

Building Effective Partnerships Award 2024 -Shortlisted

Driving Collaboration for SMEs in the West of Ireland with Platform94
Breda Kenna and Donal Hackett
University of Galway



Over 60% of University of Galway graduates work within the SME sector in Ireland, with a considerable proportion employed across the Western region.

Despite this, students' awareness of the career pathways open to them within this sector dipped significantly during the COVID-19 crisis. The main drivers for this were the contraction in the labour market at that time and resultant disruption to on-campus employer-student engagement.

This initiative achieved an increased student awareness and created employability opportunities by partnering with a prominent SME representative body in the region, Platform 94. This collaborative initiative has yielded remarkable results for students, the Career Development Centre (CDC), Platform 94, and its' members (100+ SMEs).

Work with Platform 94 has developed a sustainable employer engagement model for the University that positions SMEs as a viable work placement and graduate option in the minds of students. This relational model seeks to create multi-annual campaigns for SMEs that enable them to meet their talent pipeline development needs and compete with large corporates for this limited talent pool. Member companies have gained exclusive brand exposure and access to the community of 19,000 students through participation at University of Galway's Flagship Career fairs, work placements, interview preparation sessions and employability skills workshops. Members in the following sectors AI, Cybersecurity, E-Commerce, Engineering and Med-Tec have benefited hugely from this continued collaboration along with students and Careers staff.

Food For Thought

Annmarie MacFeely and Anna Murphy

Munster Technological University Cork



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Attention: Biological Sciences Students

DATE: 19TH MARCH

TIME: 12:30 – 14:30

LOCATION: NEXUS, MTU
BISHOPSTOWN CAMPUS



Come chat with potential employers
and graduates from your programmes

Learn more about various career
options in food and nutrition
industries

FREE PIZZA



+

PRIZES TO
BE WON



MTU has a uniquely de-centralised Careers service with work placement falling directly under the remit of Academic lecturers and staff. MTU Careers have built effective relationships with colleagues in the Biological Science Department and are working together to support pre-placement 2nd year students.

Working together, Careers and Academic colleagues have developed a tailored pre-placement CV template and A.I. tailored online mock interview for MTU Biological Science, 2nd year students, which are embedded on the MTU Career online career tools site. These may be accessed 365 days a year 24/7. The A.I. CV scan is now an embedded part of pre-placement preparation which is managed by Academic colleagues in Biological Sciences.

Careers have been delighted to support Biological Sciences Academic Colleagues, along with colleagues from Extended Campus to develop a 'Food for Thought' career pathway event for undergraduate and postgraduate students to broaden their career horizons, funded by N-TUTORR. Twenty two employers showcased their organisations, products and discussed potential careers with students from a wide array of careers such as Clinical Trials, Food & Beverage Production, Dietetics, Food Safety and Laboratory work, Food Sustainability, Research, etc.

Great opportunity to work collaboratively, build industry network, showcase career pathways and champion MTU students.

Strategic Innovation Award 2024 - Shortlisted

DCU Placement AI Chatbot Implementation Project

Paula Murray

Dublin City University

The AI Chatbot Implementation Project exemplifies AI's role as an empowering tool. It enhances teaching, learning, and service activities by providing an accessible, 24/7 support system for students, faculty, and staff. Ethical considerations are paramount, ensuring data privacy and transparency in handling sensitive information. Stakeholders, including students, faculty, and placement providers are actively engaged in the project's development, ensuring the diverse needs are addressed. By leveraging AI to streamline communication and optimize resources, this project positions AI as a supportive tool, empowering the university community while maintaining ethical standards and inclusivity.

The DCU Placement AI Chatbot aims to revolutionise and enhance the DCU Placement Unit's digital engagement by introducing an intelligent, conversational AI interface. The primary objectives include:

1. **Enhanced Student and Staff Experience:** Providing students, faculty, and placement partners with a responsive, 24/7 support system for inquiries, guidance, and information retrieval. This is key to the DCU Placement Unit commitment to continuous enhancement and improvement of the stakeholder (student, staff, and placement partner) experience.
2. **Streamlined Communication:** Improving communication channels by offering immediate and accurate responses to frequently asked questions, reducing dependency on human resources for routine queries.
3. **Data-Driven Insights:** Utilising data gathered from interactions to identify trends, pain points, and areas for service enhancement.



Designing Your Life - a transformative university journey for ALL Fionnuala Rahilly, Niamh Mullen and Ciara Tallon Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland

The impact of the Designing Your Life programme across Medicine, Pharmacy & Biomolecular Sciences, Physiotherapy and Postgraduate schools has resulted in the Career Development team and function being recognized as an early adopter within the university but also cemented our role as the thought leader in Design Thinking across international university sites.

93% of participants who engaged in this programme indicated they felt confident in their post graduation plans armed with the tools and techniques they can continue to build on as future healthcare leaders.



Strategic Innovation Award 2024 - Shortlisted

NCAD Alumni Stories Series Derek McGarry and Anna Greene National College of Art and Design

The National College of Art and Design (NCAD) Alumni Stories Series, developed during the Covid-19 pandemic, emerged as a guide for resilience and adaptability. An institution deeply-rooted in hands-on studio practice, it strived to celebrate creativity and innovation online and in the face of adversity. Four years and over a hundred interviews later, the initiative continues to uplift and motivate.

A low budget approach, with broad reach that has been elevated across social media platforms, highlighting varied creative pathways from ceramics to medical device design, painting to visual culture. It serves as a valuable resource in NCAD and beyond, offering a wealth of insights for recruitment, marketing, policy-making, and skills development in the rapidly evolving employment landscape of the creative industries.

As part of the series, #MotivationalMonday provides targeted and practical advice to students, further empowering student success, and reinforcing messages from NCAD Careers Service and professional practice modules. Engaging graduates in campaign design adds significant value and opportunity to support employability.

Through first-hand tips and advice from creative industries business owners and employers among our alumni network, we directly and indirectly facilitate invaluable partnerships, networking opportunities, internships and mentorship, better preparing students for meaningful careers in the creative industries.

For a small college without an Alumni Officer, the series has served as a massive boost in alumni engagement which had been untapped for some time. The sense of connection and community the series has fostered within the NCAD network, sets firm foundations for the next alumni chapter.

“NCAD Alumni Stories & #Motivational Mondays”

#NCADCareerServices alumni interviews
packed with tips and advice for creatives

NCAD

Early Careers Employer Forum (ECEF)

Gavin Connell

University of Limerick



Early Careers Employer Survey 2023



ASSOCIATION of HIGHER
EDUCATION CAREERS SERVICES

The Early Careers Employer Forum (ECEF) aims to provide insights and solutions for Ireland's graduate and placement recruitment market. This initiative is based on our continuous engagement with our employer partner network, which consists of 350 employers from different sectors, disciplines, and backgrounds who participated in our survey in 2023. The forum is gaining more partners and insights every year as it reflects the current situation and challenges of the early career talent market. The ECEF has two main components: a survey and a publication. The survey is the largest in Ireland, revealing the latest trends and challenges of recruiting graduates and providing placements in the current year. The Early Careers Employer survey is useful for understanding the needs and preferences of employers who recruit and develop graduates and young professionals. The Early Careers Employer survey is an online questionnaire sent to employers who have hired graduates or offered placements in the past year or plan to do so next year. The survey covers recruitment methods, selection criteria, salary levels, skills gaps, training opportunities, diversity initiatives, and satisfaction levels. The survey gathers recruitment, retention, development, and diversity data for early career talent. The survey results can help employers compare their performance, learn from best practices, and enhance their strategies for attracting and retaining early career talent.

Research Informed Practice Award 2024 - Shortlisted

AHECS

**MBA LEAP (Leadership & Employability Advancement Programme):
integrating research and practice in an evidence-based, in-curriculum module at
UCD Michael Smurfit Graduate Business School**

Bernie Burke

University College Dublin

UCD Careers Network (Smurfit), working in partnership with the UCD Smurfit School MBA Programme has introduced a new in-curriculum module as part of both its Global and Executive MBA Programmes. In its design, the Leadership & Employability Advancement Programme (LEAP) module combines the best academic evidence from occupational psychology, careers theory and universal design learning to ensure a strong correlation between the employability development of all students and global industry needs. As such, LEAP represents a unique offering amongst the top 100 global MBA Programmes. The module is underpinned by a multi-level behavioural framework, developed in consultation with UCD Smurfit School's leading global employers, and validated by independent occupational psychologists. The LEAP Employability Framework describes the behaviours required for excellence at various role levels across six global competencies, providing all students with a benchmark against which they can set development goals and build their intercultural competence for success in a global workforce. Over the course of LEAP, MBA students engage in a range of experiential and reflective exercises, both peer group and individual, to support their career development and to build their global employability skills, all validated against a robustly researched global framework. As part of UCD's commitment to diversity and inclusion, the module has been designed to optimise the participation and learning of all students, applying the principles of universal design learning. The result has been an integrated, evidenced-based, universally designed module focused on supporting student success in a global workforce, embraced by both students and stakeholders.



SMURFIT MBA LEAP & EXECUTIVE LEAP

Employability Framework



University College Dublin
Careers Network

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Research Informed Practice Award 2024 - Shortlisted

AHECS

Transforming Tomorrow's Leaders:
Recognising Research Informed Career Impact Strategies for Students at TUS Midwest.

Aoife Prendergast

Technological University of the Shannon Midwest



Technological University of the Shannon (TUS) is a multi-campus university spread across six campuses throughout Ireland's Midwest and Midlands region including principal campuses at Limerick and Athlone with more than 15,000 students enrolled in programmes. In addition, 1,450 staff members are employed at TUS. TUS has a clear strategic focus on meeting the evolving needs of society and industry through applied learning and innovative thinking. To achieve this, TUS puts the individual needs of students front-and-centre, prioritising accessibility, and opportunity for all with the skills and knowledge student require to gain success in their chosen careers. The TUS Career Impact Strategy is a comprehensive programme led by the Careers & Employability Service that encompasses a range of research informed initiatives designed to help students develop their employability skills, devise a career management plan, secure internships and placements, and secure employment after graduation. TUS aims to produce work-ready graduates with the practical skills and competencies to thrive in their careers.



'Be Career Curious'
Mini Careers Fair Series
Exhibitors 2023-24



Abbott Diabetes Care	Employability Northwest	My Homecare
Abbott Diagnostics/Nutrition	Encirc	New Frontiers
Abbvie	Enterprise	Nua Healthcare
ABP Ireland	Eures Irelandarrans	Odyssey Social Care
ACCA	Feehily Timoney	ORS
Alone	Foridge	Payac
Amcor Flexibles	Gateway Community Care	Peter McVerry Trust
Aramark	Gilroy Gannon	PGIM
Ardmac	Glenveagh	Porter & Co Chartered
Arken	GMC	Accountants
Arrotek	Grant Thornton	Portview
ATU	Hollister	Portwest
Aurivo	Home Instead	Pro Cloud
Avenue	Hydraquip	Radisson Blu Sligo
BAM	Innopharma Technical Services	Regeneron
Boyle Construction	IPS	RehabCare
Brothers of Charity, West Region	Irish Naval Service	Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority
Charles River	John Paul Construction	Shareridge
Chartered Accountants Ireland	Kepak	Sligo Bid
Clayton Hotels	Kilcawley Construction	Sligo County Childcare Committee
Coffey	King & Moffatt Building Services	SOLAS
Colas	Kirby Engineering & Construction	Specialisterne
Collins McNicholas Recruitment & HR Services Group	KTL	SUIR Engineering
Comblift	Lakeland Dairies	The Teaching Council
Cora Systems	Linesight	TLI Group
CPA Ireland	Litec Moulding	Tobin
CQS Group	Mannok	TUSLA
Dawn Meats	Medtronic	USA Summercamp
DBFL Consulting Engineers	Mercury Engineering	Valeo
Doran Engineering & Construction	MKO	Vision Built Structures
Education Recruitment & Marketing	Motion Controls	Voya
Eisner Amper Ireland	Muiriosa Foundation	Western Care Association
	Mulhern Leonard & Associates	Winthrop



'Be Career Curious' is a mini careers fair series hosted by the careers team at ATU Sligo. A return to in-person teaching in 2022, post the Covid-19 pandemic, provided the opportunity to resume campus-based events. After a two-year hiatus from physical careers fairs and a relatively low engagement at the 2021 online careers fair, the ATU Sligo careers team prioritised facilitating companies regularly on campus to provide staff and students with the opportunity to reconnect with potential employers, grow professional networks, and increase industry knowledge. Rather than returning to the 'single large scale careers fair' model previously adopted, the careers team chose to pilot a 'multiple, mini careers fair' format during 2022-23 and overwhelmingly positive feedback in relation to this change provided the impetus to embed 'Be Career Curious' into the careers calendar going forward.

ATU Sligo has hosted twenty-seven 'Be Career Curious' events since September 2022. Companies from a variety of industry sectors are deliberately hosted each week to evoke career curiosity, and continuous interest from a broader cohort, however a handful of 'Be Career Curious – TAKEOVERS!' have been hosted which provide a specific industry focus, such as the 'STEM TAKEOVER' facilitated as part of the N-TUTORR week of programmes in February 2024.

Exhibitors report a preference for the small-scale format with 90% reporting this led to more meaningful conversations. Staff appreciate the opportunity to grow their networks and strengthen links with placement providers and 89% of students acknowledged 'Be Career Curious' increased their awareness of companies and roles.

Feature Friday!
Sorcha Walshe

South East Technological University Waterford

Feature Friday

SETU Career Development Centre
presents

FEATURE FRIDAY

Hosted @11am Instagram:
@setucareerscentrewaterford



The pandemic presented significant challenges for students, especially those who commenced their studies in the months leading up to and during the lockdown. With nearly two academic years spent off-campus, these students, now in their penultimate and final years, have felt a sense of disconnection and increased difficulty in researching potential industries and job opportunities.

Recognising this unique opportunity, the SETU Careers Development Centre Waterford took proactive steps to enhance employer and student engagement.

Through a regular online series called “Feature Friday”, the Careers Centre facilitated interactions between students and 196 employers across two academic years, including well-known entities such as Jameson, Conack, Vodafone, Public Relay, For Purpose and RehabCare. Complemented by on-campus events, Feature Friday involved 125 submission in 22/23 and 145 in 23/24 across all disciplines.

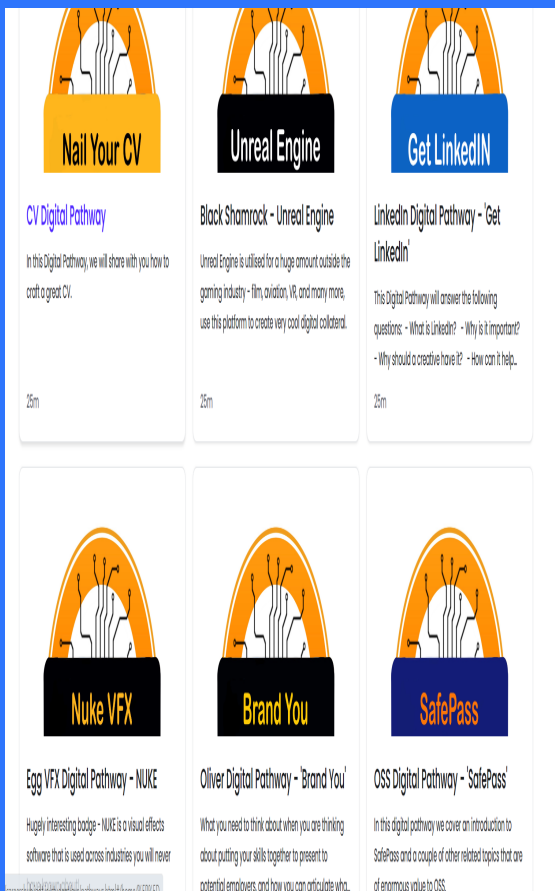
Run through popular social media platforms, Instagram and LinkedIn, “Feature Friday” provided a weekly showcase of employers offering highly practical guidance on crucial employability and recruitment aspects including sourcing and applying for opportunities, application tips, interview preparation and insights into hybrid/remote working opportunities.

Aimed to bridge the gap between students and potential employers and meet students “where they are at”, the initiative reached students from first to final year, allowing employers not only to connect with imminent graduates but also raise awareness among students in the early stages of their studies. The format, with weekly posted content that was easily accessible and saved online, resonated well with students, offering them the flexibility to review the information at their convenience.



The Future Ready Skills for Leaders Programme has been long established in Queen's University Belfast, uniquely bringing students together from any degree, discipline or level to form teams and compete for prizes. This annual three-day programme selects around 50 students who are put into mixed teams, each mentored by an employer representative, often a recent graduate not working in a management role. The aim is not only to develop employability skills but to provide students with real-life practical examples they can use throughout the recruitment process. Skills developed include problem-solving, decision-making and resource management, time management and working under pressure, teamwork and conflict management, presentation skills and public speaking, analysis of information, negotiation and influencing, professional impact and resilience. Students see the value of their degree in cross disciplinary teams as they tackle issues including environmental awareness, engagement with media, addressing sustainable development goals and practical entrepreneurship. On a personal level they increase in confidence, develop the ability to articulate their skill set and build their personal brand through engaging with employers. Multiple departments from across the university are involved, with bespoke sessions delivered by academics from Queen's Business School and the Drama department, QUB Estates facilitating the environmental challenge and the Entrepreneurship manager guiding Design Thinking. This collaborative, multidisciplinary and fast-paced programme has 100% of the participants recommending the three days to other students. Completers can also access the university Future Ready Skills Award.

IADT Employability Design Sprint: Shaping Digital Pathways and Future Careers for Students and Graduates Dawn O'Connor Institute of Art, Design and Technology



The goal of this in-person facilitated design sprint was to build short, asynchronous employability digital badges.

The badge design was to meet specific employability skill needs identified by 4 employers, Oliver, Egg VFX, Black Shamrock and OSS. The employers wrote the skill briefs, and each team worked on content and design.

The digital badges were deployed on IADT's CareersHub environment and are also accessible through platforms such as The Hub (Student Portal) and the IADT Library.

Participants in the sprint were tasked with using resources already available in IADT, such as LinkedIn Learning and the CFA asynchronous content frameworks but teams also had access to new content. Udemy (giving 20 free licences) and The Foundry (giving 4 Free licences for 6 different industry-level content creation and interactive platforms) collaborated on this project also. This project is a prototype for building an extensive digital badge library based on employer skill needs.