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**CONNECT**

**Issue 5.0 March 2019**

## **Welcome to the March edition of Connect...**

Spring is finally upon us and with it comes the promise of longer evenings and the hope of milder weather. So far spring has been a busy time for AHECS, filled with the productivity of planning exciting upcoming projects and events. The focus of the executive board in the coming months is to provide tailor-made programmes and courses for the upskilling of delegates specifically in Career Services. On that note, any feedback or suggestions are warmly welcome. Please direct them to [admin@ahecs.ie](mailto:admin@ahecs.ie).

Best wishes

Trevor Johnston & Gavin Connell

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## **AHECS Employability Awards:**

This year saw a fantastic 18 entries, across two categories in the AHECS Employability Awards. Great excitement building in advance of the Awards Ceremony.

The AHECS/Gradireland Awards Ceremony will be held on the 25th April 2019 in the Mansion House in Dublin.

AHECS have reserved a total of 60 seats for the awards night, however, the final numbers for attendance at the awards ceremony must be sent over to Gradireland on the 1st April 2019. Any seats that have not been reserved will be returned to Gradireland for resale. Therefore, applications for a seat at the

If you want to avoid disappointment, secure your ticket to the awards ceremony by clicking the following link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/585C7SZ>



## Dates for your Diary

### **28 March: An Audience with Queens University - Dublin**

Come along to meet some of our leading academics, hear from our current postgraduate students and learn more about the market-attuned programmes we offer.

### **29 March: Closing Date for applications to attend the Professional Coach Training.**

The expression of interest form to attend this years Professional Coach Training will close at 5pm Sharp on Friday 29th March.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/37RQ2MZ>

**29 March: Closing Date for applications to attend the Labour Market Training Day.** The reservation survey for the Training Day will close on at 5pm sharp on the 29th March 2019.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/585C7SZ>

### **29 March: Closing date for the AHECS/Gradireland Awards Ceremony**

The reservation survey for the AHECS/Gradireland Awards Ceremony will close on at 5pm sharp on the 29th March 2019. AHECS has 60 seats on reserve but after this date these seats will no longer be on reserve unless they are booked by individual delegates.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/585C7SZ>

### **25 April: AHECS Employability Awards 2019 & Gradireland Awards Night - Mansion House, Dublin.**

AHECS Employability Awards aim to encourage, reward and share good practice amongst Higher Education careers practitioners and employers by promoting high-quality, creative, innovative and collaborative projects and high professional standards across the full range of HE careers work. The annual gradireland Graduate Recruitment Awards 2019 and the AHECS Employability Awards evening will be held in the Mansion House in

**24 May 2019: Closing Date AHECS Bursary 2019 Applications:**

Applications for the 2019 Bursary's is now open. Please follow the link below to complete your application now:

[https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Bursary\\_2019](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Bursary_2019)

**28/29/30 May: Challenges of Careers Work in Higher Education in Ireland:**

The Challenges of Careers Work in Higher Education in Ireland module that will be held in University College Dublin in May. This version of the course will be of interest to HE career practitioners across the HE Landscape and can be taken as a stand-alone CPD programme or as an accredited module for those undertaking AGCAS/Warwick Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma in Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (HE).

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WB8227X>

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## **Ulster University - Embedding Employability into the Heart of the Widening Participation Student Experience Through Curricular Interventions**

Ulster is a sector leader in widening access to higher education, with 37% of the student population from areas of low socio-economic deprivation. These groups are categorised as widening participation (WP), and research highlights that they suffer from disproportionately poorer graduate employability outcomes compared to their peers (Reddy and Moores, 2012; Budd, 2016). In response to these disparities, Ulster has adopted a strategic approach to enhance the employability outcomes of WP students and has implemented a range of initiatives which have engaged with 1,500+ students over the last two years. This approach aligns with regional Higher Education Strategies and supports Ulster's contribution to UK frameworks such as the Teaching Excellence Framework.

One of Ulster's primary initiatives was an Office for Students (OfS) funded project entitled 'Levelling the playing field through work-based learning'. This national collaborative project was implemented alongside partners including Aston University, City, University of London and Birmingham City University.

Each of the partners scaled-up and refocused employability interventions which aimed to increase work-based learning uptake amongst widening

Ulster's interventions focused on embedding employability modules and speed networking into the curriculum. The modules were designed through co-creation with stakeholders, including employers and academics, and were delivered using creative and innovative pedagogies. Through collaborations with academic colleagues, the interventions were successfully embedded into the curriculum thus optimising WP student engagement and learning.

Ulster's interventions were evaluated using a number of short, medium and long-term measures, and evaluation activities were supported by an internal Research Advisory Group which comprised of academic colleagues. Evaluation findings to date are overwhelmingly positive, with strong gains reported in students' confidence and resilience and placement uptake, particularly for WP cohorts. These findings have been disseminated widely across the HE sector.

The OfS project is close to completion, however, the long-term impact of the project at Ulster is already clear. For example, the Employability and Careers Department has made a long-term commitment to support the employability of WP students as evidenced through the recently launched Ulster Employability Strategy. In addition, the evidence-based framework which underpinned the project is being transferred to other Departmental projects to ensure effective targeting of resources. Finally, the Department is developing a knowledge resource on the employability interventions that were utilised by the OfS project partners. This resource will be shared with the wider sector through an online toolkit, launching in April 2019.

#### References

Budd, R. (2017). 'Disadvantaged by degrees? How widening participation students are not only hindered in accessing HE, but also during – and after – university'. *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*, 21 (2-3), pp. 111 -116.

Reddy, P. and Moores, E. (2006). Measuring the benefits of a psychology placement year. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 31(5), pp.551-567



## Speed Networking Group Ulster University



## Reminders


**AHECS Awards Night**  
Only 60 Seats Available!  
Please book now using:  
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/585C7SZ>

AHECS/Gradireland  
Awards Night  
& Labour Market  
Training Day  
Applications Closing  
**29th March @ 12pm  
Sharp**

Challenges of  
Careers Work  
in Higher  
Education -  
Now accepting  
Applications!

Professional Coach  
Training Closing Date for  
Applications **Friday 29th  
March @ 5pm sharp**

Bursary  
Applications  
Now Open!



## Job Opportunities

If you have job opportunities to advertise in the next Connect, please email [admin@ahecs.ie](mailto:admin@ahecs.ie)



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## Article Submissions

We are keen to receive your suggestions for content for the next edition.

Please email [admin@ahecs.ie](mailto:admin@ahecs.ie) with your content and items for next edition by 15th April, 2019.



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