

Review

AISHE Conference 2009¹

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The [All Ireland Society for Higher Education \(AISHE\)](#) is a scholarly organisation for all those involved and interested in teaching and learning in higher education on the island of Ireland. It originated in a [Colloquium on University Teaching and Learning](#), held at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, in December 1998, with support from the HEA and participation from all nine Irish universities and the DIT. AISHE was formally established in March 2000, and has operated since then as a membership organisation, working to facilitate the development of all aspects of teaching and learning in Irish higher education. Since 2002 AISHE has also been recognised as the representative member for Ireland of the [International Consortium for Educational Development \(ICED\)](#). AISHE has now built up a strong and enthusiastic membership across the Irish Universities, Institutes of Technology, and other Colleges and organisations engaged with higher education all over the island.

AISHE pursues its mission through a variety of activities, including seminars, workshops, publications, and provision of online community forums and services. The AISHE annual conference, in particular, has been running since 2004, and has established itself as a premier venue for practitioners, from both Ireland and abroad, to present scholarly work on all aspects of teaching and learning in higher education. This year's conference took place in NUI Maynooth, on August 27-28, 2009, and very much lived up to the high standard established in previous years.

The conference format has three elements:

- Plenary sessions with invited keynote speakers.
- Parallel oral presentation sessions.
- Poster presentations spanning the full duration of the conference.

Keynote speakers this year were:

- [Val Chapman](#) of the University of Worcester, UK: Val's talk was entitled [Disability is not a choice - inclusive teaching is](#) and gave a very stimulating and constructive introduction to the challenges, opportunities and rewards of designing our learning activities to engage the widest possible diversity of learners.
- [Prof. Bairbre Redmond](#), Deputy Registrar For Teaching & Learning at UCD: Bairbre took up the timely topic of [Rewarding Teaching Excellence](#). Her presentation summarised recent experiences at UCD in seeking to recognise and enhance the role of teaching excellence in academic work. The [UCD Teaching Fellowship](#)

¹ Published in [Teaching Reflections, Issue 1](#), February 2010. [Dublin City University, Learning Innovation Unit](#).

[Scheme](#) was specifically discussed, highlighting the important added benefit of collegiality and collaboration among teaching fellows.

- [Dr. John Willison](#), of the University of Adelaide, Australia: John's presentation on [Discipline, Diversity and the Development of all Students' Research Skills](#) was focussed on a project which he is currently leading, called [Research Skill Development \(RSD\) and Assessment in the Curriculum](#). This centres around the ways that academics conceptualise and implement the explicit development of their students' research skills within undergraduate and taught masters curricula. (All participants were provided with a convenient one sheet summary of the RSD framework - but it is also [freely available for download!](#))

Abstracts of all presentations - keynote, parallel oral session and posters - are available via the [conference web site](#). All presenters were also invited to submit full papers, or other supplementary materials, to be included in the proceedings, and these are in the process of being published online also.

The conference “fringe” featured two other significant events:

- During the opening session of the conference, AISHE Vice-president Sylvia Huntley Moore formally launched the inaugural issue of the [All Ireland Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education \(AISHE-J\)](#). This is very important development for AISHE, made possible by generous support from the [Higher Education Authority](#). AISHE-J is a peer reviewed journal which welcomes the submission of manuscripts presenting original scholarly work or commentary in any aspect of teaching and learning in higher education. It thus provides a significant new niche for the promotion and dissemination of the scholarship of teaching and learning in Irish higher education. The inaugural issue featured a variety of both invited and submitted articles; and I'm particularly pleased to note that DCU was ably represented by Gerald Cannon, Mary Kelly, Colette Lyng, Mary McGrath of the School of Nursing with their paper entitled [The Production and Deployment of an On-line Video Learning Bank in a Skills Training Environment](#).
- On the evening of the first day, the conference also saw the official launch of a new book, [Mapping Civic Engagement within Higher Education in Ireland](#), edited by Lorraine McIlrath, Alison Farrell, Jean Hughes, Seamus Lillis and Ann Lyons. This is the latest in the [AISHE Readings \(AISHE-R\)](#) series, which collects together, in book form, key Irish research in the scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. Although officially described as an “occasional” series, it is noteworthy that this is now the seventh volume in what has become a very substantial and wide-ranging scholarly resource.

It is important to note that AISHE has adopted an [open-access](#) policy across all its publications; so all of the works mentioned above, including [AISHE-C](#) conference proceedings, the [AISHE-J](#) peer reviewed journal, and the complete set of [AISHE-R](#) books are all available, online, in full text form, with no charge or subscription requirement; and, further, may be freely distributed and reused under the terms of the [Creative Commons](#)

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Of course, if you would like to contribute to the ongoing growth and development of AISHE, or even just want to stay in touch with its conferences, publications, and other events, you might consider showing your support by [joining the society!](#)