

INSIGHTS INTO

RESEARCH



**St Mary's
University College**

A College of Queen's University Belfast

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SCoTENS Publishes Research on ITE Students with Disabilities

The efforts of conducting a SCoTENS-funded research project resulted in two research-related documents published by SCoTENS during March 2026. Dr Donna Hazzard and Joe Hughes were part of a research team that produced these two reports, in collaboration with other academics from University College Cork.

The first report was titled Exploring Knowledge and Awareness of Reasonable Accommodations/Adjustments (EKARA) for ITE Students with Disabilities in ROI and NI and it investigated the current levels of understanding regarding sensible modifications for students with disabilities within initial teacher education programmes. The second report, titled EKARA: A Toolkit for ITE Stakeholders, was an online toolkit specifically designed to support placements for ITE students with disabilities in ROI and NI.

Rooted in collaborative practice, the research brought together key stakeholders by drawing upon the collective expertise and insights of lecturers, placement coordinators, support staff, teachers and students. A mixed-methods approach incorporating literature review, surveys, focus groups, vignettes and interviews was employed to gather robust data, to identify existing knowledge gaps and to explore prevailing attitudes and practices. The findings from the project were analysed through the application of descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. Dissemination of insights took place at national and international conferences and at a dedicated stakeholder-focused dissemination event.

Exploring Knowledge and Awareness of Reasonable Accommodations/Adjustments for ITE Students with Disabilities in ROI and NI-EKARA



FINAL REPORT

1st of October 2025

Dr Camelia Nadia Bran
Dr Craig Neville

Dr Gemma Campion

Dr Donna Hazzard
Mr. Joe Hughes
Dr Claire Connolly

Exploring Knowledge and Awareness of Reasonable Accommodations/Adjustments for Initial Teacher Education

a toolkit for ITE stakeholders

Dr Camelia Nadia Bran, Dr Craig Neville, Dr Gemma Campion
University College Cork

Dr Donna Hazzard, Mr. Joe Hughes, Dr. Claire Connolly
St Mary's University College Belfast

2025

MEd Student Presents Research at Teacher Education Conference

Dr Matthew Martin was thrilled with the news that his former MEd student, Maeve Wright, was selected to present her research, based on her MEd dissertation, at the inaugural Teacher Education Advancement Network conference (in collaboration with BERA), which was held at Sheffield Hallam University during May 2026. The conference provided the opportunity for Maeve to present her research, titled *Restorative Practice: Eight Principles for Post-Primary Schools When Making the Transition from Punitive Models*, within an encouraging and supportive space to both experienced researchers and those beginning their research journey.



Maeve's research was featured in a panel of talks on social justice and her analysis of data, gathered through semi-structured interviews, showed that successful transitions can create a new school environment, which places value on restoring human relationships and repairing harm as opposed to isolating, excluding and stigmatising wrongdoers. She found that her experience of presenting at the conference offered her an excellent opportunity to share and discuss her proposals for how schools can transition to restorative practice in their pastoral care as well as in behaviour management policies and practices.

Journal Article on the Representation of Ireland in German TV Crime Series

The scholarly journal, *Estudios Irlandeses*, is published by the Spanish Association for Irish Studies and covers a broad scope of interdisciplinary approaches within the field of Irish studies. Its March 2026 edition featured an article by Dr Angela Vaupel and it was titled *Celtic Noir, German Gaze: Der Irland-Krimi and the Cultural Reimagining of Ireland*.

In the article, Angela examined the representation of Ireland in popular German media by focusing on the contemporary TV crime series *Der Irland-Krimi* [*The Ireland Thriller*]. This was set in the picturesque landscapes of Ireland and it reflected German longing to escape its troubled history and challenging present by immersing itself in a romanticised, culturally "pure" setting. The crime genre played a significant role by combining the allure of crime with the appeal of Ireland's enigmatic, timeless atmosphere. While *Der Irland-Krimi* attempted to avoid clichés and national stereotypes, such as the portrayal of Ireland as a land of rugged charm and mystical folklore, it risked perpetuating a "German version" of Irishness.

By exploring the intersection of media consumption, genre and national identity, Angela's analysis of the series assessed whether it served to construct a nostalgic or idealised imaginary Ireland, thereby facilitating escapism, or whether it offered a reflective engagement with its narratives.



SCoTENS Publishes Research on Creativity in Teacher Education

A research report that focused on creativity in initial teacher education was published by SCoTENS during April 2026. It was co-authored by Dr Frances Burgess, in collaboration with fellow academic staff from Dublin City University and Stranmillis University College, and was titled *Contours of Creativity: Teacher Educator, Student Teacher and Policy Perspectives on Creativity*.

Their report presented findings from their research project, which explored how creativity is understood and experienced by teacher educators and first-year student teachers across the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Using a qualitative design, which combined duo-ethnographic dialogue among teacher educators and in-depth interviews with student teachers, the study examined personal beliefs, childhood experiences, professional practices and policy discourses shaping creativity in teacher education. Informed by Foucault's writings on discourse, the analysis revealed that while curriculum policy frames creativity as a transferable competency, it is understood by participants as personal, emotional and founded in lived experience, play and collaboration. The findings challenged reductive and quantifiable approaches to creativity and highlighted tensions between policy imperatives and educational practice.

The report concluded by outlining implications for initial teacher education workshops and curriculum design, advocating for pedagogies that prioritise self-expression, collaboration, playfulness, reflective judgement and a balanced relationship between structure and autonomy in fostering meaningful and inclusive creative practice.

Contours of Creativity: Teacher

educator, student teacher and policy

perspectives on creativity



Kevin Gormley, *Dublin City University*; Frances Burgess, *St Mary's University*

College; Michael Flannery, *Dublin City University*; Glenda Walsh, *Stranmillis*

University College; Conor Scully, *Dublin City University*

'The findings challenged reductive and quantifiable approaches to creativity and highlighted tensions between policy imperatives and educational practice.'

Research Report on Technology & Design Education in Northern Ireland

A new report, launched during March 2026 at Stranmillis University College and co-authored by Joe Hughes and David Neill, highlighted Technology & Design's critical role in preparing young people for the skills needed in a rapidly evolving economy. It was titled The Health, Wellbeing and Future of Technology & Design in Northern Ireland and brought together insights from educators, researchers and stakeholders across the education sector.

The findings of the report highlighted Technology & Design's unique ability to develop creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving, while also supporting pathways into key sectors of the economy including the trades, engineering and advanced manufacturing. However, the report also identified the challenges currently facing the subject, including misconceptions about its value, resource disparities between schools and ongoing uncertainty around its identity within the curriculum. The key findings included: unclear subject identity, with Technology & Design being increasingly broad and having varying interpretations across schools; recognition challenges, with the subject being sometimes perceived as less important than traditional academic subjects; resource pressures, with

funding and equipment limitations affecting the delivery of the subject in some schools; gender imbalance, with participation remaining male-dominated in some contexts; and influences on pupil choice, with timetabling, school policies and external perceptions shaping uptake.

The report concluded that Technology & Design is uniquely positioned to connect education with real-world innovation and industry and the subject calls for renewed attention to its role within curriculum development and education policy in Northern Ireland.

'The report concluded that Technology & Design is uniquely positioned to connect education with real-world innovation and industry ...'



Journal Features Research on Accommodating Disabled Student Teachers on Placement

Stemming from a recently completed research project, Dr Donna Hazzard and Joe Hughes were part of a team of researchers who wrote an article that was published in the International Journal of Inclusive Education during June 2026. It was titled From Willingness to Governance: A Cross- Border Mixed-Method Study of Reasonable Accommodation for Disabled Student Teachers on Placement Settings and examined how stakeholders understand and enact reasonable accommodation for disabled student teachers on placement, while revealing why inclusive policies do not reliably translate into consistent practice.



Their study took the form of a sequential mixed-methods design, by combining an online survey of staff involved in placement with two focus groups. Survey items were interpreted through the theory of planned behaviour, which also informed the qualitative analysis. Quantitatively, the findings revealed that a minority of respondents reported having requested or being provided with reasonable accommodation, in a context of limited training, uneven knowledge and mid-range confidence. Additionally, exploratory bivariate tests did not yield statistically robust predictors of reasonable accommodation practice. Qualitatively, results revealed numerous themes that showed how reasonable accommodation decisions are shaped by eligibility and recognition regimes, informal and relational practices, structural constraints, placement vulnerabilities, trust-based collaboration, as well as staff uncertainty about roles and risk.

Research Article on Experiencing Partition in the Borderlands of Dromore and Trillick

The peer reviewed academic journal, Settler Colonial Studies, featured a research article by Dr Fearghal Mac Bhloscaidh during April 2026, which was titled Dromore and Trillick: Revolution and Reaction on a Colonial Frontier, 1906-22. This journal seeks to address the theoretical and practical aspects and implications of settler colonialism in the past and the present and it was established to respond to a growing demand for reflection and critical scholarship on settler colonialism as a distinct social and historical formation.



In his article, Fearghal analysed the experience of partition in the borderlands of Dromore and Trillick, County Tyrone (1906-22), through the lens of Veracini's settler-colonial triangle. Using census data, Irish-language sources, IRA and Cumann na mBan records, as well as government archives, it showed how republican mobilisation drew on cultural revival to articulate a decolonial, anti-sectarian project, while loyalism functioned as the local expression of settler-colonial dominance. The study demonstrated that the Ulster Special Constabulary (armed, funded and politically protected by the British state) used systematic coercion to secure Unionist rule and enforce the new border. The resulting asymmetry revealed partition not as a democratic compromise but as an imperial settlement sustained by state-backed, settler-colonial violence.

Research Funding Awarded for Developing Numeracy in Irish-Medium Schools

Success was achieved by Dr Thomas Rogan during June 2026 in relation to a research proposal for funding to Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta. The title of Thomas's project is The Effective Development of Numeracy within the Context of Language Immersion Pedagogy in Irish-Medium Schools and it seeks to identify how to combine mathematical pedagogy with language immersion pedagogy in order to optimise outcomes for children and young people, addressing the evolving challenges from Foundation Stage (FS) to Key Stage 3 (KS3).



Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta is the representative body for Irish-Medium schools and it commissioned the research to take forward work relating to specific Irish-Medium recommendations in the 'A Fair Start' policy document, published by the Department of Education in June 2021, to ensure all pupils in Northern Ireland are enabled to reach their full potential. It is hoped that the research will inform effective teaching and learning in the area of numeracy development in an immersion context, as well as the development of appropriate resources to aid both teachers and pupils in this area.

Thomas's research project will seek to identify how effective mathematics pedagogy and language immersion pedagogy can be combined to optimise learning outcomes and support equitable access to mathematical understanding for all learners. The research will investigate: how mathematical concepts are currently taught in Irish-Medium settings; how language supports or inhibits mathematical understanding; the professional learning and resource needs of teachers; and the practical approaches that can be implemented from the beginning of FS to the end of KS3. A mixed-methods approach will be employed, combining: a literature review; questionnaires to primary and post-primary teachers across all phases from FS to KS3; semi-structured interviews with curriculum specialists; and focus groups with numeracy co-ordinators and heads of post-primary departments.

It is anticipated that Thomas's research design will enable the triangulation of findings and will ensure recommendations are informed by both research evidence and practitioner experience.



Conference Features Research on Entrepreneurship Education Through Practice

The 16th edition of the international conference The Future of Education took place in Florence during June 2026, where Karen McGivern presented her research titled Innovating Entrepreneurship Education Through Lived Practice: A Self-Study of Professional Practice Using the 4Ps of Innovation. The conference's thought-provoking sessions, which were integrated with networking opportunities and social events, brought together teachers, researchers and practitioners from all over the world to share findings, expertise and experience about innovative teaching and learning methodologies.

In her presentation, Karen referred to how entrepreneurship education in higher education increasingly emphasises innovation, authenticity and experiential learning but also emphasised the limitations of research on business educators' personal entrepreneurial practice informing innovation pedagogy. Her talk presented an innovation-focused self-study of professional practice, which explored how her dual role as a micro-entrepreneur and business educator enriches student learning and supports ongoing business development through the application of the 4Ps of innovation framework.

Drawing on reflective self-inquiry, professional teaching artefacts and curriculum design decisions, Karen's research examined how product, process, position and paradigm innovation were modelled through lived micro-enterprise practice and embedded within entrepreneurship teaching. The findings suggested that using the 4Ps as a reflexive bridge between theory and practice enabled students to engage with innovation as an accessible, iterative and sustainable activity, while simultaneously informing continuous improvement within the micro-business. While context-specific, the research offered analytically transferable insights and a practice-informed framework that other entrepreneurship educators and practitioner-researchers could adapt.



'... the research offered analytically transferable insights and a practice-informed framework...'

A promotional poster for 'The Future of Education International Conference 16th Edition'. The top half features a night view of the Florence skyline with the Duomo. The bottom half is a white box with an orange border containing the following information:

- Programme and Topics**
 - Innovation in Education
 - Digital Education
 - Integrating AI in Education
 - Gamification
 - Teacher Professional Development
 - Enhancing Student Engagement
 - Student Assessment
 - Inclusion and Diversity in Education
 - Special Needs Education
 - Language Teaching and Learning
 - Science Education
 - Primary and Early Childhood Education
- 17 June 2026 Online Event** (with a laptop icon)
- 18-19 June 2026 Onsite Event in Florence (Italy)** (with a location pin icon)
- Organized by Pixel** (with a globe icon and the text 'Pixel INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE')

Call for Papers and Registration available at:
<https://conference.pixel-online.net/FOE>
E-mail: foe@pixel-online.net

Summer Research Symposium 2026 Held in College

Academic staff gathered for the annual Summer Research Symposium during June 2026, where colleagues presented their research projects and received constructive feedback from attendees. Organised by the Research Office, the symposium featured five presentations and was well attended, providing a valuable forum for the exchange of research ideas, experiences and best practice through audience discussion and engagement.

The event opened with a welcome and introduction from the Research Office, highlighting recent staff achievements, including research publications, conference presentations and collaborative projects.

The first presentation delivered by a member of academic staff was titled Creating Opportunities: Supporting Inclusion through Mathematical Creativity and it was presented by Julie Hamilton. The second presentation was given by Dr Geraldine Parks and it was titled Crossing Linguistic and Jurisdictional Borders through Lesson Study: Primary Teachers' Professional Judgement in Teaching Fractions on the Island of Ireland.

After the morning break, the next presentation was titled The Affective and Reflective Practitioner - Learner Styles and Emotional Competency in Teacher Formation and it was given by Rev Dr Edward McGee. The presentation that followed was delivered by Dr Ciarán Kearney and it was titled 'More than meets the AI': Challenges for Higher Education (and employment) in an Era of Digital Technologies, Social Media and Artificial 'Intelligence'? The final part of the symposium featured Dr Fearghal Mac Bhloscaidh, whose research was titled Dromore and Trillick: Revolution and Reaction on a Colonial Frontier, 1906–22.



'...providing a valuable forum for the exchange of research ideas, experiences and best practice through audience discussion and engagement.'

Equity and Awareness in Initial Teacher Education Highlighted at Research Conference

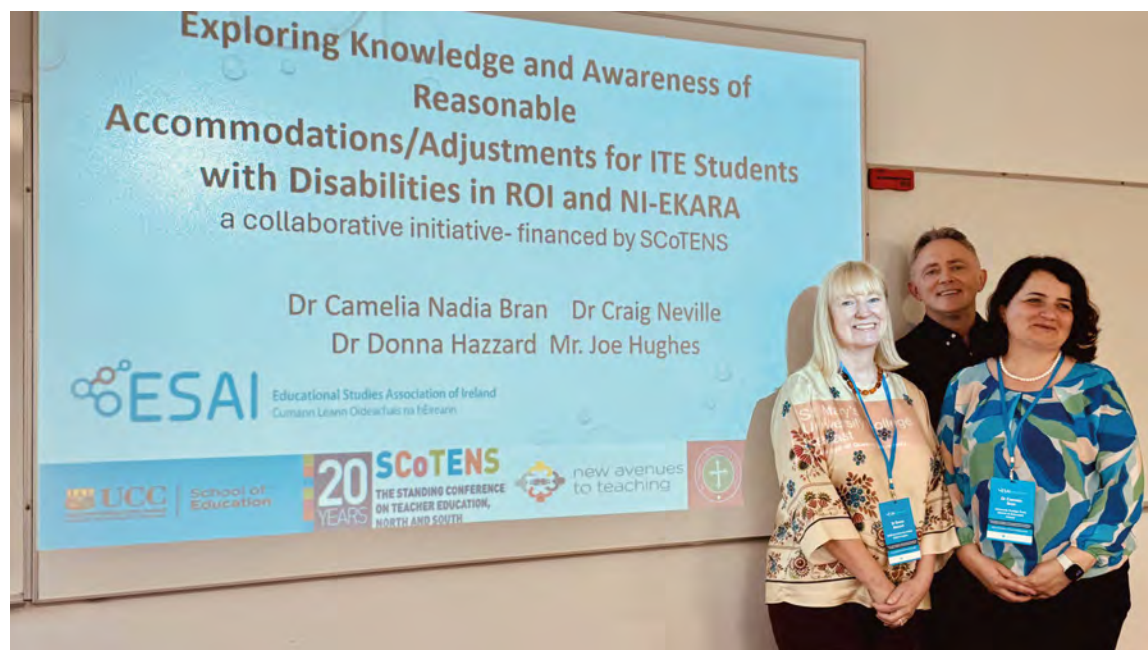
The annual Educational Studies Association of Ireland (ESAI) conference took place in Galway during May 2026 and it was attended by Dr Donna Hazzard and Joe Hughes, who continued the promotion of their SCoTENS-funded project by presenting the findings of their research to fellow educators, researchers and practitioners from early childhood education through to further and higher education.

The conference focused on a celebration of the ESAI under the theme From Legacy to Futures: Celebrating ESAI's First Meeting of Scholars and 50 Years of Irish Educational Research and it was attended by both Irish and international educational scholars from across all academic disciplines in education. It provided a forum that reflected inclusion, collaboration, imagination, social justice and wisdom to provide insights into the activities that inform education today.

The title of the presentation by Donna, Joe and their colleagues was Enhancing Equity and Awareness in Initial Teacher Education Through Reasonable Accommodation / Adjustments for Students with Disabilities in Ireland and it provided the first cross-border, mixed-methods investigation into how reasonable accommodations are understood, implemented and experienced across ITE programmes on the island of Ireland.

Against a backdrop of increasing diversity within student populations and a persistently homogenous teaching workforce, their presentation examined systemic, cultural and practical factors shaping the inclusion of disabled student teachers, with a particular focus on school placement contexts.

'... their presentation examined systemic, cultural and practical factors shaping the inclusion of disabled student teachers ...'

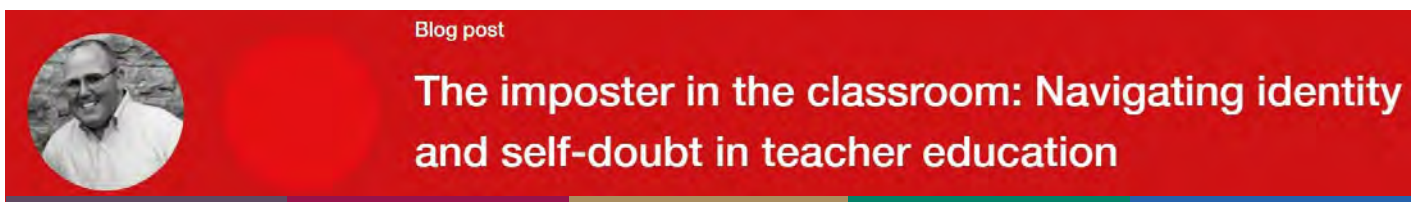


BERA Blog Features Article on Identity and Self-Doubt in Teacher Education

An article by Dr Thomas Rogan was featured in the British Educational Research Association (BERA) Blog during March 2026. It was titled *The Imposter in the Classroom: Navigating Identity and Self-Doubt in Teacher Education* and explored how imposter syndrome emerged during Thomas's transition from primary school teaching to higher education. The BERA Blog is a significant platform for amplifying voices within the education community. Its aim is to provide research-informed content on key educational issues in an accessible manner that attracts academics, policymakers, teachers, educational leaders, members of school communities and politicians.

For his article, Thomas drew upon autoethnographic reflections and research into professional identity formation. Moving from a confident primary practitioner into an unfamiliar academic space, prompted his re-evaluation of legitimacy, knowledge and worth. Thomas found himself asking who he was in his new role and did he truly belong there. His autoethnographic study, based on four years of reflective journalling, revealed a persistent tension between emerging confidence tempered by lingering self-doubt.

However, in the end, he concluded that imposter syndrome is not a weakness. More often, it is the product of caring deeply, setting high standards and finding one's feet in new professional contexts, with confidence building gradually through experience, honest conversations and the courage to believe in belonging.



Two Articles by College Lecturers in Léann Teanga: An Reiviú

Two articles by academic staff were featured in the 2026 edition of *Léann Teanga: An Reiviú*, which is a publication that provides a platform for language discourse in Ireland and abroad. The first was by Dr Seán Mac Corraidh and was titled *Amhráin na ndaoine agus amhráin a chum Séamus Ó Grianna ('Máire') é féin a ndéantar tagairt dóibh ina shaothar*. It is based around the references in Máire's works to old songs and songs that he composed himself. The second was by Dr Fearghal Mac Bhloscaidh and was titled *Ar thóir Ghobán Chill Scíre: réabhlóid agus frithréabhlóid i dTír Eoghain, 1906-24*.



Research on Creativity in Mathematics for Inclusion Delivered at a Conference

New researchers were the focus of an annual conference organised by the British Society for Research into Learning Mathematics (BSRLM) held at King's College London during June 2026. In attendance was Julie Hamilton, who gave a presentation, titled *Creating Opportunities: Supporting Inclusion Through Mathematical Creativity*, which was based on her current doctoral research.



As part of its commitment to supporting mathematics education researchers, the BSRLM invited research students, post-doctorate researchers, as well as newly appointed lecturers to present and to attend sessions on developments or methodological matters in the field of mathematics and to write for its associated journal.

Julie's presentation focused on the challenges facing mathematics education in Northern Ireland. She acknowledged that the primary curriculum supports exploring ideas and thinking creatively, however, she suggested that the post-primary mathematics specification offers relatively little scope for pupils to act with high levels of mathematical agency. Throughout her talk, Julie drew upon work relating to equity and creativity to propose a conception of 'openness' in mathematics that could provide a fruitful avenue to address some of the challenges. She suggested that openness offers a sense of unrestricted access that is central for inclusion and captures a sense of welcome that goes beyond simple equitable access. She went on to argue that openness also implies that mathematics is not finally settled and closed, but rather that there is a place for pupils to suggest, explore and entertain new ideas, rather than passively receive existing knowledge.

Research on the Recruitment of Maths Teachers in NI

Two members of academic staff, Dr Barry Doherty and Julie Hamilton, delivered a presentation to students and academic staff in the College during May 2026. Their talk, titled *Mathematics Teacher Recruitment and Retention in Northern Ireland*, was also attended by DENI's acting Director of Teacher Development, which reflected the Department of Education's active engagement with this important area.



Barry and Julie's research sought to investigate the scope and scale of the challenges in recruiting suitably qualified teachers of mathematics and to give school leaders the opportunity to offer their experiences and perspectives on the issue. They anticipated that their research would both highlight the extent of the issue and offer possible solutions so that challenges may be addressed. It involved distributing a questionnaire to all post-primary schools in NI, as well as conducting interviews with a selection of the school leaders.

Two New Research Projects Receive Funding from SCoTENS

There was success for two research proposals submitted to the Standing Conference on Teacher Education, North & South (SCoTENS) during April 2026. The first project is titled Professional Research in Initial Teacher Education Through Lesson Study and Mentoring: Enhancing Professional Learning and Teacher Well Being in School Placements Through the Japanese Practice of Research Lesson Study and it involves Dr Matthew Martin, who will be working with his colleagues from Dublin City University. Their project will examine the impact Research Lesson Study (RLS) has on three aspects of student teachers' knowledge and skills during their school experience placement. These include the capacity: to reflect critically on their planning and teaching; to experience a sense of well-being by participating in supportive, inclusive and collaborative teacher communities of practice with more knowledgeable others; and to begin developing leadership skills in facilitating teacher colleague interactions.

Their research hopes to address three central research questions - How does participation in school-based, school-facilitated RLS impact student teachers' reflective practice? How does participation in school-based, school-facilitated RLS impact student teachers' sense of wellbeing? How does the training of both teachers and student teachers in professional facilitation skills impact their leadership capacity and the sustainability of RLS within schools?

The second project is titled Critical Literacy in the Age of AI: Pedagogical Challenges and Opportunities and it involves Dr Donna Hazzard and Joe Hughes, who will be working with their colleagues from University College Cork. Their project will investigate how critical literacy can be reconceptualised and enacted within educational contexts increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence (AI) by exploring the pedagogical implications of AI and examining how educators can respond critically and constructively.

Their research hopes to address four central research questions - How does the emergence of AI-generated texts challenge established conceptions of literacy, authorship and authority in education? In what ways can critical literacy frameworks be extended to address algorithmic bias, data ethics and machine-generated knowledge? What pedagogical challenges and tensions arise when teachers integrate AI tools into literacy practices? How do students critically interpret, evaluate and co-construct meaning with AI systems?

'...project will examine the impact Research Lesson Study (RLS) has on three aspects of student teachers' knowledge and skills during their school experience placement.'



SCoTENS
THE STANDING CONFERENCE ON
TEACHER EDUCATION, NORTH AND SOUTH

