



STUDENT NEWSLETTER

Scoil an Leighis Tréidliachta UCD | UCD School of Veterinary Medicine

WELCOME

Welcome to Issue 4 of our newsletter! In the Student Newsletter editorial virtual-office, we can't believe it's almost August. And we also can't believe the weather in Dublin, which feels more like November some days than mid-summer! *shaking fists at sky* Still, every day is made that bit better and brighter by reading about what's happening in your corners of the world. In this issue, we hear about some crafting that was full swing during lockdown. Scott, one of UCD's amazing chaplains, reflects on things he's learned during the pandemic, and Vivien gives us a fascinating insight into doing a PhD in the Vet School. Finally, check out the sections on supports available to you, from the UCD Writing Centre to Jigsaw's new live chat support. As always, we'd love to hear from you and what you're up to. Read on for ways you can get involved.



School News

Work has been ongoing over the summer preparing to welcome back our continuing students and welcome our new students. The School is aiming to provide the best possible campus and blended-learning experience for our students, and it will be beneficial for you to check out and keep an eye on [the School website](#) for up-to-date information on your return to learning this coming trimester.

Another helpful website that we've referred to here before is the [UCD Student Centre website](#) where you can access information on what facilities, services and supports are currently open and available to you on campus as well as those that are available by phone or virtually. The website is updated regularly as more facilities, services and supports re-open their doors.



Reflection During Times of Crisis

Scott Evans, UCD Chaplain and Student Adviser

Back when I used to run internship programmes, one of the exercises we would do with new recruits was to ask them to imagine that they had won the lottery and that they now had an unlimited budget to start a project that they felt would impact the world. They'd go away for a couple of hours and come back with big and beautiful ideas of how they would spend their imaginary cash. Once everyone had presented their proposal, we would then deconstruct each idea to discover the values that made it worth doing. By the end of the session, they were still broke but they knew more about what mattered to them and what they felt the world needed.

Times of crisis like we are currently experiencing can do the same thing. One of the things I find helpful is to ask myself, 'What do you miss about life as it used to be?' The next question I ask is 'And why do I miss that?' What is it about going for long coffees with friends that I miss? What is it I miss about the cinema or music gigs? I miss the connection with others. I miss the stories that filmmakers tell and the emotions that musicians evoke within me. And then I try to remind myself that connection is still possible. Stories are still being told. My emotions are still there to be experienced and explored. What we miss reminds us of what matters to us and, if we can find the energy and imagination, we can find new ways of doing and experiencing what matters. My challenge to myself this summer is to find new ways of pursuing things that are restorative and life-giving life to me. They may not be familiar but my hope and prayer is that they will still be fulfilling.



Tips for Wellbeing



Have you got a few minutes to take a look at some really interesting information about self-care? We hope so!

Firstly, [this article from the Atlantic](#) series 'How to Build a Life' gives some great tips on dealing with negative emotions - something most of us have unfortunately had many of since March. But then, if you're due for a little self-compassion why not try the [RAIN meditation](#) technique - no equipment other than an open mind is needed!

Finally, we've all had our lives disrupted over the last number of months, and for many that includes our sleep patterns, but all is not lost. [Take a look at this video](#) to see what you can do to get those ZZZZs back on track.

Pandemic Thoughts: Stop. Look. Go.

Your Student Newsletter Editorial Team went down the TED Talk rabbit hole these past few weeks and stumbled across [this gem of a talk by monk, author and lecturer, Br David Steindl-Rast](#).

In it, Br David talks about the search for happiness and creating a joyful world. He says that it is gratefulness that makes us happy and not the other way around. He also talks about opening our hearts to opportunities and learning from failure, and he says that every moment 'is a gift' and that we need to take time in our busy lives to try to live more mindfully using the simple mantra: Stop. Look. Go.

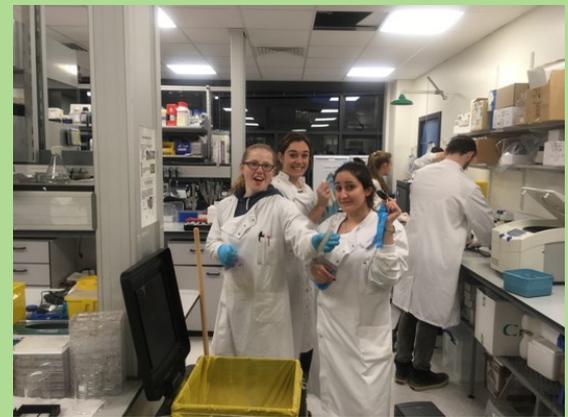


Completing a PhD in the UCD School of Veterinary Medicine

Vivien Stüttgen, PhD student (just post viva voce!)

Exactly one week ago* I passed my viva and I still have not processed it. I keep reminding myself, I still cannot believe it! There were times during my PhD when I thought I would never reach this stage, but somehow, I made it. When I started my PhD, I thought I was ready for it. I expected it to be difficult, challenging, frustrating and a lot of work, but I have to admit it was a lot harder than expected. There were times when I was close to giving up and thought I could not do it anymore. I made it, thanks to my amazing support system. A PhD journey is different for everyone, but some aspects are the same for most of us. It is stressful, frustrating and takes over your life. Sometimes, I thought my PhD taught me not to like science and research anymore, but that is not true. I still love research, I still can get excited over every little success in the lab, I am still fascinated by science, and I think these are important things you need to hold on to. A PhD is very different to any other degree on so many levels; it is not only a research degree - it is a life journey. Yes, my PhD has taught me a lot about research, time-management, project planning and so many other transferable skills. Besides this, my PhD has taught me a lot about myself. It brought me some of the most amazing people into my life, showed me how important it is to build your own support network, that it is okay to ask for help, and it gave me the chance to find my love for teaching.

Here are some thoughts for some of you who consider doing a PhD: Really think about if you want to commit so many years to one project, be prepared that you'll have days when nothing works, keep in mind that you will constantly be challenged in good and bad ways, and that you will sometimes feel like this will never end. If you really feel like this journey is not for you, it is okay to leave. It might feel like you failed - believe me you have not. It is an incredibly brave decision. Besides all the negative aspects, be ready to have the greatest laughs and funniest conversation with your colleagues. You will grow with every challenge (and trust me there will be plenty). Some of the other PhD students who accompany you on this journey will become your greatest friends, because going through this experience together creates a bond that is indescribable.



Cleaning the lab!

Some advice for my fellow PhD students: Hang in there! You will get there eventually even if it sometimes does not feel like it. Enjoy every small success and try to enjoy the journey as much as you can. If you struggle or feel like you are hitting a wall, reach out for help, have a chat with your colleagues, go for a walk and get a hot chocolate. Most importantly, make sure you have a life outside the lab and you are not losing yourself. In my case, climbing and aerial silks helped me A LOT. It kept me sane and it was the time where I allowed myself to take a break from my PhD. Give yourself this time without feeling guilty - you deserve it; you need it.



Getting some downtime and learning new skills during the PhD: Vivien doing aerial silks

I still cannot believe I made it, especially in these strange times. Who would have thought I'd have to defend my thesis over zoom? But somehow this is symbolic for your PhD journey - you will never really know what can happen the next day. One last thing, you might feel incredibly lonely on this journey sometimes; however, based on my experience, my PhD would not have been possible without all the people around me. Even if it feels like you are alone, you are not - be brave and reach out to other people. A PhD is an emotional rollercoaster. If you consider doing one, be prepared for it; if you are already doing one, you are doing amazing. I believe you can do it.

**Note from the Student Newsletter editors: Vivien passed her viva voce on July 15th. Thank you Vivien for writing this piece for us so soon after completing your own Trojan piece of research and writing. And congratulations Doctor!*

Mask-making During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Orla Hanratty, Lecturer/Assistant Professor, VetEd Hub

Masks and face-coverings are in the public eye at the moment, and (thankfully) in many cases on faces! Orla Hanratty in the VetEd Hub, like many others, has been making masks since March. Thanks to a callout from [UCD Purl Jam](#) for mask-makers, Orla dusted off the sewing machine and her skills. These masks were destined for use by healthcare workers in a Blackrock nursing home to wear over their surgical masks. The beautiful fabrics were deemed more appropriate for use because some of the nursing home residents had become quite scared by the look of the surgical masks. Wearing a colourful mask over the surgical mask had the effect of easing some of that fear and anxiety. Niamh Nestor (UCD Purl Jam co-ordinator alongside Science Student Adviser Catriona Keane) supplied beautiful fabrics and satin bias tape, and after a few emails to Purl Jammers about filters and length of bias tape, Orla created a batch of face coverings.

Once Orla's nimble fingers got going, she continued to source more fabric and make masks for friends, family, neighbours and herself! It was a challenge initially to get 100% cotton and elastic in the early stages of lockdown, but Orla followed a few leads and soon had supplies from a bookshop in Tipperary ([The Bookworm in Thurles](#)) and [Love Fabric](#), an online fabric shop in Co. Mayo.



Masks in the blue and white of Co. Monaghan** (but don't worry fans from other counties - they are reversible!)

Friends and colleagues also supplied fabrics. Soon family and friends were getting masks posted to them - some as birthday presents. Orla is also experimenting with denim for a men's range and is even trying double-denim. While a variety of cotton patterns are used, most masks have a cotton layer in white and blue stripes in case Monaghan's men's or ladies' GAA teams get back out on pitches.



Rufus modelling a mask from Orla's Spring/Summer 2020 collection



Batch of masks destined for a nursing home in Blackrock

Orla's cousin's dog Rufus was intrigued by the masks being worn. Some students and staff may recognise him as he visited the UCD Vet Hospital last November. He arrived in hospital very ill, but after excellent care from all who met him, he is now bouncing around and enjoying daily COVID walks in Monaghan.

***Note from the Student Newsletter editors: Readers may have noticed that Orla is a proud Monaghan woman. We didn't hold this against her at any point during the publication of this article.*

Knitting My Way Through Lockdown

Jessica Griffin, Final-year Veterinary Nursing Student

As an introvert, a guilty confession of mine is that I actually quite enjoyed the 'hiding away' that the lockdown afforded, although I am lucky enough to be already working in practice, and it goes without saying that the veterinary profession is not exactly one that you can work from home in! Aside from thankfully being able to carry on my part-time jobs in my busy practices, I set myself a 'stay-at-home' challenge. I am a keen knitter, and I felt that the lockdown afforded the perfect opportunity for me to finally clear out my storage boxes crammed full of various oddments of wool.

My Granny taught me to knit as a child. I was always fidgeting and could never sit still. Rather than fiddling with cushions and throws and pulling them apart, my Granny gave me two needles and some wool to make things with instead. She taught me the basic knit and purl stitches. Thanks to YouTube tutorials, I have made many different items since for friends, family, and for various charities.

Knitting is my way of relaxing and unwinding. It helps me deal with stress and anxiety, and knitting for others also has the added benefit of the 'feel-good factor'. Knitting is how I clear my head when studying for exams, on my work lunch breaks, and at the end of a stressful day.



Above is an embarrassed Trixie modelling a tutu jumper. It may be a bit small for him!

When my Granny died about 8 years ago, inevitably I inherited her wool stash. I wish I had taken 'before' pictures of what I had – the colours were all wonderful, but the tangled mess was a disaster to unravel! I started clearing out the 'stash' a few years ago when I made some dog jumpers to raise funds for the UCDVH Animal Welfare Fund. Since 2018, I have knitted for premature babies in hospital – tiny hats, booties, mittens, blankets, cardigans, and other adorable garments. I found a use for my real 'odds and sods', too – those small, nearly used-up balls leftover from bigger projects?! I found a charity that you can send knitted blanket squares to, and they send them on to a local sewing group that pieces them all together to make blankets for hospices, care homes, hospitals, and the homeless. When other people learn that I can knit, they delight in being able to pass on to me their stashes of wool, either left over from their relatives or from their failed attempts at crafting! I always try to find a good use for any wool that I am donated. I hope you enjoy some pictures of my work, and that maybe it can inspire some of you out there to take up a craft as a new hobby, or to those who already are keen crafters, to look up some charities that you too can help!

During lockdown, I managed to use up sixteen balls of wool and a shopping bag of 'scraps', helping three charities in total. I still have a stash of wool at my mum and dad's in the UK that my partner doesn't know about, but I'll get there... :)



These knitted items were sent to a group on Facebook that works with hospitals in the UK. The hospitals put out requests to the representatives of various groups for certain items that they need. In turn, these reps put these appeals out on various Facebook pages, and everyone gets knitting what they can to help!

UCD WRITING CENTRE

UCD Writing Centre

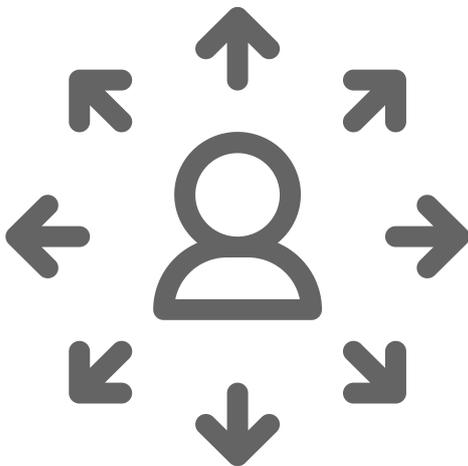
Zeljka Doljanin, Manager of the UCD Writing Centre

Being a student in UCD means being a reader, researcher, and writer. Academic writing has a set of rules of its own: written in a formal style, it should also be highly structured, clear, precise, and analytical. Analysis is especially important because academic writing is argument driven - it makes a claim or takes a position, and supports this claim by critically evaluating evidence. Sounds complicated? Don't worry. You will practise and hone your writing during your time in UCD, and the Writing Centre is here to help.

We're open to all students five days a week during term time. We can support you at any stage of your writing process, from approaching your assignment question and making a plan, to suggesting improvements in your early drafts, or helping you polish a finished paper. We offer workshops on different writing topics, as well as the very popular individual writing sessions. How do they work? You start by making an appointment with the Writing Centre on our website. The writing instructor, with whom you will work closely on a piece of your writing, will talk to you, give you tips and suggestions, and help you to become a more independent and confident writer. Currently, all our sessions are happening online. You can find out more about one-on-one appointments and writing instructors, as well as check out helpful writing handouts and videos, on our [website](#). Questions? Just drop us an email at writingcentre@ucd.ie. We'd love to chat to you!



In the photo above, you can see Scott, one of our tutors, teaching a writing workshop



Postgrad Notices

The next postgrad/postdoc coffee morning and catch up is happening on Thursday, August 6th, 12noon-1pm.

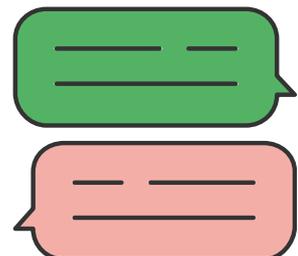
Ger Lardner, Career and Skills Consultant for graduate researchers with the [UCD Careers Network](#), will be present to give a talk on career options following graduate research degrees and answer any questions you might have on the topic afterwards!

Definitely not to be missed. Please contact the Postgrad Rep Ciara by email for the zoom link: ciara.j.hayes@ucdconnect.ie.

Jigsaw Launches New Way to Connect

All of us will experience both good and poor mental health during our lifetimes. There are many [support services available - in person, online, by phone, text and email](#). A new service recently launched is Jigsaw's Live Chat service. Jigsaw is a mental health charity for young people aged 18-25 years old. The Live Chat service allows you to connect 1:1 with their clinicians and is available Monday-Friday, 1pm-5pm. Simply login and talk about what's on your mind or send them an email anytime. Click [here](#) for more details.

You might also be interested in checking out Jigsaw's [brilliant blog](#) which holds lots of helpful information on topics associated with mental health. Jigsaw's website also offers information for [anyone who works with young people](#) and for [parents/guardians](#).



FAQs on UCD's COVID-19 special arrangements can be found on:

<http://www.ucd.ie/covid-19/faqs/faqsforstudents/>