



OLLSCOIL NA
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A magazine for
alumni and friends of
University of Galway

Cois Coiribe

SUMMER 26 | CHANGE MAKERS EDITION

In this edition...

Regional Roots, Global Presence: Inside Galway's New €34.3m HealthTech Powerhouse

Prof Garry Duffy, School of Medicine,
University of Galway

Creative Galway: Aims and Ambitions of the New Research Institute for Creativity

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Institute for Lifecourse and Society: Enabling Equity Across the Lifecourse

Prof Caroline McGregor, Director,
Institute for Lifecourse and Society
(ILAS), University of Galway

How Ward & Burke Are Helping Engineer a Future at University of Galway

Galway University Foundation

...and more.





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Cois Coiribe *Impact.*

Summer 2026
Change Makers Edition

The online publication for views and opinions from University of Galway's top academics, researchers, and alumni.

A window into the ground-breaking research and cutting-edge innovation driven by our University community. Explore our Change Makers edition today.

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Foreword from the President Focal ón Uachtarán

Professor David Burn,
President, University of Galway

Fáilte is fiche go dtí eagrán an tsamhraidh
d'Iris Alumni Ollscoil na Gaillimhe, *Cois Coiribe*.

This edition is dedicated to the theme of 'Change Makers'. Having spent my first year as President getting to know this university, I can think of no more fitting description of what happens here. University of Galway is anchored in the West of Ireland, intertwined with its communities, culture, and people. This rich heritage forms the launchpad for our graduates, researchers, and partners, who go out into the world to drive meaningful, lasting change. Our University serves as a catalyst for societal change, a driver of regional ambition, and a force for good, its reach extending far beyond the West of Ireland.

To be an authentic change maker is to understand that how we learn to think matters far more than what we learn to do. The features in these pages speak powerfully to the purpose of this University and the impact of our alumni community in shaping a better future. University of Galway's new €34.3m ARC Hub for HealthTech, led by alumnus Professor Garry Duffy, is a compelling example of transformative change in action, accelerating MedTech innovation from the West of Ireland onto the global stage. Equally inspiring is the story of Ward & Burke Construction Ltd founders Padraig Burke, Michael Ward, and Robert Ward, whose journey from engineering lectures on our campus to delivering highly complex infrastructure projects across Ireland, the UK, and North America reflects the enduring value of intellectual curiosity, adaptability, and strong engineering fundamentals. Their support for the Ward & Burke Centre for Infrastructure Research and Innovation (CIRI) will ensure that our University continues to pioneer practical, cutting-edge solutions for an ever-changing world, a wonderful example of alumni giving back to the place that helped shape their success.

True change also demands that we confront the questions affecting our society. In this edition, Professor Caroline McGregor, Director of our Institute for Lifecourse and Society (ILAS), reflects on the Institute's work enabling equity, rights, and justice. By exploring interconnected themes like life transitions, human flourishing, and intergenerational relations, our researchers ask: who gets a voice, who is left behind, and how can we drive meaningful change in policy and practice?

This commitment to societal wellbeing is mirrored in our evolving regional healthcare landscape. We are exceptionally proud to welcome back alumnus Professor Robert Scully as Ireland's first Established Professor of Rural and Remote Medicine. His return to the West of Ireland is a full-circle journey that will transform island medicine and regional healthcare through innovative educational programmes. Similarly, Professor Tony Hall traces the historic roots of the Educational Studies Association of Ireland (ESAI), which held its inaugural 'First Meeting of Scholars' right here on campus in April 1976. That this association has returned to its place of origin to mark a half-century of driving vital educational research is a source of tremendous pride for us.

At the heart of our regional ecosystem is a thriving intersection of creative practice, technology, and community engagement. Here, our new Institute for Creativity and its Centre for Creative Technologies are challenging the notion that creativity is merely a leisure pursuit. In a world shaped by rapid technological change and AI-driven automation, creative thinking is essential to navigating uncertainty. From rapid prototyping in our design labs to immersive art practice in the Burren, our researchers are demonstrating how creativity can support sustainability, strengthen creative industries, and enrich health and wellbeing.

Galway's identity as a cultural capital is inseparable from the University, a relationship that continues to shape our creativity and international reputation. In this issue, we explore this rich legacy through those leading the way. Alumnus John Crumlish, CEO of the Galway International Arts Festival, perfectly embodies this spirit, reflecting on how his journey went from student life on our campus to helming one of Europe's flagship cultural events. Our exceptional alumni network also drives the success of Baboró, Branar, and Druid Theatre, together demonstrating the power of cultural participation from an early age. Through our academies with, for example, Druid Theatre and the Galway International Arts Festival, we continue to nurture world-class creative talent on campus.

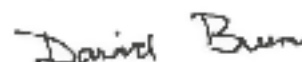
Looking to the future of this cultural legacy, Professor Rebecca Braun, Executive Dean of the College of Arts, Social Sciences & Celtic Studies, outlines how we are refining our flagship Bachelor of Arts programme to ensure the arts and humanities continue equipping society to confront complex technological challenges with critical thinking and empathy.

Mar ollscoil atá suite ar thairseach na Gaeltachta, tá sé mar phríomhaidhm dár straitéis oideachas trí Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn. Mar a léiríonn an Coimisinéir Teanga, Séamas Ó Concheanainn, san eagrán seo, tá ár suíomh agus ár gceannaireacht ríthábhachtach don teanga. Trí Acadamh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeilge, agus ár gcampais Ghaeltachta, cuirimid eispéireas foghlama tumoideachais den scoth ar fáil.

I am delighted to congratulate our staff and alumni on their newly published books across the academic year of 2025 to 2026. Meeting alumni at events in Ireland and around the world this year, I have been continually struck by the creativity and impact our University generates globally.

These stories remind us that change makers do not simply observe history, they help shape it. I invite you to have a look through this edition of *Cois Coiribe* and celebrate the impact of our global alumni community.

Le gach dea-mhéin,





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Have you recently
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Stay connected and keep up
to date with your University
of Galway Alumni community.

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the latest news and events from your
alma mater.

Update your details today at
[UniversityofGalway.ie/alumni-friends/
updateyourdetails/](https://www.universityofgalway.ie/alumni-friends/updateyourdetails/)

Dates for *your* 2026 Diary

Wednesday 10 June

50th Anniversary Reunion

The graduating class of 1976 are invited to a special 50th Anniversary Reunion celebration to commemorate their graduation on Wednesday 10 June. Details and Booking [here](#).

Saturday 25 July

Galway Arts Festival BBQ and Bell X1 Concert

Join us for our annual Galway Arts Festival BBQ in Sult College Bar and afterwards at the amazing Bell X1 in the Arts Festival Big Top. Details and Booking [here](#).

Saturday 29 August

20th and 25th Anniversary Reunion

The graduating classes of 2001 and 2006 will celebrate their milestone anniversaries. Details and Booking [here](#).

Saturday 5 September

30th, 35th, 40th and 45th Anniversary Reunions

The classes of 1981, 1986, 1991 and 1996 will come together to celebrate. Details and Booking [here](#).

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University of Galway Alumni

Institute for Lifecourse and Society: Enabling Equity Across the Lifecourse

Prof Caroline McGregor, Director of the Institute for Lifecourse and Society (ILAS), reflects on leading a University of Galway research institute and why understanding the core or arc of human lives, from birth to old age, has never mattered more.

My role as Director of the Institute is to lead the implementation of our strategic objectives to enhance equity across the lifecourse.

ILAS: Leading with Research, Impact, and Purpose

Since becoming Director of the Institute for Lifecourse and Society (ILAS) in September 2024, I've been continuously impressed by the breadth of work at the Institute and the passion our community of researchers holds for their subjects. While I had the pleasure of being part of one of the ILAS centres – the UCFRC – for over a decade, it wasn't until I took on the role of Director that I have come to fully appreciate the scope, contribution, and potential of ILAS to provide added value to the sum of its constituent centres and units.

At ILAS, the big questions are also the everyday ones: how do people navigate the turning points in their lives? What binds generations together? Who gets a voice in shaping the society we live in? Researchers here work across interconnected themes – life transitions and human flourishing; intergenerational relations, social health and wellbeing; and civic engagement and participation, with a shared conviction that good research should change not just what we know, but how we do.

The work of ILAS stands out for its interdisciplinarity, its focus on engaged research, and its emphasis on pathways to impact. My role as Director of the Institute is to lead the implementation of our strategic

objectives to enhance equity across the lifecourse, focused on four main areas:

- Research excellence to inform equity across the lifecourse
- Impact-oriented community engagement and policy influence
- Research-led innovation in teaching and learning
- Leadership with regard to collaboration

Our objectives align with our two constituent colleges – College of Arts, Social Sciences, and Celtic Studies (CASSCS) and College of Business, Public Policy and Law (CBPPL) – and our University Strategy. While potentially contributing to all four Research Pillars of the University, ILAS is especially aligned with Culture, Creativity and Society as well as Innovation and Health, with an emphasis on wellbeing.

Our strategic objectives also reflect the mission of ILAS, proudly displayed as you come into the ILAS building:

“To contribute scientific and practical awareness of human capacity and potential across the lifecourse, thereby impacting positively on knowledge, attitudes, policy and practice, internationally.” ▶

For more information, please [join our mailing list](#).





Lifecourse Through Meaningful Participation

To achieve its mission, ILAS frames its research around key lifecourse themes that explore how people experience life transitions and pursue human flourishing, how intergenerational relationships shape social health and wellbeing, and how civic engagement and participation can be strengthened across society. Central to this approach is a lifecourse perspective on policy, a commitment to solidarity across generations, and a focus on ensuring that voice is meaningfully included in research, practice, and decision-making. This broad and interdisciplinary agenda is reflected in the Institute's diverse centres. Some focus on specific populations or stages of life, including the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology, the Centre for Disability and Law, and the Centre for Autism and Neurodiversity. Others have a thematic focus like the Centre for Applied Linguistics and Multilingualism (CALM), Community Engaged Research in Action (CORA), and the Health Economics and Policy Analysis Centre (HEPAC).

Alongside these are two University-wide units that strengthen how ILAS engages with wider society: Community Engagement; Patient and Public Involvement in Research – PPI Ignite Network. Both of which support deeper and more structured forms of public participation in research.

The unifying purpose emerges to enable equity across the lifecourse. This includes research focused on disability across the lifecourse, support and protection of children and families, and transitions across the lifecourse, such as care provisions for children, persons with a disability, and older people. Agency and voice, as well as health and wellbeing, are emphasised. Diverse projects are focused on community and place, informing human rights and social justice, such as access to health and social care interventions and health technologies to improve health and wellbeing. Alongside this, critical engagement with structure, policies, and processes that affect persons across their lifecourse is key. This includes a concentration

on social exclusion, diminished powers and rights, economic insecurity, accumulated disadvantage, solidarity and justice, and collaboration between systems and services.

Underlying all of this work is a consistent emphasis on 'meaningfully involved voice' This reflects a commitment to more inclusive and equitable approaches to research and service development, ensuring that those most affected by policies, systems, and interventions are actively involved in shaping them.



Paving a Multidisciplinary Path

As Director, an important aspect of my role is to amplify and support three distinctive and interconnected features across the work of ILAS: (1) interdisciplinarity, (2) engaged research, and (3) emphasis on societal impact (pathways and outcomes).

A great benefit of being Director of an institute like ILAS is access to researchers across all career states from a diverse range of disciplines, plus so many excellent partners. We get participation from policy, direct lived experience, PPI (patient public involvement), practice, and also from wide-ranging national, regional, and international disciplines and experiential backgrounds.

As a cross-disciplinary institute, we have excellent existing and emerging collaborations across colleges and research institutes. Through being part of such a dynamic ecosystem, the potential for collaborative leadership is immense. Cross-cutting themes include interconnecting value frameworks from diverse multidisciplinary fields to generate social and economic measures of

value for policy and practice interventions, as well as investments examining issues like health and wellbeing, care, safeguarding, rights, and justice from different conceptual standpoints. We come together through community engagement and interprofessional relations, and with persons with direct and lived experience of a diversity of services, examining research-policy relationships across disciplines.

With ILAS's significant interdisciplinary and interprofessional strength, I am excited about the range of opportunities we have to advance and inform the increased emphasis on engaged research, as reflected in our University Strategy, the most recent Research Ireland Strategy, and more widely in the fields of research, policy, practice, and education. Recognising the leadership role from ILAS in relation to societal impact, one of our projects based on 'language and a path to justice and healing' is featured in the current Research Ireland Strategy.

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Methods of Engaged Research Towards Societal Impact

The term 'engaged research' is intentionally broad, reflecting ILAS's commitment towards increased societal impact in its complexity. At its core is collaboration, working with a range of stakeholders, from policy makers and practitioners to persons with direct and lived experiences.

Building this kind of research ecosystem requires more than individual projects or funding applications. It calls for a multi-dimensional approach to capacity building, that is grounded by robust conceptual and theoretical work, trusted relationships, sound values, and effective skills. To facilitate this, we deliver our ILAS Engagement Programme, which provides regular expert and networking events – large and small, virtual and in-person – under two broad areas: ILAS Public Policy Innovation Series and ILAS International Training Series.

Supporting community engagement, PPI and participative research is a key part of the engaged research agenda and is

crucial for ILAS. While we have great opportunity in our research and related activities to progress this domain of work regionally, nationally, and internationally, awareness of the stark inequality regarding who holds power over knowledge, resources, and decision making is essential. It is necessary to work collaboratively to enable greater knowledge, skills, and education about the complexity of engaged research and how we can lead it in line with our University values of respect, belonging, openness, sustainability, and excellence.

Looking to the future and ILAS's potential to advance participative research, I am very conscious of our collective responsibility to recognise its complexity. We must make sure that we avoid risk of tokenism and also resource and support meaningful participation whilst recognising the amount of power barriers that need to be broken down to create conditions for engaged research. To inform this, as Director I can draw extensive expertise from our many ILAS

colleagues, who have been developing engaged and impact-focused research for many decades, and from our units dedicated to PPI and Community Engagement and our collaborators, who bring with them lived experience, specific practice or policy contexts, and disciplinary expertise.



ILAS Is a Place for Everyone

Reflecting on the University's broader commitment to purpose, people, and place, I am proud to be the current leader of ILAS and deliver our very clear purpose with an outstanding mix of people within the University and our wider communities.

While ILAS maintains connections that span from local to global contexts – across in-person and virtual collaborations – it is also anchored in a physical home: Cursáí SAOL, meaning 'lifecourse'. With funding support from Atlantic Philanthropies and established over a decade ago, the building was purpose-designed to support scholarship focused on the lifecourse and continues to embody that vision. Today, the ILAS building provides a welcoming and open hub for ILAS staff, students, visitors, partners, and public. It also serves as a popular site for University colleagues to immerse themselves in the research culture of ILAS and our values of openness and respect. Last but not at all least, it enhances the Institute's accessibility to our wider community.

I am proud to be the current leader of ILAS and deliver our very clear purpose with an outstanding mix of people within the University and our wider communities.

Prof Caroline McGregor commenced her role as Director of ILAS on the 1st of September 2024. She is a Senior Research Fellow at UNESCO CFRC and Director of Social Work at University of Galway. With 30 years of employment in social work and academia, including a significant tenure as Personal Professor, she has extensive experience in teaching, research, and publishing on issues related to children, young people, and families. Her current work is focused on 'protective support and supportive protection', safeguarding across the lifecourse, and public engagement in policy, research, practice and education. She has a particular interest in leading and advancing practice-based and community engaged research in her role as Institute Director, furthering its mission to enhance human capacity and potential across the lifecourse, thereby impacting positively on knowledge, attitudes, policy, and practice.

Learn more about the work of the ILAS and of its constituent centres at:

[Institute for Lifecourse and Society \(ILAS\) - University of Galway](#)

[Centres & Units - University of Galway](#)



Katie Mannion

Alumni Award for Law, Public Policy and Society

Katie Mannion is Managing Solicitor at the Irish Refugee Council Independent Law Centre (IRC), where she leads a team providing legal representation to people seeking international protection, separated families pursuing reunification, children whose ages have been disputed, and applicants experiencing homelessness or unsuitable accommodation. Katie addresses systemic issues through strategic casework, litigation, and advocacy for improved procedures and legislation. Her leadership since 2018 has coincided with significant global upheaval and evolving client needs. Following the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, she developed pro bono legal networks to support Afghans at risk. In 2023, the Law Centre advocated for 550 men sleeping rough after being denied accommodation upon seeking Ireland's protection. The High Court found this breached the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the right to dignity. A further test case at the Court of Justice of the European Union confirmed that EU states cannot suspend respect for human dignity regardless of political or logistical pressures.

Before joining the IRC, Katie practised with the Immigrant Council of Ireland and earlier served as Human Rights Officer at Amnesty International Ireland. She authored *Child Migration Matters* on child-specific considerations in immigration law. Katie graduated with a BCL from University of Galway in 2005, where she developed a conviction that remains central to her work: that the primary purpose of law is to protect people at their most vulnerable.



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An Leabharlann
Library

This July, join us for a day of celebration and fond farewell to the James Hardiman Library

The doors of the James Hardiman Library first opened to students in November 1973. Now, over 50 years later, construction of the greatly anticipated new Dr Karen Guinee Library is well underway.

This will be an inspirational, welcoming, high-tech space of learning and creativity, enabling new generations of students to learn, share knowledge, and succeed in their University experience and beyond.

We invite you to join us for a family friendly **Open Day to Say Goodbye**, Saturday 25 July 2026 11am–3pm.

Log on [here](#) to register for this free event.

As part of our celebrations, we're inviting you to share the memories that made the James Hardiman Library so much more than just a building.

Email mary.chambers@universityofgalway.ie today and share your story with us.



Share your
memories



Into the West: An Interview with Prof Robert Scully, Ireland's First Established Professor of Rural and Remote Medicine

A University of Galway graduate who met his wife on campus, Prof Robert Scully has come full circle, returning to Galway as Ireland's first Established Professor of Rural and Remote medicine. In this interview, Prof Scully talks about island medicine, healthcare in the West of Ireland, and a new programme that aims to improve rural medicine and health equity.

Meet Prof Robert Scully

I grew up in Naas, Co. Kildare, as the youngest of four children. My late mother was from Blacksod in Co. Mayo, and my father is from Loughrea in Co. Galway, so I always had a strong affinity for the West. I completed my undergraduate studies at NUI Galway (now University of Galway), and those days were informative in every sense. I made many great friends, discovered what I wanted to do with my career and, perhaps most importantly, met my future wife, Sinéad. As any alumnus will know, the friendships and connections made are truly transformative!

Between then and now I spent many happy and productive years in Scotland, living and working as an academic rural GP, gaining valuable experience in the universities of Aberdeen and Edinburgh; however, it was spending two years as a rural emergency physician on the Isle of Skye which galvanised my interest in rural medicine.

For more information on GEM, please [join our mailing list](#).

Following my time on the Isle of Skye, I was fortunate to join the University of St Andrews as the clinical academic lead (and subsequently Deputy Programme Director) on an innovative rural medicine programme, which was commissioned to address medical workforce deficits in rural Scotland. During this time, I saw firsthand how education drives health system reform, and this confirmed my desire to combine clinical and academic careers.

It was spending two years as a rural emergency physician on the Isle of Skye which galvanised my interest in rural medicine.

Cois Coiribe (CC): What does it mean to you to be Ireland's first Established Professor of Rural and Remote Medicine?

Robert Scully (RS): Returning to Galway in this role feels like a full-circle event, and a massive privilege. My role is the only one of its kind in Ireland, and, as far as I'm aware, one of only two globally – the other role holder is my colleague Prof Bruce Chater in the University of Queensland. For an institution that has always defined itself by its relationship with the region, rural Ireland, and its communities, this appointment is a statement of intent, and I think that drew me back.

My immediate priority is to lead a new and innovative Graduate-Entry Medicine Programme in Rural and Connected Health, to help address the significant medical workforce deficits in rural Ireland. Given my emotional and family connection to this region, the opportunity to design and deliver such a transformative programme, alongside colleagues in the University and the HSE, is a massive privilege for me. ▶



Health equity is the absence of unfair, avoidable, or remediable differences among groups of people, whether those groups are defined socially, economically, demographically, geographically, or by other dimensions of inequality.

Having been a graduate medical student myself, I am aware of the potential impact such programmes can have on individuals, and it is very rewarding to bring such opportunities to the West of Ireland.

CC: Is there a specific anecdote you have about why you decided to pursue this area of expertise? How did your passion for it evolve?

RS: My passion for rural medicine evolved because of my interest in clinical generalism, and my lifelong love of the great outdoors. Seeing undifferentiated patients, often in resource-poor settings, is an exciting clinical challenge, and a critical resource for rural and remote communities. There is something uniquely demanding and uniquely rewarding. It never escaped me how appreciative rural communities are for their health service – they recognise that the lack of such a service threatens their way of life. It is the difference between safety and vulnerability.

I recall once seeing a crofter in Benbecula – a small island in the Outer Hebrides – who self-presented to our daytime GP service. I had met him before and was immediately concerned, as crofters only attend if they are very sick! It was quickly apparent that he had life-threatening sepsis and needed intensive therapy in a major city hospital. Waiting for the emergency medical retrieval service, we moved him to our local rural hospital and stabilised him whilst awaiting transfer. I was working at the edge of my licence. With the support of colleagues via telemedicine and enhanced technologies, he was retrieved safely a few hours later and thankfully made a full recovery.

My role is the only one of its kind in Ireland, and, as far as I'm aware, one of only two globally.

It was incredible to think his outcome was determined by an enhanced rural medicine service, working as part of a well-supported team. The most gratifying aspect was seeing him back in my surgery a few weeks later and reflecting on the entire experience. For me, this demonstrated true clinical generalism, which is often required in rural medicine practice, and also the critical importance of continuity of care. These features will be built into the new programme in Galway.

Practicing medicine in these locations is challenging and requires a breadth of expertise and experience, alongside connected health technology. I enjoy this challenge and recognise how important such skills are in all healthcare settings, where we increasingly require clinicians who can make balanced, holistic, and realistic decisions, all in the best interests of their patients, whilst also managing the precious and finite resources of our health service. Such skills are becoming more important as our population ages, and the new GEM programme at University of Galway will emphasise this, alongside the digital and connected health technologies that can help to mitigate the inequitable healthcare access that rural communities often face.

CC: Can you explain the concept of rural health equity and how it can impact society?

RS: Health equity is the absence of unfair, avoidable, or remediable differences among groups of people, whether those groups are defined socially, economically, demographically, geographically, or by other dimensions of inequality. Rural and remote communities are often disadvantaged by inequitable access to healthcare, as a result of their geography. This is unfortunate in any setting, but particularly so in Ireland, where a large minority of our population live in rural locations and make a significant and critical contribution to our economy and culture.

It is impossible to provide the same access to healthcare for urban and rural communities, but with the right intervention, we should be able to provide access to sufficient and safe healthcare for all rural and remote communities in Ireland, such that those communities can thrive. The GEM programme at the University will provide an intervention by training a cohort of doctors in rural and connected health, therefore making a contribution to the sustainability of rural Ireland, particularly across the western region and coastline.

CC: What advice would you give to aspiring students or those considering a career in your area of expertise?

RS: If you are considering a career in rural medicine, it is important to get broad clinical training. Don't feel under pressure to declare an interest too early in your career. Developing generalist clinical skills is beneficial for any clinician, irrespective of the branch of medicine you choose. And, of course, if you are a graduate who would like to retrain in medicine on a programme that wants to serve this region and those like it, I would genuinely love to hear from you. This programme is designed with people like you in mind!



Prof Robert Scully trained in General Practice in Edinburgh and completed fellowships in academic General Practice at the Usher Institute, University of Edinburgh, and Acute Rural Care in NHS Highland on the Isle of Skye. From 2017 to 2022, he was Deputy Director and Lead Clinician of the Scottish Graduate Entry Medical Programme (ScotGEM), based in St Andrews School of Medicine. Robert then transitioned to the Irish College of General Practice as Regional Director of higher specialist training in General Practice and oversaw a major redesign of the National post-graduate curriculum for General Practice. Announced in 2025, he has now been appointed the role of Established Professor of Rural and Remote Medicine at University of Galway, the first of its kind in Ireland.



Professor James Meaney Alumni Award for Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences

Prof James Meaney, from Westport, Co. Mayo, studied medicine at UCG (now University of Galway), graduating with Honours in 1985. After radiology training in Liverpool and Ann Arbor, Michigan, he was appointed to St. James's Hospital, Dublin, where he has worked for the past 25 years. He has authored more than 130 peer-reviewed publications, including papers in the New England Journal of Medicine and Nature, and holds several MRI patents on technology now implemented in scanners worldwide. He has also secured €10 million in grants and philanthropic funding for next-generation MRI and CT imaging platforms at the Thomas Mitchell Centre for Advanced Medical Imaging, Trinity College Dublin.



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Professor Patrick Farrell Alumni Award for Engineering, Science and Technology

Prof Patrick Farrell is a computational mathematician with professorships at University of Oxford and Charles University in Prague, developing numerical algorithms for solving partial differential equations, the language in which the laws of physics are written, with applications from weather prediction to understanding space-time around a black hole. His work has earned him the Wilkinson Prize for Numerical Software, the Whitehead Prize from the London Mathematical Society, and the 2025 Germund Dahlquist Prize. He has also been invited to deliver a lecture at the 2026 International Congress of Mathematicians, one of the highest honours in the discipline. Patrick graduated with a BSc in Mathematics from University of Galway in 2006, receiving the Royal Irish Academy's Hamilton Prize, before completing his PhD at Imperial College London. His techniques have since been applied across renewable energy, physiology, and the geosciences, including fieldwork in the Antarctic with the British Antarctic Survey.

Re-Purposing the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences for Critical Change

Prof Rebecca Braun connected with *Cois Coiribe* to discuss arts at University of Galway, and what the future holds. Read to find out what the College of Arts, Social Sciences & Celtic Studies has to say about critical change in a new-age world.

These are fundamental questions about our fundamental purpose. Like arts, these questions are messy, and they are vital.

What's the point of arts?

The world has been rocked by expressions of social unrest, political inequality, and a digital revolution that too often rewards speed over critical thinking and empathy. The questions facing our graduates, and our institutions, are not abstract; they are existential. Yet, while our disciplines fiddle with footnotes, the planet continues to burn.

'Was sind das für Zeiten, wo / Ein Gespräch über Bäume fast ein Verbrechen ist / Weil es ein Schweigen über so viele Untaten einschliesst!', the German poet and dramatist Bertolt Brecht lamented almost a hundred years ago in his poem, 'An die Nachgeborenen / To Those Born Later': 'What kinds of times are these, where / Talking about trees is almost a crime / Because it breeds silence on so many atrocities!'

What can and should we be talking about today? What future skills and historical knowledge will those born after us need? And who will listen and respond if all the poems about trees are generated by AI? These are the questions we are asking in the College of Arts, Social Sciences

& Celtic Studies in the context of a wide-ranging review of our undergraduate curriculum. The aim is to produce a suite of new programmes over the next two years. These are fundamental questions about our fundamental purpose. Like arts, these questions are messy, and they are vital.

For over 175 years, arts have driven University of Galway's sense of purpose. Historically it has done so in a somewhat undisciplined manner. But it worked.

By 1976, arts students made up 47% of Galway's growing student population, triple the size of science (16%), the next closest area, and twice as large as the combined forces of science and engineering (23%). These figures broadly reflect the national picture at the time, although Galway's mix is the most skewed towards arts and goes some way towards explaining the extraordinary fount of creative energy that would generate Druid, the International Arts Festival, Macnas, Baboró, and Branar, amongst other signature Galway initiatives, over the last fifty years. ►



An arts degree provides the bedrock for creativity in many areas of life well beyond the creative arts.

There is a deeper layer to all this, however. An arts degree provides the bedrock for creativity in many areas of life well beyond the creative arts. When University of Galway was founded in 1845, it was (whether deliberately or not) following a model for organising a community around knowledge that has its roots in the medieval university system. The three founding faculties of Arts, Medicine, and Law at Galway directly echoed the medieval curriculum that would see students take a liberal arts style '*studium generale*' consisting of seven foundational subjects (grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, geometry, music, astronomy) before potentially applying themselves to a professional pathway, or '*studium particulare*', in Medicine, Law, or Theology. While these professional faculties could have existed as stand-alone bodies, and they often did, it was only when they were combined with the foundational knowledge of arts that a university was formed.

The university is, in an inherent, structural sense, the progenitor of both tradition and change.

This historical model undergirds not just University of Galway but all the traditional Irish universities, and in it we must acknowledge this vital truth: basic knowledge *is* the university, and the university is, in an inherent, structural sense, the progenitor of both tradition and change. Just as in the past no-good doctors or lawyers could emerge without critical comprehension of the most basic tools of their trade – linguistic and spatial relationships – so the contemporary arts degree guards against the kind of shamanism and fraud to which a poor use of AI can lead. The ability not just to know, but to know well and differently, is what universities offer their students, and what they themselves must stand for in a world out-of-joint.

Any new idea, principle, or object will need to be developed through some combination of language, numbers, and broader systems thinking that ran through the seven subjects of the *studium generale*. Broadly speaking, these core areas of knowledge still reside in the arts degree in the form of language awareness and textual literacy (e.g. English, History, Classics, Modern Languages), spatial / relational awareness (e.g. Geography, Archaeology, Drama, Music, Psychology, Mathematics), and socio-critical thinking (e.g. Sociology, Politics, Philosophy, Law, Economics).

We have become used to tracing familiar paths through all this. Study arts and become a teacher, a lawyer, a forensic psychologist, a theatre maker, a writer, an entrepreneur, an archaeologist, a politician...

To change Galway's arts degrees is to realise the value of all these paths, and yet to be bold and declare it insufficient. To be bold not by looking for the next megatrend or otherwise trying to foretell the future, but by going back to our roots and seeing what else they might have to offer. For decades now, the joint honours degree, has been the answer. But what was the question?

And so we are going back to the start. Over the next year, a core group of some fifty academics and professional support staff are creating the time and space to ask again what we can know, how we can know it, and what kind of community might grow around this knowledge. They will do so in consultation, not just with their wider colleagues and students across all eight schools, but also with a broad selection of community partners and employers.

The purpose is practical – to design from scratch new programmes that can fully equip students and (in Brecht's words) all 'those who come later' for the challenges of the mid twenty-first century. The method is simple: to draw again, but differently, on fundamental human knowledge, experience, and curiosity; to see how else one might trace a path through all this and out into the wider world, ready to meet it where it is at.

Fears may be widespread over the increasingly autonomous operating potential of large language models, the mental distress amongst younger generations, and the general planetary toll of humankind. An arts degree alone cannot reverse these developments. However, arts graduates are exactly the people who can bridge technical capability and humanistic judgement. To the technological advances facilitated by STEM disciplines, they bring a deep understanding of context, ranging from critical engagement with societal super-structures through to harnessing the empathy that resides in the judicious use of a phrase.

There is no question, then, about the point of arts, but a challenge to universities: how to best organise their curricula to ensure they are keeping to the fore the inimitable elements of learning that are so central to humankind's existence. In the College of Arts, Social Sciences & Celtic Studies we are looking afresh at all programmes with this in mind. A programme that is free to draw on the full foundational knowledge held within a university can help students commit to critical change through the very act of changing itself.



Prof Rebecca Braun joined University of Galway in 2021 to take up the position of Executive Dean of the College of Arts, Social Sciences & Celtic Studies. Before then, she was Professor of Modern Languages & Creative Futures at Lancaster University in the UK. She has held further lectureships and research fellowships at the Universities of Liverpool, Manchester, and Oxford in the UK, and at the Freie Universität Berlin. She grew up in West Cork and Tipperary and likes nothing better than a good long run outdoors.



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Take the Survey

It All Started in Galway: The Foundations of the Educational Studies Association of Ireland

Reflecting on Ireland's first half-century of educational scholarship and teaching-inspired research.

Prof Tony Hall traces the historic roots of the Educational Studies Association of Ireland (ESAI), from its inaugural 'First Meeting of Scholars', held in Galway in April 1976, through to key events and milestones leading to the 50-year commemorative event hosted by University of Galway, bringing the association back to its place of origin. Starting in 1970s Galway, the ESAI would become one of Ireland's most important organisations for educational research and scholarship, north and south.

The formative beginnings of educational research in Ireland...owes their existence to a pioneering meeting that took place at [University of Galway] from April 8th–10th 1976.

April 1976: A Formative Year for Educational Research in Ireland

Interest in educational research is at a key moment in Ireland today; the *scholarship of teaching* is experiencing an exceptional period of unprecedented innovation and growth. In November 2025, the Department of Education and Youth hosted its First Annual Educational Research Summit at Croke Park, launching the Futures Oriented Educational Research Network. Open to all educators, researchers, and teachers, this collaboration brings education partners together to promote, undertake, and share research, with the aim of enhancing the educational experience of all learners. The National Convention on Education – the first in Ireland in over 30 years – facilitates a national conversation among all stakeholders, including pupils and parents, on the kind of educational system we want and need for Ireland's future.

Innovative government-funded initiatives, such as **T-REX: Teachers' Research Exchange**, are promoting school-based research and funding,

and supporting teachers to become *teacher-researchers*, potentially helping to bridge the gap between practice and theory in Ireland's education system so we can benefit from the positive impacts of educational scholarship and research data.

The formative beginnings of educational research in Ireland, focusing on the establishment of the Educational Studies Association of Ireland (ESAI), owes their existence to a pioneering meeting that took place at University College Galway (or UCG, as University of Galway was then known), from April 8th–10th 1976. Here we look at the central importance of evidence and educational scholarship, significantly initiated in UCG in 1976, in advancing and safeguarding inclusive educational futures. Ireland's story is illustrative in highlighting how, when we acknowledge evidence and deploy it for social inclusion, we ensure the future peace and prosperity of all.



A Historic Look at ESAI's Origin and Roots

This year marks the ESAI's first half-century as the flagship educational research organisation for the advancement of educational scholarship in Ireland, north and south. Ireland in the 1970s was divided by a violent and tragic sectarian war, with 1972 the deadliest year of the conflict; Bloody Sunday happened in January 1972. Against this historic backdrop of division, the pioneering first meeting was convened.

The organisation of the first conference was chaired by the Professor of Education, Eustás Ó Héideáin at the University, collaboratively supported by two colleagues and doctoral students, John Marshall (a future Dean of the College of Arts, Social Sciences & Celtic Studies) and James McKernan, who were each responsible for inviting delegates from both the north and south of the island. It was through an exchange of letters (and not email as we are so accustomed to today) that the meeting was arranged. For

the first time, in 1976, scholars, academics, policymakers, teachers, and educators from north and south would come together in person to discuss educational scholarship and teaching-informed research.

"It was a chance exchange of letters between a member of the staff of University College Galway and a colleague in the New University of Ulster that led to the decision to organise the Galway Conference. It was to be not simply an occasion for colleagues north and south to meet one another, although this was an incentive to those who planned it. Essentially, it was to be an occasion when members of the staff of Irish educational institutions and teachers would be together *en famille* to share their concern for education and to discuss the findings of current research. The Conference was a success beyond the hopes of those who planned and organised it."

—
Eustás Ó Héideáin, *Proceedings of the Education Conference, 1976*

The preface to the first proceedings evokes the inclusive ethos and welcome for all educators and scholars of teaching, an ESAI tradition which remains to this day.

A Retrospective on the Transformation of Educational Research

The ESAI is rightly proud of its now 50-year history as a leader in the promotion of the application of evidence to ensure inclusive education for learners of all ages, across all contexts: formal and informal, pre-school, primary, secondary, and tertiary. Fittingly, May 2026 saw the annual ESAI conference returning to Galway, where it all began.

The 2026 conference theme *From Legacy to Futures: Celebrating ESAI's First Meeting of Scholars and 50 Years of Irish Educational Research* captures something important – that understanding where we have come from is essential in shaping where we are going.



Commemorative events to celebrate ESAI's foundations included the unveiling of a plaque in the University's D Block (Old Arts Building), Room D202, a central campus location that served as a focal point for the first conference, and the launch of a 50th anniversary virtual special issue of the ESAI's peer-reviewed international journal, *Irish Educational Studies*: **"From foundations to frontiers: 50 years of educational research in Ireland"**.

Reflecting on the history of the emergence and growth of educational research in Ireland is instructive for us today, as we live through complex times globally. These challenges were the principal focus of discussion at the World Education Research Association (WERA) expert panel in Los Angeles in April 2026, titled: *Navigating Education Research Worldwide in a Time Dismissive of Evidence*.

Ireland's history during The Troubles was characterised by sectarian division and dismissiveness of the shared humanity of all communities. On the other hand, one sees how evidence – when it supports diversity and inclusion – can fundamentally change the world and create inclusive educational futures for all. Ireland in the 1950s and early 1960s was faced with a prevailing conservatism, including in terms of the outlook for education and educational access and provision. Professor Áine Hyland (2018), who was at the time an Executive Officer in the Department of Education, outlines the background with detail and concision:

"A Council of Education was set up by Minister Richard Mulcahy in 1950 and in November 1954, the council was asked to report on the curriculum of the secondary school. Its deliberations were long drawn out, and its Report on the Curriculum of the Secondary School was not completed until 1960 and was not published until 1962. It was a conservative report, and while it contained some interesting analyses of the secondary school curriculum of the time, it saw no need for any significant expansion of secondary schooling."

The ESAI is rightly proud of its now 50-year history as a leader in the promotion of the application of evidence to ensure inclusive education for learners.

It is a sobering reminder of how resistant systems can be to change, and of how much depends on those willing to challenge that resistance with evidence.

Ireland now has among the highest engagement in third-level education globally.

Fortunately for Ireland, as the country was changing, a number of Ministers for Education, the political leadership, and people envisioned a different future. Crucially, it was evidence and research – in the form of the *Investment in Education* report of 1965 in particular – that presented "a devastating analysis of the Irish educational system", making "a compelling case for radical reform", as outlined by Hyland in her keynote address: *50 Years on: Reflecting on the legacy of free second level education* at the 2018 ASTI Education Conference.

Consequently, on the 10th of September 1966, the Minister for Education, Donogh O'Malley – himself a UCG graduate – announced universal free second-level education for all children in Ireland. In his passionate and landmark speech on that auspicious Saturday, O'Malley described the lack of engagement in free second education as a "dark stain on the national conscience".

The revolutionary scheme included free bus transport, to ensure those in remote and rural areas would not be disadvantaged. The initiative completely transformed Ireland, with broadcaster Joe Duffy calling free education a "miracle" (2017), and Professor Dermot Keogh noting: "free education was liberation for an entire generation of Irish schoolchildren and successive generations" (O'Mórdha, 2000). Its legacy continues to shape the country to this day, such that Ireland now has among the highest engagement in third-level education globally, as **cited by the OECD in 2025**.

ESAI, Pioneering the Future of Education

It is no coincidence that the 1976 meeting of ESAI happened within a decade of the introduction of free education. While we now face complex challenges in terms of potential dismissiveness of evidence, including educational scholarship, the time is ripe in Ireland for research to further grow and flourish. It is not possible within a brief summary such as this to outline all the impactful and innovative education research projects and initiatives currently being undertaken. Indeed, one only needs to peruse the programme for the [2026 ESAI conference](#) at University of Galway to appreciate the breadth and impact of contemporary research, across all disciplines, and all ages and stages of education.

Today, the ESAI is an internationally affiliated research association, and its annual conferences attract delegates from around the globe.

The diversity and plurality of methodologies employed in respective initiatives highlights how both qualitative and quantitative evidence, the so-called 'big' and 'small' data of educational research, are being heeded and utilised, to support educational inclusion. Today, the ESAI is an internationally affiliated research association, and its annual conferences attract delegates from around the globe. This year's conference at University of Galway had over 400 delegates registered, from 18 countries. Furthermore, the association has its own international, peer-reviewed journal, *Irish Educational Studies* (Impact Factor: 1.2), published since 2005 by Routledge/Taylor & Francis.

Although we live in turbulent times, organisations such as the ESAI, which support all scholars – from early career to emeritus – serve as essential, compelling fora for how evidence can be used to help us conceptualise and design inclusive educational futures for all.

Ireland now ranks among the highest in the world for participation in third-level education, as cited by the OECD in 2025, a remarkable achievement for a country that, just 60 years ago, saw little need to expand its secondary schools. Ireland was and is changing. That journey from conservatism to inclusion did not happen by accident. It happened because researchers, educators, and advocates insisted on the power of evidence-based research and education, precisely the work the ESAI has championed for 50 years. As the association looks to the next 50, that mission feels more urgent, and more necessary than ever, especially in the most challenging times, while we collaborate in peace, dialogue, and empathy; from Galway to the globe.



Prof Tony Hall is a Professor of Education in the School of Education, University of Galway, Ireland. A former second-level teacher – physical education, English, mathematics, and computing – he has worked in teacher education at University of Galway since 2006, and his main research interests centre on educational design/design-based research. He is an Executive Committee Member and Vice-President-Elect of the Educational Studies Association of Ireland (ESAI) and is host and local chair of the 50th anniversary meeting of the ESAI in Galway, May 2026. Tony is also a member of the Teaching Council, Ireland's statutory body for the teaching profession.

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Fiona Murtagh

Alumni Award for Contribution to Sport

Fiona Murtagh is a competitive rower from Moycullen, Co. Galway, and a two-time Olympian who has played a central role in the recent success of Irish rowing internationally. Fiona took up rowing in 2009, following her twin brother Alan into the sport, before earning a scholarship to Fordham University in New York. Her breakthrough came in 2019 with a national title, leading to senior international selection in 2020. That year, she was part of the Irish Women's Four that won bronze at the European Championships, followed by silver in 2021. At the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, Fiona was a member of the Women's Four that won bronze, Ireland's first-ever Olympic medal in women's rowing. She subsequently transitioned to the Women's Pair, partnering with Aifric Keogh, and competed at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games. In 2025, Fiona reached a career-defining milestone, winning gold at the World Rowing Championships in the women's single sculls, firmly establishing herself among the world's leading athletes in the sport. A strong role model for aspiring athletes, Fiona embodies the values of discipline, resilience, and excellence, and she continues to represent Ireland on the world stage.

Learn more



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Baboró, a Festival for Children: Exceptional from Prelude to Curtain Call

Cois Coiribe sits down with Aislinn Ó hEocha, Executive Artistic Director of Baboró International Arts Festival for Children as the festival reaches its landmark 30th anniversary. From a childhood shaped by Galway's vibrant arts scene to leading one of the world's most respected children's festivals, Aislinn reflects on her remarkable journey, Baboró's expansion over the past 30 years, and what children can expect to experience.

Meet Aislinn Ó hEocha

I grew up in Galway, the youngest of six children, and graduated from University of Galway (then UCG) with a BA in Italian and Economics in 1994. I've had a long association with the University as my dad, Colm, was President for 21 years. He was also Chair of the Arts Council from 1989 to 1993.

My parents were avid supporters of the arts, so I was lucky enough to grow up surrounded by books and music and to be brought to plays and concerts. Two moments stand out in my mind: seeing Siobhán McKenna in *Bailegangaire* in Druid Lane and the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra (NSO) in Leisureland; both performances resonated deeply with me. Growing up in a city of festivals had a profound influence on where my career has taken me.

Having lived in Scotland, Australia, Dublin, Ennis, and Co. Limerick, I moved back to Galway with my family in 2015 to begin my dream job with Baboró. The move has been really positive for all of us, including my husband, who is a wood artist and musician. I really enjoy living in Newcastle, close to University of Galway and where I grew up, although both my parents are now long gone. Now that our children are in secondary school, I find I have a little more time for hobbies such as reading, swimming, jewellery making, and going to shows and gigs – enjoying all that Galway has to offer. I'm very grateful that my children are growing up in such a vibrant city.

I love attending festivals myself, taking in lots of performances, exhibitions, street art... perhaps taking a risk on something new.

Cois Coiribe (CC): What does it mean to be Executive Artistic Director at Baboró; what sorts of tasks do you oversee?

Aislinn Ó hEocha (AÓh): I am responsible for the whole organisation, reporting to the Board of Trustees. The position was created in 2015, combining the roles of Artistic Director and General Manager; it's very busy, but I have a fantastic team to support me. In the past ten years we have grown from three to nine people to deliver an expanded festival and year-round programme.

While all areas of the role are important, curating the annual international festival is the most significant; it's the beating heart of Baboró. I travel to festivals throughout Europe and Ireland to find shows I hope audiences will enjoy. It is a balancing act, taking into consideration artistic merit, artform, genre, style, language, age suitability, venue, cost, and more. I love attending festivals myself, taking in lots of performances, exhibitions, street art... perhaps taking a risk on something new. That voyage of discovery is the joy of the festival experience.

Of course, children have the right to enjoy a smorgasbord of creative experiences, a chance to try something new and develop their taste. That's what I aim to provide, something for everyone.

Several arts in education projects and artist support programmes keep us busy all year. One of our strategic priorities is to ensure that every child has an opportunity to participate in the arts, no matter their circumstances. For example, Creative Sensory Sessions is a two-year artists in residence project in Rosedale School, funded by the RTÉ Toy Show Appeal and Rethink Ireland, where specialist artists work with staff and students to design bespoke creative workshops, which are accessible to every child regardless of their physical or intellectual needs. Dr Charlotte McIvor, Associate Professor, Drama and Theatre Studies, is evaluating the project and its impact. This work is very close to my heart - my mum, Daiden, was involved in setting up Galway Association for Mentally Handicapped Children, now Ability West. ►

Baboró's mission is to place creativity at the heart of every childhood.



Our Baboró GROW artist programme supports approximately 40 artists per year through residencies, mentoring, and Creative Europe projects. As a charity founded on the UN Rights of the Child, we are constantly fundraising to keep the festival's global reputation for quality while keeping it accessible to all children. Baboró's mission is to place creativity at the heart of every childhood. We do this by bringing the festival directly to children in their school or community, subsidising bus transport and keeping ticket prices low or free. Tickets are subsidised by 87%, so our box office income is only 9% of our overall income. The rest we raise through multiple state and local grants, trusts and foundations, and corporate and private giving.

CC: How did your third-level education factor into your career trajectory?

AÓh: My time studying in Galway and Aberdeen certainly influenced my career trajectory. Studying Italian language and literature, and spending a year in Italy, allowed me to broaden my geographical and cultural horizons. The friends I made in college and the long discussions about plays, music, books, and films all shaped me. Many of those friendships have continued to this day, for which I'm very thankful. My dad often talked about the 'university of life', and this time in my life was certainly that.

CC: Baboró is celebrating 30 years! Can you speak to the significance of this feat?

AÓh: As a small city on the western fringes of Europe, Galway is extremely lucky to have an international festival dedicated to children. Borne out of Galway Arts Festival, now GIAF, visionaries Jean Parkinson and Patricia Forde, alongside others, founded Baboró shortly after the Irish State ratified the UN Rights of the Child. The festival was moved to October so that children can access it with their schools, not having to rely on their parents to have the time, money, or interest to bring them. Since its foundation in 1996, the festival and organisation have grown from strength to strength, now serving approximately 18,500 people each year.

The development of Baboró has taken a great deal of vision, grit, determination, and the generosity of the Galway community. As a non-profit we are completely reliant on grants and donations. University of Galway has been a steadfast strategic partner since the very beginning. The festival uses college venues and in turn brings hundreds of school children and families on campus. Baboró has hosted many volunteers and internships over the years, several of whom went on to join the staff team. Dr Rebecca Bartlett was instrumental in establishing The Value of Arts in the Lives of Children module as part of the BA in Child, Youth and Family Policy and Practice from 2014 to 2019. Baboró also collaborated with the University on BEAST! – Baboró: Environment, Arts, Science & Technology – a three-year project that began in 2012, in conjunction with the Ryan Institute and the Child and Family Research Centre. Baboró enjoys a very supportive relationship with the Drama Department, with Dr Charlotte McIvor currently serving on the Board. And I am a mentor to Dr Michela Dianetti, Department of Philosophy, as part of an Enterprise Fellowship.

University of Galway has been a steadfast strategic partner since the very beginning.

One of the things I love about working at Baboró is that the possibilities are endless! I work with a dynamic team and Board who are open to trying new things and pushing the limits of what we can achieve, and there are artists and producers in our community who are as passionate about the importance of the arts in the lives of children as we are.

Expanding our team to include year-round roles in fundraising, outreach, schools coordination, and artists-in-residence has been transformative, allowing us to reach more children, more consistently, with real and lasting impact, through co-created programmes that boost self-expression, confidence, and empathy.

In recent years, our Baboró Children's Panel, now in its fifth year, ensures that we include the voice

and opinions of children in our work. We are constantly learning from this diverse group of 9- to 11-year-olds helping us, and we have so much to learn from their insights and wisdom.

I believe strongly in the transformative power of the arts and of stories. The collective act of experiencing a live performance or participating in a workshop with your friends and family is hard to beat. Because it's live, that particular experience is unique, never to be repeated. You don't have to love the show, but it should impact you in some way. At Baboró, we try to ensure that each child's experience is as rich, satisfying, and fun as possible. It may be a child's first and only time to see a live performance, so we want it to be the best it can be, from the minute they step off the bus to the final applause. The arts can help us make sense of this crazy world, develop empathy, unify communities, and expand our world view. Every child, no matter their circumstance, deserves these experiences.

CC: How does Baboró's success help shape the Irish and international arts scene, particularly as it's focused on youth engagement?

AÓh: Baboró's success has had significant influence on the development of the performance for young audiences sector in Ireland and further afield. Baboró is one of the oldest and most highly regarded children's festivals in the world. In the past 30 years, we have seen the sector grow, particularly in the West of Ireland. Influenced by the work he saw in Baboró, Marc Mac Lochlainn set up Branar, the children's theatre company in 2001. Now in its 25th year, Branar tours all over the world as well as to schools in County Galway. In more recent years, Moonfish Theatre, Brú Theatre, Rosán Sensory Adventures, and others are making fantastic work in Galway, especially for this audience.

Baboró provides artists with a window to the world by inviting international festival directors to Galway each October. This has in turn resulted in Galway artists bringing their shows to festivals in the UK, Europe, Asia, North America, and even as far away as Australia. This year, for example, a Baboró commission, *Antarctica!*, by Rosán Sensory Adventures, created with



and for children with additional needs, is touring to the Lincoln Centre, New York, and Sydney Opera House. Irish work sits comfortably on the global stage alongside some of the best work in the world, that's something we in Galway should be very proud of.

CC: Any words of wisdom for those interested in getting involved in the arts/creative industry?

AÓh: My broad work experience certainly played a part in laying a good foundation for this role. I learnt many lessons on the job over the years, from waitressing in Italy to project management of international banking projects and setting up an HR function in a software company. The indirect route to your dream job can be an interesting journey!

I've worked in the arts since 2001, and that has taught me resilience and resourcefulness, making magic happen with very little. It's also given me a chance to have lots of creative experiences (good and bad!) and develop my palate and critical eye. Being open and collaborative in approach is helpful; I usually find two minds are better than one. And personal contacts have been really valuable, especially when I moved back to Galway. You can't underestimate the value of those.

The children's arts sector is wonderful, full of sound people who are genuinely motivated to make a difference in the lives of children and young people. As I say to my team, 'we're not in it for the money or the glamour!' – but the rewards are deep and long-lasting. Seeing a child light up in a theatre or gallery, having a really positive or even transformative experience, is worth its weight in gold. I'm really privileged to get to do that on a regular basis.

As Baboró looks to its next 30 years, I feel more energised than ever. The arts help us make sense of the world, develop empathy, build communities, and expand our horizons. I am enormously privileged to play a part in making this happen.

Baboró will be saying a fond farewell to Dr Charlotte McIvor, whose time on the Board of Trustees concludes in June, and a warm welcome to incoming board member Marianne Ní Chinnéide.

Both Charlotte and Marianne are part of the Drama Department at University of Galway.



Born in Galway, **Aislinn Ó hEocha** joined Baboró International Arts Festival for Children as Executive Artistic Director in 2015. She holds a BA (Hons) from University of Galway and an MSc in European Policy, Law and Management from Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, and served as Chair of Theatre for Young Audiences Ireland (TYAI) from 2018 to 2023. Aislinn built extensive experience in programming, management, and marketing, serving as Marketing Manager and later General Manager of glór, Ennis, and as Artistic Director of The Source Arts Centre, Thurles. She also previously worked in the software and banking sectors.

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Branar: Theatre for Children in Galway and Beyond

Explore Branar, a Galway theatre company dedicated to creating artistic engagements and experiences for children, from local DEIS schools to the Sydney Opera House. We were delighted to connect with University of Galway alumnus Marc Mac Lochlainn, Founding Artistic Director, and the wider team.

Based in Galway, Branar is one of Ireland's leading theatre companies dedicated to creating work for children. Renowned for its highly imaginative and visually striking productions, the company tours extensively both nationally and internationally.

Our work not only seeks to spark a sense of wildness but also to foster wonder, joy, curiosity, and compassion. We view every child – both in Ireland and beyond – as an equal citizen of the world, who should be nurtured through engagement with exceptional arts experiences. The way we see it, a world of wonder and creativity is more fulfilling for everyone, child or otherwise..

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A Vision Born in Galway

Branar was founded in 2001 by Marc Mac Lochlainn, shortly after completing his MA sa Nua-Ghaeilge at University of Galway. Reflecting on this time, he notes that his involvement with An Cumann Drámaíochta, and the many connections he made with fellow students and faculty members during his studies, played a pivotal role in shaping his artistic direction.

Originally from Kildare, Marc came to know Galway through working in Carraroe in the Gaeltacht. After completing an H.Dip at University of Galway, he taught at Coláiste na Coiribe for two years and worked at An Taibhdhearc. Branar emerged from his recognition of a real need, the facilitation of drama workshops through the medium of Irish. From those first workshops, something far larger began to take shape.





“Watching Branar grow over the past 25 years into a leader of the Performing Arts for Young Audiences’ sector, becoming nationally and internationally recognised, has been an honour and the result of a lot of hard work. I have had the privilege of working with amazingly talented colleagues over the years. Branar began as an idea when I was studying for a master’s le Gaeilge in University of Galway, and the University has continued to play a role; three of our current team members are graduates of the University, and two of them began with us as interns. We are delighted now to work with the discipline of Children’s Studies and Drama Studies to offer a module on Branar and making theatre for children. I have spent the last 25 years advocating for high-quality work for young audiences, and I look forward to continuing working towards this goal, over the next 25 years.”

—
Marc Mac Lochlainn, Founding Artistic Director of Branar

Bringing Creative Works to Life Here, There, and Everywhere

Initially focused on drama workshops, Branar has since evolved into a dynamic organisation, presenting productions with equal energy in local schools in Galway as on international stages. Since its inception, the company has created over 25 original productions and performed in schools and venues across Ireland and in renowned theatres worldwide.

From its base in Ballybane, the company develops theatre for children aged 0–12, with each production carefully crafted over a two-year period. New work is first shared with children in Galway before touring nationally and internationally. As a child-centred organisation, Branar places young audiences at the core of everything it does, driven by a commitment to ensure that more children can access high-quality arts experiences more often.

In the coming year alone, Branar will present three productions at major international venues, including the Sydney Opera House. We will also tour in Seoul, South Korea, multiple cities across the United States, Toronto, and London. This is all complemented by an extensive programme in schools and community venues in Galway and throughout the West of Ireland.

Enchanting Audiences with Equal Enthusiasm

How we work at Branar is as important as what we create. The organisation is guided by core values: being brave in its choices, committed to quality, generous in collaboration, playful in approach, and authentic in identity.

We are deeply committed to meeting children where they are. Our Branar sa Scoil programme delivers a bespoke, multi-arts initiative to DEIS schools in Galway over a six-month period, supported by Rethink Ireland and the Galway City Council. Support from Acorn Insurance Group enables the delivery of the Acorn Digital Arts Flag, expanding access to creative learning through digital platforms, bringing Branar's work to schools across 10 counties.

Alongside our own productions, Branar also nurtures the next generation of creatives through Branar Meitheal – a dynamic 18-month development programme for artists and producers working in theatre for young audiences. Through tailored individual and group supports, Branar Meitheal has fostered a growing network of 26 artists and producers dedicated to making creative works for children.

Branar actively advocates for the prioritisation of excellent arts provision for children in both policy and practice, grounded in the belief that every child in Ireland should experience at least one live performance each year.

We are deeply committed to meeting children where they are.



A Birthday Bash for Branar: Celebrating 25 Years of Creativity

Branar marked its 25th birthday this April, and 2026 has been a year worthy of the milestone. As part of our celebrations, we opened in style by performing *Rothar* at the Sydney Opera House as part of the Sydney Festival, and we have since been touring *Story of a Day/Scéal Lae* to venues and schools around Ireland. A co-production of Miquel Barceló's *Ballad of a Bandit* also brought performances to Cobh Library, with further events in Cavan, Mayo, and Dublin on the horizon.

The anniversary year has been rich in community and development work. The next iteration of Branar sa Scoil is underway, with DEIS schools in Galway, supported by the Rethink Ireland Inclusive Arts Fund and Galway City Council. A new international project, Wander-full Journeys – an arts and citizenship project with partners in Finland and the Netherlands – has commenced with support from Erasmus+. The Branar Meitheal cohort continues to grow in confidence, connections, and capacity through workshops, festival visits, and one-to-one bespoke support.

Branar's work is driven by a simple but powerful goal: to ensure that more children experience high-quality arts, more often.

Branar is based in the West of Ireland and is a leading theatre company focused on children. It works closely with an ensemble of exceptional artists and collaboratively with a number of creative partners, including The Ark, Baboró, NIE (England), Starcatchers (Scotland), Teater Refleksion (Denmark), and many leading Irish arts centres and festivals.

Marc Mac Lochlainn is an alumnus of University of Galway and the Founding Artistic Director of Branar, a Theatre for Children. Originally from Kildare, Marc came to know Galway through working in Carraroe in the Gaeltacht. After completing an H.Dip at University of Galway, Marc taught at Coláiste na Coiribe for two years and started acting in An Taibhdhearc. Branar came about when Marc saw a need for the facilitation of workshops through the medium of Irish. In 2001, Branar began its journey.



In Conversation with John Crumlish

Bríd Seoige, Head of Content at University of Galway, sits down with John Crumlish, CEO of the Galway International Arts Festival (GIAF), to explore the journey that took him from student life in Galway to leading one of Ireland's flagship cultural events. Reflecting on his early days at UCG (now University of Galway), his introduction to Macnas and the Festival, and the creative energy of Galway in the late '80s, he traces the key moments that shaped his path.

John shares insights into the Festival's role in Galway's growth as a cultural capital, its partnership with University of Galway, and the challenges of funding and infrastructure. At the heart of it all is a clear belief: creative industries enrich society, and the University is a development agency, helping to anchor a west coast ecosystem where talent can study, create, and build careers locally.

University of Galway provides a number of venues as theatre spaces and galleries. The campus hosts our First Thought discussion series.

Bríd Seoige (BS): John, it's a pleasure talking with you. Let's begin at the start. What was it like being a student at University of Galway (then UCG)?

John Crumlish (JC): I had a great time as a student at UCG. I met my wife Eithne there, I played a lot of sport, did some studying, and made a great bunch of friends, most of whom I'm still in regular contact with today.

Moving from North Inishowen in Donegal to Galway during the early 1980s represented significant change for me. I got through my exams and graduated with a degree in psychology, and along the way I developed a great affection for Galway.

I then went to University of Ulster and completed a master's degree in Adult and Continuing Education, which led to me teaching psychology in the North-West College of Technology for a couple of years.

I came back to Galway during a summer break to play music with another Galway graduate, Declan Gibbons, who nowadays still works with me at Galway International

Arts Festival (GIAF). It was during the summer when I'd returned that Macnas was kicking off, and things were happening culturally in the city.

When autumn arrived, I went back to my teaching job in Derry, but the following year I left that job and came back to Galway, as I knew I would sooner rather than later. I joined Macnas, joined a band, and got involved in the Arts Festival.

There was a great burst of creativity and imagination in Galway during the '80s and into the 90s. Galway was producing a lot of great bands, both the Arts Festival and Druid were building their reputations year on year, and Macnas moved centre stage with the hugely ambitious Gulliver project.

I vividly remember seeing *A Brief History of France* during the Arts Festival, performed by a French company called Royal de Luxe in the car park of Galway Cathedral. At one point, peat moss exploded all around us as the performers recreated the chaos of the World War I trenches – we weren't just watching the action anymore, ►

What's important is that there is long-term recognition of the value of culture to a city like Galway.





Image: Marc Jennings

Galway International Arts Festival Big Top, located on the University of Galway campus.

we were inside it. I very clearly remember thinking: what a way to make a living.

At that time, I was on the Festival production team, but I subsequently returned to Macnas, where I established Mac Teo, a new company within the organisation. I later returned to GIAF, having experienced the Festival from the ground up in various roles – volunteer, crew member, production manager, and now finally as CEO.

BS: You are 23 years and counting as Chief Executive Officer of the Galway International Arts Festival; could you take us through a typical day in this role?

JC: There isn't really such a thing as a typical day – it depends very much on where we are in the Festival's cycle. There is a team of us who have worked together for a number of years now, so we all very much know where focus needs to be at any given time. We move from programme planning and getting the funds together to do the Festival, where the conversations are about and with artists and their agents,

companies, promoters, partners, funders, sponsors, and potential sponsors. We shape ideas and budgets, and work through proposals and funding applications before going into a much more operational focus as the Festival approaches. Artists and companies start to arrive, venues are prepared, production issues need solving, and the priority is making sure everything works as it should. At night, there are shows and gigs to go to. It is a very big celebration of creativity that moves at pace. It's always about the ideas, about the ambition and collaboration.

BS: Galway is widely regarded as a cultural capital. In your view, how does the Festival contribute to the city's artistic life and wider economic wellbeing?

JC: Culture and creativity have played a major role in shaping Galway as a city and now play a major part in the Galway brand. If you look at various culture organisations in the city – you have Druid, which celebrated its 50th anniversary last year, Baboró,

marking its 30th year this year, Macnas in its 40th year, and ourselves approaching our 50th anniversary in 2027 – it all points to a significant and longstanding contribution.

Galway International Arts Festival was embraced early on by the public, so we now have several generations who have grown up with it, which has led to a strong sense of public ownership around the GIAF – it belongs to Galway and has a very strong connection to it.

With regard to artistic wellbeing, the Festival has always looked to work closely with artists – supporting their development; commissioning, producing, and presenting their new work. This commitment has been central to the Festival's identity. We've been incredibly fortunate to see extraordinary talent come through the Festival over the years. Writers, directors, performers, and visual artists whose work has had a significant national and international impact have passed through Galway. We've also been very lucky to have developed relationships with some incredible talents.

Galway International Arts Festival was embraced early on by the public, so we now have several generations who have grown up with it, which has led to a strong sense of public ownership.

In theatre, that includes writers such as Enda Walsh, whose work has featured at the Festival over a number of years – from his ongoing *Rooms* series to Cillian Murphy's remarkable one-man performance in *Misterman* and *Ballyturk*, the latter of which was performed with Stephen Rea and Mikel Murfi. There has also been *Arlington* with Charlie Murphy and Hugh O'Connor, and *Medicine* with Domhnall Gleeson, Claire Barrett, and Aoife Duffin.

We've been just as fortunate in the visual arts, where we have relationships with artists such as Hughie O'Donoghue and John Gerrard, whose *Mirror Pavilion* installation during Covid-19 was a particularly powerful moment for the city.

There is a real sense of privilege in that – of having such exceptional artists choose to make work for Galway. Sometimes you're sitting quietly, watching something unfold in a dress rehearsal, or you're looking at a plan for an exhibition or installation, and it's just great to be there.

Alongside its cultural impact, the Festival has now become a platform for work to be seen, as it attracts international promoters and presenters who travel here specifically to see what's shown. There is also the significant economic contribution to the local economy each year. GIAF brings audiences, activity, and visibility to Galway at a national and international level.

BS: Could you tell us more about the partnership between the GIAF and University of Galway, and how you see that relationship developing?

JC: The Festival's relationship with the University goes back a long way and has developed significantly in

recent years. A lot of the people who are involved in the Festival have personal connections with the University apart from having good working relationships developed over years.

University of Galway provides a number of venues as theatre spaces and galleries. The campus hosts our First Thought discussion series and is also home to the Heineken Big Top, which is the biggest venue we have. We run an artist development programme with the University, together we are involved in a major EU project, PACESETTERS, and we partner on our volunteer programme, which has around 500 people involved each year.

The atmosphere around the campus during July is something special. There are talks, theatre shows, visual art opera and music – for me, one of my all-time favourite Festival moments was delivered on campus, when Brian Wilson played all of *Pet Sounds* in the Heineken Big Top.

GIAF's relationship with the University has been integral in the development of the Festival to date, and I hope that relationship and connection continue for another 50 years.

BS: Universities are often described as hubs of creativity and fresh thinking. How do you see the University fostering creativity among students, and in what ways could it further strengthen its role in supporting the creative and cultural industries?

JC: The University will always play an important role in developing the creative minds of the future, but I believe it also has the potential to become a major player in the growth of the creative industries in the West of Ireland. There is a real opportunity now to further establish the West as a vibrant hub for creative industries, and the University will be central to making that happen. It is encouraging to see that it is already moving in this direction.

The University's engagement with GIAF through artist development programmes is also important to us. These initiatives help us reach a wide range of communities and

support artists from diverse backgrounds to develop their voices. In doing so, they are empowered to tell their own stories and, hopefully, become the future stars of the Festival. There are so many different communities and so many opportunities to connect with these artists. Galway has long been known as the "City of Tribes" and today we have new tribes that we actively need to engage with to fully reflect the diversity of Galway.

BS: Funding the arts remains a significant issue. What's your assessment of the current landscape for arts funding in Galway City, and what needs to happen to ensure a sustainable future for the sector?

JC: Funding is always a challenge in the arts. Festivals like ours rely on a combination of public funding, partnerships, sponsorship, donations, and ticket income. Our income model means we rely on a number of sources of income, and they all need to deliver their share each year to keep us doing what we do.

I do think that the city needs to build up cultural infrastructure if the arts are to continue to develop; in particular, Galway badly needs a gallery. Most of the spaces we use are temporary: the Kingfisher, the Bailey Allen Hall, the An Post Festival Gallery, the Festival Garden, the Big Top – these temporary cultural spaces allow us to operate at the scale we do and attract an attendance of 400,000 during the Festival.

What's important is that there is long-term recognition of the value of culture to a city like Galway. Festivals create jobs, bring visitors to the city, provide opportunities for artists, and are significant contributors to the Galway brand. They are a key part of why Galway continues to punch above its weight, so further development of the sector will only deliver more.

I think over the next decade, University of Galway has a central role to play in the development of the arts in Galway and the wider region. For example, there is now an Institute for Creativity, and graduates coming out of the University have the potential to be key players in building the creative industries across Ireland. The creative industries have the potential to help ►



Image: Emilija Jefremova

remote places and small towns along the west coast be great places to live and work. They allow for world-class content to be developed and delivered while forming connections between creative communities.

As creative work becomes less tied to major cities, Galway – powered by the University – can anchor a vibrant west coast network where students not only study but go on to build lasting careers locally. That is incredibly powerful.

BS: Looking ahead, what's next for you and GIAF? In a rapidly changing society, what role can the festival play in reflecting, challenging, and shaping cultural conversations?

JC: As we approach the Festival's 50th anniversary in 2027, we're thinking about how that celebration can allow us reflect on our past, examine our present, and hopefully also act as a springboard to launch the next 50 years. What will always be important to us is supporting artists and helping build a strong pipeline of talent.

We also have to think about sustainability, climate transition, and accessibility. If we say the Festival is for everyone, then it really has to be for everyone. Equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) is going to be a major part of that, access for all to engage with the Festival.

Also, one very important thing that the Festival does is create shared cultural experiences, whether that be in Galway or touring nationally or internationally, that bring people together. Our job will always be to help artists examine the human condition and tell those human stories. Being present and experiencing such things is truly special. That moment when everyone feels the spark of creativity jump from stage or wall or sculpture – that's the moment we are after.

The Festival's job is to try to reflect the world around us by platforming creativity and creating those unforgettable moments when great art connects with audiences. That is what GIAF has been about since the start, and what it will continue to be about for quite some time to come.



John Crumlish is CEO of Galway International Arts Festival (GIAF). He has overseen its development into one of Ireland's best-known cultural enterprises. A native of Carndonagh, Co. Donegal, he graduated from UCG (now University of Galway) with a BA in Psychology and later earned an MA in Adult and Continuing Education from University of Ulster and an MBS in Business Practice from the Irish Management Institute/University College Cork. John served as a member of the Arts Council (2006-2011), sat on the Fáilte Ireland West Forum (2010-2013) and on the Project Board of The Gathering (2012-2013), chaired the Galway European Capital of Culture 2020 bid committee, and subsequently became a member of the Galway 2020 board. He is a Fellow at Atlantic Technological University and was conferred with an honorary doctorate by University of Galway. John is also Chair of the Standing & Strategic Planning Committee of Údarás na hOllscoile.



Professor Fran O'Rourke

Alumni Award for Arts, Literature and Celtic Studies

Prof Fran O'Rourke has an MA, Lic Phil, PhD, PhD, and DLitt, and he is a native of Co. Laois. Fran moved to Galway in 1961, attending the Claddagh National School and St Mary's College before graduating from University College Galway in Philosophy and German in 1971. Postgraduate studies took him to Vienna, Louvain, Cologne, and Leuven, where he received his PhD in philosophy *summa cum laude*. He was appointed Assistant Lecturer at University College Dublin in 1980, retiring as Emeritus Professor in 2016. Fran has published widely in ancient, medieval, and contemporary philosophy. His most recent book, *Joyce, Aristotle, and Aquinas*, is a revised version of a PhD in Anglo-Irish literature, and in 2023 he was awarded a DLitt by the National University of Ireland. He has held Fulbright and Onassis Fellowships. Alongside his philosophical work, Fran has researched Joyce's use of Irish traditional song. With classical guitarist John Feeley, he has performed Joyce-related recitals worldwide, from Shanghai to San Diego, and released two acclaimed CDs. Their second, *Casadh na nAmhrán / Turning the Song*, was shortlisted for the German Schallplattenpreis. Fran is fluent in eleven languages and is a regular contributor to RTÉ's Sunday Miscellany.

Transformative Theatre: Druid and University of Galway

Cois Coiribe was honoured to reconnect with alumna Maureen Kennelly, CEO of Druid. In this article, we explore the enduring relationship between Druid and University of Galway. From knowledge exchange to the impact of the Druid Academy in nurturing the next generation of creative talent, Maureen delves into her experience as a student of the arts at the University, and how it helped shape her journey in the world of theatre and the arts.

An Origin Story, Exploring the Arts at University of Galway

I feel extremely fortunate to have been amongst the group which was the third intake of students for the Higher Diploma in Arts Administration at University College Galway, as University of Galway was then known. As part of that course, I had the further good fortune to undertake my work placement with Druid.

While at Druid, I fell under the enduring influence of mentors Garry Hynes and Jane Daly, the impact of which has stayed with me throughout all my professional and personal life.

On that arts administration course, I was taught by many graduates of the University, amongst them Mary O'Malley, Michael Gorman, and the late Mike Diskin. I found myself utterly enthralled by the course, the University, my classmates, and by Galway itself.

Studying the business of arts management in Galway felt so right to me, especially so back in the 1990s, when arts organisations were reaching new and impressive heights. Alongside the taught modules, our class was wisely encouraged to immerse ourselves in the cultural landscape of the city and county. This collapsed any sense of divide between the University and the city, and it's one of the aspects of the University that I admire most – how it integrates itself into the city and makes its work relevant to people from all backgrounds.

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L-R: Garry Hynes, President Prof David Burn, and Maureen Kennelly at the Druid Symposium.

Druid Theatre's Living and Learned Legacy

I joined Druid as its CEO in October 2025, and I am now seeing firsthand the strength of its connection with University of Galway. It is a source of enormous pride for us all in Druid to have that ongoing relationship with the University. After all, it was the birthplace of Druid, and it's always inspiring to reflect on the work that founders Garry Hynes and Marie Mullen undertook at Dramsoc alongside other Druid stalwarts, such as Sean McGinley and the late Maelíosa Stafford.

Wider than that, it's fascinating to ruminate on what may have been in the air back in the 1970s, conjecturing about what inspired such brilliant artistry and sparked the birth of not just Druid but Galway International Arts Festival and Macnas at that time – most of the founders of these companies are graduates of the University. In this way, the imprint of the University is watermarked everywhere throughout the cultural landscape in Ireland.

For all of us in Druid, it is a privilege to bring our work to audiences nationally and further afield, and to bring the values and aspirations of the University with us. We are always delighted to acknowledge the wellspring of the work borne there. ►

It is a source of enormous pride for us all in Druid to have that ongoing relationship with the University.



Image: Ros Kavanagh

Marty Rae and Marie Mullen perform *Macbeth*, Druid.

The Thriving Culture of Creativity in Galway

Through the years, Druid and the University have respectively been ambitious and visionary and undoubtedly proven that entities of excellence do not need the backdrop of a capital city against which to prosper and thrive. That sense of courage and innovation and excellence are the qualities that rightly make us so proud of each other and of our strong connection.

It is unbelievably energising to see the next generations coming through, and our work with the University through the Druid Academy is a source of immense pride to us.

At a symposium in the University last November, held to mark Druid’s 50th anniversary, it was a thrill to hear the next generation speak about their affinity with Druid and the influence it has had on their choice of course. This spring, to accompany our revival of *Macbeth*, students across a range of disciplines engaged with actors Marty Rea and Cathal Ryan, as well as designer Francis O’Connor and assistant director Lianne O’Shea, to hear about their approach to the production. A small group of students attended the show’s dress rehearsal – we are delighted to be able to provide such insights to our work.

The ongoing exchange of energy and ideas between Druid and the University is of huge importance to the company. There is a sure sense of the art form looking to the future and knowledge that it is in safe hands with the coming generations of theatre makers taught by the finest academics whilst they engage with Druid’s work and personnel through the Academy. Alongside this, the University helps create audiences who will experience the work, and the various departments encourage those who will interrogate and promote the work. There are also the librarians and archivists, careful custodians of the Druid Archive, who ensure that future generations who haven’t had the chance to see the work will benefit from all that Druid has achieved.

Year after year, the University sets about nurturing citizens to look at the world through a medium of empathy, aligned with Druid’s mission to make the very highest form of theatre available to the widest possible audience. At Druid, we believe that extraordinary theatre can help transform lives for the better.

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Maureen Kennelly is CEO of Druid and an alumna of University of Galway. Her legacy of achievement spans leadership positions at Kilkenny Arts Festival, Mermaid Arts Centre, Poetry Ireland, and the Arts Council. Hailing from County Kerry, Maureen built strong connections with Galway during her student work placement with Druid and her work with the Cúirt International Festival of Literature.



Deirdre Ní Choistín

Gradam Alumni don Ghaeilge

Ceapadh Deirdre Ní Choistín mar Ard-Stiúrthóir TG4 in Aibreán 2025, an ceathrú ceannasaí ó bunaíodh an stáisiún in 1996 agus an chéad bhean sa ról.

Thosaigh sí le TG4 in 1999 i ndiaidh di an tArd-Diplóma sa Chumarsáid Fheidhmeach a bhaint amach ó Ollscoil na Gaillimhe. Bhí sí ina Ceannaire Nuachta agus Cúrsaí Reatha, agus roimhe sin ina Bainisteoir Cumarsáide, áit ar chuir sí straitéis nua cumarsáide ilardáin i bhfeidhm. Chaith sí ceithre bliana déag mar Léiritheoir agus Stiúrthóir agus bhunaigh sí an t-ardán ar líne MOLSCÉAL in 2017.

Tógadh Deirdre i gCill Choca, Co. Chill Dara. Bhain sí céim amach sa Ghaeilge agus sa Fhraincis ó Choláiste na Tríonóide sular thug sí aghaidh ar Ghailimh. Bronnadh céad onóracha uirthi i Máistreacht sa Ghnó sa Straitéis Ardleibhéil, Ceannaireacht agus Nuálaíoch ó UCC/IMI in 2024. Tá cónaí uirthi ar an Spidéal lena fear céile Breandán Ó Conláin agus a gceathrar mac.

Creative Galway: Aims and Ambitions of the New Research Institute for Creativity

Prof Florian Schneider, Director of University of Galway's Institute for Creativity, connected with *Cois Coiribe* to shed light on the recent expansion of the University's creative offerings. In this article, he explores creative thought, cross-discipline approaches to creativity, and what the future may hold for creative process.



Explore the Institute for Creativity.

Demystifying the Essence of Creativity

What does it mean today to be creative? Creativity is usually associated with leisure time, such as after work or at the weekend. This is supposed to be the timeframe when we can engage in activities that do not serve an immediate purpose, allowing us to escape routines that force us to function in a predefined way.

In a conventional sense, creativity provides a range of exceptional opportunities to experiment, run through different scenarios, and become someone else than the persona we simulate when we work to earn money. Those days are over. Leisure time has become a battleground for self-optimisation, while creativity is increasingly demanded in the workplace. We find ourselves in a world shaped by uncertainty – fragile, complex, and unpredictable.

How can we learn to navigate fragile, unforeseeable, and complex situations without being paralysed by fear and desperation? How can we develop the confidence and experience needed to create and adapt to change? When AI-driven systems and agents claim to give everyone access to the same knowledge, how can we make a difference that matters?

The answer to all these questions is the same: creativity. ▶

Leisure time has become a battleground for self-optimisation, while creativity is increasingly demanded in the workplace.





Prof Florian Schneider, Director, Institute for Creativity with Prof Rebecca Braun, Executive Dean, College of Arts, Social Sciences & Celtic Studies.

Institute for Creativity: A Place for Creative Thought

The Institute for Creativity is a new research institute at University of Galway. It sets out to investigate a future of innovation that lies at the intersection of creativity and technology. Rather than understanding creativity as an exclusive privilege that is reserved to the domains of art and culture, the Institute will research creativity as a general condition that reshapes the manifold relationships across all faculties of knowledge: from life science to business and law, from engineering to the natural sciences.

The Institute for Creativity currently focuses on three key areas. It leads research in the role of art and culture in fostering and driving sustainable development in rural and remote areas. It rethinks and revalues the relationship between art and culture, and health and wellbeing. And it conducts experimental research to promote cultural and linguistic diversity as a competitive advantage for Ireland and Europe.

However, creativity does not only permeate all industries. At the same time, the rapid advances in digital technologies and automation are transforming the creative industries, as well as their specific sectors, from film and television to music and performance, and from print publishing to game design.

The Institute will research creativity as a general condition that reshapes the manifold relationships across all faculties of knowledge: from life science to business and law, from engineering to the natural sciences.



Read more about the Society for Artistic Research 2026.



Inaugural lecture of the Institute for Creativity in partnership with Arts in Action.

Creative Concepts of the Future

Today, artificial intelligence is capable of generating creative content with striking results, using methods that were once thought to be the sole preserve of human creativity and imagination. Virtual production technologies merge digital and physical worlds in real time. These developments demand new skills and competencies, new forms of literacy to engage meaningfully with evolving tools, technologies, and practices. They give rise to entirely new divisions of creative labour that need to be investigated, anticipated, and shaped by knowledge and research, but also through research conducted within the arts and through the means of the arts.

Ultimately, the Institute for Creativity will become a platform for collaborative, cross-disciplinary research into the impact of cultural diversity, creative technologies, and artistic practice. Through this work, the research will pave the way for next-generation collaborations between art and science, between research, policy, and industry.

Unlocking this potential is particularly urgent for Galway and for the West of Ireland as a creative hub, and equally significant at national and European levels.

With this mind, the Institute for Creativity will host the 17th Conference of the Society for Artistic Research as part of the 2026 International Forum on Artistic Research. Taking place at University of Galway from the 23rd to the 26th of June, the conference explores the theme “Endangered Conceptual Worlds”, addressing artistic research across social, cultural, and political contexts, with a focus on minoritised languages and precarious knowledge systems. Standard registration closes 10 June (subject to availability). Further information is available at the [Society for Artistic Research 2026 website](#).

Together, we can tackle challenges for practice-based research in the arts, support endangered conceptual worlds, and foster a more creative tomorrow.

Research will pave the way for next-generation collaborations between art and science, between research, policy, and industry.

The Institute for Creativity will hold its official launch on 23 June at 4.30pm in the Bailey Allen Hall. All are welcome to attend.



Prof Florian Schneider is the Founding Director of the Institute for Creativity, a new research institute at University of Galway, where he holds a full professorship. He is also Visiting Professor of Art Theory and Documentary Practices at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), where he has been teaching and conducting research since 2013. President of the Society for Artistic Research (SAR) since 2022 and scientific coordinator of PACESETTERS, a Horizon Europe-funded research initiative, since 2024, Florian is an artist, filmmaker, and curator who has been involved in projects at all scales.



The Centre for Creative Technologies was established in 2023 to support and develop research and teaching that explores the intersections between creative practice and technology.

University of Galway's Centre for Creative Technologies

What happens when artists, researchers, and communities come together to explore merging technologies? In November 2025, the Centre for Creative Technologies hosted a three-day workshop that moved between design thinking at the University's IdeasLab, rapid prototypes in its creativity lab, and an immersive art practice walk through the Burren led by the Burren College of Art.

This blend of perspectives and methods captures the Centre's ethos as a collaborative hub connecting the University with the communities it supports, where experimentation and shared motivation drive more inclusive ways of engaging.

The Centre for Creative Technologies was established in 2023 to support and develop research and teaching that explores the intersections between creative practice and technology. Situated in the College of Arts, Social Sciences & Celtic Studies at the University of Galway, and now located within the Institute for Creativity, it draws on the College's traditional strengths in the areas of creativity to develop the interdisciplinary approaches needed to tackle the key societal challenges we face today, from engaging communities in sustainability action to supporting viable creative industries and careers in the region. The Centre provides equipment, studio space, workshops, and technical support for a wide range of research, engagement, and teaching activities.

Across the Centre, researchers from film, theatre, geography, computer science, and education share space with artists developing installations, performances, and community projects. Together, they explore the many visible and unnoticed ways that technology intersects with our creative and everyday lives.

From co-creating a virtual reality experience on the realities of homelessness with clients of Galway Simon Community to a Science Week project that invited Galway citizens to consider the role of AI in creating a sustainable city, community engagement is central to the Centre's ongoing activities and events. A key mission of the Centre is to bring the best in international practice and innovation to Galway, whether that's a dancer using motion capture to transform bodily movement into data or an artist working with robotics to create a cross-continent performance between humans and non-humans. Through our regular Masterclass Series, as well as longer workshops, world-leading practitioners bring their expertise ►



to the University and beyond, with up to 60% of attendees to date coming from beyond the University walls. Having launched in September 2025, our Springboard+ supported Postgraduate Certificate in Creative Technologies and Emerging Media offers the opportunity for those working in the creative industries to upskill and bring their creative talents into new technological settings. A particular highlight over the past two years has been the augmented reality workshops run for children at the Galway Science and Technology Festival, which showcased the creativity and technical proficiency of the next generation.

The Centre has also strengthened Galway's international creative links through artist residencies and exchanges. It is a founder member of the ARTx network with Virginia Tech, alongside University of California Santa Barbara and McGill University amongst others, which supports exchanges and collaborations focused on the intersection of art, research, and technology. Working with the artist Meaghan Dee of Virginia Tech and

Having launched in September 2025, our Springboard+ supported Postgraduate Certificate in Creative Technologies and Emerging Media offers the opportunity for those working in the creative industries to upskill and bring their creative talents into new technological settings.

University of Galway academic Ríona Ní Fhrighil, the Centre is developing an immersive poetry project on the theme of migrancy and translation that will debut at Virginia Tech's Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology (ICAT) in Spring 2027. In 2025, the Centre also launched its first Digital Artist in Residence programme with the Arts Council, creating new opportunities for artists working with digital and immersive technologies. The work of inaugural Artist in Residence Jane Cassidy resonates strongly with the ethos and activities of the Centre, with a focus on co-creation and inclusive digital arts practice.

At the heart of the Centre's research activities is its PhD programme, which currently supports seven PhD researchers exploring questions from the role of computer visualisation in urban planning to the power of our brain waves to compose music. Our PhD students have been the recipients of prestigious international awards and scholarships, working at the forefront of technology enabled creativity to bring a critical humanities perspective to technological progress and change. Through the PhDs' annual Open Studio, as well as a Youth Academy module for Secondary School students on AI and creative practice, their research reaches beyond the academy to engage communities of all ages in the Galway region.



L-R: Prof Rebecca Braun, Executive Dean, College of Arts, Social Sciences & Celtic Studies and President Prof David Burn.

We were delighted in 2025 to receive recognition of the Centre's work in building capacity within the research, creative, and cultural sectors in Galway, with nominations for a Galway Chamber Award and Regional Skills West Award, with a special emphasis on the role of the Centre in bringing industry and academia together in meaningful ways. This connection of industry and academia will be showcased at the Galway Film Fleadh in July, when the Centre will, for the second year, curate an Immersive Programme strand that brings the best of international virtual reality film and experiences to a Galway audience, alongside panels and workshops that invite attendees to reflect on the future of innovation in the audiovisual sector.

This connection of industry and academia will be showcased at the Galway Film Fleadh in July.

Through these and other projects, we aim to continue in our work to build bridges between disciplines, communities, and areas of practice within and beyond University of Galway in the years ahead. With strong links across industry, academia, and global networks such as ARTx collaboration, alongside a growing PhD community working at the forefront of technology enabled creativity, the Centre continues to position Galway as a leading site for interdisciplinary innovation.



Prof Conn Holohan is Director of the Centre for Creative Technologies and a lecturer in film and media studies. His research focuses on place-making in film and immersive media. Dr Holohan has led a number of community-based and practice-led research projects and is PI on Immersive Empathy, an Irish Research Council and Science Foundation Ireland funded project which explores the use of immersive technologies to increase empathy towards socially marginalized communities.

Regional Roots, Global Presence: Inside Galway's New €34.3m HealthTech Powerhouse

With a €34.3 million investment, the new ARC Hub for HealthTech is set to supercharge the West of Ireland's MedTech ecosystem. *Cois Coiribe* sits down with its new leader, University of Galway alumnus Professor Garry Duffy, to talk about his journey from the anatomy lab to commercial spin-outs, and why the future of global healthcare is being shaped right here in Galway.

Cois Coiribe (CC): Garry, to set the scene for our readers, could you introduce yourself, tell us a little about your journey to this role, and explain what the ARC Hub for HealthTech is? Why is this such a significant moment for University of Galway and the wider region?

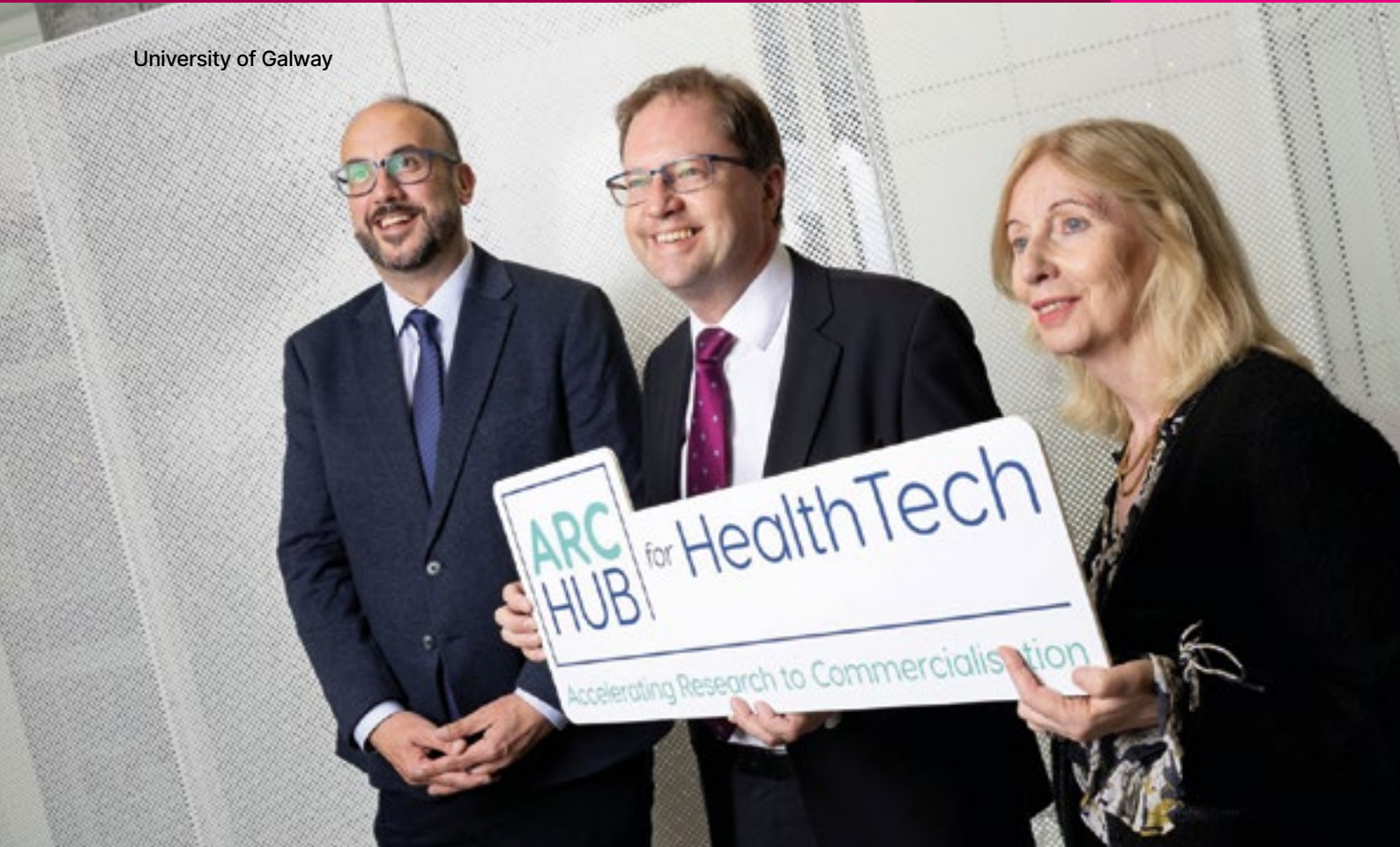
Garry Duffy (GD): As a proud double graduate of University of Galway, BSc and PhD, stepping into this next chapter feels deeply personal. My career has taken me from the anatomy lab through biomaterials and drug delivery research to co-founding two medical device companies right here in Galway

Today, I lead the ARC Hub for HealthTech, which proudly joins initiatives like BioInnovate, Health Innovation Hub Ireland (HIHI), and CÚRAM in promoting innovation for healthcare. Hosted by University of Galway in close partnership with ATU and RCSI, the ARC Hub supports projects across MedTech and connected health by accelerating their translation into scalable commercial solutions.

Galway is already recognised as one of Europe's primary MedTech destinations, home to world-class multinationals and a deep pipeline of indigenous companies. The ARC Hub is not a replacement for what exists but rather a new catalyst, designed to work with and amplify that ecosystem, accelerating the journey from research discovery to patient benefit.

CC: There are already 23 projects in the ARC Hub. What kinds of innovations are we talking about, and what does a project need to demonstrate to be selected for support on the road to commercialisation?

GD: The ARC Hub currently has capacity for approximately 20 more projects in addition to those 23 already supported, with research varying from smart implants, wearable diagnostics, and digital health platforms to novel drug delivery systems. What unites these projects is a credible pathway to clinical impact. To be selected for the HUB, a project must demonstrate a genuine clinical need, a technology that addresses that need in a way



Announcement of the new €34million ARC Hub for HealthTech, led by University of Galway, in collaboration with ATU and RSCI. L-R: Prof Garry Duffy, (University of Galway and Director of the ARC Hub for HealthTech), James Lawless T.D. (Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science), Celine Fitzgerald (Interim CEO, Research Ireland).

existing solutions cannot, and a research team prepared to engage seriously with the commercial journey. Northern and western regions of Ireland already have the companies, the talent, and the manufacturing expertise that many global regions can only aspire to. We want the research coming out Irish universities to feed that ecosystem with the next generation of innovations, ones that are developed here, validated here, and then scaled globally to transform patient care.

CC: For readers who may not be familiar with how research moves from lab to market, what does that journey typically look like for a project entering the HUB, and how does the ARC Hub accelerate it?

Galway is already recognised as one of Europe's primary MedTech destinations, home to world-class multinationals and a deep pipeline of indigenous companies.

GD: Most people are genuinely surprised by how long and highly structured the timeline to commercialisation is. For a medical device, it takes anywhere from eight to twelve years to go from initial concept to clinical use. Researchers have to navigate a complex maze of intellectual property (IP) protection, regulatory strategies, preclinical and clinical validation, and commercial scale-up. The ARC Hub accelerates this timeline by ensuring researchers avoid the costly years so often lost to unnecessary, avoidable mistakes. We provide embedded expertise in regulatory affairs, IP protection, clinical trial design, and investor readiness. My own experience founding FeelTect, which moved from a lab concept to

a CE-marked product with commercial sales in approximately six years, taught me precisely where those bottlenecks are. That firsthand knowledge underpins what the ARC Hub offers. By sharing this information, we all learn collectively.

CC: Many University of Galway graduates recognise their lecturers and researchers as first and foremost inspiring scientists. How does the HUB support the development of the commercial skills and confidence to become entrepreneurs?

GD: This is the question I find most personally compelling. University of Galway has produced outstanding scientists and clinicians for generations. Many alumni will remember being exposed to brilliant researchers and minds during their studies, be it in final year projects or student-selected components.

The ARC Hub asks those same researchers to develop a 'second fluency' in the commercial and ►



entrepreneurial skills required to bring their discoveries to market. We are building structured development programmes, connecting researchers with experienced founders and clinical advisors, and making it possible to think commercially. The best health entrepreneurs I know remain scientists fundamentally. They have simply learnt to ask one additional, vital question: who will pay for this, and why?

CC: Getting medical technology in front of clinicians and patients early is crucial. How are those clinical pathways being structured, and what role do hospital and healthcare partners play?

GD: Getting a technology in front of clinicians early is not just a smart strategic move, it is translationally necessary. Too many medical devices have been developed with minimal clinical input, only to fail when they meet the reality of a busy ward or operating theatre. The ARC Hub has structured clinical partnership pathways that allow researchers to engage with frontline clinicians

from the earliest feasibility stages. These relationships are reciprocal. Clinicians bring the real-world need and the necessary reality check, and our researchers bring the potential technological solution. Galway's MedTech industry has long understood this culture of clinical co-development, and we are embedding it into our research translation pipeline from day one, with a number of leading clinician-academics sitting as a core part of the ARC leadership team.

CC: The ARC Hub's tagline is: Regional Roots, Global Presence. For alumni at home and abroad, what does that mean in practice, and where do you see these Galway-borne innovations making their mark globally?

GD: 'Regional Roots, Global Presence' is not a marketing slogan. It describes how health innovation actually works. The clinical insights shaping our technologies come directly from Irish patients and Irish healthcare settings. However, the partnerships, regulatory pathways, and markets are entirely global.

Galway has already proven that a region can be simultaneously rooted in place and community as well as internationally significant. You only have to look at the sheer scale of MedTech employment and expertise concentrated in the city. The ARC Hub builds on that foundation deliberately and systematically. We are targeting to have nine spin-out companies by December 2029. Ultimately, I want to see companies founded here in the northern and western regions of Ireland, with products used by patients in across the world in Boston, Tokyo, and São Paulo, for example – perhaps our University alumni will be delivering these solutions.

CC: The ARC Hub was established with a €34.3 million investment from the Government of Ireland and the EU. What does that funding make possible, and how will you measure success over time?

GD: The €34.3 million from Research Ireland buys two things that researchers and early-stage companies consistently lack: time and expertise. It funds the people



who guide projects through complex regulatory submissions, the networks that open clinical trial sites, and the investor readiness programmes that prepare founders for serious funding conversations.

When it comes to measuring success, we are focused on the metrics that truly matter. These are making sure that spin-out companies are incorporated, patents are granted, venture investment is raised, clinical trials are initiated, and that ultimately products reach patients. This investment strengthens what Galway has built over decades and adds a dedicated translational layer to a MedTech ecosystem that is already the envy of comparable regions across Europe.

CC: What has surprised you most since the Hub launched, and what advice would you give to a University of Galway graduate with a healthcare innovation idea who is unsure where to start?

GD: What has surprised me most is the sheer volume of latent entrepreneurial energy in our

research institutions, and how quickly it surfaces when people feel genuinely supported. We have already received more than 60 project submissions from University of Galway alone. If I could give one piece of advice to any graduate with a healthcare innovation idea, it is this: do not wait until your science is perfect before you start engaging with commercial and clinical questions. Those questions will sharpen your technology, not compromise it. Reach out to us at the ARC Hub, talk to Enterprise Ireland, and speak to the clinicians in your network.

Galway City has the companies, talent, clinical partners, and now a University of Galway-led programme built specifically to take HealthTech solution from an idea to global impact.



Prof Garry Duffy is Professor of Anatomy and Regenerative Therapies at University of Galway, and he leads the Duffy Lab within the School of Medicine. His research has resulted in a range of transformative technologies that allow for therapeutic agents and devices to be deployed in a precise, safe, minimally invasive and maximally efficacious manner. Through leading the AM CARE, DRIVE, and DELIVER FP7/H2020 programmes, with combined funding of €24.3M, the Duffy Lab has developed: 1) Implantable reservoirs for a range of disease indications for local delivery and replenishment of therapeutic hydrogels and 2) Injectable hydrogel systems to promote post-infarct regeneration and normoglycemia in diabetes.

An Coimisinéir Teanga Séamas Ó Concheanainn

Sa gcomhrá seo, labhraíonn Bríd Seoige leis an gCoimisinéir Teanga, Séamas Ó Concheanainn, faoi na dualgais neamhspleácha a bhaineann lena oifig nua. Déanann sé cur síos freisin ar an tionchar mór a bhí ag Ollscoil na Gaillimhe air féin, áit ar fhoghlaim sé faoi cheannaireacht agus faoi fhorbairt pobail trí ghréasán na gcampas Gaeltachta.

Bríd Seoige (BS): An bhféadfá beagán a insint fút féin?

Séamas Ó Concheanainn (SÓC): Is de bhunaidh an Spidéil i nGaeltacht Chonamara, Co. na Gaillimhe mé, áit arb í an Ghaeilge teanga an teaghlaigh. . Bhí an t-ádh liom mo chuid oideachais uile ón mbunscoil go dtí an ollscoil a fháil i nGaeilge. Spreag oidí a raibh dílseacht acu dár dteanga dhúchais agus saineolas acu uirthi, ar shaocht na Gaeltachta agus na hÉireann, leithéidí Bheartla Uí Chonaire, Phádraig Uí Neachtain agus Sheáin de Búrca mé chun leanúint le léann na Gaeilge agus na staire i nGaeilge ar chlár céime B.A. in Ollscoil na Gaillimhe.

Ag tús na naochaidí, bhí rogha leathan ábhar á dteagasc i nGaeilge ansin ag léachtóirí a bhí ar thús cadhnaíochta ina ndisciplíní go náisiúnta agus go hidirnáisiúnta, eadhon an tOllamh Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh, an tOllamh Breandán Ó Madagáin, an tOllamh Gearóid Denvir agus an Dr. Máirtín Ó Briain a cailleadh go hóg. Mhothaigh mé i gcónaí go raibh féith an mhuintearais an-láidir idir foireann na hOllscoile agus comhlúadar na mac léinn. Bhí an t-ádh orm.

ndisciplíní go náisiúnta agus go hidirnáisiúnta, eadhon an tOllamh Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh, an tOllamh Breandán Ó Madagáin, an tOllamh Gearóid Denvir agus an Dr. Máirtín Ó Briain a cailleadh go hóg. Mhothaigh mé i gcónaí go raibh féith an mhuintearais an-láidir idir foireann na hOllscoile agus comhlúadar na mac léinn.

Bhí obair cheannródaíoch ar siúl ag Oifig na Gaeilge Labhartha faoi stiúir Pheadair Mhic an Iomaire agus deis á tabhairt do mhic léinn ó chuile chearn de tír barr snasa a chur ar a gcuid Gaeilge ach tréimhsí tumtha teanga a chaitheamh in Áras Mháirtín Uí Chadhain. Is ón dúsraith sin a d'fhás Acadamh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeilge ina institiúid náisiúnta léinn agus a ghréasán campas Gaeltachta i gCarna, ar an gCeathrú Rua agus i nGaoth Dobhair. Is gné uathúil dhíolacháin é an gréasán campas Gaeltachta seo ag Ollscoil na Gaillimhe agus deis ag mic léinn ó fud fad na tíre agus ó thar lear tréimhsí tumtha teanga and cultúir a chaitheamh sa milieú ina bhfuil an Ghaeilge á saothrú ina teanga phobail.

Cé go raibh an campas i bhfad níos lú ag an am, bhí an t-eispéireas léinn, cultúir agus sóisialta den chéad scoth.

Spreag borradh na nuatheicneolaíochta ag tús na naochaidí mé chun tabhairt faoi chlár iar-chéime sa ríomheolaíocht in Ollscoil na hÉireann, Má Nuad. Tar éis dom seal a chaitheamh ag obair san earnáil phríobháideach thapaigh mé an deis fillleadh ar an nGaeltacht ag obair le cúrsaí forbartha pobail faoi thús na mílaoise, agus ina dhiaidh sin le hOllscoil na hÉireann, Gaillimh agus le hAcadamh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeilge.

Tháinig borradh stairiúil faoi chúrsaí ollscolaíochta Gaeilge faoi scáth an Acadaimh sa gcéad deich mbliana den mhílaois nua. Bhí na céadta mac léinn

ag tabhairt faoi chúrsaí réamhollscoile, fo-chéime agus iar-chéime i nGaeilge, ar champas na hOllscoile sa gcathair, sna hlonaid Ghaeltachta agus i bhfo-ionaid fud fad na tíre. Ba thoradh é seo ar cheannaireacht ardbhainistíochta an Acadaimh agus na hOllscoile, ceannaireacht trínar cothaíodh comhoibriú idir an ollscoil, an stát agus pobal na Gaeilge. Bhí ról cheannaireachta éagsúla agam leis an Ollscoil, go háirithe mar Riarthóir ar Ionad an Acadaimh i gCarna, Co. na Gaillimhe, ról a chuimsigh earnálacha an ardoideachais, na pleanála teanga agus na forbartha pobail. Thug an bhreis agus fiche bliain sin tuiscint dhomhain dom ar an leas ollmhór a dhéanann oideachas ollscoile don duine aonair agus don tsochaí i gcoitinne ar mhaithe le smacht a ghlacadh ar a gcinniúint féin.

BS: Cad iad príomhfhreagrachtaí an Choimisinéara Teanga?

SÓC: Ba mise an tríú Coimisinéir Teanga ó 2004 a ceapadh in 2023 tar éis comórtas poiblí don Oifig. Uachtarán na hÉireann a cheapann an Coimisinéir Teanga ar chomhairle an rialtais, tar éis do Thithe an Oireachtais rún a rith ag moladh an cheapacháin. Tá an Coimisinéir Teanga iomlán neamhspleách i gcomhlíonadh a c(h)uid dualgas mar a leagtar amach in Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla, 2003, arna leasú.

Faidhmíonn Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga mar Oifig Ombúdóra agus mar Aisínteacht Chomhlíontachta Náisiúnta maidir le cosaint cearta teanga phobal



na Gaeilge mar a leagtar síos san Acht. Is é bunaidhm an Achta úsáid na Gaeilge a mhéadú sa saol poiblí ach dualgas a leagan, mar shampla, ar ranna rialtais, ollscoileanna, údaráis áitiúla agus áisinteachtaí eile stáit as seirbhísí poiblí a sholáthar i nGaeilge.

BS: Conas a chinntíonn an Coimisinéir go gcloíonn comhlachtaí poiblí le hAcht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla, 2003, arna leasú?

SÓC: Tugtar feidhmeanna agus cumhachtaí reachtúla don Choimisinéir Teanga faoin reachtaíocht teanga. I gcroílár obair na hoifige tá an fheasacht ar chearta teanga a threisiú, is é sin go bhfuil an pobal feasach faoi na cearta atá acu an Ghaeilge a úsáid agus iad ag déileáil leis an stát agus go bhfuil comhlachtaí poiblí eolach faoi na dualgais reachtúla atá orthu.

Tá breis agus 500 comhlacht poiblí, lena n-áirítear ranna rialtais, údaráis áitiúla, ollscoileanna agus ospidéal faoin reachtaíocht teanga. Faigheann m'Óifig thart ar 600 gearán in aghaidh na bliana faoi easpa seirbhísí tacaíochta custaiméara agus seirbhísí ar líne i nGaeilge, easpa seirbhísí do phobal na Gaeltachta agus easnamh sa bhfreastal atá an stát a dhéanamh ar an bpobal ó thaobh an oideachais lán-Ghaeilge agus araile.

Is féidir leis an gCoimisinéir imscrúdú foirmiúil ar dhéanamh ar líomhain gur sháraigh comhlacht poiblí an reachtaíocht teanga. Mar chuid de seo, tugtar moltaí don chomhlacht poiblí chun an reachtaíocht teanga a chomhlíonadh nó a shárú feasta. Sa chás go mbíonn an Coimisinéir Teanga den tuairim nár cuireadh moltaí imscrúdaithe sin i bhfeidhm, tá sé do chumhacht ag an gCoimisinéir Teanga tuarascáil a leagan faoi bhráid na Dála agus an tSeanaid ar an ábhar. Léiríonn an próiseas seo an dlúthcheangal atá idir feidhmeanna an Choimisinéara Teanga agus an daonlathas tríd an reachtaíocht teanga ar an gcéad dul síos.

BS: Cad iad na dúshláin is mó atá roimh an nGaeilge sa tseirbhís poiblí inniu? Nó: An gceapann tú go bhfuil dul chun cinn le feiceáil i bhfeidhmí na seirbhísí Gaeilge?

SÓC: Tugtar stádas speisialta don Ghaeilge faoi Airteagal 8 de Bhunreacht 1937 agus forordaítear

sa Bhunreacht ceart a bheith ag an bpobal gnó a dhéanamh leis an stát i nGaeilge amháin. Go praiticiúil, áfach, ní dheanadh aon soláthar éifeachtach córasach sa stát thar na blianta chun seirbhísí poiblí a chur ar fáil i nGaeilge. Ba mhínic a mhothaigh baill den phobal nach raibh an dara rogha acu ach dul i muinín na gcúirteanna chun a gcearta bunreachtúla teanga a bhaint amach. Thuig pobal na Gaeilge agus rialtais éagsúla go raibh géarghá le bonn reachtúil a chur faoi sholáthar agus faoi fheabhsú seirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge agus is é an Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla a thoradh sin. Ba é Aire na Gaeltachta ag an am, Éamonn Ó Cuív, a thug an cheannaireacht a chinntigh gur tugadh Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla, 2003 i bhfeidhm.

Tá bisiúlacht na Gaeilge mar theanga chomhaimseartha ag brath ar threisiú a húsáide i saol poiblí na hÉireann. Tá sé beartaithe ag an rialtas breis agus €130 billiún a chaitheamh ar an earnáil poiblí in 2026, áit a bhfuil imeall 400,000 duine fostaithe sa tseirbhís poiblí.

Tá an tseirbhís poiblí ag síorathrú, agus i láthair na huaire, tá straitéis ag Rialtas na hÉireann dar teideal *Seirbhísí Poiblí Níos Fearr* lena chinntiú go bhfuil freastal cóir á dhéanamh ag an stát ar an bpobal. Luaitear luachanna amháin an mhacántacht, an chothroime, an oscailteacht, an fhreagrúlacht agus an iontaofacht mar dhúshraith don straitéis seo, luachanna a n-aithníonn an OECD iad.

Ar an drochuair, léiríonn gearáin ó phobal na Gaeilge agus faoi bhráid m'óifige nach mbíonn na luachanna thuasluaite snite isteach i soláthar seirbhísí teanga. Is minic a bhíonn an tseirbhís i nGaeilge tearc agus easnamhach i gcomparáid leis an mBéarla, agus is minic gur réiteach post factum a bhíonn ann tar éis an tseirbhís iomlán i mBéarla a fhorbairt. Caithfidh athrú a theacht air seo.

BS: Conas atá an tAcht um Theangacha Oifigiúla á chur i bhfeidhm in institiúidí oideachais tríú leibhéal?

SÓC: Tá an tAire Forbartha Tuaithe agus Pobail agus Gaeltachta tar éis ollscoileanna na tíre uile mar aon leis na boird oideachais a fhorordúina gcomhlachtaí poiblí chun críoch na reachtaíochta teanga. Dá bhrísin, tá

dualgas orthu na dualgais a leagtar síos san Acht Teanga a chomhlíonadh. Leagadh dualgais bhreise ar chomhlachtaí poiblí faoi chóras na scéimeanna teanga i ndáil le seirbhísí breise i nGaeilge a sholáthar, e.g. go mbeadh inniúlacht i nGaeilge riachtanach do phoist ar leith nó go gcuirfí seirbhísí ar líne ar fáil i nGaeilge.

Tháinig deireadh le córas na gcaighdeán teanga, áfach, faoi Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (Leasu), 2021 mar gur theip air seirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge a fheabhsú ar bhonn córasach ar fud na seirbhíse poiblí.

Tá an tAire Forbartha Tuaithe agus Pobail agus Gaeltachta le córas nua na gcaighdeán teanga, a tabhairt i bhfeidhm. Ní amháin go leagfaidh an córas nua seo amach na seirbhísí a chaithfidh comhlachtaí poiblí ar nós ollscoileanna a chur ar fáil i nGaeilge, ach leagfaidh sé síos freisin an leibhéal inniúlachta i nGaeilge de réir Chomhchreat Tagartha na hEorpa um Theangacha (CEFR) a chaithfidh a bheith ag fostaithe na gcomhlachtaí poiblí. Dul chun cinn ollmhór a bheidh anseo, mar gurb í an easpa foirne le Gaeilge an bac mór ar sheirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge a fheabhsú.

Ról Uathúil Ollscoil na Gaillimhe

Tá dualgas eisiach ar Ollscoil na Gaillimhe oideachas ollscolaíochta i nGaeilge a sholáthar. Faoi Acht an Choláiste Ollscoile, Gaillimh (Leasu) 2006, tá dualgas reachtúil uirthi a chinntiú go bhfuil oideachas á sholáthar i nGaeilge ar cheann dá príomhaidhmeanna agus an Ghaeilge a chur san áireamh i ngach plean forbartha straitéise dá cuid.

Tá pobal na Gaeilge agus an stáit ag brath ar Ollscoil na Gaillimhe ceannaireacht a léiriú i bhforbairt earnáil na hollscolaíochta Gaeilge, ní amháin ó thaobh an dualgais reachtúil thuasluaite, ach mar gheall ar a suíomh uathúil agus straitéiseach ar thairseach an phobail labhartha Gaeilge is mó ar domhan. Tapóidh m'Óifig chuile dheis lena chinntiú go bhforófar an dualgas agus an deis eisceachtúil seo.

BS: Cad iad na hathruithe ba mhó a mholfá chun seirbhísí Gaeilge a fheabhsú?

SÓC: Den chéad uair i stair an stát, tá plean náisiúnta reachtúil i bhfeidhm chun seirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge. Mhéadú agus a fheabhsú

go córasach. ITá dhá chrann taca ar leith ina mbonn leis an bPlean Náisiúnta. Ar an gcéad dul síos, tá dualgas ann go mbeidh 20% den fhoireann a earcófar isteach sa tSeirbhís Phoiblí inniúil i nGaeilge. Ar an dara crann taca, tá córas na gcaighdeán teanga a leagfaidh amach go sonrach na seirbhísí a bheidh dualgas ar chomhlachtaí poiblí a sholáthar i nGaeilge, agus an leibhéal inniúlachta sa Ghaeilge a chaithfidh a bheith ag an bhfoireann a bheidh ag soláthar na seirbhísí sin thar ceann an chomhlachta poiblí. Is croíchuid den Phlean Náisiúnta í an phleanáil fórsa saothair a chaithfidh tarlú ar fud na Seirbhíse Poiblí a chinnteoidh go mbeidh dóthain foirne ag a bhfuil inniúlacht i nGaeilge á hearcú le go n-éireoidh leis an bhforáil earcaíochta 20% go córasach ar bhonn náisiúnta. Ós rud é go dtagann méadú glan 12,000 duine ar an meán ar líon na bhfostaithe sa tSeirbhís Phoiblí gach bliain agus léiríonn sé sin scála ollmhór an taisc chun dóthain foirne le gaeilge a earcú.

BS: Conas a fheiceann tú ról an oideachais tríú leibhéal i gcur chun cinn na Gaeilge amach anseo?

SÓC: De bharr scála agus ilghnéitheacht na Seirbhíse Poiblí in Éirinn, tá gá le gníomh náisiúnta ó earnáil na hollscolaíochta Gaeilge chun dóthain céimithe atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge a sholáthar i ndisciplíní éagsúla chun a chinntiú go n-éireoidh leis an bhforáil reachtúil 20% d'earcaithe nua faoi dheireadh 2030. Beidh géarghá le sruth leanúnach céimithe sna hearnálacha seo a leanas mar shampla: Riarachán & Beartas Poiblí, Rialachas Corparáideach, Bainistíocht Eagraíochtúil, Pleanáil Teanga, Pleanáil Straitéiseach, Oilíúint Múinteoirí Bunscoile agus Iarbhunscoile, Oideachas do Ghairmithe Cúraim Shláinte agus araile.

Ról Ollscoil na Gaillimhe agus Cur Chuige Náisiúnta

Agus í suite ar thairseach na Gaeltachtacha is mó sa tír agus cuntas teiste láidir aici maidir le mic léinn ó gach cearna den tír a mhealladh le tabhairt faoi chlár léinn i nGaeilge, tá deis ann anois nach bhfacthas a leithéid riamh d'Ollscoil na Gaillimhe ó thaobh éilimh an mhargaidh ar chlár ollscoile a fhreagróidh do dhlí teanga na hÉireann. Tá deis ag Ollscoil na Gaillimhe agus ag ollscoileanna na

tíre trí chéile ról ceannais a ghlacadh ach cláir ollscolaíochta Gaeilge a fhorbairt faoi scáth an Phlean Náisiúnta i ndáil le páirtithe leasmhara ábhartha, amhail Roinn Breisoideachais agus Ardoideachais, Taighde, Nuálaíochta agus Eolaíochta, an ÚAO, RFTPG agus institiúidí tríú leibhéal. Is trí chur chuige comhobrithe náisiúnta mar seo a fhorbrófar acmhainneacht earnáil na hollscolaíochta Gaeilge chun a chinntiú go mbeidh na mílte céimithe ag a bhfuil Gaeilge mhaith ar fáil le dualgais reachtúla an stáit i leith na Gaeilge a chomhlíonadh.

BS: Conas is féidir le daoine óga a bheith níos rannpháirtí i gcur chun cinn na Gaeilge, agus an gá níos mó brú a chur ar institiúidí tríú leibhéal chun an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn?

SÓC: Is iad glúnta óga an lae inniu todhchaí na hÉireann agus todhchaí na Gaeilge. Creidim go láidir go bhfuil misneach ar leith in aos óg an lae inniu maidir leis na héachtaí is féidir a bhaint amach trínár dteanga náisiúnta a fhorbairt ina teanga bhisiúil chomhaimseartha. Tá m'Oifig tiomanta le go dtuigfidh an t-aos óg an ceart atá acu déileáil leis an stát ina rogha teanga oifigiúla. Seo dúshraith an cearta teanga a chosaint.

Léiríonn an méadú ollmhór a tháinig ar fhógraíocht i nGaeilge go háirithe ar na meáin shóisialta gur feidir leis an nGaeilge bláthú ar na hardáin sin a bhfuil tóir ag an aos óg orthu, agus go bhfuil an-éileamh i measc an aosa óig ar ábhar cruthaitheach agus ar sheirbhísí poiblí ar ardchaighdeán i nGaeilge. Léirigh tuarascáil a d'fhoilsigh m'oifig ag Oireachtas na Samhna 2025 i mBéal Feirste gur caitheadh €19m san iomlán ar fhógraíocht i nGaeilge in 2024 de thoradh na reachtaíochta teanga nua. Caitheadh €5.2m den €19m sin go heisiach ar na meáin Ghaeilge, rud atá ag cruthú sruthanna nua ioncaim agus deiseanna fostaíochta do chéimithe óga in earnáil na meán Gaeilge.

Tá m'oifig ag forbairt stór acmhainní feasachta ar chearta teanga atá dírithe ar na cearta nua atá ag an bpobal de thoradh na leasuithe ar an Acht Teanga. Tá sé rithábhachtach go mbeadh a fhios ag an aos óg go bhfuil todhchaí agus gairmeacha rithábhachtacha ann dóibh de bharr a gcuid gaeilge. Beidh an stór acmhainní dírithe ar an aos óg ó leibhéal na bunscolaíochta go leibhéal na hollscolaíochta le béim ar

leith ar acmhainní do na meáin dhigiteacha.

BS: Cad é an éacht is mó atá bainte amach agat mar Choimisinéir Teanga go dtí seo?

SÓC: Déarfainn go bhfuil dhá ghné i gceist anseo, ceann a bhaineann le forbairt eagraíochtúil agus ceann a bhaineann le feidhmiú na gcearta teanga nua atá in Acht leasaithe 2021. Ó thaobh na forbartha eagraíochtúla de, tá foireann na hoifige méadaithe ó naonúr go naoi nduine dhéag in achar gearr agus maoiniú na hoifige méadaithe dá réir. Sheas mo thaithí bhainistíochta san ollscoil thar na blianta liom chun tacaíocht agus maoiniú a fháil ó airí rialtais agus ó státseirbhísigh shinsearach. Tá plean straitéiseach nua i bhfeidhm anois a chinntíonn go bhfuil an ag acmhainn foirne agus mhaoinithe aici freagrairt dá cúram mar oifig náisiúnta i gcosaint agus i bhfeidhmiú chearta teanga phobal na Gaeilge sna blianta beaga amach romhainn.

In achar gearr ama, tá dea-thionchar na reachtaíochta teanga nua ar úsáid na Gaeilge sa saol poiblí in Éirinn follasach. Is ábhar dóchais é an borradh atá ar fheiceálacht agus úsáid na Gaeilge ar na meáin éagsúla de thoradh na forála maidir le fógraíocht i nGaeilge a chuimsítear san Acht leasaithe. I bhfianaise gur caitheadh €19m go heisach ar fhógraíocht i nGaeilge in 2024, tá an fhoráil nua ar fhógraíocht tar éis cur go mór le hinfheictheacht na Gaeilge ar fud na meán éagsúil, agus tá ról rithábhachtach aici maidir le bisiúlacht agus úsáid laethúil na teanga a chothú. Níor mhór dlúthchomhoibriú a fhorbairt le hearnáil na fógraíochta tráchtála in Éirinn, le hearnáil na meán Gaeilge agus le comhlachtaí poiblí don fhorás seo dár dteanga dhúchais.

Ceannaireacht ar an Stáitse Idirnáisiúnta

Is mé Cathaoirleach Chumann Idirnáisiúnta na gCoimisinéir Teanga faoi láthair agus beidh comhdháil idirnáisiúnta an chumann ar siúl i nGaillimh i mí Mheán Fómhair seo chugainn 2026. Beidh m'Oifig ag cur fáilte roimh Choimisinéirí Teanga agus roimh ghníomhairí cearta teanga ó gach cearn den chruinne chuig an gcur agus an cúiteamh ar láidriú cearta pobail teanga i bhfad agus i gcóngar. Beidh na himeachtaí ar siúl sa Ghaeltacht agus ar champas Ollscoil na Gaillimhe agus tá gach duine ag súil go mór leis.



Ruth and David Mackey (MBRYONICS) Alumni Award for Emerging Leader

Dr Ruth Mackey is Co-Founder, Chief Science Officer, and COO of MBRYONICS, where she bridges complex optical physics and large-scale industrial operations. A pioneer of satellite laser communication, her doctoral research in Adaptive Optics at University of Galway – once considered far from commercial application – now underpins technology required on tens of thousands of satellites worldwide. Named EY Entrepreneur of the Year in the Established Category in 2024, she also played a pivotal role in establishing Photon-1, Ireland's first high-volume manufacturing facility for satellite optical transceivers. Ruth holds an MPhys from Heriot-Watt University and a PhD from University of Galway. A committed advocate for STEM education, she and the MBRYONICS team sponsor the 'Bringing Innovation to Light' award at the BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition.

Dr David Mackey is Co-Founder and CTO of MBRYONICS, where he leads the development of radiation-hardened photonic systems and satellite optical terminals underpinning the company's STARNET, STARCOM, and STARGATE product lines. Named EY Established Entrepreneur of the Year in 2024, he is a globally recognised expert in miniaturising complex laser systems for space, and he holds over 35 patents. David holds a PhD in Applied Optics from University of Galway and a degree in Aeronautical Engineering from University of Limerick. He co-founded MBRYONICS in 2014, bringing together a rare combination of aerospace engineering experience, doctoral research in photonics, and an entrepreneurial spirit he has nurtured since starting his first business at the age of 15.



Your *Legacy*, Their *Future*

A legacy gift to University of Galway is a powerful way to make a lasting difference. It reflects your values, supports future generations, and helps create transformative opportunities for students and researchers.

James and Elaine share a lifelong connection with University of Galway – first as undergraduate and postgraduate students, and later as proud alumni with enduring ties to the School of Law.

“The University was formative in our development as lawyers and throughout our respective careers. It also gave us a sense of duty to society and to help those less fortunate than ourselves.”

Inspired by their belief in the power of education to change lives, James and Elaine have chosen to include a legacy gift in their Will in support of the School of Law.

“Having received so much from the University, we are grateful for the opportunity to give something back and to support the education of future generations.”

Their legacy will ensure that future School of Law students benefit from the same transformative experience.

If you'd like to discuss your legacy gift, contact Stephanie at +353 (0) 86 206 1503 or stephanie.neylon@universityofgalway.ie



Michael Lohan

Alumni Award for Business and Commerce

Michael Lohan has been Chief Executive Officer of IDA Ireland since April 2023. IDA Ireland is Ireland's inward investment promotion agency, responsible for attracting and developing foreign direct investment for the economic and social benefit of the country. It works with multinational companies across sectors, including financial services, technology, biopharmaceuticals, medical technologies, and the green economy. Prior to becoming CEO, Michael held senior leadership roles within IDA, including global responsibility for Life Sciences and Organisational Lead on Talent, Transformation, and Innovation. He joined IDA in 2003 from the private sector, having held management positions with Nortel's European Operations in Galway and IEC Electronics. Michael holds an Engineering degree and an MSc in Technology Management from University of Galway, and he is also a graduate of the Berkeley Executive Programme.

How Ward & Burke Are Helping Engineer a Future at University of Galway

Ward & Burke's history is deeply rooted in the West of Ireland. Founders Padraig Burke, Michael Ward, and Robert Ward built the company on a shared vision for engineering, one shaped by hands-on experience, practical knowledge, and belief in adapting that expertise to the challenges of an ever-changing and evolving future. Driven by this vision, Ward & Burke recently made a transformative gift and contribution to support the creation of the Ward & Burke Centre for Infrastructure Research and Innovation (CIRI) at University of Galway. Read more to discover their journey and continued support of innovative engineering works!

First Principles, Lasting Impact

From their first lectures at University of Galway to delivering complex infrastructure projects across Ireland, the UK, and North America, the founders of Ward & Burke have built a company on engineering fundamentals and a belief that how you learn to think matters more than what you learn to do.

Padraig Burke and brothers Michael and Robert Ward were raised in an agricultural environment in East Galway, where they developed strong practical foundations in the sector. Padraig's focus was primarily in agri-contracting, while Michael and Robert focused on livestock and agricultural machinery, providing a broad and complementary skill set across farming operations. In both households, education was non-negotiable. It had a strong foothold in the Burke family, since Padraig's mother was a teacher, and it was a given that he and his three sisters would all go to university. "It wasn't an option not to go," says Padraig. "What was for one was for all."

For Michael and Robert Ward, engineering was equally embedded in family life. Their uncle, Peter O'Keefe, former President of the Institute of Engineers and City Engineer in Dublin, played a defining role in shaping their path. When Robert considered studying veterinary medicine, it was Peter who steered and encouraged him towards engineering, stating: "The anatomy of a cow won't ever change, but infrastructure will."

All three enrolled in engineering at what was then University College Galway, the former name of University of Galway. Padraig was first, then Robert, then Michael. Throughout the 1980s, the first glimmers of what would become Ward & Burke were sowed and began to take shape, driven by a shared ambition to build lasting infrastructure with lasting impact. ▶

Ward & Burke were ... driven by a shared ambition to build lasting infrastructure with lasting impact.

This feature was created in collaboration with Galway University Foundation. Find out more about the Foundation at [guf.ie](https://www.guf.ie)



L-R President Prof David Burn, Pdraig Burke, February 2026. Photo Credit Andrew Downes, xposure.

From the West of Ireland to an International Enterprise

Like many engineers of their generation, Pdraig and Michael began their careers on construction sites in Ireland and England, gaining essential and practical experience on large-scale infrastructure delivery from the ground up. Robert Ward took a different route and went further afield, choosing to study at MIT after receiving offers from Harvard, MIT, Brown, Caltech, and Berkeley.

Fast forward to 2001 and, with decades of combined experience and confidence in their technical judgement, the three founded Ward & Burke. “We always said we had our degrees,” says Pdraig. “If it didn’t work, we could go back to the day job.”

What followed was steady success. Ward & Burke has grown into one of the most respected engineering contractors working transatlantically, delivering complex water, wastewater, and underground infrastructure projects. Their reputation was not built through marketing campaigns, but through technical delivery, expertise, trust, and word of mouth. To this day, the

founders remain deeply committed to the importance of clean, potable water for a healthy society.

When reflecting on the company’s success, none of the founders point to a single project or contract. Instead, they give credit to University of Galway and the education provided to them as cornerstones to the foundation they built – they learned to think as engineers. At the University, professors like JD O’Keeffe were passionate about first principles engineering in graduate training. Together with a team of world class lecturers, he and others enabled a generation of engineering graduates to excel in engineering careers both nationally and internationally. That clarity of thinking is still visible in how Ward & Burke approaches problem-solving today: start with what’s actually happening, and why, before reaching for a solution.

In line with this mindset, Michael captures this philosophy through a quote by Herbert Spencer: “The great aim of education is not knowledge but action.”

Looking ahead, all the founders believe engineering is entering another period of transformation, shaped (or driven) by digital tools and artificial intelligence. Yet for Pdraig, he is direct about the potential risk. “If you lose first principles, you lose judgement.”

Their ambition, both for Ward & Burke and for the University, is to ensure the next generation of engineers are technically fluent and fundamentally grounded in their principles, and that they are capable of using new tools without losing the ability to think.

Ward & Burke has grown into one of the most respected engineering contractors working transatlantically, delivering complex water, wastewater, and underground infrastructure projects.



Ward & Burke Partnership Launch, 28 May 2026. Photo Credit Andrew Downes, xposure.

Partnership in Action

Over the years, Ward & Burke's relationship with University of Galway has never been a formal arrangement alone. Instead, it has evolved through collaboration in practice, largely through practical applications, manifesting through the recruitment of graduates, the support of postgraduate study, and a return to the University's laboratories when a problem required it. It's worked because both sides value understanding a problem properly before trying to solve it.

One defining example of this type of thinking emerged in 2018, during a major combined sewer overflow interception project connected to London's Thames infrastructure. The work was technically demanding, involving constrained underground environments, high construction risk, and strict safety requirements. The designs had been approved, but when the Ward & Burke team looked at them closely, they noticed that something wasn't right. "From a construction perspective," Padraig recalls, "we knew straight away it wasn't buildable."

Going back to basics, they worked with researchers at University of Galway, developing and testing a full physical prototype in the University's hydraulics laboratory, which was one of the few facilities in Ireland capable of validating the solution at the required scale. The applied research directly informed construction decisions and significantly improved safety outcomes. "If you get the engineering right first," says Padraig, "everything else follows." ▶



Ward & Burke Partnership Launch, 28 May 2026. Photo Credit Andrew Downes, xposure.

A Commitment to the Next Generation

In 2025, as Ward & Burke approached their 25th anniversary, Pdraig, Michael, and Robert made a transformative philanthropic commitment to the School of Engineering at University of Galway. The decision grew out of everything that had come before it, decades of experience that kept leading back to the same place, and through working with academics, such as Prof Laoise McNamara and their long-term research collaborators Dr Bryan McCabe and Prof Eoghan Clifford.

“Our existing research partnership with Ward & Burke has been hugely impactful in turning innovation into practice,” says Eoghan. “This commitment from Ward & Burke, with its focus on research, innovation, and education will enable us use fundamental engineering knowledge with innovative data science and engineering innovation to tackle some of society’s key challenges.”

As part of Ward & Burke’s educational commitment, Michael is particularly passionate about reaching students earlier, before they ever get to university. “It’s about showing them what’s possible,” says Michael. Driven by this principle, Ward & Burke has invested time in school visits, giving young people a picture of what a career in engineering looks like: varied, demanding, creative, and impactful. The commitment also supports an ambitious scholarship programme, designed to attract promising students to engage with engineering at University of Galway.

“We benefited enormously from our time [at University of Galway],” says Pdraig. “This is about making sure others have that same chance.”

In 2025, as Ward & Burke approached their 25th anniversary, Pdraig, Michael, and Robert made a transformative philanthropic commitment to the School of Engineering at University of Galway.



Prof Brian Sheil. Photo Credit: Andrew Downes, xposure.

The Ward & Burke Centre for Infrastructure Research and Innovation

At the core of Ward & Burke's investment is the creation of the Centre for Infrastructure Research and Innovation (CIRI) at University of Galway. Its focus areas are water systems, underground construction, climate resilience, and digital engineering. They reflect the same problems or challenges that Ward & Burke have spent 25 years building solutions for. The Centre is constructed on a shared belief that the most useful research happens close to real engineering practice (or problems), not at a distance from it.

Central to CIRI is a new Professorship in Smart Infrastructure. A key part of this vision is the appointment of Prof Brian Sheil as Professor in Smart Infrastructure. He brings that ambition into focus. As a University of Galway graduate himself, Prof Sheil is an internationally recognised leader in construction engineering and digital infrastructure, having recently served as Laing O'Rourke Associate Professor at University of Cambridge, and his return to Galway is a joyful homecoming. He brings with him a global expertise that will benefit the institution borne from the university where his own engineering thinking began.

Under Prof Sheil's leadership, the Centre will support researchers, postdoctoral fellows, and PhD students while strengthening undergraduate, research and teaching. The long-term ambition is clear: to equip future engineers with both deep technical understanding and the ability to work confidently with advanced AI-driven tools and digital technologies.

"There are dozens of secondary schools in Connacht with thousands of leaving cert students passing through them each year. The University plays an important role in guiding them into appropriate career paths," says Michael. "We are supporting the University in this role by providing practical input and some financial support that will help attract the brightest students to a very important and rewarding education and career." A key mission of CIRI will be to support undergraduate and research-led teaching and provide exciting opportunities for the next generation of engineers.

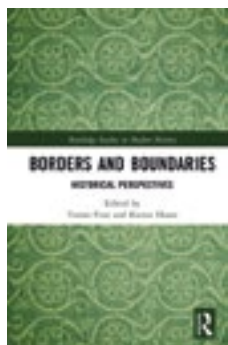
"The fundamentals taught in engineering serve many other careers outside infrastructure, and the University's resources will be strengthened by Prof Sheil's input,

both academically and practically," says Michael. "In short, if you come to University of Galway for a four-year undergraduate degree and follow it up with a practical and impactful PhD for another four years, you will have a very well-prepared mind that can address any problem and use the most sophisticated AI-powered analysis tools. University of Galway will be world class in this regard."

For Pdraig, Michael, and Robert, CIRI represents the fullest expression of what they have always believed: good engineering education changes what people are capable of; it changes lives, industries, societies, and that obligation runs in both directions. Through the new Centre, the relationship between education, research, and real-world practice can flourish in real time, preparing future engineers to build the infrastructure of our future.

At the core of Ward & Burke's investment is the creation of the Centre for Infrastructure Research and Innovation (CIRI) at University of Galway.

The Reading List



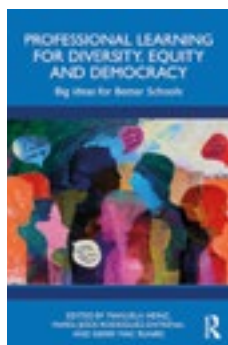
Borders and Boundaries: Historical Perspectives

Tomás Finn & Kieran Hoare

Routledge Press, Hardback, €190,
ISBN 9781032691862, January 2026

This book examines the making and remaking of borders and boundaries primarily relating to Ireland. It highlights how borders remain essential to comprehending our worlds.

Tomás Finn is a lecturer in History and Kieran Hoare is an Archivist at the University of Galway.



Professional Learning for Diversity, Equity and Democracy: Big Ideas for Better Schools

M. Heinz, M. J. Rodríguez-Entrena, G. Mac Ruairc

Routledge, Paperback, €40.79,
ISBN 9781032601342, January 2026

This edited volume examines research and practical examples of professional learning approaches for school leaders and teachers in the areas of diversity, equity and democracy.

Manuela Heinz is Associate Professor at the University of Galway and Editor-in-Chief of the European Journal of Teacher Education.



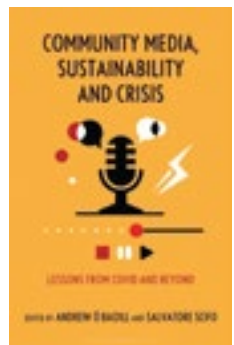
Sport and Film (2nd Edition)

Seán Crosson

Routledge, Paperback, €60.89,
ISBN 9781032294803, February 2026

Now in a fully revised and expanded new edition, Sport and Film examines the social, cultural, historical, and ideological significance of representations of sport in film around the world.

Seán Crosson is Associate Professor of Film in the Huston School of Film & Digital Media at the University of Galway. He is leader of the Sport in European Cinema project sportandfilm.eu.



Community Media, Sustainability and Crisis: Lessons from Covid and Beyond

Edited by: Andrew Ó Baoill and Salvatore Scifo

Bloomsbury, Hardback, £72,
ISBN 9781538181546, April 2026

Community Media, Sustainability and Crisis examines how community media responds when existing structures and normal expectations are upended, across a global set of perspectives.

Andrew Ó Baoill is a Lecturer at the School of English, Media and Creative Arts at University of Galway. His work focuses on the political economy of the media, in particular not-for-profit media.



The Celtic World: A History

John Waddell

Four Courts Press, Hardback, €26.95,
ISBN 9781801512008, February 2026

At the dawn of history the Celts occupied a vast swathe of Europe from Ireland in the west to lands south of the Black Sea in Asia Minor. This book describes the discovery of this Celtic world.

John Waddell is a Professor Emeritus of Archaeology at University of Galway. His books include Archaeology and Celtic Myth (2014) and Pagan Ireland: Ritual and belief in another world (2023).



Social Media Frenzies: Digitalized Agitation and Social Change

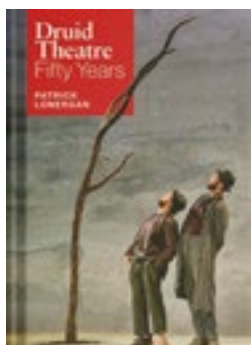
Diana Stypinska

Routledge, Hardback, €53.59,
ISBN 9781032217758, October 2025

This book examines the relation between agitation and social change in the digital context, focusing on the socio-political effects of the phenomenon commonly referred to as social media storms.

Diana Stypinska is a Lecturer in Social Theory at University of Galway. Her books include 'On the Genealogy of Critique' (2020) and 'Social Media, Truth and the Care of the Self' (2022).

We continue to celebrate the achievements of our our staff and alumni authors in *Cois Coiribe*. If you published or are publishing a book in 2026, email the title and publication details to stories@universityofgalway.ie for consideration in a future edition. Please note that, due to the volume of submissions, some titles may be listed as text-only entries, and *Cois Coiribe* reserves the right to decline submissions that fall outside its scope.



Druid Theatre: Fifty Years

Patrick Lonergan

Lilliput Press, Hardback, €29.95, ISBN 9781843519584, December 2025

This fully-illustrated and authorised history marks 50 years of Ireland's most ground-breaking and successful theatre company.

Patrick Lonergan is Professor of Drama and Theatre Studies at the University of Galway.



Greenways of Ireland: 25 traffic-free walking and cycling routes

Richard Manton & David Flanagan

Three Rock Books, Paperback, €25, ISBN 9781068591211, March 2026

This is a guide to traffic-free walking and cycling, including detailed maps, directions, facilities and sights, along with histories and stunning imagery of these old waterways and railways.

Dr Richard Manton is the Director of Sustainability at University of Galway. He completed a PhD in greenway planning and design at the University in 2016.



Research Handbook on Digital Transformation and Responsibility

Edited by: Noel Carroll

Edward Elgar Publishing, eBook, £48, ISBN 9781035339877, January 2026

The Research Handbook on Digital Transformation and Responsibility explores how emerging technologies are reshaping contemporary society.

Noel Carroll is an Associate Professor in Business Information Systems in the J.E. Cairnes School of Business & Economics, University of Galway.



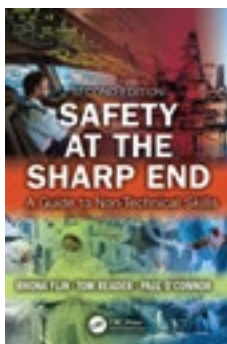
English Countess, Irish Earl: The Social World of Frances, Countess of Clanricard, 1567-1632

Bernadette Cunningham

Four Courts Press, Hardback, €39.95, ISBN 9781801512077, April 2026

This book follows English countess Frances Walsingham and the Irishman with whom she spent the second half of her life, exploring social and political networks and wider aspects of English-Irish relations.

Bernadette Cunningham is a retired librarian based in Dublin. She has published widely on early modern Ireland, and is a former winner of the Irish Historical Research Prize.



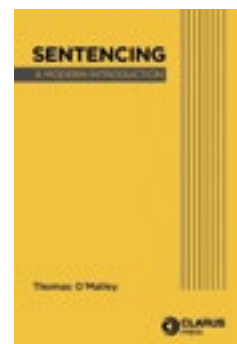
Safety at the Sharp End: A Guide to Nontechnical Skills (2nd Edition)

Rhona Flin, Tom Reader, Paul O'Connor

CRC Press, Paperback, €52.79, ISBN 9781032618821, November 2025

This book explains how to improve safety in high-risk, team-based workplaces by identifying, training, and applying non-technical skills like communication, teamwork, and decision-making.

Paul O'Connor is a Personal Professor at the University of Galway; Rhona Flin is a Professor at Robert Gordon University; Tom Reader is a Professor at the London School of Economics.



Sentencing: A Modern Introduction

Tom O'Malley

Clarus Press, Paperback, €89, ISBN 9781911611752, September 2025

This book, intended for students at postgraduate level, provides a detailed analysis of the theories and principles of sentencing.

Tom O'Malley is Associate Professor Emeritus of Law and a Senior Counsel who has written 11 books, including "Sentencing Law and Practice" (3rd ed) (2016) and "Sexual Offences" (2nd ed) (2013).



Lichtenberg

Alumnus Tom O'Connell

Temple Dark Books, Paperback, €20, ISBN 9781068250736, November 2025

This is a dystopian novel about a man taken in by the propaganda of an authoritarian regime in a walled city-state, partially inspired by Ireland's colonial history.

Tom O'Connell is a PhD candidate at University of Galway, studying British and Irish dystopian literature. 'Lichtenberg' (2025) is his first novel, but he is writing a sequel as part of this degree.



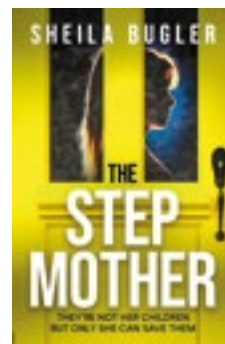
Digital Twin for Marine Fish Farming

Alumnus Fearghal O'Donncha, Martin Føre, Jon Grant

Springer Nature, Hardback, €213, ISBN 9783032103611, April 2026

First book that gives a complete synthesis of digital twin and precision techniques for aquaculture.

Fearghal is a Senior Research Scientist at IBM Research. His research explores the development of human-centred digital twin technologies for environmental systems such as ships, ports, and fish farms.



The Stepmother

Alumna Sheila Bugler

Hodder and Stoughton, Paperback, £10.99, ISBN 9781399754200, September 2026

Psychological thriller.

Sheila Bugler is an Irish crime writer, living and working in the UK. The Stepmother, published on 24 September 2026, is her eleventh novel.



Peer Support Work in Mental Health Services Theory, Research, Policy and Practice

Alumnus Michael John Norton

Routledge, Paperback, €27.99, ISBN 9781032714530, September 2025

This book provides an in depth guide to understanding the role of Peer Support Worker in mental health services.

Michael John Norton is a PhD student with RCSI. He is also a Recovery and Engagement Programme Lead who has led the implementation of peer support nationally.



TIDAL

Alumna Karen J McDonnell

Doire Press, Hardback, €16, ISBN 9781915877048, September 2025

The poetry collection explores the tropes and roles we impose on memory and history: what we choose to remember, how age affects viewpoints, historical events and biographical themes.

Karen J McDonnell is widely published in journals & anthologies; she has performed her work at festivals and on radio. 'This Little World' (2017) is also published by Doire Press.



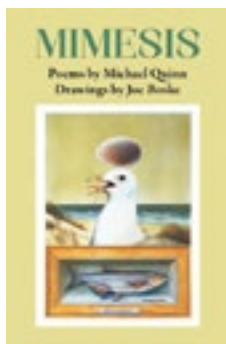
The Tree is Missing

Alumna Shannon Kuta Kelly

Faber, Paperback, £12.99, ISBN 9780571395576, April 2026

This debut book of poetry explores the borders between nations, languages, people, the past and present, and folklore and history.

Shannon Kelly holds a PhD from the Seamus Heaney Centre at Queen's University Belfast. The Tree is Missing (Faber 2026) is her debut poetry collection.



Mimesis

Alumnus Michael Quinn

(Artist: Joe Boske)

Little Gull Publishing, Paperback, €16, ISBN 9781739130657, September 2025

A Poetry book by Michael Quinn with drawings by Joe Boske.

Michael Quinn, based in Galway. He worked in Digital Equipment and a further 22 years as Managing Director of Mortgage Brain Ireland. He is an Ambassador for Project Espwa.



Voices from Inside: Hidden Journals of Long Kesh

Alumnus Paddy McMenamin

Rivers Run Free Press, Paperback, £20, ISBN 9798344337777, August 2025

The book contains journals the author edited, typed up and smuggled out of Long Kesh in 70's. The originals are deposited in Special Collections @ NUI Galway.

Paddy McMenamin is a former political prisoner in Long Kesh. He returned to education at 50 with a BA, HDip & MA and graduated as a Secondary Teacher. He has published 4 books!



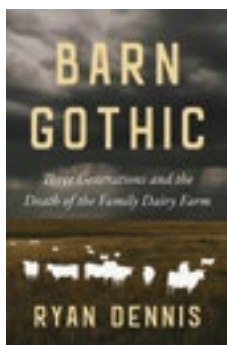
On Camino Once More

Alumna Ann McGarry

Vanguard Press, Paperback, £11.99, ISBN 9781836711827, May 2026

This book follows Ann McGarry's traditional pilgrimage on the French Camino, between the cities of Burgos and Leon, high on the Meseta Plain, discovering True Self and freedom of joy.

Ann McGarry is a human development consultant, trainer, coach and author. Since 2001, she has provided programmes on leadership, management development and personal effectiveness.



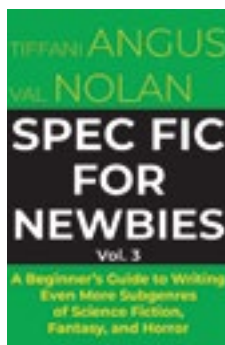
Barn Gothic: Three Generations and the Death of the Family Dairy Farm

Alumnus Ryan Dennis

Island Press, Hardback, €24.95, ISBN 9781642834475, November 2025

Barn Gothic is a literary memoir that chronicles trying to keep a small dairy farm going under extreme circumstances, while also exploring the politics that led to those conditions.

Ryan Dennis is a university lecturer and editor of The Milk House. He also published the novel The Beasts They Turned Away (2021), longlisted for the Republic of Consciousness Prize.



Spec Fic for Newbies: A Beginner's Guide to Writing Even More Subgenres of Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror: 3

Alumni Tiffani Angus and Val Nolan

Luna Press, Paperback, £16.99, ISBN 9781915556714, March 2026

The third stand-alone volume of the award-nominated series of creative practice guides to Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror.

Val Nolan is a Research Fellow at Aberystwyth University. He has published articles in Irish Studies Review and Science Fiction Studies, as well as the book Neil Jordan: Works for the Page (2020).



A Tudor Viceroy. Sir William Fitzwilliam of Milton, 1588-1594, a lord deputy bridled

Alumna Dr Deirdre Fennell

Wehrhahn Verlag, Hannover (The Formation of Europe, Vol. 15), Hardback, €28, ISBN 9783988591364, March 2026

This book examines the second term of Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam (1588-1594), considering the threat posed by Spain, ambitions of the earl of Tyrone, poor state resourcing and corrupt practices.

Deirdre Fennell was a Visiting Researcher at the Moore Institute in 2023. She previously authored A Tudor Viceroy. Sir William Fitzwilliam of Milton, 1560-1575, the reluctant lord deputy (2020).

University of Galway's Alumni Awards Gala 2026

University of Galway marked the achievements of its 2026 Alumni Award recipients at a gala ceremony on campus, celebrating graduates who are making an outstanding impact across a wide range of fields, from arts and business to law, science, health, and public service. Reflecting the strength and global reach of a community of more than 145,000 alumni since 1845, this year's honourees are recognised for their leadership and influence at local, national, and international levels.



Awardees included Deirdre Ní Choistín (Irish), Fiona Murtagh (Sport), Ruth & David Mackey (Leadership), Prof Fran O'Rourke (Arts), Katie Mannion (Law, Public Policy & Society), Michael Lohan (Business), Prof Patrick Farrell (Engineering, Science & Technology), Prof James Meany (Medicine).



Ruth Mulhern, Caitriona Morgan, Karen Sorensen, Nicola Rees.



Maeve and Gerard Roche.



Breda O'Reilly, Deirdre Giblin, Fionnuala Mannion, Laura Beatty.



Declan and Caitriona Monaghan.



Anna Lardi, Philip Fogarty.



Caitriona Morgan.



Daragh and Christine Murphy.



Cathy and Joe Connolly.



Laura O'Shea, Lt Col Mairtin Coffey.



Liz and Adrian Furey.



Maeve and Jim Browne.



Veronica Mee-Smyth, Karen Sorensen, John Mee.



Pat and Eimear McGarvey.



Ashley Wholihan, Caroline Kennedy.



Alumni Award for Emerging Leader, Ruth and David Mackey, co-founders of MBRYONICS. Presented by Niamh Connolly on behalf of Bioinnovate Ireland, with University of Galway President Professor David Burn.



Alumni Award for Business and Commerce, Michael Lohan. Presented by Trevor Gardiner on behalf of Bank of Ireland, with University of Galway President Professor David Burn.



Yuchen Liv, Merve Zeden, Majella, Mike Maher.



Dr Michelle Canavan, Prof Wael Tawfik.



Joan, Keith Finnegan, Louise Monaghan.



Prof Fidelma Dunne, Damien Scott.



Mary Rodgers, Leonard and Michelle Cleary.



David Boyle, Aoife McMahon.



The Meaney family (L-R): Anna, Siobhan, Jim Jr., Mary, Nancy and Laura.



Julie and Prof Tim O'Brien.



Alumni Award for Law, Public Policy and Society, Katie Mannion. Presented by David McCarroll on behalf of RDJ, with University of Galway President Professor David Burn.



Prof Michael Kerin, Dr Annette Kerin.



Patrick, Gillian Buckley.



Kieran and Ann Ryan, Greg and Sandra Nolan, Dawn and Jonathan Key.



Maureen Kinsella, Breda Fox.



Rebecca Braun, Karen Sorensen, Bríd Seoige.



Alumni Award for Engineering, Science and Technology, Professor Patrick Farrell. Presented by Stuart Servis on behalf of Analog Devices, with University of Galway President Professor David Burn.



Alumni Award for Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, Professor James Meaney. Presented by Tom Shiel on behalf of Medtronic, with University of Galway President Professor David Burn.



Prof Becky Why, Caroline Loughnane.



Rebecca Braun, Harold Braun, Deirdre Ní Choistín.



Kieron, Una Kavanagh, Aisling Lennon, Fiona Duggan, Pádraic De Búrca.



Aileen Burn and President of University of Galway, Prof David Burn.



Michela Dianetti, Joshua Tamnaro, Lucy Elvis.



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The *Placement* Process Roadmap

Explore 60+ courses across various disciplines in our Work Placement Brochure to find the ideal skillset for your business.

We are currently seeking placement opportunities across all our programmes, so if you have a finance, marketing, data analytics, supply chain, sustainability, or HR project to fill, our students offer valuable hands-on experience while enabling you to benefit from fresh perspectives, a graduate pipeline, and practical skills.

Our experienced Placement Officers make the process simple and efficient, supporting you from start to finish.

To find out more, check out our brochure or contact us directly at placement@universityofgalway.ie if you would like to discuss placement opportunities or have any questions.

Partner with us and tap into the energy, talent, and potential of our vibrant University community.

Read the
Brochure



Be an Alumni
Ambassador



A New MBA Alumni Chapter

We are all familiar with the University of Galway Alumni Association. What began in the late 1980s as the UCG Graduate Association has morphed, along with the University's formal name changes, into the current Alumni Relations function within the University of Galway, delivered as a professional service and embedded in the Development and Advancement structure. Indeed, the University of Galway Alumni Office, based in the Gate Lodge, has published *Cois Coiribe* since those early days of post-graduation recognition, visibility, and connection.

Historically, there were specific branches of the UCG Graduate Association, depending on what your original discipline was. I can recall the cool and appropriately titled MEGA, the Mechanical Engineering Graduates Association, for example. Indeed, the acronym's meaning often spoke as much as the grouping involved.

Today, alumni engagement continues to evolve with alumni chapters again developing in locations such as Dublin, London, New York and potentially Sydney and Boston. And there is now a new Alumni Chapter, overseen by the School of Business & Economics.

A call-out for submissions to Issue 2 of the *Gnó-ings On* newsletter is now live and active; any suitable and relevant article/piece is considered.

University of Galway MBA Alumni Chapter

The Chapter was formed last year and officially launched at a well-attended social event at the University's SULT bar in March 2025. The University's MBA Programme Director Prof Orla Lenihan spoke, welcoming the new Chapter initiative, as did the incoming Chair of the Galway MBA Chapter, John Bourke (MBA 2025), who outlined his, and the incoming Committee's, vision for the Chapter: to engage and connect MBA graduates of the University through networking, social, educational, and professionally related activities – there is already a Western Chapter of the MBAAI that the Alumni Chapter links in with regularly.

A Mission Statement has now been agreed on: "To unite and connect University of Galway's MBA graduates". Additionally, a well-received University of Galway MBA Alumni Chapter inaugural newsletter entitled, *Gnó-ings On*, was distributed to all subscribed MBA graduates December 2025.

There is a LinkedIn presence for the Chapter as well as both Facebook and Instagram accounts, available to follow and connect.

Galway's MBA intake generally involves students from local businesses and industry, mostly at operational management level. Of course, as a post-graduate and post-experiential course for managers, the intake varies, but it's been engineers, line managers, HR people, financial controllers, and the like who mostly benefited from the MBA in Galway down the years.

We were fortunate that the University's MBA Programme founder, the late Prof Jim Doolan, was present at – and persuaded to address – the Chapter's launch event. In his engaging talk, he spoke of his own background at Harvard Business School in the late 1950s, and the genesis of MBA studies at the University in 1972.

In its inaugural year, the MBA was offered alongside another relevant qualification: the since-sunset Masters in Industrial Engineering (MIE) degree. Both courses had some common subjects.



Launch of the new MBA Alumni Chapter at University of Galway's SULT bar, 2025. In fond memory of Prof Jim Doolan, pictured in the middle of the group.

The Galway MBA was also part-time, not insignificantly, as students were employed as managers or in some responsibility-bearing capacity. It was Ireland's second MBA course after UCD's, established in the 1960s.

An extensive interview with Prof Jim Doolan was among the pieces in the flagship issue of the *Gnó-ings On* newsletter. The University of Galway MBA Alumni Chapter intends to put all past issues of our newsletter on our forthcoming dedicated website.

The MBA Alumni Chapter Committee meets regularly to organise and plan ahead for this: a new Chapter in University of Galway's graduate life story.

If you are an MBA Graduate of University of Galway and wish to learn more or join us, please see the link: <https://forms.gle/JkUWnxADUQExXXHb7>

General queries can be directed to: galwaymbaalum@gmail.com



Thank you to Jim Ward (BE, 1988, MBA, 1998), Chapter Committee Member, for authoring this feature.



Stay tuned and please subscribe/contribute to our newsletter.

In the News

January

08/01: An international research team led by the University has developed a new method for gaining insights into climate change by using tiny polar plankton shells to enable scientific reconstruction of ocean acidity and CO2 levels in cold polar oceans.



12/01: The University announces its new Library is to be named in memory of Dr Karen Guinee, a medicine graduate who passed away in 2006.

20/01: The €6.5 million cross-border PEACE-Air project is unveiled, bringing together 10 partners on the island of Ireland to improve air quality and public health by reducing emissions from transport, agriculture, and solid fuels. A team from the University leads research on air pollution from solid fuel burning, indoor air quality, and community engagement.

27/01: Two University of Galway projects secure European Research Council Proof of Concept awards to advance innovations towards real-world application. One is led by Prof Ted Vaughan and Dr Mahtab Vafaefar on next-generation 3D printing software, and the second is led by Prof Martin O'Halloran on the Uro-Lieve hydrogel pain relief therapy.

February



04/02: University of Galway launches its new Medical Device Prototype Hub, supported by medical device company Medtronic.



06/02: Minister for Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht Dara Calleary T.D. launches a digital edition of *An Gaodhal*, the world's first newspaper dedicated to the Irish language community. The entire collection of the paper is held by the University.

13/02: New research led by Prof Ivan Keogh highlights life-threatening dangers of button battery ingestion.



15/02: An international team of scientists shows how to predict the world's most dangerous scorpion hotspots, identifying high-risk regions to improve global sting prevention.



18/02: Experts launch Hedgehog Conservation Ireland to monitor and protect populations.

24/02: The new ARC Hub for HealthTech, a multimillion-euro Government investment to drive regional development by accelerating the commercialisation of cutting-edge, patient-focused research, is officially launched.

March

02/03: New research led by scientists at the Ryan Institute finds burning 'low smoke' fuels is potentially more harmful to human health due to the release of tiny ultrafine particles.



09/03: A new 5km River Route is opened on campus alongside the River Corrib to enhance physical and mental wellbeing for students, staff, and the wider community.

11/03: Maoiniú bronnta ar Ollscoil na Gaillimhe chun STEM trí Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn.



16/03: An international consortium of scientists finds that coral reefs harbour diverse microbes and produce chemicals with promising potential for future application in medicine and biotechnology.



19/03: A new report by Prof Alan Ahearne, commissioned by Stripe founders John and Patrick Collison, states that Ireland's economic model is in need of urgent reform to sustain high standards of living for future generations.

23/03: Over 400 students from 64 schools across Donegal, Clare, Mayo, Leitrim, Sligo, Roscommon, and Galway receives Special Gaelige Recognition Awards, gifted to students who achieved a distinction in Higher Level Irish in their Junior Cycle examination.



24/03: An international team of astronomers, led by PhD student Chloe Lawlor, make the groundbreaking discovery of a second planet, WISPIT 2c, in the same system where they discovered another planet last year.

April



02/04: New research led by Prof Emer McGrath suggests that having higher levels of vitamin D in middle age is associated with lower levels of a protein in the brain, which signals presence of dementia.



14/04: University of Galway and RCSI secure government funding to establish MeDiNet, a national medical device innovation centre led by Dr Eimear Dolan that provides shared facilities and expert support to accelerate the design and testing of new healthcare technologies in Ireland.

20/04: Minister Hildegard Naughton T.D. launches a report highlighting the success of CodePlus, a computing outreach programme for girls that promotes computer science through workshops, tech talks and industry visits, with 23,000 participants to date, including 6,450 in 2024/25.

21/04: Researchers find that a therapeutic strategy improving brain efficiency for learning and memory may help target impaired activity in Alzheimer's disease by focusing on nerve cells that limit brain signals, offering a new approach to treating the leading cause of dementia.

27/04: Dr Mihailo Mirkovic joins the Centre for Chromosome Biology on a prestigious Wellcome Trust award specialising on the science of cell division and DNA copies.

May



01/05: Sheol an tAire Breisoideachais agus Ardoideachais, Taighde, Nuálaíochta agus Eolaíochta, James Lawless T.D., an taispeántas cartlainne Iorras Aithneach – Cliabhán an Chultúir.



04/05: Minister James Lawless T.D. led a special Topping Out celebration to mark a major milestone in the construction of the new Dr Karen Guinee Library.



13/05: Shannon College of Hotel Managements hosts a special celebration event to mark its 75th anniversary.

14/05: The Institute for Clinical Trials publishes a White Paper on processes for approval of clinical trials in Ireland following its successful Hypercare pilot initiative, which was supported by Medtronic.

Alumni Events

Dublin Law & Business Alumni Chapter Launch

President Connolly officially launched the University of Galway Dublin Law & Business Alumni Chapter at Blackhall Place.

In her address, she spoke about the importance of human rights, and the role Ireland continues to play in this area. She was also presented with a specially commissioned copy of *Bunreacht na hÉireann* in appreciation of her presence.

Sincere thanks to Keith Walsh for his outstanding work in leading the event, along with Denise Waldron and Siobhan Dunne. Special thanks also to the Law Society of Ireland, President Rosemarie Loftus and Mark Garrett for the warm welcome at Blackhall Place, and to University of Galway colleagues who helped strengthen the connection between past and current students.



President Catherine Connolly (centre) with (L-R) Denise Waldron, Jim Clarken, Keith Walsh, Chapter Head and Siobhán Dunne at the Law Society of Ireland where President Connolly launched the University of Galway Law and Business Alumni Dublin Chapter.



Paolo Carbone and Martin Hogan.



President Catherine Connolly with Damien Courtney.



Jessye Gibson and Jessica Odemena.



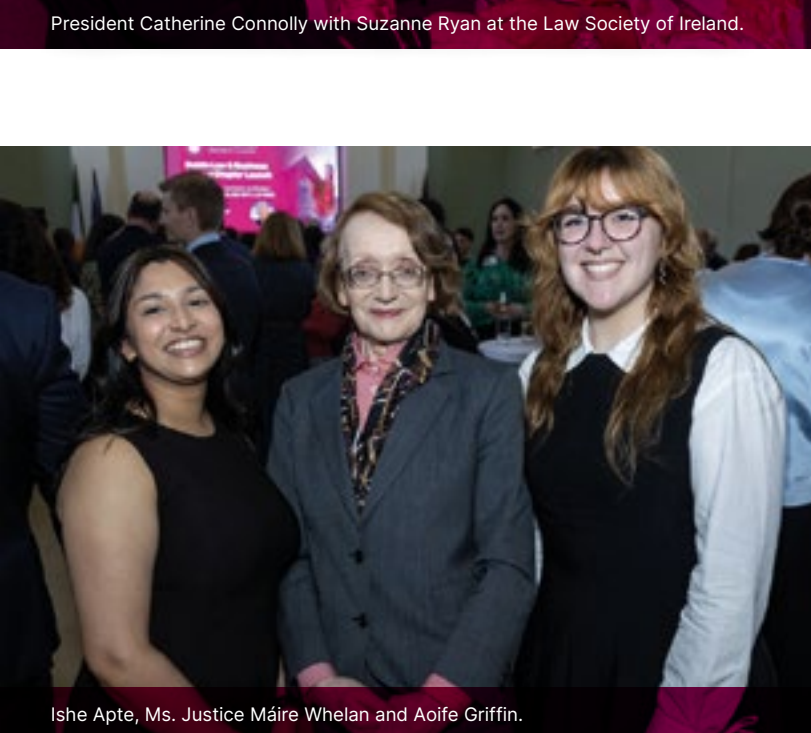
President Catherine Connolly (centre) with (L-R) Professor Karena Yan, Dean, School of Business, Professor Alma McCarthy, Executive Dean, College of Business, Public Policy and Law, Julie Stafford, Director of Development and Alumni Relations and Professor Martin Hogg, Dean, School of Law.



President Catherine Connolly with Suzanne Ryan at the Law Society of Ireland.



Lara Butler Carney, Aisling McDonnell and Sarah Byrne.



Ishe Apte, Ms. Justice Máire Whelan and Aoife Griffin.



Kevin Davoren, Professor Karena Yan, Dean, School of Business and Eoin Mangan.

New York Alumni & Friends Gathering

We were delighted to host an Alumni Gathering in New York during May 2026 at the Consulate General of Ireland in Manhattan, in partnership with our MBA programme. The evening opened with a reception and welcome address from President Prof David Burn, marking his first visit to New York in his role as President of University of Galway. This was followed by an alumni panel discussion on the theme *Leadership Journeys & Global Impact*, where speakers reflected on the experiences and milestones that have shaped their careers.

And to Dr Orla Lenihan, MBA Programme Director, who moderated the discussion.

It was a pleasure to connect with alumni and friends in New York and to strengthen our global community. We look forward to building on this engagement in the years ahead. With thanks to everyone who attended, and to the Irish Consulate for hosting.



Prof David Burn addresses alumni and friends in New York.



Dr Orla Lenihan, Professor Alma McCarthy, Aisling Lennon, Prof David Burn, Julie Stafford, Stephanie Neylon, Nicola Reilly.



Aisling Murphy, Aisling Greene and Francis Yates.



Aaron Molloy, Tina Deignan and Caoimhe Nic Giollarnáith.



Caoilinn Browne, Ava Walsh, Maedbh Meehan, Naomi Hutchinson, Kate Skelly.



Aedhmar Hynes and Caitriona Fottrell.



University of Galway alumni & friends with Prof David Burn.



Neasa Russell, Fiona Keane and Stella Hughes.



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Governing Authority *Election 2026*

Use your vote to shape the future of
University of Galway

Two (2) positions in the internal membership of Údarás na hOllscoile, the Governing Authority, will become vacant on 31st July 2026 and will be filled through election.

Voting will take place **online from 9am June 15th until 12pm June 16th 2025 (GMT)**. Staff will receive a unique link by email on June 15th at 9am to vote within the relevant election.

Find out more at:

<https://www.universityofgalway.ie/governance/governing-authority/udaraselections2026/>

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our generous contributors from the University community and alumni network who brought this publication to life with their unique views and insights. *Cois Coiribe Summer 26* was produced and edited by an in-house Content Team at University of Galway.

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