

AHECS Employability Awards

The AHECS Awards are an annual competition for AHECS member services which is run in conjunction with our publishing partners gradireland.

The aim of these awards to promote, encourage and acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the career professionals working in Ireland North and South. The awards are adjudicated by a panel of judges made up of both careers' professionals and employment market experts.

The judges for 2025 and 2026 are:

Paul Vance, Head of Resourcing, KPMG

Leslee O'Loughlin, Group Human Resources Manager, Enterprise Mobility

Fiona Doherty, Operations Manager, Group GTI

Judy Murphy, Coach Supervisor & Accredited Master Coach; OD & Career Consultant

There are four categories in The AHECS Employability Awards:

Category	Who we are seeking submissions from
Supporting Student and Graduate Employability	Member services who can show effective development and implementation of an initiative with the ultimate aim of improving the student/graduate outcomes and learning gain.
Strategic Innovation	Member services who can show the effective design or redesign of the way in which a service is delivered in order to adapt to changes and/or meet new demands, whether institutional, regional or sector-wide. This can also include incorporating the use of new technologies.
Building Effective Partnerships	Those able to demonstrate effective collaboration with one or more organisations, with the ultimate aim of demonstrable benefits for the service's stakeholders.
Research Informed Practice	Those contributing to the production and creation of new knowledge and insight that could be used to enhance the work of AHECS member services.

The winners are announced and presented with their awards at the annual gradireland Graduate Recruitment Awards held in Dublin each April. This is a great night filled with entertainment and provides career professionals and employers the opportunity to meet and network whilst also celebrating the success of both career professionals and employers alike.

Entry Rules 2026

- Entries will be accepted from **10am, Monday 26th January 2026**.
- AHECS member HEI's can enter multiple categories.
- One submission per HEI per category (exception of collaborative submissions; if a HEI is in a collaborative submission for one category, they may also submit a solo/standalone project into the same category)
- 2025 winners may enter any category but not with the same submission as previous year.
- The same AHECS member service may enter the same initiative/scheme for different categories however cannot win more than one category with the same initiative/scheme.
- Quotations will be included in the word count (**250 words per criteria question, please see application form**)
- Any entry form that exceeds the word limit will not be accepted and your nomination will be withdrawn.
- Do not include hyperlinks. Judges are instructed not to open them.
- Submissions will be shortlisted by the judges based on the quality of their submission with a maximum of three shortlisted per category.
- AHECS reserves the right to accept or reject entries, and/or not make an award, as circumstances dictate.
- The judging panel's decision is final. Neither the judges nor AHECS staff will enter into any discussion or correspondence with entrants on this subject.
- A jpeg photo/image relevant to your submission (collage image acceptable) must be emailed to admin@ahecs.ie. A summary of your submission will also be promoted through AHECS social media channels (consent requested on submission form).
- A minimum of two entries per category is required to proceed to judging stage.
- Entries must be received by **5pm, Monday 16th March 2026**. Late entries will not be accepted.
- Winners will be announced at the gradireland Graduate Recruitment Awards on Thursday 30th April 2026.

Some feedback from previous judges as to what makes a winning submission:

- The inclusion of metrics and statistics of success clearly evident in winning submissions.
- The inclusion of testimonials added high impact to a submission, no matter how short the testimonial.
- Consider testimonials from a variety of stakeholders to give different views / perspectives from different stakeholders.
- The submissions that fared best contained the following key features: rationale, testimonials, statistics of success and clarity of evidence of impact.
- The inclusion of context is important, where did the ask/need for the project come from?
- Proofread final draft of submission prior to submitting for clarity of messaging for 3rd party reviewer.
- Care needed with use of internal jargon/phrases. Use plain language throughout submission.

Wishing you the very best of luck....