

EDI BULLETIN

Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences



Welcome from the Dean

Colleagues, I am delighted to welcome you to the June edition of the AHSS EDI Bulletin. It is exciting to see so much activity in the Faculty in the areas of equality, diversity and inclusion, particularly since the relatively recent inaugural bulletin last March. This is both reassuring and emboldening, emphasising the sustainability of the initiatives and the commitment of staff and students. Our

focus on equality, diversity and inclusion helps to create and support an environment which respects, values and champions difference. It represents an openness to inclusivity and the richness that diversity offers our community. Most of all, it is a recognition of the fundamental importance of equal concern and respect for the dignity and worth of all persons.

The initiatives in the Faculty have been very impressive. They have both a depth and breadth, and include: media-based interventions such as Tell Your Own Story, participation in seminars on LGBTI+ parental rights, Africa Day and Eid al-Fitr celebrations, performances exploring the role of culture amidst adversity, the launch of Unapologetic and Gorm Media to highlight social issues facing contemporary and multicultural Ireland, the creation of new peer support groups such as Trans Limerick Community (TLC), the running of the ISPhD Intercultural Summer School, the sharing of ideas on Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and the recent appointment of a new Intercultural Advocate, Michelle Daly. I am very grateful to Dr Lydia Bracken for her proactive and engaging leadership in the role as Assistant Dean of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and to all staff and students who participated in the range of excellent initiatives outlined in the bulletin.



*Professor Shane Kilcommins, Executive Dean of the
Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences.*

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Staff Attitudinal Survey

Action 3.3 of the AHSS Athena SWAN Action Plan commits the Self-Assessment Team (SAT) to conducting annual attitudinal surveys with AHSS staff and students to regularly collect feedback and monitor progress as actions are implemented. In light of the changing environment created by the COVID 19

pandemic, the SAT committed to issuing the first surveys within the first year of the Bronze award. A survey was issued to AHSS Staff in March 2021 in order to gather information on how staff are adjusting to remote working during the COVID 19 pandemic and to identify any supports that may be needed.



Summary of Results:

The overall response rate to the survey was 38% (70). Among academic and teaching staff, the response rate was 35%. Among professional and support staff, the response rate was 81%. The majority of respondents identified themselves as female (68%) working in an academic post (79%).

Workload:

Most respondents indicated that their workload had increased as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic: 67% said they 'spend more time on teaching' than before the pandemic and 61% said they 'spend more time on administrative tasks' than they did before the pandemic. By contrast, 60% of respondents felt that they 'spend less time on research' than they did before the pandemic. In terms of overall workload, 56% of respondents felt that they 'always work more than contracted to'.

Communications and Meetings:

The majority of respondents indicated they are happy with the level and frequency of communications from their line manager/ Head of Department and are happy with the frequency and timing of team meetings.

Staff Suggestions:

A variety of responses were received in response to the questions 'What is the top thing your manager/Head of Department/Faculty could do to support you to work remotely from home at the moment?' and 'Do you have any other comments or suggestions for improvement of working practices in your area?'

It is encouraging to note that some respondents used this section to commend the work of their line manager. Others put forward specific suggestions. The most common suggestions fell into the following broad categories:

- Timely and transparent communications from the line manager.
- Clarity on workload and provision of teaching supports.
- A general call for flexibility in all aspects of work.
- A desire to free up time for research.

AHSS Faculty Response:

In response to the issues identified in the survey, the AHSS Athena SWAN SAT proposes that the following responses apply for the remainder of the current period of remote working. These responses are supported by the AHSS Management Committee:

- Line managers should ensure that they maintain regular contact with staff and respond to queries in a timely manner.
- Workload allocations should be transparent and communicated to staff well in advance of the start of each semester.
- Staff are reminded that there is no requirement or expectation to reply to emails outside of the core hours of 9am-5pm. HR have also developed guidance on minimising email, available [here](#).
- In line with the recent HR guidance on meetings:
 - As far as possible, all faculties and divisions are asked to keep Fridays as free from online meetings as possible to give the space needed to keep on top of workload.
 - Try not to schedule meetings back to back.
 - Allocate times in your day for dealing with email or other activities including taking breaks and getting away from the screen for a few minutes on a regular basis.
 - When team meetings are held, the call should open 15 minutes before the scheduled time for team members to get a chance to talk and interact outside the meeting agenda.
- In line with the recent HR guidance on flexible working arrangements: employees can request to operate hours that suit their needs best. They should be facilitated to do their hours of work later or earlier in the day or at weekends if requested to free up their time during the weekly working hours for non-work-related responsibilities.

It should also be noted that HR is currently developing a policy on remote working. When published, this will provide further clarity on expectations for staff when working off-campus.

Student Attitudinal Survey

A survey was also circulated to undergraduate and postgraduate taught students enrolled on AHSS programmes. The response rate was low at 3.5% (119 students) so the responses cannot be regarded as representative of the most prevalent issues arising for students in the faculty. However, it is important that staff who teach are aware of the student responses. The sample of students who responded to the survey indicated that:

- The main challenges experienced while learning remotely were:
 - Staying motivated
 - Loneliness/ isolation
 - Making friends is harder
 - Too many distractions at home
- Most respondents (59%), indicated that it is 'more difficult' for them to ask/answer questions in online lectures compared to face-to-face lectures.
- 53% of respondents felt they now spend more time on coursework (including attending/viewing lectures) than they did before the pandemic.
- A variety of responses were received in respect of the question 'What is the main thing that your lecturers could do to support you during the current period of remote teaching and learning?'
 - It is encouraging that many respondents used this question as an opportunity to commend the supports provided by their lecturers.
 - Specific suggestions were also put forward. The most common suggestions related to: a desire for reminders of key tasks to be sent by lecturers each week; a reduction in workload; greater flexibility in terms of deadlines; a desire for more live interactions.

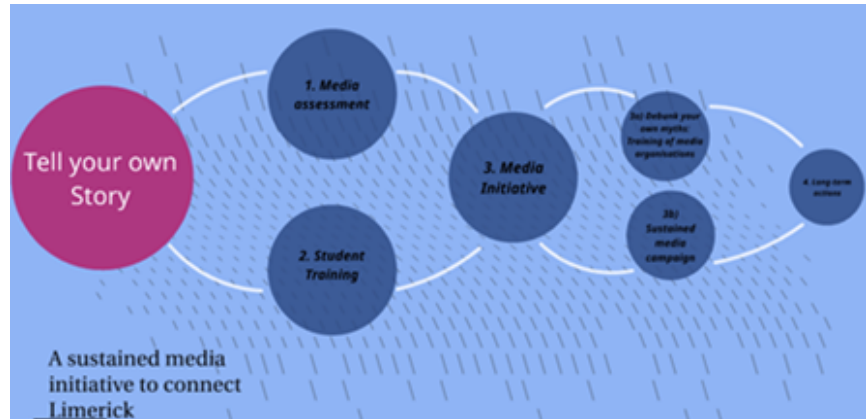
These points have been brought to the attention of the Faculty Undergraduate Teaching and Learning Committee for consideration.



Faculty EDI Activity

Tell Your Own Story: A media campaign promoting diversity in the Mid-West region and Limerick city

'Tell your own story' is a new project promoting inclusivity and diversity in Limerick and the Mid-West region through a sustained media campaign. It emerged as a response to racist incidents that took place on the UL campus and Limerick city in 2021. These included sustained



intimidation and verbal abuse of PhD students from Algeria, many of whom are Muslim. This large group of scholarship holders who only arrived a few months ago will therefore be chosen as a pilot group for this project.

Research has shown that stereotypes are created and altered based on first-hand and single experiences with members of stigmatised groups, but also, and more importantly, driven by second-hand information from sources such as mass media, friends, and family. Hence, it is often a lack of knowledge that causes stereotypes and incidents of racism. In particular, media and news exercise great power over their audiences: prolonged exposure to biased media content has the potential to cause highly automatic stereotypes and behaviours towards other cultures.

A large amount of research already exists on bias and a lack of diversity of voices in the media, both in terms of who is employed in media organisations and the way organisations portray the 'Other'. Following on from this lack of diversity, there is often a perception that media is 'done' to people and that people become victims of the media. This project is a media-based intervention for stereotype and prejudice reduction at the University of Limerick, Limerick and the Mid-West Region where trained students will engage in sustained and narrative-based contributions to media platforms and add to the diversity of voices in the media.

The PI for the project is Dr Maria Rieder, School of Modern Languages and Applied Linguistics. Project members are Anita Barmettler, Michelle Daly, Dr Angela Farrell, Dr Marta Giralt, Dr Florence Le Baron-Earle, Dr Niamh Lenahan, Stephanie O'Riordan.



Four Families: A Series on LGBTI+ Parental Rights



OUTLAW
network



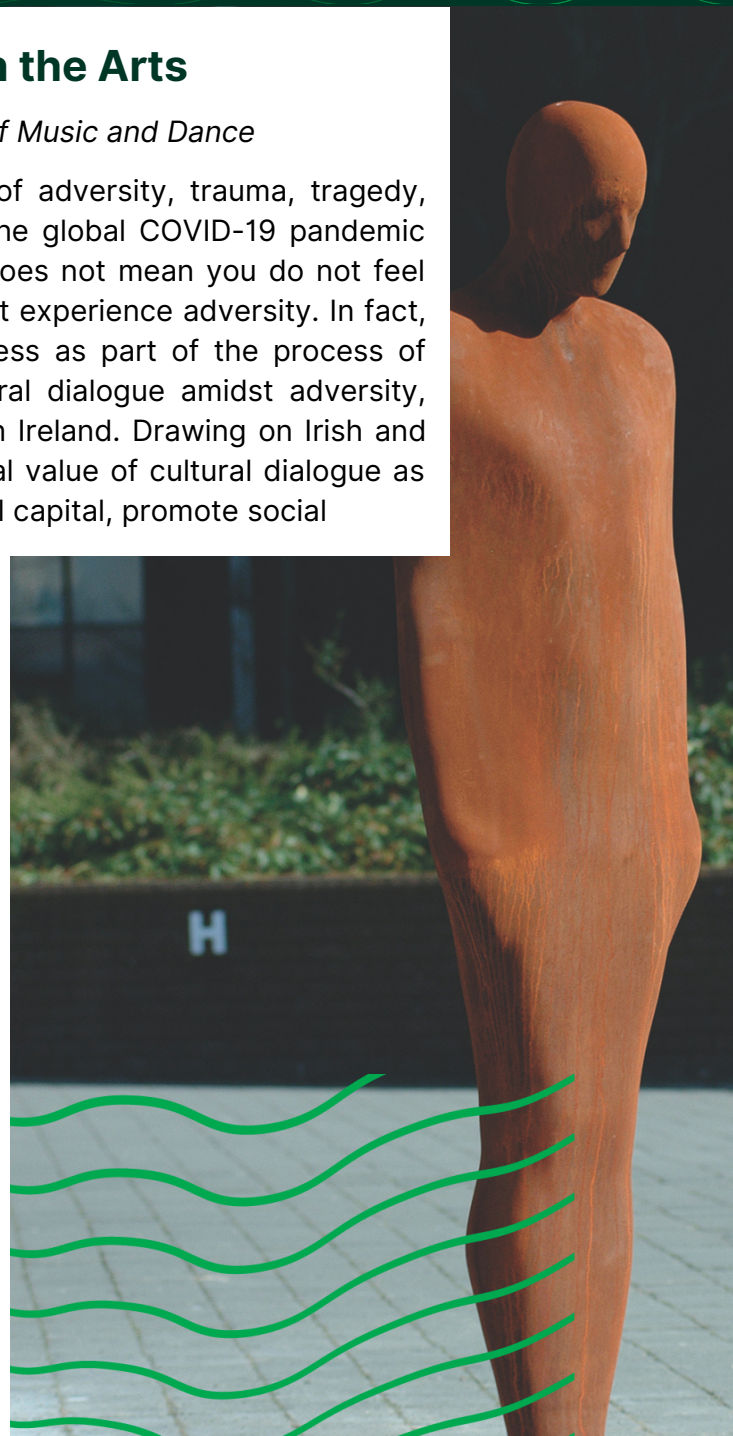
Dr Lydia Bracken recently participated in a webinar series on LGBTI+ parental rights hosted by Equality for Children and the OUTLAW Network. Lydia spoke as part of the third webinar in the series, 'Who's out? – Which LGBT+ parents cannot apply to get parental rights?'. A recording of the webinar is available at <https://www.outlawnetwork.ie/four-families-a-series-on-lgbt-parental-rights/>

Resilience in Cultural Dialogue through the Arts

by John Nutekpor, PhD Candidate, Irish World Academy of Music and Dance

Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress. Undoubtedly, the global COVID-19 pandemic crisis has put our resilience to the test. Being resilient does not mean you do not feel distress. Emotional responses are expected for those that experience adversity. In fact, the road may well involve considerable emotional distress as part of the process of resilience. This performance explored the role of cultural dialogue amidst adversity, particularly in the context of new cultural communities in Ireland. Drawing on Irish and Ghanaian performative practices, it explored the potential value of cultural dialogue as noted by Hanssanli et al. (2019) to build social and cultural capital, promote social cohesiveness, give communities the opportunity for public celebration, facilitate a feeling of social harmony, enhance social identities, offer a release from the stresses of everyday life, positively influence subjective well-being, contribute to a sense of place and build better multicultural society. The performance grounds this exploration in an artistic dialogue of creation, development, dissemination and reflexive evaluation of a musical and dance performance piece called Kutrikuku/Resilience, produced as part of an arts-practice investigation of cultural dialogue through music and dance pedagogy, curation and performance by John Nutekpor a third year PhD candidate at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance.

The performance was performed virtually on the 5th of November 2020 in an empty auditorium and was supported by the Department of Justice and Equality, Limerick City and County Council, Irish World Academy of Music and Dance and The University of Limerick. A recording is available [here](#).



New Appointment of Intercultural Advocate for ISPhD FAHSS Cohort



Michelle Daly, PhD researcher of intercultural awareness at the School of Modern Languages and Applied Linguistics, has recently been appointed as the Intercultural Advocate for the International Structured PhD FAHSS Cohort. This role was created by former Executive Dean FAHSS, Professor Helen Kelly-Holmes with the support of VP Global and Community Engagement, Professor Máiréad Moriarty and the ISPhD Programme Director, Dr Angela Farrell.

In this role, Michelle meets the students for consultation on a wide array of topics and advocates for them by liaising with the ISPhD Programme Director Dr Angela Farrell, the Postgraduate Students' Union President Andrea La Touche, faculty, and support staff. This is with the aim of supporting the students' successful integration into university campus life and the local Limerick community.

Michelle has been instrumental in organising the ISPhD Intercultural Summer School in conjunction with Dr Angela Farrell and the MLAL Internationalisation committee. This four-day virtual event in June will feature workshops, panel discussions, guest speakers and student presentations on different aspects of Algerian and Irish culture. Both Irish and international PhD students are also invited to attend and will be facilitating some of the workshops.

The key themes for the ISPhD Intercultural Summer School are as follows:

- Self-empowerment
- Ireland: Past and Present
- Moving to a New Culture
- Communication Across Cultures
- ISPhD Supervisor Day

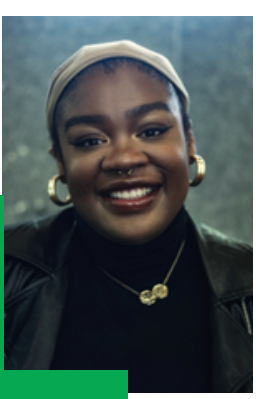
This event will create opportunities for shared cultural knowledge and discussion to enhance intercultural understanding and communication to support internationalisation as a key objective (Goal 3) of the UL@50 Strategic Plan 2019-2024.





Gorm Media

Mamobo Ogoro is a 3rd year PhD student in the Modern Languages and Applied Linguistics and Psychology Departments at the University of Limerick. Her Research focuses on the media and social representations of first- and second-generation migrants in Ireland. Following the rise of social consciousness that occurred in Ireland in 2020, Mamobo grew frustrated with the lack of nuance in conversation relating to social issues and the divisiveness within them. Therefore, she took it upon herself to tackle this issue, and created Gorm Media. Gorm Media, is a start-up social enterprise that curates common ground. With a shared understanding that difference does not mean division, Gorm's impact lies within the core mission to spark a movement of unity and shared understanding, in which they critically engage with social issues through online video content that educates, entertains and sparks curiosity within their audience to create a better more empathetic world. The enterprise began as a reflective new media/arts project through a web show called Gorm TV, in which Mamobo and a diverse range of young speakers come together and speak on the social issues that affect Ireland's multicultural generation, and highlights the nuances that lie within these issues. Now, they are developing as a social enterprise and working with initiatives such as Social Impact Ireland, Stand.ie and Your Y Network to further develop their objectives.



Website: www.gormmedia.com

Social Media (Facebook/Instagram/Twitter): @gormmedia

Afro-Irish Cultural Dialogue: Voices of African Scholars

In association with the African Scholars Association of Ireland, John Nutekpor, PhD Candidate, Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, organised a webinar on 'Afro-Irish Cultural Dialogue: Voices of African Scholars' as part of Ireland's Africa Day celebrations on 25 May 2021.

It featured invited speakers from the African Scholars Association Ireland, highlighting current African-Irish research. Speakers included Dr. Eburn Joseph, Funmi Jinadu, Sandrine Uwase Ndahiro, and John Nutekpor.

Afro-Irish Cultural Dialogue: Voices of African Scholars
 Tuesday, May 25th
 2pm - 3pm GMT
 3pm - 4pm pm IST

			
Chair and Speaker: John Nutekpor	Opening Words: Dr. Eburn Joseph	Speaker: Funmi Jinadu	Speaker: Sandrine Uwase Ndahiro

Logos at the bottom include: Limerick City & County Council, Irish Research Council, and University of Limerick.

The Launch of Unapologetic - A New Multidisciplinary Magazine

Unapologetic is a new magazine that seeks to bring together academics, artists, activists, writers, and creatives to capture a comprehensive view of the social issues facing contemporary Ireland. *Unapologetic* wishes to capture a historical moment in the era of BLM, Marriage Equality and Repeal the Eighth, as we move to a new definition of what it means to be Irish. All these intersectional ideas of change are contributing to modern discussions of contemporary Ireland. *Unapologetic* will give people from minority and diverse backgrounds a space to be unapologetically themselves while simultaneously highlighting the social issues we see and experience in Irish society today. Your voice matters.

Unapologetic is about creating a space, a medium, and a community that works toward a vision of a better Ireland where academics, artists, activists, writers, and creatives can share their love for creativity as a form of social activism. This first issue of *Unapologetic*, called 'Change Makers' focuses on historical figures, moments, and aspirations that inform our understanding of contemporary Ireland. We ask each contributor to think about a definition of 'change makers' that helps you to understand pathways to a better future. This interdisciplinary issue will be made accessible for all and should be of particular interest to those who see the power of writing as a form of activism.

The Co-founders and Co-Editors-in-Chief of *Unapologetic* are Sandrine Uwase Ndahiro, Gareth Brinn, and Professor Margaret Harper. Sandrine is a PhD Candidate in the English department at the University of Limerick, Gareth Brinn is a Master of Arts in Technical Communication and E-Learning student at the University of Limerick, and Professor Margaret Harper is the Professor of Contemporary Writing in English at the University of Limerick.

Sandrine, Gareth, and Professor Harper began the magazine for a multitude of reasons. Firstly, they saw an opportunity for a new space for young voices, emerging voices, and minority voices within the academic and literary spaces. Secondly, they want to showcase that not every opinion about Ireland's future must come from an academic or politician. They want to show that academics, artists, activists, and writers can exist in one space and build a comprehensive understanding of Ireland's future together.

Unapologetic's submission window is open until the 31st of July 2021 at 9 pm. Fiction, Creative Non-Fiction, Academic Essay are to be between 800-1200 words. All works submitted will be peer-reviewed with one round of revisions. *Unapologetic* also accepts Poetry, Visual Art, Music, Photographs, and Audio. Full submission details are on the [website](#).



Trans Limerick Community founded by AHSS student

Trans Limerick Community (TLC) is a new peer support group for trans, non-binary, gender diverse and questioning adults based out of Limerick. TLC was founded by Creative Writing MA student Will Keohane, with the aim to provide a safe online community space to meet-up, chat, support each other and share information and resources.



The inaugural meeting and launch of TLC was a hugely successful and well-attended event, that helped to bring together the beautiful, bright diverse trans community in Limerick City and its surroundings. TLC look forward to joining and connecting with the vast network of peer-support groups in Ireland for trans, non-binary and gender diverse people in Ireland. At the launch of TLC, we were joined by Lilith Carroll and Noah Halpin from the Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI). TLC are delighted to be supported by TENI, and particularly want to acknowledge the work of Lilith in helping to establish the group. TLC is also supported by cultural and community resource centre, Ormston House. In-person meetings will be held at [Ormston House](#) later this year, in accordance with government guidelines.

TLC meetings currently take place online via Zoom. For details of future meetings, and to join the mailing list, please email: translimerick@gmail.com. Anyone who identifies as trans, non-binary, gender diverse or questioning is welcome to join, and participate in a way that is comfortable for them. For more details and regular updates, follow us on [Instagram](#) & [Twitter](#).

Universal Design for Learning Virtual Coffee Mornings

In April and May, AHSS hosted two online Universal Design for Learning (UDL) 'coffee mornings', which provided an informal space for sharing ideas and examples of UDL. Each session started with a short presentation from an experienced UDL educator to kick start the discussions and this was followed by an unstructured 'chat' about UDL. Jess Beeley delivered a presentation on incorporating UDL principles into teaching practice at the April meeting and Darina Slattery presented on information and instructional design strategies for promoting accessibility at the May meeting. Resources from these sessions are available on the [AHSS E-Learning SharePoint](#).

We are keen to continue these sessions and are particularly interested in showcasing disciplinary examples of UDL in practice. If you are interested in delivering a short presentation on your use of UDL at a future session, please contact Lydia.Bracken@ul.ie.

Universal Design for Learning

by Jess Beeley, Educational Technologist, Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a research-based quality teaching and learning framework to support a diverse student population, and to develop more engaged learners who are more fully able to demonstrate their knowledge.

UDL breaks down barriers and provides equity in education. It creates a positive learning experience for all your students, and a better teaching experience for you. UDL is not just for students with disabilities but rather a way to support all your students.

There are many ways you can incorporate UDL into your teaching, which can promote:

- **CONSISTENCY:** Use logical and consistent formatting in your Sulis site. Chunk your weekly content. Use the AHSS Module Template in Sulis.
- **CLARITY:** Ensure your module outline, assignment instructions, due dates and learning outcomes are clear. Provide students with grading rubrics. Signposting is your friend!
- **FLEXIBILITY:** Ensure elements of your course can be undertaken at a student's own pace. Reconsider using timed exams.
- **CHOICE:** Have students choose from a selected bank of assignment topics. Allow students to demonstrate their knowledge in multiple ways. For example, allow a student to submit their assignment by essay, audio or video.
- **ACCESSIBILITY:** Ensure your materials are accessible. Provide captions in your videos. Give content in multiple formats.
- **REVIEW and REFLECT:** What current course activities, methods of instruction, and assessments are working well? Listen to feedback from your students.

You are probably using some of these techniques already. I recommend making small steps by incorporating one or two new ideas into your teaching and seeing what kind of difference it makes.

Resources on UDL are available on the [AHSS E-Learning SharePoint](#).

Upcoming training in UDL:

The National Forum's Digital Badge for Universal Design in Teaching & Learning is being rolled out this October - December. It requires 25 hours of work, and you will be supported by online materials, facilitators, and a peer group. The course will be advertised within UL in August - September.

Celebrating Eid al-Fitr at the University of Limerick: A time for Celebration with our Algerian Colleagues

COVID-19 restrictions did not prevent the International Structured PhD FAHSS Cohort from celebrating Eid al-Fitr recently at the University of Limerick. Eid al-Fitr marks the end of Ramadan, a month-long period of fasting, prayer, reflection and community engagement and is one of the most anticipated Islamic holidays.



Both FAHSS staff and PhD students came together virtually to mark this special occasion on Wednesday, May 12th, 2021. Watch the full celebratory event [here](#). ISPhD student, Naima Manaa created an informative presentation in which she explains how the Muslim community worldwide celebrate Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr with specific distinctions given to the Algerian context in terms of traditions, recipes, music and more. To listen to Naima's presentation, click [here](#).

In celebration of Eid al-Fitr with the wider university community, a collaborative student-led newsletter was launched by Aine Proudfoot, UL Global and Michelle Daly, Intercultural Advocate ISPhD. The ISPhD cohort and other students submitted a broad array of enlightening contributions of how they united to celebrate the end of Ramadan at the University of Limerick. To read the newsletter, click [here](#).

With the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, small groups of people were able to meet. Well-known local Limerick photographer, Sean Shinnars, captured this evening of joy and festivity among the community of ISPhD students on campus at Thomond Village. The event was organised by Andrea La Touche, Postgraduate Students' Union President.



Pride Month

'Pride Month' is celebrated in June. This is a time when the LGBTQI+ community celebrates in different ways. As well as being a month long celebration, Pride month is also an opportunity to peacefully protest and raise political awareness of current issues facing the community. AHSS is home to a number of scholars who research across a broad range of LGBTQI+ issues in our society, helping to address current issues and provide support to community organisations through research collaborations.

Happy Pride Month!

EQUALITY.

LOVE.

PRIDE.