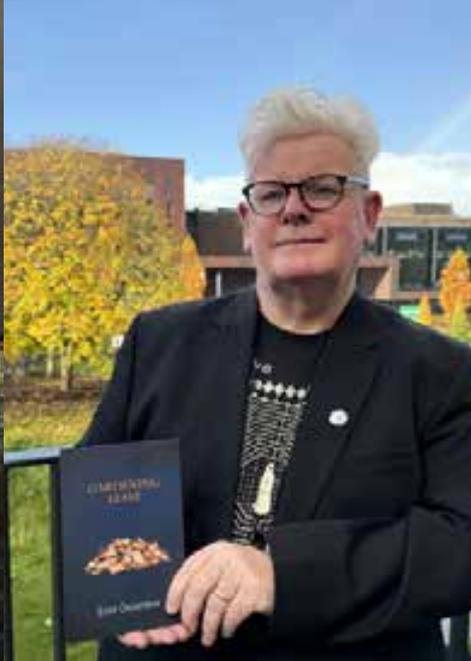




AHSS NEWSLETTER

Winter 2025





Take a Look

Inside

Winter
2025

Welcome	2
Faculty News	3
Research News	7
Events	10
Equality, Diversity & Inclusion	15
International	17
Postgraduate Research	21
Students	24
Alumni	26

Dean's Welcome

Dear Colleagues,

I'm delighted to share the Winter edition of our faculty Newsletter, which is a vibrant reflection of the sustained excellence across all our disciplines. As we approach the close of 2025, it's a perfect moment to pause, reflect on an incredibly productive semester and celebrate everything we've accomplished together.



*Dr. Sandra Joyce
Executive Dean, Faculty of Arts,
Humanities and Social Sciences*

This year has been truly remarkable. Among many highlights, we were honoured with the Athena Swan Silver Award, a powerful testament to our shared commitment and collective strength. Thanks again to everyone who contributed to this achievement, and especially to Dr Maria Hickey, whose leadership and dedication were instrumental in securing this recognition.

Throughout the semester, our staff and students have continued to shine in teaching, research, creative practice and civic engagement. This edition showcases an inspiring range of achievements: prestigious national and international awards, groundbreaking research successes and impactful contributions to public discourse, policy and culture. From major literary honours and research excellence awards, to projects advancing social justice, language, history, law and community wellbeing, the work featured here speaks to the depth, diversity and relevance of our disciplines across AHSS. I would like to give a special mention here to our colleague Professor Joseph O'Connor, winner of the An Post Irish Book of the Year 2025 for his outstanding novel *The Ghosts of Rome*.

You'll also find exciting developments in teaching and learning, including innovative initiatives such as transferable skills digital badges and enhanced recognition of student learning beyond the classroom. These forward-thinking approaches prepare our graduates for an increasingly complex and competitive world. Alongside this, we celebrate excellence in teaching through individual awards and practice-based learning that bridges theory and real-world application, ensuring our students graduate with confidence, skills and ethical awareness.

International engagement is another strong theme in this edition. Our colleagues have represented UL at major conferences, policy forums and cultural events across Europe and North America. Global partnerships continue to enrich our research, teaching, and student experience. Engagement initiatives with schools, community organisations and cultural partners further demonstrate the faculty's vital role in widening participation and strengthening connections beyond the university.

I hope this Winter Newsletter offers a moment of pride and reflection on all we've achieved together. My sincere thanks to everyone who contributed, and especially to Chloe Nagle and Joanna Carroll, whose hard work brought this edition to life.

Finally, I wish you all a restful Christmas break and a prosperous New Year. Thank you for your continued dedication, creativity and engagement. I am deeply grateful for all that you do.

Le gach dea-ghuí,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Sandra Joyce".

Dr Sandra Joyce

Executive Dean, Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences





AHSS Athena Swan Silver Award

A delegation from faculty office travelled to Carlow on Wednesday 12th November to accept the AHSS Athena Swan Silver Award.

As chair of the AS EDI Committee, Dr Maria Hickey would like to thank everyone involved in writing the application, for engaging in the analysis, in the very thorough and honest evaluation of the faculty across areas of EDI, in identifying gaps and areas for improvement and in designing the Silver Action plan based on this. Also a big thanks to everyone in the faculty providing their insights, experiences and opinions through the various forms of data collection for the application. We are now moving to implementation phase of our new Silver Action Plan which can be accessed on the AHSS EDI Sharepoint site.

The Ghosts of Rome by UL's Professor Joseph O'Connor named 2025 Irish Book of the Year



The Ghosts of Rome by Professor Joseph O'Connor, Frank McCourt Chair of Creative Writing at University of Limerick, has been announced as the 2025 An Post Irish Book of the Year. The book was among six titles competing for the accolade, all of which were category winners at the recent 2025 An Post Irish Book Awards.

The Ghosts of Rome was unveiled as the An Post Irish Book of the Year during a one-hour special television show aired on RTÉ One Thursday 11th December, hosted by broadcaster Oliver Callan. The best-selling novel won The Last Word Listeners' Choice Award at the recent An Post Irish Book Awards and was chosen as the overall winner by a distinguished panel of judges. The Ghosts of Rome by Professor O'Connor is one of the biggest-selling books in Ireland in 2025 and the first of his novels to receive the Irish Book of the Year Award.

SOLO by Grainne O'Brien (UL Creative Writing MA) wins International Education Services Teen and Young Adult Book of the Year

A former student of Professor O'Connor's, Gráinne O'Brien, was also shortlisted for the Irish Book of the Year Award for her debut novel, Solo, after winning the international Education services Teen and Young book of the Year award, the roots of which began while she was a student on the MA in Creative Writing at UL.

Gráinne, who is both a graduate of UL's Bachelor of Arts and MA in Creative Writing, is head book buyer at Kenny's Bookshop in Galway and a guest lecturer in UL where she teaches creative writing to undergraduate students.



Sorcha de Brún wins First Prize in Oireachtas Literary Competition for Prose 2025



Dr Sorcha de Brún from the School of English, Irish and Communication was awarded First Prize in the A4 Saothar Próis/Prose category of the Oireachtas annual Literary Awards 2025. The Awards Ceremony took place in the Waterfront Hall in Belfast on Wednesday October 29 where she was awarded the prize for a work on Gaeltacht writers by 2025 Oireachtas na Gaeilge President, Éamon Ó Cuív. The Oireachtas Literary Awards / Comórtais Liteartha an Oireachtais is an annual award which celebrates the best in prose, poetry, drama and non-fiction.

New UL initiative gives graduates 'boost' in competitive jobs market



A new initiative led by the Transferable Skills Unit at University of Limerick aims to give graduates a 'boost' in an increasingly competitive jobs market.

UL's Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS) is the first in Ireland to offer skill specific digital badges and to record transferable skills on its academic transcripts, giving its graduates a distinct advantage when applying for jobs.

Degree Boost allows students the opportunity to earn seven digital badges that demonstrate the transferable skills they have gained during their degree.

In response to employers increasing demands for transferable skills, the Transferable Skills Unit at UL is focusing on seven key skill areas that will empower students for lifelong success in a competitive labour market. They include communication, collaboration, creativity, problem solving, critical thinking, digital skills, and sustainability literacy and action.

Students will be encouraged and enabled to recognise and record evidence of the skills they have developed not just during their academic studies but also while on work and Erasmus placement. Skills gained as a result of volunteering efforts, as well as involvement in on-campus student organisations and off-campus activities, will also be recognised.

Speaking at the launch of the Degree Boost and 'Recognise, Record, Reward' initiatives, Dr Sandra Joyce, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences said: "Degree Boost is a new way of thinking what a degree can be.

UL-led programme supports local leaders to combat complex social problems

The University of Limerick's Local Leadership Programme, developed by the REPPP project and funded by the Department of Justice, supports local leaders in tackling complex "wicked problems" such as poverty, inequality, drug-related harm and community violence. Since 2019, over 150 participants from statutory, community, voluntary and education sectors have engaged in collaborative, evidence-informed problem-solving. Led by Dr Johnny Connolly, the programme offers a safe space to rethink entrenched issues, strengthen inter-agency trust and develop realistic actions. Participants across Ireland describe it as transformative, with successes including community empowerment projects and improved collaboration in areas like Dublin's inner city and Longford.



UL research into Irish language court records investigates violence against women during the early years of the Irish Free State



New research from University of Limerick into Irish language court records has examined the violence suffered by and perpetrated by women during the first decade of the Irish Free State.

The research sheds new light on attitudes towards the treatment of women and native Irish speakers, as well as the use of the Irish language, in the Irish Free State courts between 1922 and 1932.

Led by historian Dr Helene Haak and Irish scholar Dr Sorcha de Brún, 'Tá Bean in Éirinn': Violence against women, the Irish language and justice in the early years of the Irish Free State: A National Archive Research Project reveals the stories of real Irish women who were involved in violent crimes, and how the Irish language impacted their pursuit for justice in the courts.

The research, which centres on criminal cases from the West of Ireland heard in the Circuit Courts and Central Criminal Court, focuses on an aspect of modern Irish History and Irish Studies that has to date remained under researched.

Dr Haak and Dr de Brún explored the context and circumstances where Irish was used by both victims and defendants in the Irish Free State courts and examined how witness testimonies in Irish described and detailed violence and abuse against women and girls.

Their research reveals how the use of Irish by witnesses in the Irish Free State courts was problematic. Issues such as language comprehension on the side of the court room officials, as well as irregularities with the use of Irish in official court documents, resulted in barriers to the execution of justice for those involved in the cases.

In an extensive search of 83 boxes of uncatalogued court files held in the National Archives for counties Clare, Cork, Donegal, Galway, Kerry and Mayo for the years 1922-1932, De Haak and Dr de Brún uncovered six cases from Donegal and Galway that included Irish language documents, and which centred on violence against women or perpetrated by women.

Winners of President's Research Excellence and Impact Awards announced



We take immense pride in celebrating the 13 recipients of this year's President's Research Excellence and Impact Awards. Their outstanding contributions to advancing knowledge and driving innovation across diverse academic disciplines exemplify the very best of scholarly achievement, Acting President Professor Shane Kilcommins presented the awards at a special event held in The Pavilion, North Campus on Tuesday, 2 December.

- Outstanding Research Collaboration Award: Professors Jennifer Schweppe and Amanda Haynes in the European Centre for the Study of Hate (ECSH)
- Early Career Researcher – Starting: Associate Professor Triona McCaffrey, Irish World Academy of Music and Dance

Research Output, Faculty Awards- AHSS:

Advanced category: Professor Susan Leahy, School of Law

Advanced category: Associate Professor Niamh Nic Ghabhann Coleman, School of History and Geography



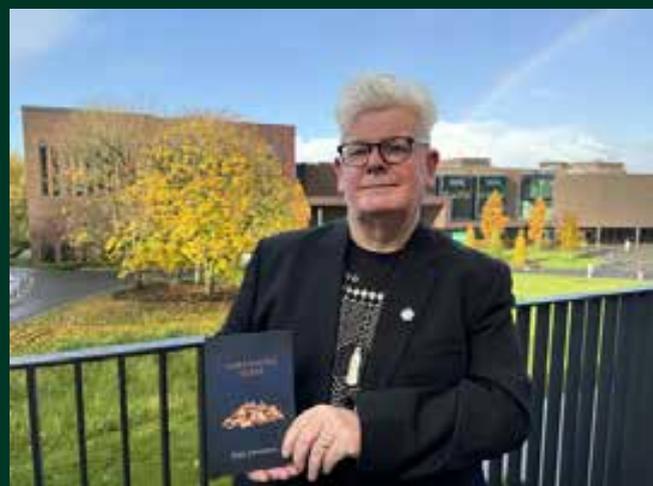
Irish Travellers' Access to Justice research cited in Council of Europe report



Research conducted through the European Centre for the Study of Hate was cited in the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) report published last week. In the framework of its activities, ECRI conducts country monitoring work, which analyses the situation in each of the member States of the Council of Europe regarding racism and intolerance and draws up suggestions and proposals for dealing with the problems identified. The ECRI Report cited two key findings of the Irish Travellers' Access to Justice research, regarding institutional discrimination and racial profiling. In particular, ECRI recommended, "that the Irish authorities: i) take steps towards the introduction of legislation that clearly prohibits racial profiling by police officers; ii) ensure the collection of appropriately disaggregated data about individuals subjected to stop-and-account/stop-and-search by police officers; iii) incorporate the issue of racial profiling and the reasonable suspicion standard into in-service police training; and iv) enhance police oversight by developing strong internal reporting and external police complaints mechanisms in order to ensure that any racial profiling and other discriminatory practices are promptly detected and subject to effective investigations and, where necessary, appropriately sanctioned." The Irish Travellers' Access to Justice report was co-authored by Dr Sindy Joyce, Olive O'Reilly, Margaret O'Brien, David Joyce, Amanda Haynes and Jennifer Schweppe.

Professor Eoin Devereux gets political and personal in debut poetry collection

Professor Eoin Devereux of the Department of Sociology has published his debut poetry collection, *Gardening Leave*, a work he describes as unapologetically political and rooted in both social justice and personal history. Drawing on hidden family stories and his working-class upbringing in Kennedy Park, the poems aim to amplify unheard voices and imagine better futures. Devereux says the four-year creative process brought freedom and strengthened his academic work. A lecturer on UL's MA in Creative Writing, he emphasises empathy as central to the craft. *Gardening Leave* has already earned high praise from leading Irish writers was launched in Limerick on 6 November.





#ThinkLanguages 2025 - MLAL's biggest outreach event

On Thursday 20 November, the School of Modern Languages and Applied Linguistics welcomed 165 Transition Year students and their teachers to the UL campus to take part in #ThinkLanguages: The University of Limerick Experience. This is an event funded by Languages Connect as part of a national #Think Languages Week which promotes language learning among TY students. The four local schools who visited UL are: - Villiers School - Hazelwood College - Coláiste Iósaef - Castletroy College The event, organised by Erika Marcet and Stéphanie O'Riordan (MLAL), opened with The Big Quiz, where students were tested on their general knowledge about languages and cultures, language skills, and geography. This was followed by a range of culture- and language-related workshops to raise students' intercultural awareness, foster mutual understanding and empathy, and have fun learning new skills. Despite the cold, TY students also got to experience our beautiful and sunny campus with a short, guided tour led by our language ambassadors. Feedback from students and teachers was highly positive and we hope their experience will encourage more of them to consider studying languages, particularly at UL. This is MLAL's biggest outreach event, and it could not have happened without help from all directions.

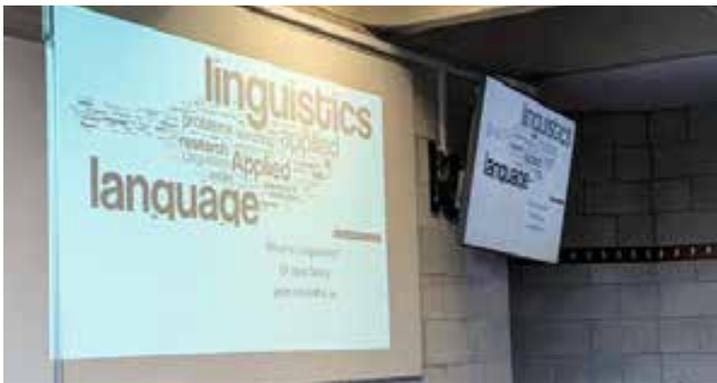
Policy Event at Stormont: Co-operatives as a Policy Tool for Economic and Social Transformation



The event was opened by the Minister of the Department for the Economy NI, Dr Caoimhe Archibald. And was addressed by speakers including Jerome Nikolai Warren (University of Eastern Finland), Ian Adderley (FCA - UK), Professor Mo Moulton (University of Birmingham) and Steward Dickson MLA.

Dr Patrick Doyle (PPA) and Tiziana O'Hara (Cooperative Alternatives) organised an important policy event for those interested in the future of the democratic economy in Ireland. 'Co-operatives as Policy Tools for Economic and Social Transformation' which took place in the Long Gallery, Stormont, Belfast on Thursday 13 November from 9.30-13.00 and was held in accordance with 2025 being the United Nations' International Year of Co-operatives.

TY Arts Taster Day



On the 29th October the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences invited TY students with an interest in LM002 Bachelor of Arts or any of its 16 subjects to attend the Arts Taster Day. During the event, students attended sample lectures, learned about the various academic and student supports available, received advice on subject selection, and gained valuable information about Erasmus opportunities and work placements.

TY Law Day

The School of Law invited TY students to apply to attend the TY Law Day, which took place on campus on Tuesday, October 28th, from 10.00am to 3.30pm. Attendees learned more about the study of law from lecturers and students, attended taster lectures, received a tour of the campus, and experienced a moot court.





Geography Awareness Week 2025

All of UL Geography Awareness Week 2025 events took place on Tuesday 19th November. We were delighted to welcome 24 Newport College 6th year students and their teachers to the geography lab. There they got a taste of studying geography in UL and a hands on experience identifying sedimentary rock features under the microscope. Later on Tuesday evening we hosted our annual Geography Quiz in Scholars. Over 50 students, staff and friends (15 teams) battled it out to be the 2025 champions. In the end it took a nail biting tiebreaker for the student team, The Badgers, to be crowned the Geography@UL #Geoweeek2025 quiz champions!!! Thank you to the School of History and Geography for sponsoring the event.

Future Learners Welcomed to Campus by AHSS and Engage in Education



In early December, the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, along with colleagues from across UL were delighted to welcome two groups of students to campus in collaboration with Engage in Education. Students visited the Appellate Court, where Law Plus student Chloe Nagle explained what it is like to study law. They toured the Geography Lab, examining rock samples with fantastic guidance from Liz Gabbett. They also got to see our journalism facilities. Thank you to Lynn O'Doherty, EHS, all at Engage in Education and the schools involved for organising two fantastic days of activities.

UL and Mary Immaculate College mark nearly 250 years of modern language education in Ireland

University of Limerick and Mary Immaculate College came together the 1st of December to celebrate Ireland's remarkable legacy as a global pioneer in university-level modern language education.

The event was the third in a four-part national series leading up to next year's milestone anniversary: 250 years since Trinity College Dublin (TCD) first established professorships in

French, German, Italian and Spanish in 1776 – positions that laid the foundations for modern language study in Irish higher education. The final event in the series will take place in TCD in 2026. Proceedings opened at MIC's Limerick campus, where Professor Michael Cronin, 1776 Professor of French and Senior Researcher in the Trinity Centre for Literary and Cultural Translation at TCD, delivered his keynote. This was followed by a panel discussion on multilingualism in Irish schools, supported by a poster exhibition showcasing current research and national language-learning initiatives.



Irish World Music Café strikes the right chord in the community



The Irish World Academy of Music and Dance at the University of Limerick, in partnership with Doras Luimní, holds the Irish World Music Café in Limerick city as a social and cultural event where new migrants can meet other people living in Ireland.

Continuous professional development event for music therapists on 'Musical pleasure and treating anhedonia in music therapy' facilitated by Professor Kat McFerran



On October 15th, the MA Music Therapy, Irish World Academy hosted a continuous professional development event for music therapists on 'Musical pleasure and treating anhedonia in music therapy' facilitated by Professor Kat McFerran (University of Melbourne, Australia). This event was attended by over 20 professional music therapists across Ireland and organised by Dr Triona McCaffrey (Associate Professor of Music Therapy) and Ms Sarah Alley (Music Therapist and PhD Researcher). Professor McFerran has written 6 books, 35 book chapters, and 132 journal articles, as well as a TedX Talk called 'Returning from the Darkside with Music' (with 130,000 views) and a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) called 'How Music Can Change Your Life' taken by over 31,000 people across the world to date



Athena Swan Silver Award

The Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences was awarded an Athena Swan Silver award this year. A delegation from faculty office travelled to Carlow on Wednesday 12th November to accept the Award. As chair of the AS EDI Committee, Dr Maria Hickey thanks everyone involved in writing the application, for engaging in the analysis, in the very thorough and honest evaluation of the faculty across areas of EDI, in identifying gaps and areas for improvement and in designing the AHSS Silver Action plan. The Award was celebrated internally with a cake and mince pies at our Christmas gathering on the 3rd December.

The AD EDI, her support team and the new EDI Committee have started the implementation of the new Silver Action Plan, which will guide us through structured improvements across many areas of EDI, including student and staff well-being and staff recruitment, promotion and training.



Dr Maria Hickey and Dr Darina Slattery hosted a UL Global lunchtime seminar on Trauma-sensitive teaching on the 19th November 2025.

They presented resources created as part of a blended intensive programme together with 8 partner universities in 2024.

Given the growing diversity of students on our campus, the seminar explored the relevance and importance of trauma-sensitive approaches in third-level institutions.

Participants were introduced to the fundamentals of trauma and its impact on student engagement, participation and learning, with a particular focus on first response and prevention of trauma triggers.

The seminar demonstrated how inclusive, trauma-aware teaching strategies can foster safer, more supportive learning environments for all students. We would also like to acknowledge Dr Elaine Walsh's contributions as a member of the UL team.

The resources can be accessed at the programme [website](#).



Sorcha de Brún presents paper in Harvard University on October 10 2025

Dr Sorcha de Brún presented a paper on 10 October 2025 at Harvard University's renowned Harvard Celtic Colloquium in Cambridge, Boston, USA. The colloquium is an annual event organized by the Department of Celtic Languages and Literatures in Harvard University that brings together the best of research in Celtic Studies internationally and, in the main, from Harvard University. Sorcha's paper was titled 'Wealth and Status in Caoineadh Airt Uí Laoghaire' and was one of just five Irish papers chosen for presentation. Sorcha's paper will be published in the Proceedings of the Harvard University Celtic Colloquium in 2026.

Brian Milstein takes on “polycrisis” at major political science conferences in Thessaloniki and Vancouver

Dr Brian Milstein (Politics & Public Administration) presented a new working paper on “polycrisis” at two of the world’s largest political science gatherings—the European Consortium of Political Research (ECPR) General Conference in Thessaloniki, Greece, and the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association (APSA) in Vancouver, Canada. Titled “‘Polycrisis’ as Ideology,” the paper looks at how the concept of “polycrisis” has spiked in recent years.

Referencing a state of affairs in which multiple crises interact and combine in such a way as to produce “emergent properties” in its own right, this concept has been embraced as an apt description of the present global situation by public intellectuals such as Adam Tooze and major organizations such as the World Economic Forum.



UL represented at the forum on digital citizenship education at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg



Catherine Jeanneau, Language Learning Hub coordinator, was selected to represent the e-lang citizen project, a European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe initiative, at the first forum on digital citizenship education (DCE) (“Act now!”), which was organised on May 27 and 28, 2025, by the Council of Europe in Strasbourg as part of the European Year of Digital Citizenship Education 2025. Catherine Jeanneau joined more than 200 participants from over 30 different countries.

Helen Fitzgerald & Dr Eoin O’Meara Daly (REPPP) present to the European Union Drug Agency reference group on Drugs and Crime in Lisbon



Helen Fitzgerald & Dr Eoin O’Meara Daly REPPP presented at a closed conference at the European Union Drug Agency in Lisbon on the 5th November on 'Addressing the Recruitment of Young People into Criminal Drugs Networks' . the event hosted by the EUDA Reference Group meeting on Drug Markets and Crime brought together leading experts to share insights and strengthen Europe’s preparedness against evolving drug market threats. Over two days, participants explored key dimensions of the drug market, from violence and global dynamics to environmental impacts and youth recruitment. This collaboration helps identify emerging trends and guide evidence-based responses to improve security across Europe.



‘A remarkable milestone’: UL event celebrates 30 years of EU-membership for Austria, Sweden and Finland Held on Wednesday, 5th November

University of Limerick marked the thirtieth anniversary of Austria, Sweden and Finland’s membership of the European Union at a special event on campus. The Centre for European Studies (CEUROS) at UL hosted H.E. Melitta Schubert, Ambassador of Austria to Ireland; H.E. Leena Gardemeister, Ambassador of Finland to Ireland; and H.E. Lina Van der Weyden, Ambassador of Sweden to Ireland for a roundtable discussion on the ‘remarkable milestone’ for their countries.

The panel discussion was chaired and moderated by Professor Brigid Laffan, Chancellor of UL, who engaged the Ambassadors in conversation around their countries’ journeys to EU-membership, the benefits of membership, and the challenges ahead – including how to keep citizens engaged with the European project.

The event was also attended by UL Acting President Professor Shane Kilcommins; Dr Sandra Joyce, Executive Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences; and Director of CEUROS, Dr Michaela Schrage-Früh.

'Important links forged': UL event marks historic 'first' for international sporting arbitral body



Dr. Leanne Calvert (History) has been elected as the new President of the International Federation for Research in Women's History (IFRWH).

Founded in 1987, IFRWH is the leading international network for researchers in women's and gender history. It has a global membership, with member organisations including Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Portugal, Spain, South Korea, and Japan. Leanne's election means that the next international meeting of the federation will take place in Limerick in the near future and we will be welcoming delegates from all around the world.



History was made at University of Limerick as it played host to a special event for the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) – its first ever requested training workshop to take place outside of headquarters in Lausanne, Switzerland.

Members of CAS – an international body established to settle disputes related to sport through arbitration – were welcomed to campus for the event, hosted by UL's School of Law and led by Dr Laura Donnellan, Associate Professor at the School of Law and a leading international expert in sport and the law.

As the first university in Ireland to offer a module on the intersection between sport and law, more than 20 years ago, UL is recognised as the forerunner in the research and teaching of Sports Law. This, added to the cultural and social importance of sport to UL and, more broadly, Limerick, made the University a natural choice to host the milestone event.



‘A transformative educator’: Dr Kathryn Hayes receives UL Excellence in Teaching Award

Dr Kathryn Hayes has been announced as the recipient of the UL Excellence in Teaching Award (Individual) for 2024/25.

Dr Hayes, Associate Professor at the School of English, Irish, and Communication and Course Director of the BA in Journalism and Digital Communications, was hailed by the award panel as “a transformative educator whose work has a valuable impact on students”.

A seasoned journalist and editor with over two decades of experience in the media industry, Dr Hayes began her career at the Limerick Leader before taking the helm as news editor at the Evening Echo. She went on to work as a freelance journalist for several years, contributing to high-profile publications and media outlets including RTÉ, The Irish Times and the Irish Independent; before taking up her role in UL in 2013, earning her PhD in 2023.

The judges praised Dr Hayes’ ‘ability to bridge industry and practice [to create] an immersive learning environment that equips students with essential employability skills’, and she was also recognised for her ‘dedication, skill, and ability to develop highly competent and ethical students’.



‘I am whole’: Journey in dance helped UL graduate embrace identity and heal trauma

Dr Russell Patrick Brown, an Irish step dancer, harpist, and newly conferred PhD graduate from the University of Limerick, credits his decade-long Arts Practice research journey with helping him fully embrace his Romani identity. Raised in Cleveland in a home alive with Irish traditional music and dance, he carried those early rhythms into his academic life, completing a master’s at NYU before pursuing a practice-based doctorate at UL’s Irish World Academy.

His research focused on “impact-driven dance,” a term he created to describe using movement to confront personal and ancestral trauma, particularly the long history of anti-Romani discrimination. Through this process, dance became a form of healing and affirmation. Initially hesitant to reveal his Romani background due to past prejudice, Russell found a supportive environment at UL and, inspired by classmates and the historical influence of Romani performers, recognised that owning his identity was essential to his work.

Support from supervisors Dr Breandán de Gallaí and Dr Catherine Foley, as well as the community in Ennistymon, Co. Clare, sustained him through interruptions and return. Russell hopes his work will strengthen the visibility of Romani scholarship and highlight the importance of marginalised voices in academia. Completing the PhD, he says, allowed him to become the dancer, scholar and person he long aspired to be.

PhD Conferings

In August 2025, the Faculty of AHSS witnessed 20 AHSS PhD researchers graduating with PhDs. A reception took place after the graduation ceremony to celebrate their achievement with their supervisors, internal examiners and the students' families in attendance.



Abdulmohammed Shareef Ali - Associate Professor Alistair Malcolm/
Dr Roberto Mazza

Addad Imene - Associate Professor Elaine Riordan
Bailich Souad

Professor Liam Murray/Associate Professor Marta Giralt

Bellal Ilhem - Associate Professor Yianna Liatsos/Associate Professor Sinead
McDermott

Ben Adel Islam - Associate Professor Elaine Vaughan

Benmoussa Moufida - Associate Professor Martin J. Power/ Professor Amanda Haynes
Bouhamed Sabrine - Professor Liam Murray

Boutamine Alaeddine - Professor Amanda Haynes/Associate Professor Elaine Vaughan
Charrak Oum Kaltoum - Professor Fiona Farr/Professor Paul Conway

Ghitri Asmaa Jazia - Associate Professor Elaine Riordan

Hitache Zahia - Dr Deirdre Ní Loingsigh/Professor Helen Kelly-Holmes

Housni Ikram Zohra - Professor Gisela Holfter/Dr Florence Le Baron-Earle

Karouche Meryem Hana - Professor Michael Griffin/Associate Professor David Coughlan
Lahiouel Nour El Houda - Professor Máiréad Moriarty/Dr Sadhbh O'Dwyer

Mina Roufaida - Associate Professor Sinead McDermott/Dr Niamh Hehir

Momani Sojood - Associate Professor James Carr/ Professor Eoin Devereux
Moussaoui Mohammed - Associate Professor Marta Giralt

Brown Russell Patrick - Dr Breandán De Gallaí/Dr Catherine E. Foley

Burns James - Professor Hilary Moss

Nohilly Gail Marie - Professor Shane Kilcommins/Dr Kathryn O'Sullivan

‘Profoundly rewarding’: UL students contribute 50,000 hours of volunteer work in past year



Students at University of Limerick contributed almost 50,000 hours of volunteer work in their local communities over the past year.

It comes as the students involved were awarded this week for their volunteering efforts, which have been described as a ‘profoundly rewarding experience’.

In a special ceremony held as part of the annual [UL President’s Volunteer Award \(PVA\)](#), 797 students from across the University were recognised for their individual contributions to a combined 47,123 hours of registered volunteer work.

Students were presented with gold, silver, bronze and Plassey medals, respectively, in acknowledgement of their hours dedicated to voluntary work, having engaged in mentoring, fundraising and coaching across everything from international projects to environmental initiatives.

Among the almost-800 students receiving medals at the event were this year’s Student Volunteers of the Year – five students who were specially recognised for their outstanding dedication to volunteering in the community.

2025 Peadar Kirby Prize awarded to Fionnuala O’Connor

The Department of Politics and Public Administration are delighted to award the 2025 Peadar Kirby Prize for the best Final Year Project to Fionnuala O’Connor.

Fionnuala wrote a dissertation about the mistreatment of female soldiers in the Irish Defence Forces and British Armed Forces that was commended by its examiner for being ‘gripping’, if ‘chilling’, and ‘very well executed’. A copy of her thesis can be found [here](#).

The Peadar Kirby prize is named in honour of our Emeritus Professor of International Public Policy and is awarded annually, in recognition of the strongest Final Year Project submitted by an undergraduate student studying in the Department of Politics and Public Administration. A list of previous winners, and their dissertations, can be found [here](#)



'I gave it my everything': - How crisis of confidence sparked curiosity for learning in UL graduate

In her early 50s, Jean, from Waterford and now living in Tipperary, found herself stuck in a career rut and suffering from low self-esteem, but the pursuit of education and a curiosity for learning has restored her confidence and given her a renewed sense of self. "I've really stepped outside my comfort zone and the whole experience of returning to education in my 50s has massively helped my confidence," Jean explained.

The Waterford native, who hails from The Folly but now resides in Ballina in Tipperary with her husband and 17-year-old daughter, spent over 30 years working in administration in Ireland and overseas, but, at the age of 52, Jean decided to make a drastic change in her life and fulfil her dream of studying English Literature.



Student Visit to Limerick Prison

On Monday 3rd November 2025, criminal justice and sentencing students visited Limerick Prison. This short-term experiential learning provided students with a unique opportunity to enhance their knowledge with a deep understanding of the practicalities associated with the criminal justice and sentencing processes, rehabilitation and reintegration. Students gained valuable insights into the functioning of a prison, daily lives of prisoners and staff, and were able to apply their knowledge in a real-world setting.

The visit was informative and transformative bringing classroom learning to life, building a conceptual bridge between theory and practice. This short-term field trip is underpinned by UL's strategic plan to enhance teaching and learning and creating learning spaces that emphasises academically rigorous transformative learning and enhanced student engagement through experiential learning. The visit was organised by module leader Dr Ger Coffey, School of Law.

Bethany Hayes

I have been immersed in dance since an early age. My grandmother was a dancer, which is where my journey started. I then later joined the Farrell Caffery School of Irish Dance. I started to compete while still taking classes with my grandmother. I first came to UL in transition year to model for the Junk Kouture Fashion Show and performed in the University Concert Hall. That's when I fell in love with performing and also fell in love with UL. I knew then that I wanted to study at UL.



Bethany always knew she wanted to study at the University of Limerick, though she wasn't initially sure which path to follow. She loved dance but felt uncertain about turning her passion into a career. That changed in sixth year when she attended Higher Options at the RDS and met Dr Breandán de Gallaí, course director of the BA in Irish Dance. Their conversation gave her the confidence she needed to pursue the degree. For Bethany, the programme allowed her to deepen her skills and understanding of Irish dance while also exposing her to a wide variety of other art forms. She credits the course with introducing her to many remarkable people who helped shape her journey. She particularly valued the classes that pushed her beyond her comfort zone and the strong sense of community that developed over the four years.

Katie Clancy

I'm Katie Clancy, and I'm originally from Longford. I currently live and work in Osaka, Japan as a translator in a patent firm. I studied Spanish, German, and Japanese under the Applied Languages course and graduated in 2017. I studied Spanish for my Leaving Certificate, but I had always wanted to study Japanese and German. When I was doing my Leaving Cert, Japanese was still a rather niche language in Ireland and was not offered by many universities. UL was the only university where I could study all three of those languages. Not many people from Longford go to UL, so it was a big change!



In my second year I did my Co-op for six months in Tokyo, Japan. This experience gave me an advantage when I moved, since I already had experience working in a Japanese work environment, which varies greatly from Irish ones. This experience also helped me to improve my business Japanese, which is one of the most difficult aspects of the Japanese language. In addition, the friendships I made at UL were one of the most valuable aspects for me. Many of my friends from my course have become some of the most important people in my life. They've supported and cared for me so much through the years - I couldn't imagine my life without them.



UNIVERSITY OF
LIMERICK
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

***Wishing you all a
Happy Christmas***