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AHECS - Association of Higher Education Careers Services

AHECS is the voice of higher education careers and employability professionals across Ireland.

Representing 25 Universities, Technological Universities, Higher Education Institutes and Institutes of Technology, we enable careers teams to develop their own skills and share best practice approaches and resources.

Together, our members and partners are helping over 400,000 students to get ahead.

www.ahecs.ie

CONNECT November 2024

Welcome to the first newsletter from your new Executive Board!

We'd like to thank all of you for supporting us as we've settled into our new roles on Executive. It was great to see so many of you at our recent meetings and we hope to be able to meet you in person in 2025. Together, we have a unique opportunity to continue driving forward our mission to lead and support collaboration among Higher Education Careers Service professionals throughout Ireland and be the recognised authority on graduate employability, Placement and Career Development Learning.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the outgoing committee members who have made significant contributions to our association's achievements over many years especially out going Chair Orla Bannon, Angela Collins, Catherine Staunton and Fionnuala Rahilly. Your hard work and commitment have laid a strong foundation, and we are deeply grateful for your commitment and we look forward to carrying that momentum forward over the next two years.

I am also delighted to welcome our new committee members, each bringing a wealth of experience and fresh perspectives. Welcome to Sandra Scannell, Queens University Belfast and Paula Murray, Dublin City University.

I am looking forward to our collective journey and to celebrating our shared successes in the years ahead. It is important for us to hear your ideas and suggestions and to get your feedback to inform our plans so feel free to contact us at admin@ahecs.ie

Best wishes

Marie Laffey
AHECS Chair



AHECS Executive Committee 2024 - 2026



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Marie Laffey
University of Galway



AHECS Deputy Chair
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University College Dublin



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AHECS Director
Sandra Scannell
Queens University Belfast



AHECS Director
Paula Murray
Dublin City University



November 2024

Wednesday 6th - JMB Meeting

Tuesday 19th - All Members online Meeting 11am -12pm

Wednesday 20th - Lunch N Learn - Engineers Ireland

Thursday 28th - CPD Subgroup Meeting

December 2024

Friday 6th - AHECS Executive Committee meeting in Dublin City University

Wednesday 11th - Lunch n Learn - Release, Recharge & Restart

Wednesday 18th - NORTHWEST Regional Event

January 2025

Thursday 9th - CPD Subgroup Meeting

Thursday 16th - AHECS Executive Committee Meeting in University of Limerick

Thursday 16th - AHECS AGM and Heads of Service Meeting in University of Limerick

Friday 17th - Heads of Service Training Day in University of Limerick

Thursday 23rd - All Members CPD Training - Beginners

Monday 27th - AHECS Employability Awards open for submissions

Thursday 30th - All Members CPD Training - Intermediate

February 2025

Thursday 6th - All Members CPD Training - Advanced

Thursday 20th - CPD Subgroup Meeting

Wednesday 26th - AHECS Executive Committee meeting

March 2025

Sunday 9th - Monday 12th - Global Careers Summit 2025

Friday 14th - AHECS Employability Awards closed for submissions

April 2025

Thursday 3rd - CPD Subgroup Meeting

Wednesday 9th - AHECS Executive Committee meeting

Thursday 24th - AHECS in person event, Royal Irish Academy, 19 Dawson Street, Dublin

Thursday 24th - AHECS Employability Award winners announced at the gradireland Graduate Recruitment Awards, Mansion House, Dublin

May 2025

Date TBC - Accreditation Training

Thursday 22nd - CPD Subgroup Meeting

Thursday 29th - AHECS Executive Committee meeting



The AHECS Employability Awards will open for submissions from
10am Monday 27th January 2025 until 5pm Friday 14th March 2025.

Submissions are invited across four categories:

1. Building Effective Partnerships Award
2. Supporting Student/Graduate Employability Award
3. Strategic Innovation Award
4. Research Informed Practice Award

We are delighted to announce a brand new judging panel for 2025 and 2026:

1. Paul Vance, KPMG
2. Leslee O'Loughlin, Enterprise Mobility
3. Fiona Doherty, gradireland
4. Judy Murphy, former Head of Service, South East Technological University Carlow

We would like to acknowledge and thank Gavan O'Brien, gradireland, Paul McClatchie, Engage People, Sinéad D'Arcy, Future Roots and Siobhain Scanlon, Musgrave for giving their time and expertise to judging for the past few years.

AHECS Employability Awards 2025 - Entry Guidelines

You are invited to..... AHECS NORTHWEST Regional Gathering Promoting Student Self-Agency Through Career Pathways



When: Wednesday 18th December

Where: Careers Seminar Room, Career Development Centre, University of Galway

Time: 11am -2pm

Link below for full brief and schedule.

Registration will be via booking forms issued to your Head of Service.

Closing date for registrations is 2pm on Thursday 12th December 2024

Please contact admin@ahecs.ie with any questions.

We hope you can make it!



The AHECS CPD Subgroup are delighted to announce that we are funding Canva training for our members.

Expression of Interest forms have been issued to each Head of Service. If you are interested in attending this training, please contact your Head of Service who will complete the form on behalf of your HEI.

Reminder that forms to be returned by 2pm Thursday 7th November to allow us to confirm with the trainer and subject to demand, facilitate an additional course. Please note it is not mandatory to attend all three courses, you can select which level(s) are appropriate to you.

The course will run over the following dates and times:

- Week 1 - Beginners - Thursday 23rd January 2025 10.30am - 1pm
- Week 2 - Intermediate - Thursday 30th January 2025 10.30am - 1pm
- Week 3 - Advanced - Thursday 6th February 2025 10.30am - 1pm

An expression of interest is not a guarantee of a place; however, we will endeavor to ensure an even representation from all AHECS member HEI's.

A graphic titled 'STRUCTURE' on a dark background. It lists the course content for three weeks. The text is white and yellow. There is a signature 'Teresa Howard' in the top right corner. The graphic is divided into three columns for Week 1, Week 2, and Week 3. Each column lists the topics to be covered in that week. The background has some colorful abstract shapes in green, pink, and yellow.

STRUCTURE

The course is designed to run over 3 dedicated training sessions of 2.5 hours each.
The course content may vary as the Canva platform continually evolves.
I will survey your members in advance to ensure the content aligns with their specific needs.

Week 1 - Beginners	Week 2 - Intermediate	Week 3 - Advanced
• Navigating the Canva ecosystem. • Working with colours & developing a brand kit. • Creating a design from scratch. • Exploring templates. • Uploading your own content to Canva.	• Exploring some basic keywords to unlock Canva. • Design a month of social media posts in 10 minutes! 🤖 • Elevate online meetings with Presentations & Whiteboards • Introduction to image editing. • Bringing AI into the mix - how you can use it to boost your marketing	• Advanced video editing to truly elevate your marketing mix • Scheduling social media with the scheduling tool. • Create mobile-responsive landing page

We want to hear from you....the CPD Subgroup are in the process of creating a Training Needs Analysis to help inform our plans around training and CPD. This will be circulated once finalised. In the meantime, if you have any suggestions please feel free to reach out to any member of the AHECS CPD subgroup, contact details can be found [here](#).



AHECS Communities of Practice

New members are always welcome to these groups.

Work Placement

The CoP met on the 12th September and a follow up email was sent to the members to gauge topics of interest for the academic year. The following were areas of interest and HEI's are invited to share their experiences :

- International internships - encouraging and supporting students to apply and engaging with international hosts.
- Best practice in risk assessment
- Alternatives to internships in modules, WIL experiences
- How do other HEI's manage unpaid internships
- Widening participation
- Business development/marketing techniques for internships.
- Professional development, i.e. conference and training that others recommend.

Our next CoP meeting takes place on the 7th November 12- 1pm and NUIG will present on Supporting International Students on Internships.

Contact oonagh.sweeney@ucd.ie and breda.kenna@nuigalway.ie

Psychometric Assessment

Psychometrics in Recruitment: How Can We Support Gen Z Students to Compete with Confidence?

The panel discussion on the use of psychometrics by employers (and how to prepare students for them) are now available to view in "byte-size" segments by question/topic!

This panel discussion took place as a parallel session at the AHECS Biennial 2024. As you can see below, the panel discussion was moderated by Co-Facilitators Deirdre Parker and Michael McDonnell, and comprised of academic, employer, professional and recent graduate perspectives.

The panellists were:

- Claire Linehan, Senior Occupational Psychology Consultant
- Hannah Mahony, Trading Graduate, Musgrave
- Sinead Darcy, Early Career Strategist (formerly Jameson)
- Siobhain Scanlon, Early Careers Manager, Musgrave
- Dr. Ultan Sherman, Senior Lecturer, Organisational and Resource Management, UCC

Highlights of the discussion on the day included:

- The panel discusses how psychometric testing can enhance recruitment by identifying candidates' strengths and cultural fit.
- Claire Linehan elaborates on the types of psychometric assessments and their appropriate applications. Cognitive ability assessments were recommended for screening out unsuitable candidates early in the process, while personality assessments better suited for later stages to inform interview questions. The importance of not screening out high-potential candidates based solely on academic achievements was also highlighted.
- The panel discuss the evolving nature of assessments for interns and how organizations are increasingly considering personality traits alongside cognitive abilities. The consensus was that psychometrics should be one part of a broader evaluation strategy that includes various candidate attributes.
- Sinead D'Arcy shares findings from a ten-year study that examined generational differences in candidate profiles and their impact on job performance. The discussion underscored the importance of aligning assessment results with actual job performance metrics to validate the effectiveness of psychometric tools in recruitment.

Have a watch!

Contact [Michael McDonnell](#) or [Deirdre Parker](#)

Employer Engagement

Hester Jackman, Partnerships Development Manager TCD Careers, and Caroline Pierce, Business Development Manager in UCD Careers Network, are co-chairing the Employer Engagement CoP for 2024/25 and held their first meeting in September. This community aims to share best practice and explore key themes of interacting with employers strategically. If you engage regularly with employers, please reach out and consider joining our group. Our next meeting will take place in November (TBC)

Contact [Caroline Pierce](#) or [Hester Jackman](#)

Healthcare

Orla is planning an in person networking meeting in Dublin during the 2nd week of December for careers professionals interested in joining a collaborative community to focus on Healthcare careers related topics and supports. Anyone interested in attending please contact [Orla O'Dwyer](#)

'Career IT Systems Information Exchange Group'

This CoP will focus on the exchanging of knowledge and best practice around the use of IT systems within your service.

Contact [Fionnuala Rahilly](#) or [Jillian O'Mahony](#)

'Arts & Creative Industries Employability'

The aim is to establish a collaborative network of career development professionals dedicated to enhancing the employability of Arts & Creative Industries (ACI) students in Ireland and share best practices, resources, and expertise in supporting ACI students navigate the unique challenges and opportunities of their career paths. Membership is open to all career development professionals working with ACI students in Irish universities and representation from diverse institutions, disciplines, and levels of experience is encouraged.

Contact [Mary Rose O'Sullivan](#)

LinkedIn Learning

Its purpose is to support one another to develop proficiency and confidence with 'Admin Functionality, curate/share careers resources, learning Paths and collections. New members are always welcome!

Contact [Deborah Seddon](#) or [Adette Ring](#)



AHECS Lunch n Learns

Lunch n Learn sessions run once a month, typically on Wednesdays from 1pm – 2pm to facilitate members coming together to share ideas and learn about a particular issue.

Thank you to everyone who contributed and supported the sessions to date. If you are interested in delivering a Lunch n Learn session please email admin@ahecs.ie.

Wednesday 20th November 2024
1pm -2pm

Title: Engineers Ireland - The Chartered Engineer Application and Interview Explained

Presented by: Andrew Kennedy, Professional Titles Development with IEI Engineers Ireland

Membership Benefits / Joining Process
3 x Routes to CEng Explained
Application process explained
Interview Process
Q&A

Wednesday 11th December 2024
1pm -2pm

Title: Release, Recharge & Restart

Presented by: Maeve Lankford

This short session will be an opportunity to reflect on the semester just completed and honour the transition from one year/one semester into the new year and new semester coming up in January. We'll take some time to wrap up the semester and tie up any loose ends. Then we'll look at what you would love to experience over the Christmas period to recharge your batteries and connect with family and community. And finally we'll look at your vision for the year ahead and some early actions to set yourself up for success in 2025.

During the session we'll also explore two tools/strategies to transform your experience and feel more resilient!

FYI - the tools/strategies we'll look at are using your breath and how to work with your diary as a transformational tool - if you want to name them feel free to do so, but it might be more intriguing to leave the detail til the day!
Totally up to you!

Lunch n Learn sessions are recorded (where permissible) and can be viewed on the AHECS YouTube channel [here](#)

Global Careers Summit 2025



Pictured above are a number of AHECS Heads of Service who attended the GCSS 2024 in Washington DC.

[The Global Career Services Summit \(GCSS\)](#) 2025 will take place in Belfast hosted by Queen's University. The Summit will take place 9th – 12th March and it brings together thought leaders, including global employers, from around the world to discuss important current and future issues that impact careers services university recruiting of early careers talent.

This year the Programme Committee will be led by Sue Harbour, Associate Dean & Executive Director of Berkeley Career Engagement (BCE) at the University of California, Berkeley and the programme will be available nearer the time. It is going to be an amazing conference with outstanding sessions, networking conversations, and evening events.



Hello from gradireland!

gradireland Undergraduate of the Year Launch

We have just launched the 2025 gradireland Undergraduate of the Year Awards. With 12 awards, our fourth year of the awards will be our biggest yet! Within each category, our sponsorship partner provides a fantastic prize for the winner (such as mentoring, payment of course fees, internships and placements on graduate programmes) and other exclusive opportunities. An award ceremony will be held at the Aviva Stadium in Dublin where finalists from each category will get the opportunity to network with top graduate employers.

Students can apply now for the award of their choice here: <https://www.undergraduateoftheyear.ie/>

Submissions close Monday, the 3rd of February.

gradireland Breakfast News

The next gradireland Breakfast News will take place on the 28th of November at the Mayson Hotel. Keep an eye on our LinkedIn page for more information and to register to attend for free in person or online.

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/gradireland>



International Network of
Employers and University
Careers Services

How can Ireland's National Strategic Framework for Lifelong Guidance (Dec 2023) transform the future of employability and talent development in Higher Education?

The AHECS webinar took place on Thursday 31st October. It explored the key strategies aiming to reshape education and career pathways from 2024 to 2030 including:

- Outlining the progress to date starting with the OECD Skills Strategy Ireland (May 2023) and how this applies to Higher Education Career Service provision in Ireland.
- Looking at Dublin City University's (DCU) Transversal Skills Project which exemplifies the integration of OECD recommendations aligning with the National Strategic Framework for Lifelong Guidance (Dec 2023) into both academic modules and career development programs in Higher Education.
- Discussing the rise of micro-credentials in education and training enabling career mobility of Ireland's workforce and how the University of Galway are striving to achieve this.
- Focusing on access to guidance via – MyCareerPath, another example of how supporting career mobility for individuals in the workforce through guidance provision (MyCareerPath) can bring learners back into Higher Education to upskill and retrain, thereby enabling career mobility of the workforce.

Speakers:

- Emma Kinsella, Principal —Skills Policy and Enterprise Engagement Unit
- Dr Ciarán Dunne, Transversal Skills Director for Dublin City University (DCU)
- Emma Goode, MicroCreds Project Lead, UoG
- Bridie Killoran, ATU, Manager MyCareerPath



Community Resource Sharing

Share what you are.....listening to, reading, a project you are working on, an event that is coming up that might interest people, spotlight someone to follow in the industry. Please send your suggestions to admin@ahecs.ie and we will share them here.



New Textbook by AHECS Executive Member, Aoife Prendergast (TUS) offers essential Guidance for Social Care Practice Placements

AHECS Executive Board Member Aoife Prendergast (TUS), in collaboration with co-authors from MTU (Aine de Roiste) and Carlow College (John McHugh) is pleased to announce the publication of the new academic textbook, **Social Care Practice Placement: An Essential Guide**. This comprehensive resource is designed to support social care students, placement supervisors/educators, and lecturers engaged in practice placements.

Key Features:

- **Holistic Perspective:** Examines placements from the perspective of all stakeholders, addressing key student concerns and challenges.
- **Practical Guidance:** Provides clear guidance on how to develop evidence of learning, using tools such as case examples, checklists, and guides.
- **Effective Supervision:** Explains how placement supervision can be a valuable learning tool for achieving goals, increasing professional confidence, and ensuring a rich placement experience.
- **Bridging Theory and Practice:** Considers the application of learned concepts, values, policies, and theories in everyday practice.

Social Care Practice Placement: An Essential Guide is now available for purchase at a price of €36.99. The ISBN for the book is 978-1-73845-453-2.

<https://www.borupress.ie/bookshop/social-care-practice-placement-an-essential-guide>



Spotlight on..... Members within our Careers Community

In this edition we get to know a little bit more about
**Sandra Scannell, Employer Engagement Manager, Queens University Belfast and
AHECS Executive Director**



Name: Sandra Scannell **University:** Employer Engagement Manager, Queens University Belfast

Length of time in the position and route into careers:

I joined the Careers, Employability and Skills team in Queen's just over 5 years ago. At that time, I didn't have experience of a careers service and, although I had worked within (and with) a range of sectors during my own career, Education was not one of them. So, it was an entirely new direction for me, but one where my skills, knowledge and business network could be utilised.

I followed a non-linear career path, having graduated from Queen's with a degree in Psychology, and then taking an interest in Marketing whilst on a graduate development programme. This led to marketing roles in Tourism, Conferencing and Engineering Consultancy.

Somewhere in there, I also went back to study a Masters part time at Ulster University, graduating with distinction in International Business. This opened the door to my role with the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce, a game changer for me when everything really came together. It was a small team, and I had great scope and opportunity to get involved in a variety of roles gaining experience in event management, project management, business development, relationship management, strategic planning, HR and quality assurance. All this experience has been extremely useful, not only in the role of Employer Engagement Manager, but also to add value across the careers service and wider university through collaborative work.

What is the best piece of advice you have been given when you started in Careers?

Build your internal university network! When I joined Queen's, I didn't quite appreciate the many stakeholders that need to be engaged to ensure success of service activity. The advice was bang on as having advocates, collaborators and supporters in different areas of the University makes a difference.

What is the best experience you have had in your role?

The best part of my role is feeling fulfilment from knowing that what I do has the potential to influence and support young people in their onward journey. In terms of the best experience, I enjoy the 'side hustles' that being in the role gives me access to, supporting my own development and giving me wider scope, exposure and experience beyond the day-to-day tasks – the most recent of which is being a board member of AHECS. It's a fantastic opportunity to learn from and share knowledge and experiences with the network.

lazing about, I've recently got into circuit training and I am, surprisingly (as a previous gym hater), really enjoy it!

What's your favourite holiday destination?

Italy. I went there one Summer after Uni with friends, visiting a few different cities and loved the cultural/historical feel and natural beauty of the country. So much so, we had our wedding there in the gorgeous Lake Garda.

What's something you want to learn or wish you were better at?

I would consider myself a continuous and reactive learner and learning for me has always been about keeping up with trends and developments in my field, to identify new skills or areas of interest that I can utilise. At the moment, it's about expanding my knowledge of AI and looking at how it could be utilised in what I do. I have recently completed a course in Generative AI for Business from Cambridge, which has given me a great insight into AI and plenty of food for thought on how I can use it.

What would you love to do when you retire?

Travel more! When I was younger, any travelling I did was on a budget and then with having kids it's all about the family holidays. When I retire, I would like to see more of the world on not so much of a shoestring.



AHECS YouTube Channel

The AHECS YouTube Channel can be viewed by clicking on the icon above.

Here you will find recordings of Lunch n Learn sessions, keynote speakers from recent AHECS Conferences and a variety of short videos covering multiple topics such as interview tips and techniques and supporting students with disabilities.

The AHECS logo consists of the letters 'AHECS' in a bold, white, sans-serif font, positioned inside a black chevron shape that points to the right.**AHECS**

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