

Digital Education Conference

9-10th December 2025



Conference Introduction

The Digital Education Conference brings educators, researchers, tech/student support and industry professionals together to share and discover innovative uses of technology in an ever-changing teaching and learning environment. This conference will stimulate dialogue and debate in our education landscape as we move through learning and teaching to utilise the technology suitable and relevant to our needs whether its immersive XR, VR applications or the myriad that is Gen AI and opportunities and challenges therein related to academic integrity, ethics, efficiency, engagement and creativity. How we navigate through the emergent developments in a human-centric manner cognisant of our values, beliefs and vision illuminates the transformative opportunities of education in our society to be inclusive, exciting journey for all.

This event provides an opportunity to present your research and practice-related projects, extend your network and dive into new collaborative ideation with practical and theoretical contributions. The conference will take place over 3 days, 8, 9, 10th December. The cost is €70 (incl. daily refreshments and the Conference dinner in the Tower Hotel on 9th December). This year we are partnering with EdTech Ireland to co-host their 1st EdTech Ireland Developer conference from 12-5pm on 8th December, running on the same day as our Doctoral colloquium 9am-5pm and DigiTeachNet 4:30pm-7pm. The conference schedule starts on Tuesday 9th December at 9:30am to 6pm, and Day 2: 9:00am to 4:00pm. This booklet gives an insight into some of the conference activities.

This event aims to showcase the excellent work that the Faculty of Education and Lifelong learning in SETU and many other faculties within our university and across our partner and the wider Education communities are actively engaged such as SATLE, Research Ireland and Horizon Europe. This dynamic forum is dedicated to the exploration and advancement of pedagogical practices in the digital age. This gathering serves as a crucible for the exchange of innovative ideas, research findings, and best practices in the realm of digital education. As we navigate the ever-evolving landscape of technology-enhanced learning, this conference provides a platform for educators, researchers, and experts to engage in critical dialogues, share insights, and collaboratively shape the future of education in the digital era. With a diverse array of sessions, workshops, and keynote presentations, we aim to foster a holistic understanding of the multifaceted challenges and opportunities that digital education presents. We look forward to the enlightening discussions, collaborations, and discoveries that will emerge during this intellectually stimulating event.

Venue

The conference will take place in the SETU Auditorium and Atrium which is located on our Cork Road Campus, X91 K0EK and closeby break-out rooms. Information on campus location, car parking, and travelling by bike, air, rail, bus and taxi can be found on the following link: [How to Find Us - SETU Waterford Campus](#). Car parking next to the building will be accessible on the day free of charge. Should anyone have any particular accessibility requirements please let us know and we can ensure you are fully accommodated.



Networking Event - Conference Dinner and hotel accommodation

Our Inaugural SETU DigiTeachNet event is NEW for 2025 hosted at SETU on 8th December and include canapes and drink reception in Atrium foyer at SETU from 4:30pm -7pm on 8th December, registration for DEC25 is open during this event which aims to bridge the tech side of developing applications for Ireland's education landscape to our Primary, Post- Primary and Tertiary education institutions.

The conference dinner will be hosted in The Tower Hotel. Located in the heart of the City, there is a Christmas Wonderland on our doorstep for all to enjoy which is sure to get you in the festive spirit. Winterval 2025 is in the heart of the city and all the attractions a short walk away. Our conference dinner will be in the Hobson's restaurant located on the first floor overlooking The Mall and the Marina, Hobson's offers the best views in Waterford city for dining. We have secured a conference rate of B&B €128 per night ask the hotel for details referencing DEC25 @SETU. We have also options for Pub craic after dinner with Peter Windle leading the posse.

About Waterford

Waterford City, steeped in centuries of history and nestled along the picturesque banks of the River Suir, is a captivating gem on the Emerald Isle. With a heritage dating back over a thousand years, Waterford is renowned as Ireland's oldest city, and its rich past is palpable in every cobblestone street and ancient building. Visitors are transported back in time as they explore the city's well-preserved medieval architecture, including the iconic Reginald's Tower, a Viking relic that stands as a sentinel to the city's formidable past. Waterford's historical significance is further celebrated at the Waterford Crystal , where master craftsmen create exquisite crystal pieces that are revered worldwide. The city also offers a vibrant

cultural scene, with lively pubs and traditional music echoing through its charming lanes. Nestled in the heart of



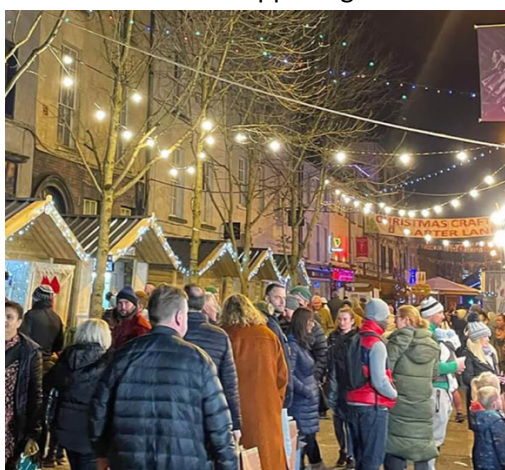
Ireland's stunning southeast, Waterford is a must-visit destination for those seeking a captivating blend of history, culture, and natural beauty.

WATERFORD WINTERVAL Ireland's Christmas Festival

Winterval, Ireland's largest Christmas festival returns to Waterford this November and

December. Waterford, Ireland's oldest city, will be transformed into a magical Winterval wonderland from Friday, November 21st until Tuesday, December 23rd. Be a part of the journey through a world of Christmas celebration, magical experiences, festive family attractions, seasonal surprises and an abundance of free and ticketed events for all ages to enjoy.

Brought to you by Waterford City and County Council, Winterval 2025 will see the return of lots of the original attractions like Santa's arrival to Waterford, Winterval On Ice, the Port of Waterford Eye, The Helter Skelter and The Carousel; newer events like the Winterval Circus, Glow, and the Lego Exhibition, and magical reimaginations of so many of the festival favourites including a multi-dimensional light show, European-style Winterval food and craft markets, a packed programme of live music and performances and an enchanting display of festive decoration that will dazzle and delight Kids from 1 to 92 ... and it's all happening this Christmas in the heart of Waterford City.



Copper Coast and Waterford Greenway

The 25 mile journey from Tramore to Dungarvan is known as the copper coast. It is the only official European Geopark in Ireland and is celebrated for its diversity of rock formations and beautiful coastline. If feeling brave Newtown Cove and the Guillamene are good spots for a winter dip and Tramore beach or Kilmurrin for a surf. Contact the programme committee for more information.



Speakers

Kirra Prendergast: *Human Digital Risk Management Across Smart Education in the Age of Digital Chaos*



Kirra is an internationally recognised leader in online safety, celebrated for her emotionally intelligent, ethically grounded approach to building safer, more human digital futures. With deep expertise in systems thinking, digital wellbeing, and child rights, she advises global platforms, governments, and organisations on designing environments that are not just secure but empowering by design.

A strategic thinker and clear communicator, Kirra thrives in complexity. She bridges the gap between policy, practice, and technology with clarity and purpose, bringing critical insight to trauma-informed design, AI ethics, youth safety, and digital trust. Her work consistently centres the most vulnerable, delivering inclusive solutions that create meaningful, lasting impact. With decades of leadership across technology, governance, and online safety, she helps leaders bridge the critical gap between digital systems and the people they serve, before it becomes their greatest risk.

Australian-born and based in Italy, Kirra works globally across the UK, EU, Australia, the US, and New Zealand partnering with organisations that understand one thing clearly: protecting people online is protecting the future.

Prof Patrick Prendergast



Professor Patrick Prendergast has experience in all aspects of universities. He was President/Provost of Trinity College Dublin from 2011 to 2021. Prior to that he held a number of key senior management roles in Trinity, including Chief Academic Officer (Vice-Provost & Deputy President) and Dean of Graduate Studies. He conducted engineering research at the highest international level as Professor of Bio-Engineering and founding Director of the Trinity Centre for Bio-Engineering, publishing over 250

papers on mechanobiology and medical device design. He has international experience of working at the TU Delft/Erasmus University Medical Centre, Rotterdam, the University Polytechnic of Catalonia, the Polish Academy of Sciences, and as a Governing Board member of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) from 2012 to 2020. Currently he is Research Professor in Trinity College Dublin. Research Web page at

<https://www.tcd.ie/research/profiles/?profile=pprender>

David Denieffe Chair: Student V Lecturer Debate



Debate Title: *I'm not cheating I'm accelerating my intelligence.*

David Denieffe is the Senior Vice President Operations of South East Technological University (SETU). With a career spanning over 35 years, he has held senior leadership roles that have shaped higher education strategy and operations. His leadership in quality assurance is internationally recognised, having chaired more than 100 programme and institutional reviews worldwide. At SETU, he plays a pivotal role in steering the university's

operational framework, ensuring alignment with academic goals and regional development. He leads in shaping and delivering a student experience that reinforces a culture of inclusion and belonging.

Dr Helen Murphy; Head of Faculty, Education & Lifelong Learning at South East Technological University (SETU).



Helen is responsible for the Faculty of Education and Lifelong Learning at SETU and this involves the education programme portfolio (undergraduate and postgraduate), research and lifelong learning across the University. The Faculty has a presence across four campus locations in the South East and supports over 5,000 lifelong learners.

Helen is involved in a number of EU funded research projects relating to RPL for Lifelong Learning, Professional Development for Adult Educators, Micro-credentials and Access to Higher Education. She is the current Chair of HELLIN (Higher Education Lifelong Learning Ireland Network) and a member of ESREA (European Society for Research into Adult Education). She has held roles of internal and external examiner for PhD and EdD candidates in SETU, University of Sunderland and the University of Liverpool and has participated as an assessor and evaluator for the national Teaching Council in Ireland and the Quality and Qualifications Ireland. She is a current member of the Editorial Board for the Adult Learner, Aontas. Helen is recently appointed to the national Expert Future Skills Group as the Higher Education representative.

Helens' research interests are in the field of education policy specifically policy relating to lifelong learning, using RPL for access to higher education, adult education and teacher education. Current research projects include micro-credential development in Higher Education, RPL in Higher education and Innovation in Digital Literacy.

Prof Gary Burnett, Loughborough University, UK: *Ready Student One: Will immersive learning transform education?*



Gary Burnett is a Professor in Digital Creativity in the School of Design and Creative Arts at Loughborough University. He is an experienced lecturer who teaches and conducts research in Human Factors and Human-Computer Interaction. Gary's research interests concern the human-centred design of disruptive technologies in complex contexts, including novel information and automation systems within future vehicles – and most recently, the impact of virtual/augmented reality and holograms in the Higher Education sector. Throughout his career, Gary has received over £20M in funding from industry, UK government, EU and charities – and has published over 300 peer-reviewed papers, with greater than 6000 citations in total. Gary currently contributes to the influential work of the JISC steering committee for Extended Reality in the UK, is an elected member of Innovate UK's Immersive Tech Network Accessibility working group, and is Associate Editor for the international journal, 'Virtual Worlds'.

Presidents Panel Chair: Ambassador David Donoghue

Panelists

Prof Vincent Cunnane, TUS



Professor Vincent Cunnane became the inaugural President of Technological University of the Shannon on the 1st October 2021.

Previously Professor Cunnane was President of LIT which he joined in September 2016 from IT Sligo, and where he had been President since 2014.

He was formerly Chief Executive Officer of Shannon Development until its merger with the Shannon Airport Authority to form the Shannon Group (2008-2013). Prior to that, he was Vice President of Research at the University Limerick, where he also lectured and researched (1990-2008).

Professor Cunnane is an internationally renowned researcher in the field of physical electrochemistry. He was Chair of the Governing Council of the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies (DIAS) for 10 years and was previously a member of the board of the National Institute for Bioprocessing Research & Training (NIBRT). He is currently Chair of the Technological University Association (TUA) and was Chair of its predecessor organisation, THEA during the period when all four TUs outside of Dublin were formed. He is Chair of the President's Council of the Regional University Network – European University (RUN-EU).

Prof Maggie Cusack, MTU



Professor Cusack is a multidisciplinary scientist with experience in senior leadership roles in universities in the UK. In 2021, she was appointed MTU's inaugural President. She is guiding MTU through one of the largest transformation programmes in the Irish third-level sector, merging six campuses across Cork and Kerry into a new university.

Professor Maggie Cusack was appointed as the inaugural President of MTU on January 1st, 2021, by the then Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Simon Harris TD.

Professor Cusack has a BSc in Cell Biology, a PhD on the thaumatin protein and is still active in research on biominerals. Professor Cusack has held multiple leadership roles, including Associate Dean for the Faculty of Physical Sciences Graduate School, International Lead for the College of Science & Engineering, and Head of School of Geographical & Earth Sciences at the University of Glasgow; and Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences at the University of Stirling. She has served as Chair of the Learned Societies Group and was a member of the Scottish Government STEM Strategy Advisory Group; the Royal Society Partnership Grants Committee; and the Carnegie Trust PhD committee.

Professor Cusack has been the recipient of several awards, including the Saltire Society's Scottish Science Award and the Schlumberger Medal. In 2011, she was elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh (FRSE) and subsequently served a term as its Vice-President (Physical Sciences).

Prof Veronica Campbell, SETU



Prof. Veronica Campbell is a Pharmacology graduate of the University of Edinburgh and was awarded her PhD from the University of London. In 1998 she joined the School of Medicine at Trinity College Dublin, where she built a strong reputation in cell biology, pharmacology and tissue engineering research, alongside extensive experience in undergraduate and postgraduate teaching. Throughout her career at Trinity College Dublin, Prof. Campbell held several senior leadership roles, including as Bursar & Director of Strategic Innovation.

Prof Campbell served on the Board of the Atlantic Institute, based in Oxford University, and was the Chairperson of the Global Brain Health Institute of Trinity College and the University of California San Francisco, funded by Atlantic Philanthropies. She is a former President of the Royal Academy of Medicine in Ireland (Biomedical Sciences Section). In July 2022, Prof. Campbell was appointed inaugural President of South East Technological University (SETU). Since taking up this role, she has spearheaded the University's strategic ambitions to drive educational and economic development in the south east of Ireland, positioning SETU as a catalyst for innovation and excellence.

Dr. Orla Flynn, ATU

Dr Orla Flynn was appointed inaugural President of Atlantic Technological University in April 2022, having served two years as President of Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology. Prior to this Dr Flynn was Vice President for External Affairs at Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) for six years, and previous academic leadership roles in CIT included Head of CIT Crawford College of Art & Design and Head of School of Humanities.



Dr Flynn commenced her academic career as a Lecturer in Computer Science, holding undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications in Mathematical Physics and Computer Science from University College Cork, an MA in Management in Education from Waterford Institute of Technology, and a PhD from the Kemmy Business School at the University of Limerick. She is a current Director on the Boards of HEANet and the Technological Universities Association and has previously held Director positions on both Cork and Galway Chambers of Commerce. Dr Flynn is a proud Deise woman, with roots in Lismore and Cappoquin.

Prof Gerard Dooly, Centre for Robotics & Intelligent Systems, University of Limerick.

Title: From Seafloor to Smartphone: Digital Mapping, Marine Robotics, and Citizen Science for Coastal Literacy

Digital education and citizen engagement is rapidly evolving, driven by advances in robotics, geospatial mapping, and mobile platforms that connect communities. This keynote presents an integrated approach to coastal citizen science and outreach, showcasing how drones, ROVs, AI-enhanced perception, and the mobile app are transforming how we observe, teach, and engage with coastal and underwater ecosystems. Examples include seabed and shoreline mapping, underwater imaging for cultural-heritage sites, and community-driven reporting of marine plastics. These technologies not only generate high-quality environmental datasets but also support new pedagogical models, immersive visualisation, digital storytelling, and experiential learning. The talk will show how straightforward digital tools and real mapping



data can support teaching, learning, and community understanding of the coast.

Professor Gerard Dooly is a lecturer in Robotics and Automation at the University of Limerick and Director of the Centre for Robotics & Intelligent Systems (www.CRIS.ie). He has over 20 years of experience developing advanced robotics and sensing platforms at UL. Gerard is the nominated responsible person for all UAS operations within the University and holds an Irish Aviation Authority license to operate fixed-wing and multirotor systems up to 75 kg MTOW.

He is Principal Investigator on multiple research projects, including two European-funded and four nationally funded grants. His research spans real-time 3D reconstruction, SLAM, machine

vision and machine learning, optical sensing,
structural health monitoring, and automated survey and intervention systems.

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