New Agreements and Partnerships

International Education Division

Newsletter Issue 6 2017
Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the 2017 edition of the IED newsletter. The objective of this newsletter is to share the highlights of UL international activity with the campus community and our partners around the world.

IED is delighted to welcome two new international recruiters to the office. Niamh Kavanagh and Liam Ryan joined IED in January 2017. They are developing our partnerships in SE Asia, North America and the Middle East and have already made a significant contribution to our work in these regions. Since January, they have visited 23 university partners and 20 high schools and attended 34 fairs in 11 countries.

We also bid a sad farewell to Patricia O’Flaherty, who retired from her position as Erasmus and Exchange Manager after 13 years at UL. Patricia has been key to establishing UL as the largest Erasmus programme in Ireland. Patricia’s good work will be continued by Lina Koseleva, who worked in international education at Klaipeda University, Lithuania and the University of the Arts, London before joining the UL team in August 2017. I would like to warmly welcome Lina and bid Patricia a happy retirement.

UL welcomed 2,581 international students in 2016/17, 1,383 of whom were degree-seeking students and the remainder of whom came to UL as visiting students through either the Erasmus or Exchange programme (662) or the Study Abroad programme (536). This will grow to over 2,700 over the academic year 2017/18 and we have already seen significant growth in full degree students from India, China and the USA.

UL has maintained its strong position in the International Student Barometer Survey (published in January 2017) and remains the most highly recommended university in Ireland. The survey was undertaken by independent research group i-graduate and involves over 18,257 international students across 182 institutions worldwide. The University of Limerick ranked among the top universities globally for overall student learning experience, incomparable campus living and top-tier graduate employability.

The IED team would like to thank the campus community for the continued support in promoting UL internationally and the great student care afforded to international students on campus. This work is not sufficiently recognised and is invaluable in attracting high-quality students to UL and raising our profile overseas.

I look forward to working with you throughout 2017/18.

Josephine Page, Director, IED
IED PROMOTES

IED travelled abroad to promote UL at a range of events over the past year, including education exhibitions, study abroad fairs, second-level schools, and international education conferences and seminars. In total, this amounted to 28 visits to 12 countries and 80 promotional events. The following countries were visited multiple times: USA (6), China (4), India (4), Vietnam (3), Malaysia (2) and Saudi Arabia (2).

IED ran four pilot workshops to address cross-cultural awareness and communication with groups of postgraduate students from programmes including Computer and Communication Systems, International Management, International Tourism and Project Management. The workshops were designed to help participants apply cross-cultural communication skills to build better intercultural relationships, communicate more effectively in the classroom environment and recognise the value of diversity.

Post-workshop survey results indicated an increased awareness around cultural differences when forming groups for projects and activities. The results also indicated that students were becoming more comfortable approaching lecturers.

One central theme, which was emphasised in the workshops as well as in the feedback, was that the workshop acted as a space for cross-cultural contact/understanding. Recommendations included running further workshops to continue to provide this space, expanding the programme to include additional MA/MSc classes and including Irish students.
RAZAN IBRAHEEM

Based in Dublin since completing her master’s degree at UL, Razan Ibraheem is a journalist and human rights activist from Syria. Her story featured on the cover of this year’s UL Links magazine. We caught up with Razan to find out how her MA in English Language Teaching at UL set her up for a fascinating career in Ireland.

“One of the greatest experiences in my life personally and professionally has been doing an MA in English Language Teaching at the University of Limerick. Coming from a very different culture, education system and language background, I left Syria and joined the MA ELT course in 2011. The teachers, classmates and course coordinators did their best to make me feel at home and overcome challenges and difficulties.

“The course is very well structured and has a good balance between theory and practice. I enjoyed every subject, project and presentation I did. What I liked the most was the team spirit and the cooperation between classmates and teachers. I met such amazing people on the course and am still friends with them today.

“Joining the MA ELT in UL was a turning point in my life as it opened many doors after I graduated. Although English is not my native language, I was able to find a teaching job in Ireland and I worked as an English teacher in a summer school before becoming an academic manager in a language school in Limerick. The experience, knowledge and excellent ELT materials I got from the course helped me a great deal in managing the school and understanding my students’ and teachers’ needs.

“Now I am a journalist and a human rights activist. I always carry my wonderful experience of the MA ELT course in my heart and mind as it has been the reason for my success in life and work.”

Dr Patricia O’Flaherty, who retired from UL in September this year.

Dr Patricia O’Flaherty, Erasmus (EU) and International Exchanges Manager, started working at UL in 2003. She previously held an academic position at Dublin City University. Prior to that, Patricia spent 20 years working in Zimbabwe and believes her experience in Africa influenced her decision to work in the University of Limerick.

This is how Patricia describes her arrival and work at UL: “I arrived in UL in September 2003, and in 2004 I saw the post of Erasmus coordinator in international education advertised. I applied and got the post, which I’ve held for the past 13 years. Firstly, I feel very fortunate to have been able to come to such a beautiful university – it might sound like a superficial reason but it’s quite important to me.

“In my experience, because I had spent such a long time in Africa and worked in many different cultures, I think the Erasmus programme was a natural next step. I think after living in Zimbabwe, the move to the international office was the right one for me, and I hope I was able to bring certain skills and experiences to the job.

“The job involves organising the Erasmus programme for the university, and it has grown tremendously since I arrived. We’re now sending over 400 students abroad every year to Europe and another 50 to the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Some students even go as far as Japan and China on study programmes.

“UL also sends about 300 students a year to European countries on work placements. That programme, in the past four years, has come under Erasmus and those students also receive grants from the EU.

“It’s an absolutely fantastic programme and it’s vital to UL. When UL was founded as a university, they had the foresight to introduce the Erasmus programme. It’s now an integrated part of 17 degree programmes. This is all due to UL’s commitment from the very beginning to work and study placements, and UL is one of the leading universities in the Erasmus programme. In fact, very recently we applied to the European
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Association for International Education for an award in innovation in internationalisation. UL was shortlisted amongst four universities."

Speaking about the importance of students getting the chance to study abroad, Patricia says: "It’s an extraordinary opportunity. Even for those who are a bit reluctant at the beginning and might find it quite difficult to go, I’d say 98% of students absolutely love it. Many write to us afterwards to say it was the experience of a lifetime.

“They often don’t realise beforehand how much it’s going to change their lives and outlook. The benefit to them professionally and personally is almost indescribable. Students often tell us that their overseas experience made them appreciate UL more because very few European universities would have the student support systems that UL has or the clubs and societies or the beautiful physical environment we have here.”

On the changes she has seen since coming to UL, Patricia says she has witnessed “huge expansion”. “UL has succeeded in attracting more and more international students. You can see that in day-to-day life on campus. When I first came to the university, I wouldn't have encountered people from other cultures except maybe the Erasmus students from European countries. You wouldn’t have met students from Pakistan, Nepal, Afghanistan or China, whereas now it’s almost commonplace to meet people from a huge variety of cultures on campus. It has transformed not only the university but also Limerick. I hear all the different languages on the bus. There have been huge changes in the last decade, and those changes have all been for the good.”

Patricia says she is very proud of the team in the International Education Division. "There has been tremendous initiative in international education over the last five to ten years, and I'm very proud of the fact that the team has played a role in all those innovative practices. We get good feedback from the students and also the European Commission, which picked UL as an exemplar of good practice last year because of all these innovative efforts. It's been a great experience to be part of all that."

Speaking about retirement, Patricia says, "I am really looking forward to it, and while I don't actually have a plan, I do have interests that I wish to continue. I'm very keen on gardening; recently, in preparation for retirement, I rented an allotment, and my first round of vegetables are beginning to appear. I'm looking forward to doing more gardening and hope to continue walking and cycling. I've lived in and travelled to so many countries but I feel I don't really know Ireland very well, so I'm looking forward to going to places that I haven't been to before and discovering my own country a bit more.

"I've really enjoyed my time here in UL. Apart from the wonderful physical environment, I really have great colleagues and there is a wonderful collegiality about the university and a great sense of solidarity. I feel very privileged to have been able to work here."

Patricia has obviously played an important role in building the supports for internationalisation here at UL! We wish Patricia all the very best for a very happy retirement.

UL GRADUATE AND YOUNGEST IRISHMAN TO SUMMIT MT EVEREST SPEAKS TO INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT FAREWELL EVENT

IED hosted its annual Farewell Event in April. Guest speaker Rob Mortell, a UL graduate and the youngest Irishman to reach the summit of Mt Everest, gave a rousing talk to our outgoing international students and shared with them an incredible video documenting his climb. Rob’s presentation was followed by an afternoon of music, dance and food to show our appreciation of our students leaving us this semester.

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Celebrations & Awards

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Celebrations & Awards

EDUCATION IN IRELAND AMBASSADOR AWARDS

Enterprise Ireland hosted an awards ceremony for the Education in Ireland International Student Ambassadors to honour these students for their work promoting Ireland as an education destination. Celina Jaffe, MA Contemporary Dance student from Chicago, represented UL.

A former University of Limerick international student was lucky in love after getting engaged on the UL Living Bridge. Ryan Sappington from Virginia, USA won a competition to come back and revisit his alma mater. He proposed to Megan Doyle on the bridge as it was her favourite spot on campus when she visited him in UL over a year ago.

IED staff were honoured to be in on the surprise and organised a photographer to capture the moment.

SURPRISE MARRIAGE PROPOSAL

Celina Jaffe, Education in Ireland Ambassador for the US, with Minister Richard Bruton

Celina Jaffe (centre) with Alan O’Callaghan, Department of Education and Skills
In August, 33 international students from 12 countries graduated from 22 different courses.

Students from around the world came together with the Indian Society, International Society and Postgraduate Students’ Union in April to celebrate the Indian festival Holi, also known as the festival of colours.
International Gaelic Football Tournament

The UL North Campus hosted a selection of teams from all over Ireland in October for a unique Intervarsity International Student Gaelic Football Tournament, jointly hosted by IED.

100 international students from colleges including DIT, NUI Maynooth and IT Tralee braved Storm Brian to travel to Limerick to take part in the competition. The event was coordinated by IED and ‘Go Gaelic’, a Clare-based company that ran Gaelic games tutorials for international students in each of the colleges as part of Orientation Week events in the autumn.

The UL team were runners-up to worthy winners Limerick Language Centre. The Shield competition was also won by a Limerick side when LIT took the honours.
The University of Limerick Study Abroad team was selected as this year’s recipient of the University of Minnesota (UMN) Balkcum Award. This annual award is made to one UMN partner institution to recognise excellence in, and commitment to, serving UMN students abroad, particularly those partners who have performed above and beyond expectations.

In his nomination of the UL Study Abroad team, Eric Leinan of UMN said, “Katherine [Martin, Study Abroad Manager] and her staff have consistently been easy to work with and willing to collaborate. Developing CSE course equivalencies, establishing I-UROP eligibility, and the semester-long nursing program currently in development are just a few examples of unique and noteworthy projects we’ve created jointly, to the benefit of UMN students. Overall, Katherine and her staff at Limerick have been friendly, easy and fun to work with, and responsive to our needs. The relationship between the LAC [Learning Abroad Centre] and Limerick truly feels like a partnership.”

In recognition of this award, the Study Abroad team was presented with a plaque in the UMN LAC. Congratulations to the team members for this recognition of their hard work!
CHINESE NEW YEAR

In January 2017, we once again celebrated Chinese New Year with our students. Over 100 students joined us for a three-course meal at Chung’s Cuisine, a local Chinese restaurant.

The Chinese New Year is the longest and most important celebration in the Chinese calendar, and 2017 saw the arrival of the Year of the Rooster. UL staff and visiting academics from one of UL’s partner institutions, Henan Polytechnic University in China, attended the celebrations. Speaking at the event, Professor Paul McCutcheon, Vice President Academic & Registrar (Jan–April), highlighted the importance and strength of the Chinese community in UL.

The event was organised by IED in conjunction with Ya Nan Wang, UL’s Chinese cultural advisor, who works closely with Chinese students at UL to offer them support and guidance while settling in to life in Limerick and Ireland.

THANKSGIVING

The International Education Division hosted its annual Thanksgiving Dinner on 23 November to celebrate the US holiday with our American and North American students and staff. Student numbers from the US continue to grow and currently there are 315 American students studying in UL on various programmes including, Study Abroad; Non-EU Exchange; Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate.
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UL is renowned for its outstanding international student experience and warm welcome, and events like the annual International Festival are a significant part of the internationalisation of the university. With over 1,200 students coming to UL from over 90 countries this year, the international student population of UL is of great benefit to the local community.

IED hosted the 2017 International Festival on Wednesday 4 October. Celebrating the rich cultural diversity of the UL student body while helping to integrate the vast number of international students studying at UL, the day-long festival consisted of free events and attracted an excellent turnout of international and Irish students.

Some of the events included:

» A Study Abroad Fair, which showcased Erasmus and Exchange opportunities for UL students. Held in the Atrium of the Foundation building, the fair featured stands from partner institutions around the world.

» “A Taste of Our World” International Food Fair, which was held in Eden Restaurant. The food fair featured dishes from countries such as China, India, USA, France, Spain and Germany.

» Erasmus+ Staff Information sessions, an American football demonstration and an international film screening.

IED continues to organise events like these to celebrate the internationalisation of the university and to make our international student body feel welcome.

DIWALI

Over 100 students celebrated the Diwali festival of light in UL on Thursday 19 October at a party organised by IED. Music, food and rangoli made it a memorable evening for all.
SIXTY-EIGHTH FOUNDING ANNIVERSARY OF PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA CELEBRATED IN DUBLIN

IED Director Josephine Page with H.E. Dr Yue Xiaoyong, Chinese Ambassador to Ireland

IED Director Josephine Page attended celebrations marking the 68th anniversary of the Founding of the People’s Republic of China in September in Dublin. The event was hosted by H.E. Dr Yue Xiaoyong, Chinese Ambassador to Ireland.

ISB SURVEY RESULTS

As voted by international students, UL ranked first in Ireland for overall student support.

International students who took part in the i-graduate International Student Barometer (ISB) survey voted UL first in Ireland for a range of features under the categories of student support, arrival, living and learning.

Features of UL’s learning environment, including its multicultural nature, class size, employability and work experience, were placed first in Ireland. Language support was voted first in the UK and Ireland.

Aspects of living, including cost of living, campus environment and campus buildings, were also ranked first in Ireland. Social activities were voted first in the UK and Ireland.

International students also voted UL’s careers service first in Ireland and seventeenth in the global rankings.

Arrival supports, such as institution orientation and registration, were voted first, while overall application-to-offer satisfaction was ranked first in Ireland, third in Europe and twelfth in the world.

UL was ranked as the number one most highly recommended institution in Ireland, the ninth most recommended in Europe and the twentieth most recommended in the world.

Reaching almost 160,000 students from 82 institutions in 17 countries, the ISB survey is the biggest survey of its kind in the world.

ST PATRICK’S DAY CELEBRATIONS
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UL SIGNS NEW AGREEMENT WITH UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS HO CHI MINH CITY – INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS SCHOOL (UEH-ISB)

The University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City – International School of Business (UEH-ISB) is leading the way for education in Vietnam by signing an MOU with UL’s Kemmy Business School. The signing ceremony took place at UL on 13 March 2017 during a visit by UEH-ISB Dean Professor Tran Quan and managing director Mr Douglas Foster. The MOU sets the framework of cooperation around international student and staff mobility between both institutions' business schools.

Professor Quan and Professor McCutcheon were both delighted to develop the cooperation between the two educational institutions, and UL looks forward to receiving students from UEH-ISB in the coming months.

According to IED Director Josephine Page, “Developing mutually beneficial international collaborations is key to the success of our internationalisation strategy at the University of Limerick. The formal commitment to partnership between the University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City – International Business School (UEH-ISB) and the University of Limerick is the start of a positive relationship which envisages international student and faculty mobility between our business schools. This will further internationalise our campuses in Ho Chi Minh City and Limerick.”

UL SIGNS NEW AGREEMENT WITH MAASAI MARA UNIVERSITY, KENYA

In June of this year, UL signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Maasai Mara University (MMU), Kenya in what is seen by both institutions as an important first step in building a partnership in the areas of nursing, environmental science and business. MMU is one of the brightest and best new universities in Kenya and will be a key partner in the region for the University of Limerick.

After the formalities, VC Walingo and Ambassador Opembe received a tour of the Bernal Institute from Dr Sarah Brady and a UL campus tour from Liam Ryan, IED. They were extremely impressed with the facilities on offer to students and are very interested in setting up pathways for Kenyan students to finish their studies or continue their postgraduate studies in UL.

Also discussed were opportunities for collaborative research and staff mobility between UL and MMU. The possibility of MMU working with the Department of Chemical Sciences on the protection and conservation of the Maasai Mara National Reserve was of particular interest to both parties.
DEPARTMENT OF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY CELEBRATES INTERNATIONALISATION SUCCESS

The development of successful international activity, from student recruitment to international partnerships, requires considerable focus and planning on behalf of the faculty and department involved. The Department of Nursing and Midwifery (DNM) is an excellent case study for best practice in this area, and IED takes this opportunity to congratulate the entire department, but in particular Kathleen Markey and Dr Pauline O’Reilly, for the work they have done to set the scene for internationalisation.

The DNM responded wholeheartedly to the internationalisation objectives set out in the university’s strategic plan Broadening Horizons 2015–19; as a result, international student numbers have increased almost threefold since 2015. This was strongly facilitated by the design and launch of two full-time degree programmes with international students in mind: the BSc Nursing Studies (level 8) and MSc Nursing Studies (level 9). Both programmes have been very successful and have brought nursing students from seven non-EU countries to study at UL.

The DNM also welcomes increasing numbers of semester-long Study Abroad students from the USA. Since 2016, the Developing Self as a Healthcare Practitioner summer programme (6 ECTS credits) brings US students to UL for three weeks in May/June. The work with Study Abroad partners in the US has led to a collaborative international project with the University of Minnesota, which will bring 10 senior-year nursing students to UL next September. The DNM has also developed a practice-based module to meet the needs of incoming US nursing students.

Recent success in an Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility funding bid has created a link between the nursing studies at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana and DNM and will provide funding for the mobility of students and staff during 2017/18.

This notable success comes from a willingness to be innovative and build programmes that are attractive in the international context and to cultivate an environment that supports staff to build international collaborations. The work included establishing a course board for international studies in 2016 and the DNM Internationalisation Committee in 2017. The Student Forum for International Students was set up to facilitate dialogue between students, IED, the Students’ Union and DNM and to provide a voice for international students in the department.

IED and the Department of History were delighted to welcome Professor Jyoti Atwal, Associate Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi and Adjunct Professor, Department of History to UL in October as part of UL’s International Challenge Fund.

Professor Atwal teaches gender history and her major publications include a book entitled Real and Imagined Widows: Gender Relations in Colonial North India (2016). She is currently writing a biography of Irish suffragette Margaret Elizabeth Cousins (1878–1954).
Every year, EAIE (European Association for International Education) seeks to recognise a European higher education institution that demonstrates institutional best practice within a European context. EAIE is the acknowledged European centre for expertise, networking and resources in the internationalisation of higher education.

The successful institution must demonstrate innovative practices in international education within the last five years, with tangible outcomes. The main aim of the award is to highlight outstanding practices that further the internationalisation of higher education. As 2017 marks the 30th anniversary of the Erasmus programme, special consideration was given this year to institutions that demonstrate innovation in the area of Erasmus exchange.

Along with three other universities, the University of Limerick was shortlisted for the 2017 EAIE award (which was ultimately won by Ghent University, Belgium). UL has the largest Erasmus programme in Ireland and has made unprecedented progress in the last five years in internationalising the university through innovative institutional practices. As a result, one in three UL undergraduate students spends a semester overseas, and international students have voted UL first in Ireland for social and cultural student integration (and sixth globally) as well as first in Ireland for campus environment.

Some of the innovative initiatives introduced by UL in recent years include:

» An academic literacy module worth 3 ECTS credits
» Cultural awareness workshops for new postgraduate class cohorts
» A module on internationalisation for academic staff on the Graduate Diploma in Teaching, Learning and Scholarship
» A new ‘assistant dean international’ position in each faculty
» The launch of an International Activity Challenge Fund
» International alumni ambassadors in priority countries

These initiatives build on the structure, established 30 years ago, of integrated and fully recognised Erasmus study and work placements, a full cohort of academic coordinators per subject area and a strong network of international partner universities. UL has 422 partnership agreements, 113 of which have been signed in the last five years.