving force behind the Summer's Evening on the Quad concerts, which bring 2,000 people to the campus every year and saw Pat receive the Lord Mayor's Civic Award for his exceptional contribution to the cultural life of Cork. 100% of ticket sales go to their charity partners, with north of €600,000 raised for good causes since 2006.

That concert was part of the reason he chose to take up his initial diploma, after much persuasion. Willie Weir of ACE had been in his car for four years or so, 'Do the course, Pat. It'll be very helpful to you. You're doing the stuff Youth and Community Work is all about.' Eventually, he relented. Not just to up-skill for the concerts, but to help in his volunteering with Cork Penny Dinners and Fr Mathew's Basketball Club.

Now, he's playing the role Willie did for him.

"I'd advise anybody to take the step because I was fearful of looking stupid, or not being able to cope with the workload, or not being able to comprehend the questions, and not ask questions, and the usual fears that people would have when it came to education.

"But I had all of that in my head

because when you were in school long ago, the teacher would always say you're the one that's going to end up sweeping the streets and you were constantly being put down. But with ACE, the programmes have a way of giving you a sense of worth, which is brilliant.

"I found the most difficult part for me was just making the start and saying I'm going to do it and not putting it on the long finger. If you feel you want to do something and a course is suitable for you, just go and do it. It could be the simplest course but it's something ACE is putting on that people have an interest in and you will get to meet like-minded people there.

"With the Youth and Community course, we've made lifelong friends. We're still in touch with one another and still bounce questions off one another in different situations. So it's not just about going to a course every Tuesday night and getting a diploma at the end of it. You actually get a life skill that you can carry with you no matter where you go.

"Until then, I probably wouldn't have done this interview with you. I would have said no but it's given me more enlightenment into how I have a bit of knowledge in certain areas and if I can share it, I can share it.

"What ACE do, they encourage and enhance that a little bit more and bring it out in you. The help is there and the skills are there to bring you along, and it's not all

about getting the fees in from this, they invest in the people."

For the Disability Studies Certificate, Pat approached it as a means of understanding the changes that UCC could make to help students with disabilities. But it was a presentation on concert access, and how even some disability-friendly venues can mean restricted access, that sparked an idea.

"On the back of that, I decided to put on a concert on the Friday night before the main concert for people with disabilities. What would happen is anybody in a wheelchair, or who has autism, or visual or hearing difficulties, could come along to the Quad, enjoy a concert, but not only could they sit with their family, they weren't placed anywhere differently.

"In three years, it's gone from 800 people to nearly 2,000 people coming in with disabilities and they love every aspect of it. It's the first time in a lot of cases that kids with autism could come to an event without having to wear the headphones or without having to go into a dark room, and were able to walk around if they felt like walking around or tumble down the bank if they wanted to tumble down the bank, with no restrictions on them."

Amazing life stories

Aside from group work, having continuous assessment, instead of written exams, appealed to Pat, and he received all the help he needed as he found himself writing for assignments, with the lecturers approachable at all times.

"It was one of the most interesting things I've ever done and the support given to me by ACE was

second to none.

"I found the lecturers there had life experiences and had worked in the backgrounds in which they were teaching and were able to tell us the good and the bad. It was just amazing to hear their life stories.

"You learn an awful lot about yourself, which was brilliant. But even some of the stuff I was able to lend, the life skills I'd picked up, even though I didn't have formal education to a certain extent, would have shocked people to know I had that volume of work ethic and the job I was doing. Likewise, I was shocked at how other people had so much on their plate and they didn't realise how much they were doing until it came to putting it down on paper.

"If it wasn't for the ACE course, I know I wouldn't be on a Master's course at the minute."

September 22nd is the key date taking up his attention now, deadline day for his dissertation. As ever, his volunteer work is central to the topic: life after homelessness. Asking how do people cope with getting a house, and what structures and supports are put in place for them?

"That'll delve into the reason why people have been homeless in the first place. Was it down to loneliness living in bed flats on their own? Was it down to a breakup in a marriage or a relationship? Or was it life just got on top of them?"

There's no shortage of people for him to talk to, with Penny Dinners on board as well as his part in the High Hopes Choir. And he won't be short of confidence either, as he goes from interviewee to interviewer.

Springboard opening doors for students

Springboard+ courses offer targeted qualifications in growing sectors of the economy that need skilled personnel.

Funded by the Government and EU, Springboard+ courses are free for job-seekers and returners to education, while those in employment receive a 90% fee subsidy from the Higher Education Authority.

Academic theory is mixed with an industry focus to produce courses that are as highly rated by graduates as they are sought-after by employers.

Kieran Egan, who completed the Operator Development (Pharma Manufacturing) course last year, saw a number of his classmates get manufacturing jobs during or upon completing the certificate. He was among them, being promoted to a Packaging Shift Lead at BioMarin towards the

end of the course.

"We had painters, carpenters, people with previous degrees that weren't quite sure where they wanted to go. This course opens doors for you. It's not just manufacturing, it's so broad that you have different paths for which way you want to go.

"If people are unaware of their own applications, it just opens their eyes to what they can actually achieve. There was one chap in that class, he used to get epileptic episodes because of groups and he got first-class honours.

"It pushed him outside his comfort zone so if you want to open doors and opportunities and just make yourself a better person, it's definitely a fantastic course."

Kieran wouldn't have considered himself as having a strong educational background before starting the course. He entered working life as an apprentice plumber before the recession shut that door. He moved

into the biopharmaceutical sector and it was there that education returned to his radar.

However, the structure was totally unlike his secondary school experience.

"That was one thing I liked about the course because I didn't do the standard Leaving Cert, as such. My family was all into apprenticeships so I went down that road. I just don't have the initiative to sit down and absorb information and that's what the Leaving Cert essentially is. How much information can you absorb on that day?"

"Whereas this course was an ongoing assessment. I actually found the course quite easy because it's something I was interested in and there were no exams at the end. I'm sure if there were exams at the end, I would have found it quite difficult so the structure they have implemented is fantastic."

Kieran earned first-class honours. Another first was learning how to do presentations, which has become part of his new role with BioMarin.

"Presenting in groups definitely brought me out of my shell. Inside in work, you've to give inductions if there are new starts or interns coming in. It's a very daunting task if you're not used to it but UCC and

the course material prepared you.

"I never, ever presented anything in front of anybody before I went to UCC. The first assignment was tough but by the end of it, I was quite comfortable presenting to the whole class."

The course also worked through job applications and case studies to help with interviews.

"There were certain aspects that helped me gain experience and knowledge before applying for the job.

"The other side of it was the interpersonal skills. We did a lot of people management and conflict management and all these are contributing factors to becoming a shift lead because they play a big role in that. Attending a Level 7 course that was primarily made up of that course material, it definitely benefited my application."

Kieran says he found the work-study-life balance manageable too.

"Why it worked so well for me was because it was one night a week for three hours. I have a two-and-a-half-year-old child, we were in the process of selling our house to buy another property, full-time work, and starting a new job. I was able to complete the course to the best of my ability with all this stuff

going on in my life.

"Even the assignments themselves might have been another two or three hours a week so it was six hours a week tops for a Level 7

course.

"There were quite a few people got jobs in manufacturing so the proof is there the course is doing what it's intended to do."

Spotlight on Springboard+ at ACE

ACE offers part-time Springboard+ courses from NFQ level 7-9 which include:

- Academic expertise combined with industry focus aimed at upskilling or reskilling
- Dedicated support for adult learners
- Individual career coaching
- Courses rated highly by employers and graduates alike
- 100% fee subsidies for jobseekers and returners to the workforce
- 90% fee subsidies for those in employment.

Applications will open in late May/early June. E-mail ace.springboard@ucc.ie to join the mailing list.

Springboard+ is co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Social Fund and part of the ESF programme for employability, inclusion and learning 2014-2020.

Left: Kieran Egan, Springboard student at UCC.



The Psychology Behind Policing

You might think Allison O'Flynn's Master's in Drama and Theatre Studies seems utterly unrelated to her Diploma in the Psychology of Criminal Behaviour.

It might not be a common qualification in the ranks of An Garda Síochána but Allison, a Kilkenny native who joined the force in 2005, can see a link.

"Drama and acting is all tied in with human nature and the study of human psychology so I guess there is a thread from that point of view."

The diploma involves one week-end a month in the classroom, with Allison's group including four guards, one of whom has since become a sergeant. The class also included a prison officer, a solicitor, and social and community workers, among others.

The tutors were similarly varied, including talks from a prison psychologist, a youth rehabilitation counsellor, a Garda inspector on dealing with witnesses, an army officer on military law, and a researcher leading the battle against child abuse imagery online.

"The course tutors they had in were excellent," says Allison, "like really high quality and engaging. What I found interesting about it and really comforting in a way was that there are other people fighting the same battle as you, but in their subject.

"It reassures me because there's only so much the police can do about a lot of things. We are a last

resort, really. People call us when things have fallen apart.

"But to think there's so much can be done to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour before you ever need to call the police, that you're stopping the problem before it begins, it's really the way things need to be focused. The problem with that, from a policing point of view, is that it's very hard to put into statistics crimes that haven't happened."

There are many examples of different disciplines improving policing outcomes: architectural developments producing housing estates without the alleyways, nooks, and crannies of social housing projects of the past; car manufacturers improving technology to prevent thefts.

That crime prevention ethos has permeated policing approaches, too, with the Public Order Unit, which Allison is a member of, employing step-by-step escalations in response to volatile situations and clear messaging to ease tensions when dealing with the psychology of crowds.

The content covered in the course also filters into Allison's day-to-day work as part of the Community Policing Unit in Mayfield.

"It just becomes so enmeshed in the way you're thinking, it broadens your mind in your approach to things and the reach you can have.

"The psychology of it all just permeates policing totally. There's much more awareness of that these days than there would have been in the past.

“What I found really comforting was that there are other people fighting the same battle as you, but in their subject.”

"Community policing is more of a personal touch. People feel there's a human connection there. That's the basis of all policing, knowing what's going on in your community. It gives a bit of comfort to the community and makes it more stable.

"The fear of crime is actually much more prevalent than the actual crime, especially in the older populations. They're the least likely to be the victims of crime but they have the most fear of being a victim of crime. The psychology of all that is really interesting when you drill down into it."

The community approach pays extra dividends when dealing with a situation like the coronavirus pandemic, with people living in isolation more plugged in to a force that's there to help them, whatever the situation.

As for those unsure about taking on the course, Allison recommends the 10-week Introduction to Criminal and Forensic Psychology course as a taster for the diploma.

"I really loved it. I'd totally advise people if they're interested at all, they'll find it very rewarding and you can focus in on the stuff you

enjoy – like I really enjoyed all the stuff about psychopathy and personality disorders. You just learn so much.

"I was always really looking forward to my lectures. There's just so much variety within it and it exposes you to the expansive nature of the field."

Course Spotlight

Diploma in the Psychology of Criminal Behaviour

Location: UCC

Duration: 2 years

Delivery: One weekend per month (Oct. to Sept).

Aim: This course explores the workings of the criminal mind and examines what motivates individuals to commit crimes of a deviant nature, as well as how investigators collect psychological clues



Allison O'Flynn keeping an eye on St Patrick's Street as part of a Mayfield Community Policing patrol during the coronavirus lockdown. Photo: Garda Síochána - Southern Region Facebook

Life story: Coaching course ‘a journey to realising your potential’

When Hugh O’Donovan stood in front of a room full of ACE graduates to deliver his commencement speech, he distilled two decades of army experience, and another two decades in the world of coaching, into his opening line: “You can always rewrite your story.”

It’s a story he’s lived time and again.

His current role as a chartered psychologist and performance coach is the perfect melting pot for Hugh’s varied life experiences.

He started out as a primary school teacher, with a background in sociology, before rising to the rank of Commandant in the Irish Defence Forces by the time of his retirement, having served in Lebanon and Yugoslavia, as well as along the border during The Troubles. A qualified chef and sommelier, he established a restaurant with his wife, Michelle, before completing his psychology degrees.

In his sporting life, he played rugby for Munster and Cork Con, lining out as part of a second-row pairing with Donal Lenihan in a star-studded Con team which featured a host of Ireland internationals; half-backs Michael Bradley and Ralph Keyes, and Moss Finn; plus Munster’s try-scorer against the All Blacks in that famous 1978 win, Christy Cantillon.

It all feeds into his work as programme co-director of the Higher Diploma in Coaching / Coaching Psychology, with Hugh also organising a conference which coincides with the 10th anniversary of the course. Indeed, he’s had no problem attracting speakers as UCC develops into a “hotspot” in the expanding field of coaching.

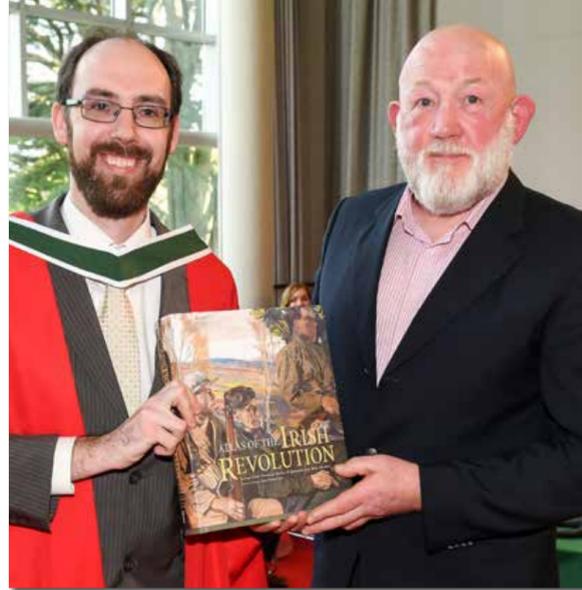
Much of his work can be distilled down to untapping the incredible potential in people, understanding and overcoming what may be holding them back.

“Sometimes people ask me how long have I been coaching,” says Hugh, “and even though I didn’t fully realise it, or understand the theory or the logic around it, I started coaching early in my career as an army officer, working with people, motivating people, leading people, managing people in stressful and demanding situations.

“It’s a really interesting space to be in because at a global level, there are certain things we can’t predict or control, like dealing with the coronavirus at the moment.

“We do need to understand different ways of behaving, different ways of relating to the world we live in, which are likely to give us some chance of continuing even, dare I say it, as a species into the future.”

For Hugh, the importance of education isn’t so much the regurgitation of pages of textbook theory and it’s certainly not one size fits all. In this changing world, we need to train ourselves in adaptability.



Dr Griffin Murray UCC presents guest speaker Hugh O’Donovan with *The Atlas of the Irish Revolution* after addressing the 2019 ACE spring conferring ceremony at Devere Hall.

Photo: David Keane

“That’s being challenged with the rate of change currently. You can become an expert in one particular area and change comes along and you lose your job or you may need to reinvent yourself along the way.

“There’s very little within education that actually prepares people to manage themselves and deal with all of this change, all of the potential setbacks. What happens when you lose your job? What happens when things don’t turn out the way you planned them? How do you manage yourself?”

“When we talk about things like emotional intelligence, as opposed to intelligence quotient (IQ) and how that is measured in education currently, emotional intelligence is becoming increasingly important in terms of how people relate to the world and those in it. We’re very good at solving problems, we’re very good at delivering tasks, and we’ve all of the educational requirements around that, but the third leg of that stool is how we work with and manage people.

“Even going back to my military days when I was a young army officer, I was trained in leading other people but with very little reference to how I led myself, how I managed myself, how I understood myself.”

The messy business of working with people

Hugh sees people enrolling with their own diverse experiences to bring to the classroom, from business to health, from education to policing, and everything in between.

“When people are given more

responsibility in organisations, maybe leadership roles or management roles, it’s then the messy business of working with people starts.

“It becomes slightly more challenging when you have to engage with people and motivate them and understand them and manage them. This is where the growth is for many people. They have loads of experience but it’s beginning to learn to manage themselves and other people in more effective ways.”

And while he’s not a man for many formulas, he does offer one: performance equals potential minus the interference. That could be internal, through our anxieties and doubts and lack of confidence, and external in terms of the challenges put in our path.

“One core definition we begin with in coaching is unlocking people’s potential to maximise their performance. Sometimes our thinking is the greatest obstacle to achieving our potential.

“Coaching is a very pure form of education in that it seeks to draw out the potential that’s always there for people that sometimes remains unrealised for various reasons, how we perceive ourselves and how we limit ourselves: ‘I’d never be able to do that. That would be too hard.’

“So how do you rewrite your story? The reality of coaching is to invite them into what I call the fear zone, the anxiety zone, the insecurity zone, and just beyond that is the development zone, the growth zone, and moving on to your new comfort zone, which might be getting a diploma.

“Even going to UCC, doing a course, it was a big thing.”

Cover Story Continued

his time spent inside the classroom. Martin was among a group of kids who’d bowl up and down the road from their estate to a local beach, never losing a bowl to the sea but plenty to the surrounding ditches. He reckons many are still there to this day, monuments to the biggest name in Irish road bowling.

He left school around the turn of the millennium with a poor Leaving Cert in hand but it was boom-time in Ireland, so work was plentiful. “It was all about building and I was working for

block layers, labouring jobs, stuff like that.”

The crash, though, meant it was time to convert to factory work, where he found a job as a contractor with DePuy Synthes in 2012, before being made full-time 18 months later.

But being an All-Ireland champion in one part of your life means you’re likely to be ambitious in your work too, and Martin wanted to develop himself further.

“Since then, I’ve always been trying to progress and the opportunity came up through UCC.

‘It opens up a whole new world. It’s a new way of seeing’

Students describe seeing the world around them with new eyes after a few months on the European Art History Diploma.

The course jam-packs 2,500 years of art, sculpture, and architecture into two years of weekly classes. There’s also the small matter of two international trips – one to Florence or Rome in the first year, followed by another European trip in year two, usually to Amsterdam, Berlin, London, or Paris – although they’re far from the only attraction.

Sheila Kingston didn’t know about the international trips when she signed up.

An accounting and maths teacher at Intermediate School, Killorglin, she’s among a number of students travelling a distance to attend the Tuesday night lectures. Sheila from Killarney. One from Tralee. Two from Glenbeigh. Two from Limerick.

“For years, I always wanted to do the diploma and every year, I’d say maybe I’ll get to do it next year. But this year, I spotted it and started it and I love it.

“You see things differently. The lectures are just so interesting. I thought before, how can I sit for three hours and listen to lectures, but it actually flies by. It’s because it’s visual as well and you’re engaging with it all the time.

“Even nowadays, if I’m walking around town, I notice architecture in a way I never did before. It retrains your eye and makes you aware of everything that’s going on around you.

“I just love it. It opens up a whole new world. It’s a new way of seeing.

“I know two friends of mine have said they’d love to do it once it starts again, just from me talking to them. Even with the distance. But it’s worth it.”



ACE European Art History Diploma students view *The Umbrellas* by Renoir at Hugh Lane Gallery in Dublin.

It’s not just holidays abroad either. The likes of the Crawford Gallery in Cork, the National Museum in Dublin, the Hunt Museum in Limerick, and medieval areas of Kilkenny have also featured on trips.

Miriam Verling, a recently retired Montessori and childcare teacher from the Cork College of Commerce, has already been making use of her newfound knowledge.

“It’s amazing how you look with new eyes at paintings and sculptures because now you’ve got the correct tools to look at what the artist was doing.

“It makes you more interested in going into even local museums. I went back into the Crawford Art Gallery with totally new eyes. I’d

“It was a bit daunting for me when I hadn’t much school done, or anything like that, but I went with it. It wasn’t what I thought it’d be, it wasn’t as difficult. Lots of my own experiences helped with the assignments.

“It wasn’t all plain sailing. I struggled with writing, getting the right language for assignments. I could talk it out but getting the right words and the style they’d want it written in, backing it all up; that took a lot of research but I enjoyed that side of it too.”

He entered the course working as an operator, and emerged as a line manager, overseeing 10 people in the HipEx department. “I’ve been in that job since I completed the course,” he adds.

He’d like to continue on that path now, targeting a role as a team lead

down the line.

“[It’s about] challenging myself. A team lead would be challenging but that’s what I want to do. I don’t want to sit back. I’d rather take a challenge on and if it works out, it works out. It’s a bit like doing the course, just take it on, and I’m glad I passed it and glad it stands to me.”

He says the course made him look at people and the wider company in a new way in his day-to-day work. “You automatically put it into practice when you’re working. Unknown to myself, I always come back to stuff I learned, especially dealing with people.”

Work gave him support, too, managing his shifts around his study, as he learned to manage the coursework in bitesize chunks,

avoiding the pitfalls of cramming, while also fitting in some road bowling training in a closed-off Carrigaline factory.

“If I can do it, anyone can do it. From a limited background in education and being out of education for 15 or 20 years, it’s very possible.

“The rewards for yourself, even to complete a course and graduate out of it, besides what’ll come down the line out of having qualifications, it’s a great boost to your confidence, a great boost to your self-belief.

“Anything is possible. It’s up to yourself if you want to put in the work. It can be difficult managing time with family, work, or other commitments but at the end of it, the rewards are there.”

“It gives you a different perspective on things you think you might know”



Jim O’Donovan accompanied by his wife Catherine Devlin (left) and niece Anne Burke, who is manager of UCC ACE, after receiving his Certificate in Arts (History) in November 2019. Picture: David Keane

Jim O’Donovan wasn’t long retired from his job with Cork City Council when he started looking for a course to take on.

A former director of the city’s environment and recreation services, he set-up the Cork City Marathon in 2007 and served as race director until 2018.

He had completed an MA in Local Government Management in 2005 but was looking for a new challenge, to pursue an interest.

That’s where the Certificate in History came onto his radar.

“I found it very good, very interesting. I had done some different courses but not that kind of academic-type course.

“The content of the course was quite challenging and very interesting. It was quite a small group, eight or 10 or us, and there were quite varying opinions about issues covered. There was good discussion in the class.”

Jim couldn’t but be struck by the commitment of many in the class, in their 30s and 40s, taking time between their family and work lives to study something they had a passion for.

“Being retired, I had that bit more time, even though I didn’t spend too much time on it, to read and research. A lot of the people were working as well and some of them had young families so it was more of an effort for them to attend the course and do the essays and reading.

“It was a significant effort for people who were working as well, coming out for a few hours on a Wednesday night through the winter when they could be at home. It just showed most of them had a strong passion for the subject.

“It was good to have a group with that interest and commitment so I’d recommended it as a course to anyone with an interest in history. You’re studying the subject

more deeply and getting different perspectives from the lecturers and from the books.

“It gives you a different perspective on things you think you might know.”

He has nothing but praise for the tutors either, who were happy to facilitate questions and comments from the class.

“The lecturers, like John Ware, Alan McCarthy, Rory O’Dwyer, Jacqueline Fitzgibbon, they’re all very engaged with their work and extremely knowledgeable.

“They were open to questions and different comments. They encouraged it. They would ask, what do people think of this, that, and the other?”

Topics covered included The Origins of European Identity, The Making of the Modern Irish State, US History since 1865, and a case study in research skills.

Jim found getting used to the set-pieces of essay-writing, punctuation and referencing, a challenge, but one he was happy to embrace.

“We had to do an oral presentation on the research we did on Éamon de Valera, which was again a bit of a challenge but that’s good. One of the modules was basically to do a critique on a book, Judging Dev by Diarmaid Ferriter.

“In critiquing that book, we had to look at other work on De Valera. I found doing the research increased my knowledge of De Valera and I would certainly have much more respect for him now than I would’ve had before.

“There was a good bit of reading to do, a good bit of research. It was challenging to do essays and even to have the written exam, which was the Origins of European Civilization module. I hadn’t done a written exam for 10 or 12 years. But overall, I would recommend it highly.”

Course Spotlight

Diploma in European Art History (Special Purpose Award)

Venue: UCC

Duration: 2 years

Delivery: One evening per week plus occasional field trips

Aim: The course surveys European art history from the fifth century BCE to contemporary practice. It introduces you to the work of artists, sculptors, and architects in the disciplinary canon and examines their work within the broader social and cultural context of its production.

Sanctuary movement a gift amid traumas of direct provision

Deborah Oniah left her home country to escape feelings of powerlessness. Not being able to exercise her rights or fully be herself. To avoid the cycle of hopelessness that so many had fallen into and she could feel creeping up on her.

Leaving her family and her country was a hard decision but the only option she had, to protect herself and her children.

When she arrived in Ireland three years ago with her three sons and a daughter on the way, she found herself cast into the direct provision system. Another cycle of isolation, fear, and uncertainty.

She fell into depression, trapped in this hostel with nowhere to go or no means to go there. But Deborah found a way to escape, through speaking and writing, through supporting and advocating for asylum seekers, through everyone she meets on the Sanctuary Runners and at Cork Migrant Centre coffee mornings, and through education.

She applied for everything she could do that was pinned to that noticeboard, each one a ticket to freedom. One such ticket was a notice about UCC's Sanctuary Scholarships.

Deborah is a qualified lawyer and had worked as a life coach in Nigeria but she didn't believe she'd be good enough to be accepted. She

found others believing in her before she believed in herself.

Now, a year into her Postgraduate Diploma in Trauma Studies, she says her life has been transformed through education.

"My kids are so proud, because they saw me go through everything. All the times I cried and sometimes they would join in and cry with me. They didn't know why but they'd start crying. They saw all the suffering and they saw me picking myself up and doing this.

"Like who would have thought someone like me would be in UCC? I remember the first time I held my student ID card in my hand. Just to have that and feel I'm part of ACE and part of UCC... I don't have my residency yet but I look at myself and just to know I'm in UCC is huge.

"For me to be able to do that with kids and still study, you can't put a price on it."

Dark place

Deborah describes herself as still being in the recovery phase from the traumas she's endured.

"Coming to Ireland and hoping you would have that freedom and then being in a space of direct provision and being isolated and not being with people was quite traumatising. I was in a dark place, very depressed.

"The beginning of the course was

about victims and victim-blaming. That was huge for me. Where we grew up in Africa, there are so many things you take as normal but they're not normal. Because you're used to it and you're born into it and the system is like that, you don't see anything wrong until you come to a different space.

"For me, to read through those lines and see everything I've been through and I'm still standing, it was really strong. In the course, I realised that for me to be able to go through all the trauma and victimhood and still be standing is a sign of resilience."

Deborah grew up with her grandmother after her mother left, while her elder sisters were raised at two aunt's houses. She could feel the same patterns unfolding for her kids as they faced huge challenges in school and she faced huge challenges as a woman trying to have a career and family life.

Law took a backseat and for a while, she went around schools teaching kids about self-esteem while struggling to have any herself.

"I just got tired because you're in a situation where you know it's wrong but there's no support for you. Because I had the education I have, it's not like it was easier to leave my family and leave my husband and just come. It wasn't

easy but at the time, it was the only decision I needed to take because I was stuck and it was getting worse and worse and worse.

"I was becoming invisible and powerless in myself and as a mum, I was seeing the same pattern unfolding for my own kids. It was a huge fear of can I do it for myself alone? But it was something I had to do. It was very hard, one of the hardest decisions I ever had to make in my life.

"I'd never been to Ireland but I knew I needed to leave."

After a year stuck inside the walls of the direct provision centre, Deborah started finding ways to get involved in the community, describing the moment she joined Sanctuary Runners as "when my life started".

Inspired by her kids, she crossed the finish line of the Cork City Marathon relay: "You know when people say you can't buy happiness, you just have it. That was a gift for me to have and I've been running since then. Running is my wellness tool now, and reading too, and just having education, and being able to better myself."

I only know me

When she went to the first Trauma Studies lecture, she felt intimidated among the professionals, such as therapists and psychologists, in her class.

Breaking down barriers to independence

"The CCL gave me my first steps to independence. If it hadn't been for them, I wouldn't be the person I am today."

Kevin Walsh was asked back to UCC recently to do a presentation for the University's social work students on his experiences of the Certificate in Contemporary Living (CCL).

As he cast his mind back to 2012, signing up as he did after completing the Leaving Cert, Kevin recalled his thoughts at the time. How all his friends in school were talking about going to college, how he wanted to be like them, and like his parents too, who had both gone to college and become doctors. He wanted his college experience.

The CCL, an innovative, two-year, part-time course for people with intellectual disabilities, gave him that chance.

He remembered his mother giving up full-time work, going part-time to help him with his homework every day. How he was "totally dependent" on her assistance. But as time went on, he became more independent, both in his studies and in making his own way from Bishopstown to UCC every morning, something he couldn't have imagined before.

"I went from a child in school to a more independent adult during my two years in the CCL," he wrote. "I became much less dependent on my mother. Once she knew I would

be safe and minded, she was happy to step back and let me grow up.

"The CCL gave me my first steps to independence. If it hadn't been for them, I wouldn't be the person I am today."

It's a story repeated many times in the 11 years since the CCL began life as a pilot module. Back then, parents insisted the course must keep going and growing. They raised funds for a second module to be developed, and UCC staff organised fundraisers too.

The community impact evident from the start.

Cocooned

Several years later and Eileen Walsh, Kevin's mother, still speaks about the impact of the course on Kevin, on their family, on his classmates, and on the wider UCC community. Kevin has a speech and language issue which they've never managed to get a diagnosis for. That meant he didn't tick the necessary boxes for extra help in school, although he successfully completed his second-level education and joined his peers at UCC.

"Any time his school friends would see him around the UCC campus, he felt just like them," says Eileen.

"We had very much cocooned him until then but the CCL course

let him grow up, get independent, and in a way, move away from us. It taught him living skills. They used to bring them out on trips, it got them used to going on public transport, they did some work experience, they learned the internet, Gmail, computers, budgeting, music modules, project work. It gave them confidence in themselves, they were constantly praised, and they all learned how to help each other.

"It gave them the whole university experience. They got the graduation and went through life just like everybody else would.

"But more importantly, they really, really cared about them compared to other courses because since Kevin left, if there are things happening, they'll send out emails to the past pupils and they're very interested in how they've all done.

"When you have a child with a disability in most services, it's a box-ticking exercise. It's so frustrating and it's banging my head against a brick wall. Whereas in UCC, in the CCL course, they really were invested in them.

"It was an amazing experience and it's two years he really, really enjoyed. He just blossomed during the two years. It was great for us to see, and I would definitely encourage other people to do it. Everybody who went on it went on it for a different reason but everybody got something out of it."



Deborah Oniah, with her daughter Muna, speaking at UCC Refugee Week last February. *Picture: Tomás Tynner*



Kevin Walsh and his parents on his graduation day in UCC.

"The reflection journal we had to do for the second term was: for somebody you have worked with, write about trauma and recovery. I said to my lecturer, I don't talk to anyone, I don't know anyone. I only know me, myself, my life, and being in direct provision. She said, go ahead and write about it.

"It was healing to write it. This course is a huge recovery for me, just reading it and being able to write about me and tell my story. I don't think I will ever be as distressed as I used to be. Maybe I'll be tired or overwhelmed but that dark place of depression, I don't know if I will ever go there because I've been able to learn how to support myself with this course.

"It's been life-transforming for me, particularly being a mum in direct provision. Before now, it's just been living my life around my kids. But having something for me and understanding myself better and the best way to support myself, I'm very grateful.

"I remember when the news came about the lockdown, I was very anxious, I couldn't breathe. I had to stop and take deep breaths and then one of my teachers was saying, look, you're not the way you used to be. Before now, it'd be you being powerless and not having anything but now you have the support, you have your education, you have your kids, you're safe.

"Just the reminder that I have all of this helped me catch myself and say, okay, it's not the way it used

to be."

Ireland has given Deborah plenty of gifts, too: the opportunity to find her voice, to sit in the audience of a school play pinching herself with her son in the lead role, to work as an intercultural dialogue facilitator, and to have a piece published in *Correspondences: An Anthology to Call for an End to Direct Provision*.

In the piece, she wrote: "Behind the wall of the hostel, being in the asylum process, the dreaded brown registered envelope evokes much fear. The fear of uncertainty is very real. I am not sure what the Justice Department will say, or when they will make a decision. In this state, my life and safety and that of my children is one thing that keeps me awake most nights, low some days and full of fear on many other days. It can eat your time, mind, health and everything that gives you strength, but with nature and the people I met every day, I escape.

"The air that I breathe says yes to me. The green grass and trees say yes to me. The genuine people I have met since being here say yes to me. I know for sure this time my brown registered envelope will say yes to me. So, with faith, I escape.

"I have said yes to almost every opportunity that has come my way. That is the beauty of Ireland and life in general. It presents you with opportunity and if you have nothing, that opportunity is the something that you can have. I have said yes to the Cork City of Sanctuary movement, yes to facil-

itating, yes to continuous learning, yes to being a member of boards working with asylum seekers, and yes to speaking, and I will say yes to many more opportunities that I have. So, behind the wall of nothing, by saying yes, I have escaped."

Course Spotlight

Postgraduate Diploma in Trauma Studies

Venue: Online

Duration: 2 Years

Delivery: One evening per week plus occasional weekend workshops

Aim: This course focuses on both the individual and societal implications of trauma and draws on examples and experiences from individuals who survived, and societies emerging from, violent political conflict

Certificate in Contemporary Living

Venue: UCC

Duration: 2 years

Delivery: Two days per week

Aim: This course enables students with intellectual disabilities to develop skills to support increased self-determination and to maximise their capacities for participation in, and contribution to, their own communities and the wider society.

independent.

"It gives them a belief in themselves that they can do more than maybe they think they can do. And maybe it shows the families, as well, they are capable of doing more than we think because we always want to protect them."

In attending and graduating from UCC, Kevin also set the example for his four younger siblings, who looked up to him as he navigated college life.

"It was a stepping stone to help me prepare for independence," he says.

"It gave me way more confidence to make my own decisions. It gave me the ability to make my own way to college. All the modules gave me the opportunity to learn about myself and what I can do."

Assurance

Kevin is now learning to drive and has taken on more activities, like Toastmasters, which helped with his presentation to the social work class.

"CCL gave my mother the assurance that I can move on and helped me keep developing. In my talk to social work students in UCC, I said, people like us, especially people with disabilities, need to get into employment.

"Now, my goal is trying to get into a job, hopefully get independent, get my own car. They're the goals that help people with disabilities like myself.

"People I graduated from the course with now have jobs of their

own. One is working in the likes of 96FM and another is working in a medical centre in Skibbereen."

As he said to conclude his presentation: "My parents won't be around forever and I don't want to be dependent on my younger brothers and sisters. I want to be the best I can be, just like everybody else."

The course got Kevin thinking about the steps he'd like to take in life, and course director Máire Leane says many parents will flag their children finding their own voice through the CCL.

She cites students taking the study skills they've learned into further education courses in animation, hospitality, and IT, as well as the workplace.

"Increasingly people who have intellectual disabilities are going through mainstream channels in primary and secondary school but when they come to third-level, they hit a wall and have to deviate from where all their peers are going.

"Creating an inclusive teaching and learning environment in UCC that was open to and welcoming of different groups of learners is very much part of what we are trying to do. That fits in very well with the whole adult education ethos and the idea of looking at how can we do teaching and learning in a way that makes it more accessible to groups that wouldn't maybe fit with the traditional ways we've done it.

"Many of the students would have spent quite a bit of time availing of opportunities in a particular service

but then they're used to all that's on offer there and they're looking for something new. The change in environment from a very sheltered workshop or training setting into something like UCC, which is a huge campus, a huge number of students, and they just become one of this big group of students, is a very different kind of learning environment for them.

"Rather than just being part of a cohort that have disabilities, they're seeing themselves as being part of a wider cohort of everyday students. That really improves self-esteem for the students. They also love the buzz on campus.

"That freedom opens up a much bigger environment for them than they might have been used to if they've been in a service. That's important to them and they often tell us that they like being treated like adults, that they're given encouragement to think for themselves, that they're given challenges to figure out what they want for themselves, who they are themselves."

As Kevin says: "Today, I have my UCC graduation scroll and picture just like thousands of other students. I feel really proud to be a college graduate and an example to my younger siblings."

Just like any big brother. Just like any UCC student.

Autism Studies: the full spectrum of online learning experience

Laura Murray had dropped out of three different colleges before she took on UCC's Autism Studies diploma.

All along, her high IQ had masked the undiagnosed autism, ADHD, and dyslexia that were holding her back. She would spend 12 hours in the library, day after day, reading and rereading the same fourth paragraph until she began to make headway.

She would be well able to pass, her compensation methods finding ways around the problem, but each assignment ended in disappointment, failing to reflect the multiples of time and effort she was expending compared to her classmates.

Each time, she had to drop out, burned out by the strain, not understanding her sensory issues on campus, and isolated without the supports she needed to help her along the way.

Suffering a non-epileptic seizure while driving her kids around Dublin four years ago finally allowed her the appropriate medical attention to diagnose her autism and ADHD, with an educational psychologist later recognising her dyslexia.

Laura's response to her diagnosis was to study everything to do with autism. Every book she read, every TV show she watched, had to have an autistic character.

Autism was her obsession and getting a qualification meant a lot to her so when the online course in Autism Studies came upon her radar, it was a decision whether

or not to officially study what she was already studying. Her negative experiences of education, however, left her unsure.

She emailed programme coordinator Eileen McBride a year before she signed up, about her diagnosis, about her difficulties in life with learning. "I was saying I don't want to fail another course, I don't want to drop out, because I just don't think I've got it in me anymore. My resilience by that stage was wearing thin."

Eileen explained the course had been designed around people with lived experiences of autism. It's continuous assessment, flexible for all learning differences, and people can watch the lectures or read the material when it suits them.

"I didn't know it was not normal. I didn't know things could be improved," says Laura of her prior experiences of college.

"I would have been completely wiped out when you combine all of the undiagnosed issues I had. I would drop out not because I couldn't succeed but because I would just get complete burnout. I'd have gone into what felt like depression for a few months but I now know it was autistic burnout."

"It was one of the most frustrating things of my life because I'm a very academic person. I'd actually be quite intellectual but when I went to uni, I was confronted with the opposite of what I knew I was on the inside."

Having made the choice to be a stay-at-home mother for her chil-

dren, Laura says it would've been easy to hide in that role. But she felt a huge unfulfilled need to have a career, to have an academic passion to pursue. When her kids are ready for her to go back to work, she wanted to be ready too.

Saving grace

Since taking on the course last year, Laura was asked about her favourite hobby. 'Taekwondo' would be her default answer. Instead, without thinking, she blurted out 'learning'. And today, she can enjoy it without those 12-hour library marathons.

"I definitely have a sense of achievement when I get my essay in but also when I get my results back. I haven't felt at all disappointed. Now, I'm actually getting really good results on normal day-to-day effort. I love that I can fit it into my life."

"The format of the course is ideal, and having access to the UCC Disability Service kind of overwhelms me emotionally, having something I needed my whole life."

"I haven't needed to contact them as time has gone on but having the Disability Service and the tutors has been a saving grace."

Laura's goal is to accumulate a well-rounded understanding of the full spectrum of autistic experiences, from those living with it, parents, and those working in the support sector, like SNAs, teachers, and carers. The online learning discussion board facilitates that by bringing the class together in con-



UCC Autism Studies Diploma students Dévon Badenhorst (above) and Laura Murray (right)



versation, despite their distance. It also allows for an international dimension to be explored.

Dévon Badenhorst is using the course in part to spread awareness of autism, which is a taboo subject in her home country of Namibia.

Dévon didn't know what she wanted to do after finishing school until she started working with a boy with autism. After a while, though, she felt she'd hit a wall in how much she could help him. With no specialised option in Namibian

much money to a place you've never seen but I had no regrets.

"With UCC Autism Studies, it's a trusted source, it's backed up with a lot of research, there's a discussion platform that I can turn to and discuss anything with my fellow students, and it's really diverse and broad. It touches on topics I never even thought were applicable to autism."

"It's things you don't hear because, in Namibia, autism is a taboo topic. It's not known to most people and our larger autism communities are in poorer communities. They're kind of hidden away."

A new world

Working at the only school for kids with autism in Namibia, Dévon has gone from feeling lost to learning new topics to explore with her students. The practicality of the lectures having a direct impact on children living 9,000km away.

"The information has not just broadened my knowledge, it's broadened the knowledge of the people I work with on the spectrum as well, from kids to teenagers to adults. And because we have no information about autism in Namibia, unless we go on a website or contact someone overseas, we've used the school as the main point of information for Namibia."

"For any autism questions, I would go back to my notes and I can always refer them to some reading."

"It's helped a lot for us to build up not just the knowledge of autism in Namibia but awareness as well, because I feel we are 50 years behind Ireland at this point."

"I'm actually quite sad because the course is almost finished. Time flies when you're having fun and I was really having fun with the course. I would highly recommend

it and have done to about four of my friends. It opens up a new world to autism and it's a benefit to every single person involved in your autism journey."

Another perspective represented in the class is that of a parent and professional. Sharon McDonagh, from Ballincollig and now living in Dublin, has both.

Her son was diagnosed with Asperger's when he was eight and Sharon has since found herself

"It's helped a lot for us to build up not just the knowledge of autism in Namibia but awareness as well."

moving from HR and admin to working as an SNA.

She read everything she could on the subject but, like Laura and Dévon, found herself questioning the credibility of some of the information and interventions online.

"When you're a parent, you'll do anything to gain some support and resources," says Sharon. "You will go on the internet and you will pay the money, if you can afford it, to help your child. But all these people who say they have all this information or all this experience, it may not necessarily be true or backed up by scientific evidence."

She finds herself now buying books recommended by her classmates on the discussion board on top of her course reading. "I didn't have a prior degree but it's encouraged me to do further training."

She adds: "It gives you hope for the future and not to underestimate a child that hasn't functional communication. It's very important because you don't know how much they understand. You can be surprised which is what opens your

mind to be a little more hopeful and a little less judgmental."

Inside out

Sharon's plan is to move into teaching while Laura is looking towards advocacy, bringing together the different groups of what she sees as a fractured neurodiversity movement with their varied experiences of autism – from those with late diagnoses to parents speaking for their children.

"That's where I feel it's stuck," says Laura. "It's people communicating about autism using two completely different languages. It's like shouting two foreign languages at each other and neither one hearing what the other one is saying."

"I'm gaining experience in switching off my own personal experience of autism in order to hear other people's experiences, which is a very important ability in advocacy because my experience of autism is not the same as everyone else's. So I find the format and the diversity

Course Spotlight

Diploma in Autism Studies

Venue: UCC, Limerick, Kilkenny, Online

Duration: 2 years

Delivery: One evening per week plus occasional Saturdays

Aim: This course explores how people on the autistic spectrum experience the world and spans from the history of autism to the various strengths, challenges, theories and conceptualisations.

Social farmers harnessing the power of community

A social farming project in Kerry has harnessed the best of rural Ireland in a community service that supports inclusion opportunities for those living with intellectual disabilities and acquired brain injuries.

Initiated by South Kerry Development Partnership in 2013, the programme sees participants attend the farms once a week to contribute to the day-to-day operations, be it tending to livestock, growing and delivering vegetables, attending the mart, or a whole host of other possible activities. More than 30 participants are currently availing of the programme on 20 farms. In 2020 the course delivery has expanded and is being offered to students in Cork and Limerick.

The voluntary nature of the programme has seen bonds forged between participants, farmers, and families that have turned into long-standing friendships. Some participants have even gone on holidays with their host families over the years.

All involved have experienced the benefits, with many of the farmers returning to education last year after requesting more formal training to further develop upon their practical experiences. 13 enrolled in that first course, the one-year Certificate in Practice Support in Social Farming, operated between UCC ACE and the University's outreach campus in Kerry, Skellig CRI. All 13 passed with flying colours.

Birds, leaves, and natural silence

Patricia Kelleher was one such student.

She's had a participant attending her and her husband Anthony's farm, near Killarney, for the past seven years. It's a relationship

that's reaped increasing rewards as time goes by.

"He loves coming out here. He's well able, a lovely man, and he'd do anything for us. He gets stuck in. He's always mad to tell us news, very chatty, and great to take a joke, very honest. You can see he's blossomed in his confidence since he came here on the farm."

"We're just glad to give him a chance he'd never otherwise get. He'd be stuck in a concrete jungle otherwise so he looks forward to coming out here."

"Do you know what he said to Anthony one day? It's so peaceful out here. He goes for a lot of walks in the National Park in Killarney and Muckross and I didn't realise there's always noise out there. You've kids laughing, people talk-



For the past three years Kerry farmers Breeda & Patrick O'Sullivan have been participating in social farming
Picture: Valerie O'Sullivan

ing, horses clip-clopping, busses coming, going, tourists chatting. But there was nothing out here only the birds in the trees, the rustling of the leaves, and natural silence.

"He picks up on things we take for granted. We get a lot out of it but what he gets is an abundance

of inner peace when he comes out here.

"I like teaching him about the farm because I'd be telling no-one about the farm otherwise. I love to pass on knowledge of farming and cattle. It's what I like and I've been around them all my life."

Activities on the farm have included measuring and cutting steel for calf pens, improving electric fencing, piking silage, cleaning sheds, working in the recently-installed polytunnel, dosing cattle, and weighing calves to determine how much feed to give

universities, and without the funds to study there even if there was, she turned to her only remaining option. She typed 'online studies autism' into Google. UCC was the first result.

"It was quite daunting to pay so

assignments was a challenge between the farm and family life, with her husband, mother, and three kids at home, she managed and credits the tutors with making everyone feel comfortable and encouraged all the way.

Topics ranged from studies into disability, the environment, and communication methods. Patricia also mentions the benefits of animal-assisted interventions, wilderness therapy, and ecotherapy, the type of stuff they'd always worked on but never defined.

She's chatting a year to the day after the course began and on her scheduled graduation day, until the onset of the coronavirus postponed that celebration for another day.

"I can't wait for it," she says. "I always wanted to go to college but I never got the opportunity so I can't wait to get up and get my piece of paper, and dress in the gowns."

The course isn't pigeonholed for farmers either, as she recommends it to people interested in environmental science, biodiversity, and to carers too.

Belinda Gascoigne, programme co-ordinator at UCC ACE and

Skellig CRI manager, says the course was designed with exactly that in mind. Support workers can take the course to upskill to a Level 6 qualification to enhance their employment prospects, while it gives farmers a qualification recognised by other employers which can provide them with further opportunities.

"In our very first roll-out, we had students who are farmers and somebody from the service-providers. That brought a lot of interesting discussion in the classroom because you're seeing it from both sides."

"They found doing the course invaluable because they gained a lot of new skills and knowledge. If you train to be a support worker, you don't get all the knowledge in the same way around coaching and mentoring, around the environment, because you're not in that setting."

My dream come true

The impact for the students and participants has touched all aspects of their lives.

"Because this is a voluntary model, the participants are not on

the course has been really great in getting me closer to objectivity."

"I want to join the movement in changing the dialogue around autism, what autism is, who autistic people are, in order to make society more flexible, so that autistic people can find society more comfortable. At the moment, autistic people are changing themselves in every way in order to suit society."

"There's this whole focus in society on how autistic people are crap at communication but no, reciprocal communication is a 50-50 experience. You can't keep lumping it on autistic people who are really struggling to change how they communicate in order to be understood."

"I always describe it as turning your brain inside out, just so you can speak the language of the people, and that gets really tiring after a while. That's how you end up with your ability to process your sensory experience becoming strained, your ability to process language becoming strained, and if you're doing that your whole life, then you don't develop a sense of self at all."

"If you let autistic people design the world, you'd all have less anxiety."

a time restriction in terms of how long they keep coming out to the farm. Some of them have been coming out for years to the same farm and that building of relationships and confidence has been phenomenal.

"It has a massive positive impact for the farmers and their families as well. We know that farming can be very isolating but some of them also have young families and for them, there's no stigma about that person having a disability. They're just part of their family, the kids look forward to seeing them, and they're all so inclusive. They're just like everybody else."

"It brings the participants out of themselves and makes them feel just as good as anybody else that they also have ability, not disability. That's the focus, bringing the best out of them and giving them the most opportunities to be able, not disabled. That goes back to their families and back to their communities too."

It's perhaps best encapsulated by the words of another participant:

"Social farming is my dream, my dream come true every Wednesday. I couldn't ask for anything better."

ACE at UCC courses on offer for 2020/2021 academic year

Level 6 Programmes

Certificate in Arts (History)

Venue: UCC
Duration: 1 year
Delivery: One evening per week

Certificate in Arts (History of Art)

Venue: UCC
Duration: 1 year
Delivery: One evening per week

Certificate in Arts (Psychology)

Venue: UCC
Duration: 1 year
Delivery: One evening per week

Aim: These courses will provide students with a general introduction to the discipline of psychology, history or history of art.

Certificate in Languages

Venue: UCC
Duration: 1 or 2 years
Delivery: One evening per week
Aim: This programme will broaden participants' horizons by allowing them to engage with different languages and cultures including Chinese, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish.

Certificate in Mental Health in the Community

Venue: UCC, Dublin, Cavan, Clare
Duration: 1 Year
Delivery: One evening per week plus occasional Saturdays
Aim: This course explores how individuals and communities can enhance mental and emotional well-being through best practice in mental health promotion and suicide prevention.

Certificate in Contemporary Living

Venue: UCC
Duration: 2 years
Delivery: Two days per week
Aim: This course enables students with intellectual disabilities to develop skills to support increased self-determination and to maximise their capacities for participation in, and contribution to, their own communities and the wider society.

Certificate in Practice Support in Social Farming

Venue: Kerry, Limerick, Cork
Duration: 1 year
Delivery: One evening per week
Aim: This unique programme is the first of its kind in Ireland and has been designed for those involved specifically in the Social Farming initiative, both the host farmers and the service providers working with people with a disability

Level 7 Programmes

Certificate in Safety, Health and Welfare at Work

Venue: UCC
Duration: 1 year
Delivery: One evening per week
Aim: This course aims to equip students with the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to be competent in the practice of health and safety in the workplace, regardless of the sector

Certificate in Operator Development (Pharma Manufacturing)

Venue: UCC
Duration: 1 year
Delivery: One evening per week plus occasional Saturdays.
Aim: Tailored specifically for those currently in or seeking operator roles in a pharma manufacturing environment, the programme aims to equip participants with the skills demanded by pharma facilities in Ireland today.

Certificate in Interpersonal Communication

Venue: UCC, Portlaoise
Duration: 1 year
Delivery: One evening a week plus two residential weekends.
Aim: The course will focus on both the personal and interpersonal aspects of communication within and across the particular social systems of which course participants are members.

Diploma in Autism Studies

Venue: UCC, Limerick, Kilkenny, Online
Duration: 2 years
Delivery: One evening per week plus occasional Saturdays
Aim: This course explores how people on the autistic spectrum experience the world and spans from the history of autism to the various strengths, challenges, theories and conceptualisations.

Diploma in Development & Global Human Rights

Venue: UCC
Duration: 2 years
Delivery: One evening per week plus occasional Saturdays
Aim: This course aims to provide a critical and theoretical understanding of the issues, processes and institutions central to global poverty, inequality and development

Diploma in Disability Studies

Venue: UCC, Limerick
Duration: 2 years
Delivery: One evening per week
Aim: This course explores how disability is understood in our society by examining new research and different educational models.

Diploma in Environmental Science & Social Policy

Venue: UCC
Duration: 2 years
Delivery: One evening per week plus occasional Saturdays.
Aim: The course is designed to give you a broad knowledge and experience of the key concepts of environmental science, sustainable development, social policy and economics that shape the world we live in

Diploma in European Art History

Venue: UCC
Duration: 2 Years
Delivery: One evening per week plus occasional field trips
Aim: The course surveys European art history from the fifth century BCE to contemporary practice. It introduces you to the work of artists, sculptors, and architects in the disciplinary canon and examines their work within the broader social and cultural context of its production.

Diploma in Food Manufacturing Management

Venue: UCC
Duration: 11 months
Delivery: 10 two-day modules at various locations
Aim: The Diploma aims to provide relevant management education to delegates across all areas of business with specific emphasis on food and beverage manufacturing and operations management.

Diploma in Food Science and Technology

Venue: UCC
Duration: 2 Years
Delivery: Weekend workshops
Aim: This course gives students an understanding of food science, microbiology, food processing technology, nutrition and food business

Diploma in Genealogy

Venue: UCC
Duration: 2 Years
Delivery: One evening per week plus occasional Saturdays
Aim: The course offers participants the opportunity to engage in an interdisciplinary study of the past while developing genealogical research skills designed to equip learners with transferable skills aimed at genealogy, heritage and tourism employment.

Diploma in Learning and Development Practice

Venue: UCC, Dublin
Duration: 2 Years
Delivery: 10 two-day modules at various locations
Aim: This course, offered in partnership with the Irish Institute of Training and Development (IITD), aims to provide a structured and authentic learning opportunity for those wishing to acquire an academic and practical knowledge of the

Diploma in Local and Regional Studies

Venue: UCC
Duration: 2 years
Delivery: One evening per week plus occasional Saturdays (Begins Feb 2021)
Aim: The course will develop skills for those interested in local and regional studies, integrating approaches used by historians, folklorists, Celtic scholars and geographers. It is aimed at those interested in local history and heritage, members of historical societies, and those working, or intending to work, in the heritage sector.

Diploma in Management Practice

Venue: UCC
Duration: 2 Years
Delivery: One evening per week plus occasional Saturdays
Aim: The programme is designed to introduce participants to key management principles, best practices and practical ready-to-apply tools in order to help students build their own managerial skill-set

Diploma in Process and Chemical Engineering

Venue: UCC
Duration: 2 Years
Delivery: One evening per week
Aim: This course introduces students to the fundamentals of process and chemical engineering including key principles and their application

Diploma in Social and Psychological Health Studies

Venue: UCC
Duration: 2 Years
Delivery: One evening per week plus occasional Saturdays
Aim: This course introduces students to the key concepts and theoretical frameworks relevant to personal, social and health education.

Diploma in Social Studies

Venue: UCC
Duration: 2 Years
Delivery: One evening per week plus occasional Saturdays
Aim: This interdisciplinary programme gives students the opportunity to study sociology, social policy, social psychology, social philosophy and economics in order to develop a critical awareness of the key issues that impact on everyday life in contemporary society

Diploma in the Psychology of Criminal Behaviour

Venue: UCC
Duration: 2 years
Delivery: One weekend per month (Oct. to Sept).
Aim: This course explores the

learning and development profession. works of the criminal mind and examines what motivates individuals to commit crimes of a deviant nature, as well as how investigators collect psychological clues

Diploma in Social Enterprises and Community Development Practice

Location: TBC
Duration: 2 years
Delivery: One evening per week plus occasional Saturdays
Aim: This course introduces you to the theoretical and practical elements of community development and social enterprise. Emphasis is placed on developing ways to successfully integrating a range of business skills suited to people-centred social enterprise.

Diploma in Speciality Food Production

Venue: UCC
Duration: 1 Year
Delivery: Two days per week every three weeks
Aim: This course is the only one of its kind in Ireland and the UK. It is designed for those who are starting or wish to further develop an artisan or specialty food business and also for those involved in this sector including farmers, producers, retailers, culinary specialists, and those in support agencies.

Diploma in Substance Misuse and Addiction Studies (Special Purpose Award)

Venue: UCC
Duration: 2 Years
Delivery: One evening per week plus occasional Saturdays
Aim: This course examines how substance misuse and addiction impacts on the health and well-being of individuals, families, communities and the health, social care and criminal justice resources of the state

Diploma in Supply Chain Management

Venue: UCC
Duration: 2 Years
Delivery: 6 x 2.5-day workshops plus - per year
Aim: This course will provide personnel across a range of organisational functions with a holistic understanding of the dynamics of supply chains in order to enhance their ability to continually improve supply chain performance

Diploma in Youth and Community Work

Venue: UCC, Limerick
Duration: 2 Years
Delivery: One evening per week plus occasional Saturdays
Aim: This course explores approaches to working with groups in a variety of settings to facilitate

Want to Find out More? Get in touch!

Facebook: @ace.ucc Twitter: @ACEUCC Instagram: @ace.ucc
Email: ace@ucc.ie Phone: +353 (0)21 490 4700 Web: https://www.ucc.ie/en/ace/courses

dialogue in the community

Diploma in Women's Studies

Venue: UCC
Duration: 2 Years
Delivery: One evening per week plus occasional Saturdays
Aim: This course focuses on the changed and changing roles of women, delving into areas of knowledge relevant to women's lives today

Diploma in Leadership in the Community

Bespoke programme for closed groups only, not available for open recruitment. Contact ace@ucc.ie for more details
Duration: 2 Years
Delivery: Delivered as per needs of cohort

Level 8 Programmes

Certificate in Procurement Management

Venue: UCC
Duration: 1 Year
Delivery: Every second Friday
Aim: This unique course aims to upskill procurement personnel in technical, managerial and people skills - the 'holy trinity' of procurement competence

Higher Diploma in Coaching/ Coaching Psychology

Venue: UCC
Duration: 1 Year
Delivery: One evening per week plus occasional Saturdays
Aim: The programme provides the student with strong coaching skills and with an insight into self and the psychology of coaching

Higher Diploma in Facilitating Inclusion (Disability Studies)

Venue: UCC, Limerick
Duration: 2 Years
Delivery: Every third weekend (Friday 6-10 and Saturday 9-5)
Aim: The programme offers value to those who are already working in the area of disability, enhancing their knowledge, reflexivity and practice

Higher Diploma in Safety, Health and Welfare at Work

Venue: UCC
Duration: 2 Years
Delivery: Two evenings per week
Aim: The course provides professional training in the management of safety, health and welfare at work in order to help students to ensure the safety, health and welfare of the Irish workforce.

Higher Diploma in Relationship Mentoring

Venue: UCC, Portlaoise
Duration: 2 Years
Delivery: One evening per week plus occasional Saturdays
Aim: The course is based on

a co-creative understanding of human relationships but participants are supported and encouraged to come to their own conclusions of what makes sense to them. Participants are also trained to evaluate what happens within and between people in different family, school and work settings and to devise appropriate mentoring and/or educational interventions where conflicts exist.

Level 9 Programmes

Postgraduate Certificate/ Diploma in (Bio)Pharma Processing

Location: UCC
Duration: 1 year
Delivery: Two Fridays per month per month (Oct. to April) plus 2 workshops on 2 consecutive days in Sept. & May.
Aim: This course is designed to facilitate science or engineering graduates who hold sufficient educational or professional experience to transition into or within the BioPharma and PharmaChem sector nationally. The programme has a key focus on upstream/downstream processing; sterile working environment; practical training; industrial standards and regulation; collection and analysis of data; validation; novel and personalized therapies; formulation and delivery of biological drugs.

Postgraduate Diploma in Irish Food Culture

Venue: UCC
Duration: 2 Years
Delivery: One evening per week plus occasional weekend workshops
Aim: This course will explore the development of Irish Food Culture from the past to contemporary times. It will examine Irish food heritage, the contemporary food system, food and the environment and sustainability

Postgraduate Diploma in Mindfulness Based Practice and Research

Venue: UCC
Duration: 2 Years
Delivery: One evening per week plus occasional weekend workshops
Aim: The programme includes an eight-week Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction programme and provides the student with the platform to develop a strong personal mindfulness practice

Postgraduate Diploma in Trauma Studies

Venue: Online
Duration: 2 Years
Delivery: One evening per week plus occasional weekend workshops
Aim: This course focuses on

Confused about where to bank? There's no need to be!

THE LOUGH Credit Union

www.loughcu.ie | 021 4963384

We make it simple!

Benefits to being a member? What do you need?

- Free Online Banking
- No hefty fees or charges like with the banks
- Free Loan Insurance
- Free Online Banking
- Proof of ID
- Proof of Address
- Proof of PPS Number
- Live, Work or Study in our Common bond (includes UCC!)

Education Loans, EFT Payments, Savings, Payroll deductions etc

both the individual and societal implications of trauma and draws on examples and experiences from individuals who survived, and societies emerging from, violent political conflict

MA in Advanced Fieldwork Practice and Supervision (Social Work)

Location: UCC
Duration: 2 years
Delivery: Two Fridays per month per month (Oct. to April) plus 2 workshops on 2 consecutive days in Sept. & May.
Aim: This course provides social work practitioners with an

important opportunity to engage part-time in a professionally accredited, post qualifying program in Practice Teaching and Professional Supervision. It is designed to equip participants with the necessary knowledge and skills to become competent Supervisors and Practice Teachers.

MSc in Mindfulness Based Wellbeing

Venue: UCC
Duration: 2 Years
Delivery: One evening per week plus occasional weekend workshops
Aim: This programme trains the

student to teach mindfulness in a workplace or educational setting in year one while in year two the student learns to teach a Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction programme
MSc in Personal and Management Coaching
Venue: UCC, Dublin
Duration: 2 Years
Delivery: One evening per week plus occasional weekend workshops
Aim: The programme provides the student with strong coaching skills and an in-depth insight of how to integrate coaching into life and organisational settings

The man whose vision led to the foundation of UCC ACE

Those who pass through the doors of UCC ACE follow a tradition of lifelong-learning courses first instituted back in 1946.

These days, anyone taking up one of the many courses on offer will likely find themselves going to a lecture or grabbing a coffee in the O'Rahilly Building, between the Boole Library and Honan Chapel, and it's thanks to the vision of the man that building is dedicated to that UCC took on the pioneering endeavour of courses for adult-learners all those years ago.

UCC, like all universities, was not always so open to the wider population beyond the front gates but in that sense, Alfred O'Rahilly was a man ahead of his time.

First hired as a maths lecturer in 1914, the war that coincided with his appointment hastened his rapid promotion as UCC's professor of mathematical physics was shot and killed on the battlefields of World War I. That same year, 1917, he set-up the first of his economic conferences, a forerunner to the adult-education courses, aimed at the labour movement and attended by workers involved in local trade unions.

His background may have been mathematics but he was, in truth, a polymath, writing about topics as varied as philosophy, theology, social justice, politics, history, and literature.

It was a tumultuous time and his first cousin was killed during the Easter Rising but O'Rahilly was a pacifist who believed in moral force over physical violence. Despite that, he was centrally involved in

other aspects of the independence movement, writing policy documents and election literature for Sinn Féin, and being elected to Cork City Council in 1920. In Lord Mayor Tomás MacCurtain's last public act two months later, he proposed O'Rahilly for the position of UCC Registrar before being killed at home by British forces later that day.

O'Rahilly's political writings saw him arrested in the UCC chaplain's house at 4am one morning in 1921 and interned for a total of six months on Spike and Bere Islands. Upon his release, he acted as an adviser to Michael Collins during the treaty negotiations and was elected a Cumann na nGaedheal TD for Cork in 1923.

It's no wonder O'Rahilly was an emotional observer when the graves from the adjoining Cork County Gaol were handed over to UCC in 1946, as they held friends of his executed by British firing squads during the War of Independence. The site, which now sits in front of UCC's science building, contains a monument erected during O'Rahilly's presidency in 1948.

His life experiences and teachings shaped that presidency, which ran from 1943 to 1954.

"If you look at his social involvement at that stage, he was very democratic in what he was doing, driven an awful lot by Christian social justice, and it was out of that that the adult-education courses developed," says Brendan Goggin, who served as Registrar of CIT from 1994 to 2008 and has lectured on the history of Cork's educational

institutions.

"His courses were very much aimed at areas like sociology, economics, and business-organisation that would equip people to be good trade unionists in a social-democratic fashion. That was his driving force behind it.

"He did speak at the opposition he was getting within UCC. He said when he started those economic conferences back in 1917, there were other staff members who complained to him they didn't want a couple of hundred tramps around the college. In other words, working-class people were not welcome, and that was the kind of phraseology that was used.

"He was immensely popular but at the same time, made an awful lot of enemies. There was the story that if he was ever found dead in bed with a dagger through his heart, every staff member in UCC would be a suspect.

"He was very blunt, very straightforward, and very driven but at the same time, very highly respected. He usen't socialise with people in UCC and would go to the Trades Council functions rather than the college functions."

The ordinary people of the city

O'Rahilly wished to influence the labour movement towards social democracy, rather than more extreme ideologies like Marxism, and so the Diploma in Social and Economic Science was launched on October 14, 1946. It marked the beginnings of UCC ACE and the formalisation of adult continuing education courses in Irish universities.

It was, however, predated by a partnership with Crawford Technical Institute to establish a Diploma in Chemical Technology at Crawford in 1943, the first year of O'Rahilly's presidency. It was a modest beginning, focused as it was on a small base of scientific industry, but a milestone to O'Rahilly's eventual destination.

At the time, the numbers completing their Leaving Cert were small and those progressing to university smaller again. UCC may have grown to accommodate over 20,000 students but it employs more staff now (over 2,500) than it had students until the 1960s.

The first Diploma in Social and Economic Science was oversubscribed, with 34 students, representing eight trade unions and 20 firms, accepted for classes on five subjects: economics, accounting, business and secretarial practice, sociology, and modern social organisation. There were also seminars on public speaking and the conduct of meetings.

Economics and sociology were taught in UCC each Wednesday afternoon, with the rest covered in night classes at the Cork School of Commerce. The Cork Examiner summary of O'Rahilly's opening address read: "The course being inaugurated now was the culmination of an endeavour to bring the College in touch with the ordinary people of the city."

O'Rahilly added: "The idea that one class is inferior to another and must not get every advantage is out of date.

"We are in a new era of democracy, whether we like it or not. This is the first real attempt – the only attempt I know of – of a University opening its doors to the workers and putting them on the same level as the other College students. For that reason, it is an historic occasion.

"We expect Cork to give a lead once more to the rest of the country."

In June 1948, the first 24 graduates were awarded their diplomas in UCC's Aula Maxima, with O'Rahilly hailing a "pleasant and profitable association" and "a

comradeship which will not end today". Before the year's end, the course had been extended to centres in Limerick and Waterford.

"Two of them were fathers of people who worked with me as lecturers in CIT," says Brendan, "and, as it happened, were trade union officials with the Transport Union. You also had Seán Casey, who was later a Labour TD and the Lord Mayor who welcomed John F Kennedy to Cork."

Casey was one of three students to receive first-class honours, alongside Eamon Wall and Dominick Murphy, who was appointed Irish Secretary designate of the Railway Clerks' Association three months later.

"This was long before free education and it was the means by which you had a lot of educational development in UCC that didn't happen in other universities.

"It became the basis on which adult continuing education developed right around Munster and was a major educational breakthrough into the 1950s and '60s, educating people that hadn't benefitted from the restricted numbers that were completing even second-level education at that stage."

The next innovation was a rural development course and by the mid-1960s, 115 courses were on offer across a range of topics in 58 different centres throughout Munster.

"There's a new dimension to it in recent years in terms of the social engagement charter that UCC have is a great breakthrough as well," says Brendan. "That has very significant effects in terms of ethos but it is building on an earlier ethos.

"There was a long period where there was an ivory tower syndrome to what was happening but the undercurrent of social engagement has come through much more strongly in recent years."

The diversity of programmes and the backgrounds of students have changed considerably over the decades, but where Alfred O'Rahilly first led, ACE has not only followed but continued to pave the way forward.

« The first Diploma in Social and Economic Science class pictured in the UCC Quad at the end of their first year in May 1947. Alfred O'Rahilly is in the front-row (centre), with Prof. John Busteed, UCC, and Paddy Parfrey, City of Cork VEC, to his right. To his left are Gus Weldon, Principal, and Austin Goggin, Deputy Principal, Cork School of Commerce. Directly behind him is Fr. Jerome O'Leary.



« Alfred O'Rahilly after his first arrest in a photo from intelligence files of the Sixth Division of the British Army. He was noted as being Registrar of UCC and, incorrectly, Director of Sinn Féin propaganda.



Dick Langford honoured for lifelong contribution to adult education

Dick Langford, the long-time CEO of Cork City VEC, was the 2019 recipient of the Bertram Windle Award in recognition of his outstanding contribution to adult education.

The award is named after UCC's fifth president, who pioneered adult education in Ireland by initiating short courses and off-campus extension lectures.

Dick was praised for his role in transforming the learning environment in Cork city and paving the way for the evolution of Cork as one of UNESCO's inaugural 12 Learning Cities.

A Waterford native, he studied and tutored at UCG, where President Michael D Higgins was among his students.

He was hired as a teacher at Birr Vocational School in 1963 and within two years, he was made principal – at only 24 years of age. In 1970, he was appointed founding principal of Waterford RTC, now WIT, and then became CEO of Waterford City VEC.

From 1980 until his retirement in 2005, Dick led the Cork City VEC, now rebranded as the county-wide Cork ETB.

He was an innovative CEO,

leading significant developments in adult education, community education, and youth services across sites such as Cork College of Commerce, Colaiste Stiofáin Naofa, and St John's College. He also oversaw the expansion of the Cork School of Music.

He drove an agenda that prioritised flexible learning through back to education and vocational training schemes, as well as providing classes in Cork Prison and through community partnerships. He was centrally involved in the foundation of the Cork Lifelong Learning Festival and established a Cork City Learning Forum.

The award was presented last November on the same night as the Alfred O'Rahilly Lecture was delivered by emeritus professor of education and former UCC vice-president Aine Hyland, who also played a key role in setting out the vision for Cork as a Learning City. Her address was entitled 'Bridging the Gap between Town and Gown'.

The Bertram Windle Award is decided upon by the UCC ACE director, former award winners, and those who have given the Alfred O'Rahilly Lecture.

Above: Dick Langford is presented with the Bertram Windle award by Professor John O'Halloran, Deputy President of UCC and Dr Seamus O Tuama, Director of ACE in UCC, at the presentation ceremony in UCC. Also included are Professor Paul McSweeney, Vice President for Learning and Teaching in UCC and Lyndsey El Amoud Assistant Director of ACE in UCC. **All pictures on this page: David Keane.**



Clockwise from top left: Deirdre O'Byrne and Marian McCarthy, UCC; Willie McAuliffe, Cork Learning City; Siobhan O'Sullivan, UCC and Brendan Goggin, former registrar in CIT; Dick Langford, seated left with his wife Nuala, and family members John, Deirdre and Ronan Wall and Joseph Langford, Jim Corr chatting with Peter Langford.

Below: Guest speaker Professor Aine Hyland, speaking at the Bertram Windle award presentation ceremony in UCC.



‘Education was just a battle in my head but I deserve to be here’

Peter O’Shea describes how he overcame 25 years of living on the fringes of society to set a course for becoming an addiction counsellor.

Before I became a student at UCC, I came from a background of long-term unemployment, homelessness, long-term heroin addiction, poverty, I was a long-term resident in various institutions, and, in general, living on the fringes of society.

I started using drugs at 11. I didn’t fit in anywhere, at school, in wider society, so drugs were a solution for me. It was a way of me opting out and finding people who accepted me.

I actually grew up close to UCC. I’d go there and use on the grounds. It was somewhere I couldn’t relate to and never saw myself attending. It never even entered my head. I thought it was way above me to even go there, that those people were different, better than me. It was a non-entity, an alien, intimidating structure to me.

I’d no ambition to go there either. It was just someplace that wasn’t relevant in life.

My first experience of school

wasn’t good. I got thrown out of primary school, and I got thrown out of secondary school. The consequences of my addiction and my behaviours got worse. My choice of drugs got worse. I ended up going to prison and was in nine different treatment centres. I ended up on heroin, being strung out for a long period of time on methadone, on crack, on tablets. I’d very low self-worth, living outside of society, a real no-hoper.

You see people on the streets around the city centre, I was one of them for a long time.

Never going back

I got clean at 36. About a year before I stopped, I was burnt out. I couldn’t do it anymore. I felt turned inside out by addiction. I was very close to killing myself because I thought I would never get clean.

Once I got into treatment and got through a detox at Arbour House, I just felt like I’m never going back. This is the starting point. No matter what happens, I’m never going back.

I didn’t really have any ambition to do anything. Even in recovery, for the first year to 18 months, I’d no ambition to get a job, do a course, anything. I just didn’t want to go back on drugs.

But perspectives change and my thinking started to follow. I was clean but I wanted to change my life as well, give myself a better quality of life, just contribute to society and push myself.

Someone suggested the diploma

in UCC, Substance Misuse and Addiction Studies. I started off in the College of Commerce and it planted the seed. I’d nothing to lose.

Although I considered myself in good recovery with adequate coping skills prior to starting the course, my experience of school as a young person was traumatic to me; characterised by rigid fear, anxiety, and avoidance techniques to block out the experience. I brought this experience of education to the gates of UCC with me and as an adult, I was triggered upon returning to it.

‘For someone who got thrown out of primary and secondary school, he saw me graduate college.’

Close to leaving

I live on Washington Street, on UCC’s doorstep, in social housing and at the beginning of the course, I turned my head so I didn’t have to look at the building when I was passing. The books I brought home from the library, I hid them away so I didn’t have to look at them, blocked them out.

I didn’t think it was going to be enjoyable, I didn’t think I’d be able to do it, and I was very close to leaving at the start.

But my experience of adult education, of that course, was different. I’ve been treated with real respect and acceptance by the lec-

turers and everyone on my course. I was invited to give my opinion. I got to know people from different walks of life.

Even the fact the lecturers weren’t on a pedestal. They would talk to you, they’re human too; whereas as a child, you were looking at the teachers as dragons. I found the coping strategies I brought from childhood, avoidance and the feelings of anxiety and fear, were no longer based in reality.

I got massive growth out of the course because I had to push myself. A very important part for me was the self-esteem, self-

my past behind me and contribute to society.

Challenging my brain and educating myself have helped me think differently, cope differently, and react differently to situations that arise in my daily life. It changed my perception of education, and UCC too. I enjoyed the course, I enjoyed learning, and I enjoyed being accepted.

Ambition

I graduated last November, which was very important to me because my dad died recently. There’s a long history with me and addiction but he got to see me clean and for someone who got thrown out of primary and secondary school, he saw me graduate college. He was very proud and it was a big day for me as well. The picture is on display in my mam’s house.

Now, I’m in the process of being pre-accredited as an addiction counsellor and I’m hoping to be accredited soon. Once I achieve this objective, it’s my ambition to go back next year to do a general counselling degree.

As long as you’re standing and you want to get clean, then you can have it. You can get clean. As life goes on, perspectives change and that’s what happened with me. What you think today won’t be what you think tomorrow. What will help change your thinking is education. It’s very doable.

Education, for me, was just a battle in my head but I deserve to be here. There’s a lot of growth in that.

worth, and personal growth I got out of completing the assignments, attending the lectures, contributing in class, and making friends.

I had lived outside society for most of my life and although in recovery I said I am part of society again, I never really felt it. I felt less than everyone else and I brought that feeling into UCC with me. Through the process of completing the course and going on to get work in the sector, I can honestly say I can hold my head up high and have conversations with people from different backgrounds to me and have confidence in doing it. I feel I can put

I am Human:

A prisoner’s experience of UCC Mental Health course

UCC ACE’s outreach programmes are all about facilitating the needs of communities across Ireland.

The Certificate in Mental Health in the Community is a prime example, running from places as far apart as Knocknaheeny, on Cork’s northside, and Letterkenny, Co Donegal, in response to the high rate of suicides in the region.

As part of their mission to reach out to disadvantaged communities, the programme has now travelled inside the walls of Cork Prison.

16 prisoners completed a 12-hour (Wellness Recovery Action Programme) in the prison’s Education Unit, with two progressing to complete the full certificate. Their graduation had to be delayed due to coronavirus restrictions but they, too, are due their day in ceremonial gowns, receiving their parchment from the UCC President.

The conversations in the classes were characterised by hope, rather

than self-pity. The graduates surveyed other prisoners on their mental health issues. One even collected all the plants available in the prison, combining them with some music to create a ‘forest bathing’ setting for meditation. An oasis of tranquillity in a tumultuous environment.

It’s an unfortunate fact that many prisoners’ first positive engagement with education comes in a prison setting. Four in five prisoners (80%) do not complete a Leaving Cert, more than half (52%) leave school before Junior Cert, and just over a quarter (26%) never attended secondary school.

This course helps to tackle the common problems of self-harm, suicide, and mental health issues in prison, and the effects don’t stop at the gates, either. With so many children of offenders following the cycle into prison, this course ripples out to families and exhibits to the next generation the positives education can provide.

If daddy can go to lectures with UCC, why can’t I?

It can be life-changing and family-altering.

As one graduate wrote of the course: “I have utterly transformed and recovered my mind from the murky waters it once resided with. I was blind, I could not see, but now prison, education, recovery, and change has given me a set of glasses to finally view the world with focus and perspective.”

“My behaviour has been changed and shaped like a potter would shape their clay to produce art. I am, then, the created art of the system, I am the proof that recovery does exist and that behaviour can change, and most importantly, I am human.”

Here’s a written interview with that prisoner:

Q: What was your experience of education like prior to getting involved with the Education Unit?

A: “My prior experience of education was bad, very bad. I was quite a handful for teachers, always acting out aggressively



UCC President Patrick O’Shea examining the art work created by prisoners prior to a graduation ceremony at Cork Prison. Also included from the left Cork Prison Governor, Pat Dawson; Séamus Ó Tuama, Director ACE; Edel Cunningham and >

‘Once they put their toe in the water, they won’t be allowed to sink’

Christine Chasaide has seen it all in her years co-ordinating ACE’s outreach programmes in Limerick and Tipperary.

People who didn’t think they have the academic ability, people who didn’t think they’d be able to commit the time, people who think they can’t up until they prove they can. She always sees it – if people have a genuine interest, they’ll do it and they’ll succeed in it.

Christine, an Orkney Islands-native, has been overseeing ACE’s work in the region since 1997, running programmes from her adopted home in Limerick city, and as far and wide as Cashel, Nenagh, Tipperary, Knocklong, Newcastle West, Letterkenny, Wexford Town, Charleville, and Ennis.

The original programme in the region was Credit Union Studies but by the time Christine joined, it

had moved on to running courses in Social Studies at Limerick College of Further Education, and Youth and Community Work at South Hill House. Limerick has changed a lot since then and the courses have evolved too, with Autism Studies, Disability Studies, and Youth and Community Work currently available, while Mental Health in the Community has also been offered.

“Often, people say, I don’t know if I’d be able for it, but I’ve had people who haven’t even done their Junior Cert, and they come quite nervously into a classroom, and at the end of the year or two years, they’re sometimes the people getting the top marks.”

“When they have the interest and they start to work with something, they sometimes find they have resources they didn’t realise they

had. There are all sorts of possibilities. You just have to dip your toe in the water.

“Be prepared to name it if you need a bit of support or help with something and you’ll get there. It’s very rarely that somebody wouldn’t get to the end of a course. And if something happened, it’s possible to defer and come back a year or two years later to complete it.”

“People are sometimes worried, how will I do assignments? Will I be able to do this? There’s a lot of support. Notes are put up online, tutors give lots of guidelines around what’s needed, and students support each other. These are often groups where people become very much linked and friendly.”

“There’ll be a lot of people cheering them on once they put their toe in the water. They won’t

be allowed to sink.”

Those class bonds can give so much more in courses like Autism or Disability Studies, where students come together from different perspectives – people with lived experience, parents, teachers, support workers – and share their thoughts in the classroom or over a coffee.

“Even with Autism Studies, we’d have people who have children at home, and maybe they have just got a diagnosis or they’ve had a diagnosis for a long time, but they feel isolated.

“When they come in, meet other people, and over the coffee break openly talk about things that have happened to somebody who understands, isn’t surprised, shocked, or judgmental, other students who have similar experiences, that’s an outlet in itself.”

She highlights many graduates who have made impacts in their communities. Two graduates founded Community Crisis Response Team Ireland, a suicide intervention group based in West Limerick. Another works with the Ana Liffey Drug Project in Limerick. One opened a youth club and runs a junior football team in Moyross. Another started the Limerick Autism Group. The examples go on.

“For me, when I’m taking out leaflets and posters to organisations, one of the great things is going into an office and seeing faces who’ve done your programme in the past. There are very few organisations if I go out to them now that I wouldn’t meet former students.”

“I’ve had the privilege of working with amazing people, both lecturers and students. It’s their

energy and commitment that keeps me motivated and working.”

Christine also represents ACE on an intergenerational choir who sing and use sign language in Tipperary town, where the Disability Studies course is currently running in the MooreHaven Centre. “Tipp town has been pretty depressed lately and we’re trying to bring programmes there to give people the incentive to study and maybe start things up, rather than always having to look out.”

It’s another case of reaching into communities where the need is greatest, as they did in areas like South Hill and Moyross over the decades. And as they will continue to do for decades to come.

“When people came into the learning classroom, it didn’t matter where they came from. It was established as a safe place. Other differences stayed outside. I think it was important to have places like that, where it didn’t matter which side of the city you came from.

“The thing about looking at community positively and seeing that we can all contribute to it, whether you’re doing a science degree, Social Science, Mental Health in the Community, or Disability Studies, it’s looking at how to find positive ways to progress situations. That’s really important.

“It’s a good way to stand at a little distance and see what’s possible.”

If you are interested in joining any of the Limerick programmes Christine can be contacted by email at c.chasaide@ucc.ie or by phone on 087-9461472.

with a don’t-talk-down-to-me-or-I-will-break-your-jaw attitude. This attitude always got me dragged up to the principal’s office by the ear.

“This experience was a weekly periodic for me, until eventually, I got expelled and then ended up in prison. Still here since, and will be for some time more. I suppose you could say I was quite a Rubik’s Cube for teachers, they really struggled to put me into alignment.”

Q: Why did you decide to take on the Certificate in Mental Health in the Community?

A: “The course interested me because I can relate to mental health experiences. It’s something I have seen and felt from a young age. Mental health haunted my family and close friends like an inescapable nightmare, myself included. It was a way of life, a normality, something everyone in my social circle was familiar with. Additionally, I’m also curious by nature and love to academically explore; now that my anger issues have been resolved that is. So the academic opportunity was another

prompt for my decision.”

Q: What was your personal experience of the course?

A: “It was interesting and engaging. The tutors who came in to deliver the classes were very down-to-earth, reasonable, and understanding. As for the topics covered, there was social science, biology, and psychology. Relating to those subjects within the context of mental health was easy. What the material discussed was not unfamiliar to me. At times, it felt weirdly as though some of the readings were designed for my eyes; like the researchers were actually talking about my experiences and hard times.”

Q: Tell me a little about the classes...

A: “The class was fun, enjoyable, and it instilled some sense of normality for me. Very different from the chaotic screams, jingling keys, and echoing walkie-talkies on the prison landings. When the class was big enough to have group discussions, we talked about mental health policies, such as empowerment, recovery, and change.”

Q: What did you learn from the practical work and assignments?

A: “Most of it was reflective writing. When you write something down, it takes thought and reflection, so therefore you understand your thoughts and feelings on a more... soul-touching level. In my reflection, I really had to take out all my organs, place them on a table, and like a detective, examine them to every last inch of their genetic makeup. And to be honest, I’m thankful for it, because I have a deeper understanding of myself now, on and academic as well as a personal level.”

Q: Did the course bring up any challenges for you and how did you overcome them?

A: “The revelation of the ACE study was challenging to inhale; looking at the dangers of Adverse Childhood Experience and how it can in turn cause such a biological earthquake. “What I mean is when my eyes coalesced with the page that listed all the factors, such as abuse, trauma,

neglect, almost all factors were familiar. I felt like a dartboard being penetrated by a whirlwind of darts, it hurt. I overcame this by reading more deeply... learning that all is not bad if the right measures are taken, such as a healthy lifestyle and walking the path of recovery.”

Q: How do you intend to use this experience going forward?

A: “That’s an interesting question; one I have always wondered about. Like, bless me Father for I have sinned, I’m a convicted criminal. So is it really possible to use it on a professional level, working somewhere like the HSE maybe? Possibly? Who knows?”

“However, it’s knowledge I have gained and it’s knowledge that can never be taken away from me. It’s knowledge that has changed my perspective and attitude towards the importance of early childhood development and how if this is tampered with in any way, it can have disastrous effects. I mean, look at me, I’m a perfect example. I’m textbook.”

From shame to pride?

Ireland's first LGBT+ history course

Diarmuid Scully lectures on history but he was there, back in May 2015, like all the others to witness it being made.

At the courtyard of Dublin Castle, the Marriage Equality referendum results came in as county after county turned green and rainbow flags were raised to trumpet the historic 'Yes' vote to legalise same-sex marriage.

It was a day full of colour, of celebration, of energy, but Diarmuid had other emotions bubbling under the surface – anger and emptiness.

History had been made but history had been forgotten, whitewashed out of the prevailing narrative.

Rather than being eaten alive by rage, he vowed to transform it into something positive and in that moment, the idea for Ireland's first LGBT+ history module was born. In 2020, the first standalone course followed – 'From Shame to Pride: A Short Introduction to LGBT+ Irish History (1970s-2020)'.

"It was great energy but I felt angry because you could already sense a narrative happening that this was all bad but now everything's perfect, and it's almost as if we're not going to talk about the past.

"I thought, no, we need to know. Number one, is everything perfect? That's why I called the ACE course

'From Shame to Pride' with a question mark, because I don't think it's that simple or straightforward, though huge positive change has taken place.

"I thought instead of just being angry or feeling things have been ignored, this is the opportunity to say, why don't you do something about it because there haven't ever been any university courses on Irish LGBT+ history. I thought instead of going around complaining, you could actually do something positive about it."

Hostile perspective

Diarmuid's background is in

medieval history, studying Irish identity but also identities of other marginalised or peripheral people, Jewish people, African people, Muslim people.

But history is read backwards and rather than start in medieval times, Diarmuid had to start with the here and now before moving back through the decades.

There were challenges in compiling that history, being in parts hidden and often recorded from a hostile perspective. But personal archives and oral histories told the story from the people's point of view, exactly where Diarmuid wanted to focus his attention.

"The material I really wanted access to was LGBT+ people representing themselves because there's a huge amount you could find in newspapers or in anything to do with the Christian Church's teaching, but until very recently, it's all from people or perspectives that are either actively hostile or mystified.

"I also wanted to look at how

the media and the courts and the Churches represented LGBT+ people and their history, because those attitudes haven't gone away.

"When I was asked about the ACE course, I wanted it to be something that wasn't confined to the University but to do public outreach."

It drew 19 students, from LGBT+ support alliances to teachers, from social workers to those who simply had a passion for history, from those in their early 20s to those in their mid-70s. Included among them was one of Ireland's first open LGBT+ activists, Edmund Lynch, who travelled down from Dublin every week to attend. A primary source sitting in the corner of the classroom.

"To have somebody in the class who has not just lived these experiences, but had a formative impact on them, was a huge thing for me and everybody in the class.

"For somebody you could turn to, especially since he worked in RTE, and say, what is your memory of this,

is fantastic."

The subject matter at times provoked anger and surprise in the students, just like Diarmuid felt at Dublin Castle. It arose when they examined the murder of Declan Flynn and the shocking reactions, from the suspended sentences to the reportage. It arose, too, in covering Christian catechism's repeated references to LGBT+ people being 'intrinsically disordered' or 'objectively wrong'.

Both remain relevant today, with Ireland's first Trans Pride Parade retracing the steps of the protest march against the lenient treatment of Flynn's killers, while the institutional anti-LGBT+ attitudes of religion remain problematic.

"It hasn't got much publicity in the Republic but in Northern Ireland, the main Christian domination, the Presbyterian Church, has become much more actively anti-LGBT+ in the last two years, refusing, for example, to admit LGBT+ people as full members of the community and

refusing to baptise their children.

"I would also have to say anybody who thinks Ireland or Catholicism are particularly homophobic is delusional. I did a comparison with homophobia in other countries and cultures which are not Catholic, or very secular, and many of the same ideas or themes or prejudices are there and, in some countries, are actually worse, so I'm getting a sense of the nuances as well."

The course looked at the AIDS crisis by comparing Ireland to the UK and USA, places to which many Irish LGBT+ people would've emigrated. "Again, the level of homophobia they would've faced in apparently liberal societies is sobering, so I was trying to avoid any narrative where this is a rant. It's an analysis.

"I think Irish people have a tendency to idealise Ireland or demonise it or see it as somehow exceptional. I don't think it was or is."

Seizing the moment

For Diarmuid, Ireland's first

LGBT+ history courses are just that, a first step. Broadening out its teaching is needed to confront the bullying young LGBT+ people still endure, and to create a society where anyone can feel safe coming out.

"Until it gets into the schools and is tackled head-on, the issue of homophobia is not going to go away. The outreach we're doing is great but it needs to be much greater.

"I'd be very concerned that there's a narrative of, effectively, haven't you got what you wanted so would you not go away and be quiet? That's at the most negative end of it but there's an assumption everything is okay now. At either end of the spectrum, for much older people or for much younger people, I would have a very strong sense that it isn't okay.

"It's a question of seizing the moment. Among LGBT+ people, there can be a delusion that because history has gone in a particular

direction, it's going to keep going in a positive direction. You can already see in places like Brazil or the States, where there's been a rollback, let alone in other countries which are very seriously homophobic. LGBT+ people shouldn't take their freedoms for granted.

"There's a lot of very positive goodwill out there. I've got a sense, now, of State support, the fact that the libraries and museums are all behind it, but we need more education.

"What's hugely encouraging is anybody I've talked to about it in the University, the students and ACE, the level of not just academic interest, but real commitment to equality is very impressive. It would give you great hope for the future. There are a lot of very positive people out there, LGBT+ and straight, so in future generations, if we've got people like that, we're in good hands."

Short Courses at ACE

ACE is one of the leading providers of short courses in an Irish university context. Our short courses:

- Are delivered part-time over 6-10 weeks
- Appeal to a broad range of interests, concerns, and needs
- Serve to strengthen your knowledge in an area of existing interest or introduce you to a new area of learning or facilitate your professional development
- Offer you the opportunity to engage in lifelong learning without the burden of assessment
- Are not only accessible but they are also a very enjoyable and sociable way to engage in learning

Applications will open in late May/early June.
E-mail shortcourses@ucc.ie to join the mailing list.



Picture: Noel Donnellon

Creating the next generation of Traveller leaders

Anne Burke went to her first meeting with ACE ready for a battle.

In her role with the Southern Traveller Health Network (STHN), she had been trying to establish a leadership course to give the group of women she was working with access to the type of qualification, the type of associated confidence, they felt was needed to put themselves forward for jobs in their communities.

She had approached other agencies, who were unreceptive, some of whom wouldn't give them the time for a meeting.

That's been the lived experience of Travellers for so long, being told what to do to fit in rather than having their differences accepted and accommodated. But in ACE, they found collaborators who were not only willing to work with them, but let them lead.

"It couldn't have happened without ACE. I went into the first meeting ready for a fight and that wasn't what happened at all. ACE really wanted to make this work," says Anne.

"They didn't want to control it. They didn't want to come in and say, this can't happen, that can't happen. They said to us, tell us what you want and we'll try to make it happen. And they did.

"They bent over backwards to accommodate us, to look at how we'd make the course work for the women. They've been really great to work with and understanding that we are the ones who know how to do this. We, as Traveller women, know what Traveller women want, what will work for Traveller women.

It's all failed

"That's not been our experience with other agencies and, in fact,

that's not been the experience of our lives. Our life experience has been Government agencies coming in and telling us what's best for us, this'll work for ye, this is what ye need. And it's not, it's all failed.

"The fact we had 27 women with very poor primary education was an indictment of the education system, of not listening to Travellers, not listening to the people who live it, who know what would work, who know what won't work.

"It's been our experience that they've tried to fit us into what works for settled people, and that's been the failure of the Government."

Anne would've been delighted had ten women enrolled. Instead, 27 did, building upon years of engagement with STHN, working together to identify and address issues. They had organised a conference on mental health and suicide to help rectify the emergency services' lack of understanding of Traveller culture. "They said they knew more about Polish culture than they knew or understood about Traveller culture," says Anne. Similar themes were explored in a booklet on domestic violence developed by three generations of Traveller women.

The idea for a leadership course, like the conference, like the booklet, came from the women themselves.

It was designed to lessen the barriers the women had to overcome, around childcare, around study, around travel, with people coming from as far as Tralee two mornings a week. Five had to pull out for personal reasons but of the 22 remaining, 17 want to go on and do a second year, leading to the development of a diploma course.

The modules examined topics such as the history, practice, and principles of community develop-



ment, and social analysis.

"You must have a good understanding of what's wrong before you can fix it. Our experience all our lives is being told that we're what's wrong. The systems are there but we're what's wrong."

Colouring class

The education system Travellers are used to is one that doesn't accommodate or even acknowledge difference. One that doesn't recognise a modified approach is needed. One that was imposed upon them.

"It was a real eye-opener for the women. When we looked at the whole inequalities in the system, we had very strong women break down and cry, realising the way they had been treated in the system, the way they hadn't gained from the system, the way they've been excluded and marginalised.

"It's very hard to see how you

were treated when you live through a system, and I would say Travellers survived through the education system. Their experience was being put at the back of the class with a piece of paper and crayons, and they have colouring while the other children are doing the work.

"We have women on the course who went through a segregated education system in this country, who were treated really badly, who were taken in in the morning and stripped and washed, and who in the playground, there was a wall and they weren't allowed to mix with settled children. Settled children weren't even allowed to know they were there.

"That's had a huge effect on a lot of the women. We have a woman there, an amazing woman, and her reaction to that was, I'm never going to let my children be treated like this. And she's ensured that's never happened to her children and

she's had the strength and resilience to do that.

"Others internalise it and say, well, the reason that happened was because there was something wrong with us and we deserve to be treated like this. But it's the systems that need to change, not Travellers.

"We've young women on the course with young children in school who see the value of education. Now, they have the confidence to go up to the school and challenge and say, why is my child on a reduced timetable? Why is it alright if my child doesn't come to school and nobody puts in a phone call?"

"That's the power in it. It's about empowerment. It's about collective action. It's about people coming together to work on issues that affect the group. These are issues that affect us all as Travellers."

The course is all about constructing the supports where they're needed most. It discusses the type

of education system needed, one that builds on what already exists in communities, rather than dismissing those structures. One tooled more towards problem-solving than retaining reams of information.

"I think they're owed this opportunity," says Anne. "They're owed the supports to help them. Nothing will change if we can't change education, if we can't turn that around and make it work for us.

"Education is so important with all the other issues that go on in our lives, issues of racism and discrimination, issues around accommodation, health issues. Education gets lost a bit in that. It's not prioritised in the hierarchy of needs. Education is that bit that's missing for us."

STHN are working with another group of women who they hope, in time, will arrive at a place where they want to do a course like this. As it is, the current generation of

new Traveller leaders will be the best advertisement for a return to education, one that's tailored to their needs.

"This will work on so many different levels. If they never did anything else after, this will help their children in education, this will help their children's confidence, and their children's self-esteem. This will spread out to their sisters, to their mothers, to their sons, to all the family.

"The women themselves will go into the spaces where they'll be able to represent Travellers, where they'll be able to lead. Some women might decide they want to do something else after this diploma and do further education.

"Once you start something, you don't know. It will travel in so many different directions and, hopefully, all to the benefit of the women."

Course Spotlight

Diploma in Leadership in the Community

Bespoke programme for closed groups only, not available for open recruitment. Contact ace@ucc.ie for more details

Duration: 2 Years
Delivery: Delivered as per needs of cohort

Professor Patrick O'Shea, President of UCC (centre) pictured with a group of traveller women on their first day of the Cert in Leadership in the Community.
Picture: David Keane

Celebrating student success at the Adult Continuing



Education conferring ceremony at UCC, November 2019

Photos by David Keane





Vincent Murphy (third left) after addressing the 2019 ACE conferring ceremony at Devere Hall. *Picture: David Keane*

Light-bulb moment: How Vincent pedalled up his personal Everest

Vincent Murphy remembers the first lecture he gave in UCC, back in 2005.

An electrician by trade, he set off an odyssey of seemingly random course choices through the '80s and '90s to bring him to this point, lecturing on the Higher Diploma of Safety, Health and Welfare at Work. Still, he says, "I was planking myself".

"I always remember coming out of that lecture, a three-hour lecture, the first night, and I was shaking. My nerves were at me but I felt a great sense of achievement. From leaving school at 15 years of age, I didn't ever think I'd achieve that. For me, it was like climbing Everest."

Those nerves took a couple of years to overcome, between teaching people he considered very highly educated and the prospect of being "put back in your box".

Only an electrician?

One night, early in Vincent's tenure, before his first lecture with a new group, he was in the classroom early. As a self-confessed technophobe who now provides risk assessments for a living, it was perhaps natural that he'd double and triple check the slides on the memory stick.

Satisfied it was working, he sat at the back of the room running through his notes when a familiar face walked in.

"Of course, I recognised him from another life – we had worked together. He says to me, 'Jaysus, Murphy, how are you getting on?' and we were talking away. Then, he says, 'Are you doing this stupid course as well?'"

"I'm saying to myself, I don't want to embarrass him nor embarrass myself, so I said, 'I'm actually giving these few lectures.' He turned to me and said, 'You are in your f***, sure you're only an electrician!'"

"I said, 'Yeah, you're right, but so was Lech Wałęsa and he became president of Poland. And secondly, Tommy, I'll be marking your papers as well!'"

In November 2019, Vincent delivered the commencement speech to an auditorium full of new ACE graduates. "The thought of ever entering this hallowed hall either as a student or lecturer was not even a pipe dream for me in school," he said.

He also quoted Einstein to summarise his early educational experience: "If you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid."

Vincent was that fish.

Born the eldest of eight to a family in the North Cork village of Kiskeam, he grew up sharing a bed with two of his younger brothers. School was largely irrelevant to him and he left after the Inter Cert. "There was no money or prospects or anything like that so it was a case of get an apprenticeship if you were lucky enough."

Vincent ended up with a rare choice, being offered apprenticeships as a fitter with Bord na Móna or an electrician with CIÉ. He took the latter but he didn't rest on his laurels.

He couldn't do a degree at the time without a Leaving Cert to his name but enrolled in an electrical engineering night course at CIT through City and Guilds. Back then, changing careers was a foreign concept but the aim was to hopefully achieve long-term gain, not that it was without short-term sacrifices.

He had got married in the meantime and he remembers many a Tuesday night on the Curraheen Road waiting for a bus as it approached 10 o'clock, asking himself, "am I off my tree or what?"

After that, he heard about UCC ACE setting up a Diploma in Social Studies at Douglas Community School... "This course in no small way lit my fire,"

he says, "and gave me the confidence to believe that there might be more left in the brain-tank I previously thought was empty."

Next was a Diploma in Development Studies... "Once you get a taste of it at all and you realise some of it is sinking in, you keep going."

Then he took the big step of signing up for a law degree... "I was getting very brave at that stage."

He passed his exams through first and second year, earning his third diploma, before he received some advice from a friend. The field of health and safety was emerging and he advocated a change from law, saying, "unless you marry into the profession in Cork, you haven't a hope in hell."

Vincent switched to the Diploma of Safety, Health and Welfare at Work and a few years later, the Master's in Occupational Health was established. He got a few hours of lecturing before taking up the course himself for his fifth UCC qualification. Not to mention, Vincent set up his own company, Safe Place Systems, in the same period.

On a high

He owes it to each of the courses he studied along the way to bring about that

change over the decades.

"At that time, the option of changing careers didn't exist and you'd no great expectations. I was kind of resigned to that. Your self-confidence is relatively low and you say to yourself, 'I'm going to be fixing sockets and lights now and that's my lot.'"

"But when I went to the Community School and did Development Studies, being able to find out how politics and local government work, which was a totally alien concept, it was like getting a hit from a banned substance. I was just on a high like, God, it's brilliant to know this stuff and it became addictive."

"It took commitment because we had two kids and money was scarce. Most guys were out doing nixers or foxers but I read some philosopher said, in order to get up the hill, you have to pedal. Some people just freewheel down the boreens or valleys. I peddled for a good many years just to educate myself really. Thank God, it paid dividends in the end - that's for sure."

He overcame his own hang-ups around education along the way.

"Martin Ó Fathaigh was professor of adult education at the time and he always made the point that he started out as a postman and went back to college late as well.

I found that inspiring and the likes of Willie [Weir] and Séamus [Ó Tuama] were always there to encourage and drive me on.

"I suppose I was reassuring to people doing the course from maybe a construction or an agri background, that their confidence wouldn't be up to it because the College can be a daunting place. I suppose I'd allay their fears and I'd never apologise for coming from a trades background."

"You don't have to be an academic. 40% gets you over the line. You don't necessarily have to have a first-class honour, even though a lot of people were driven to that level."

Others had hang-ups too. Once asked if he would ever go back to do the Leaving Cert, Vincent replied: "I don't need the Leaving Cert, I've an honours master's, four diplomas, and a good few certs. If anything, it's a PhD I'd be doing at this stage."

He has other things in mind than a PhD and delivered his lecturing swansong last year, but he won't quit his lifelong learning journey, quoting Einstein once again: "Once you stop learning, you start dying."

By that logic, Vincent has lived many lifetimes. And many more to come.