CORA Cork Open Research Archive
Cartlann Taighde Oscailte Chorcaí

Title	My education week
Authors	Hyland, Áine
Publication date	2016-11-21;2016-11-21
Original Citation	Hyland, Á. (2016) 'My education week', Irish Times, 21 November 2016.
Type of publication	Contribution to newspaper/magazine
Rights	© 2016, The Irish Times DAC.
Download date	2026-11-02 18:03:27
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/17745

UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

My education week: Board meetings, Facetime with my grandchildren and an honorary doctorate

Despite retiring from UCC a decade ago, Áine Hyland is heavily involved in education activites on a daily basis

about 3 hours ago

Aine Hyland



Aine Hyland, emeritus professor of education at UCC. Photograph: Cyril Byrne

BIOGRAPHY

Áine Hyland has been one of the most influential figures in Irish education over the past 50 years. After serving initially as a civil servant in the Department of Education, she became a teacher, admissions officer in Carysfort College, senior lecturer in UCD, professor of education in UCC and vice-president of UCC.

She also helped establish one of the first multidenominational schools in Ireland, the Dalkey School Project, in the mid-1970s, which led to the creation of Educate Together. Since her retirement in 2006, she has continued to be actively involved in educational activities on a pro bono basis.

SUNDAY
11.30am on a Sunday may seem a strange time for a board meeting – but not when it's the National Association of Youth Drama. Its board consists mostly of youth drama leaders from around the country, so Sunday is the only day they can travel to Dublin for a meeting.

I am continually impressed by the support and advice the association gives to youth drama organisations throughout the country. Youth drama is an excellent example of a co-curricular activity which provides great out-of-school learning opportunities for young people.

In the afternoon my education background and experience comes into good stead when chatting with my grandchildren! I have six grandsons, ranging in age from seven to 17, living in California, Dublin and Mexico City. I usually Facetime them on Sunday afternoon.

The grandchildren in California and Mexico are upset about the outcome of the US presidential election. Alexander (7) worries that Trump might "start a war" with Mexico. Liam (17) is completing his application to the University of California which has a wide range of criteria for assessing applications: academic grade points, SAT scores, special talents, and achievements and awards in fields such as performing arts and athletics. For all its shortcomings, there's a lot to be said for Ireland's CAO system.

MONDAY
I meet with Michael Barron of Equate Ireland to plan a conference next March on equality and diversity in education. Our discussion includes schools' admissions criteria and the Government target of 400 multidenominational schools.
I have been a proponent of multidenominational education since I was a founder member of the Dalkey School Project in 1974. We never anticipated at that time that there would be such growth in the Educate Together sector which now has more than 80 primary schools and a growing number of second-level schools.

In the afternoon, I attend a meeting in the Teaching Council offices in Maynooth to discuss accreditation of initial teacher education programmes. During the past three years, I have chaired accreditation panels and reviewed initial teacher education programmes for primary and post-primary teachers to ensure that they meet exacting Teaching Council criteria.

TUESDAY
In the morning, I phone Deirdre Mortell, director of Social Innovation Fund Ireland. I am delighted to accept her invitation to chair an advisory group on the allocation of a new education fund. Having chaired numerous committees on educational disadvantage, I am aware of the many educational challenges encountered by children and young people from lower socio-economic groups.

Later in the afternoon, I participate in a conference call with two colleagues from University College Cork, Prof John O'Halloran, vice-president for teaching and learning and Marian McCarthy, director of the centre for the integration of research and teaching and learning. We debrief after a recent visit by Marian and myself to the University of Renmin in Beijing where we led a two-day workshop for more than 60 Chinese professors on teaching and learning in universities.

WEDNESDAY
I attend the bi-monthly meeting of the strategy and policy subcommittee of the Medical Council. When I was first invited to join this committee as a lay member three years ago, I wondered what expertise I could bring to the work of the council. I quickly learned that educational and curriculum planning skills and experience are valuable in every profession.
I have found that I can contribute constructively to the committee's discussions on professional and ethical behaviour, internships, postgraduate education and continuing professional development.

THURSDAY
Today is a big day for me. I am awarded an honorary doctor of science by the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. I was gobsmacked when Dr Cathal Kelly, chief executive of the RCSI, contacted me some months ago to inform me that this honour was to be bestowed on me.

I now join a roll of extraordinarily prestigious honorary graduands including former president Mary McAleese and Fr Michael Kelly, an internationally renowned expert on HIV/Aids.

It is a solemn and moving conferring ceremony with all the pomp and circumstance associated with a college that received its Royal Charter in 1784. I was a member of the medical and health sciences board of the RCSI from 2009 to 2015. The RSCI is a

most impressive high-performing and student-centred constituent college of the National University of Ireland. As well as providing a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes on its Dublin campus, it also delivers programmes in Bahrain, Dubai and Perdana.
At the conferring ceremony, I give a 20-minute address to the masters graduands, focusing in particular on their future roles as leaders in healthcare and highlighting the challenges facing all leaders in the volatile and unpredictable world in which we live.

My key message is the importance of ethical and caring leadership in all walks of life, and especially in the world of healthcare. I am very pleased that so many of my extended family are invited – not just to the conferring ceremony but to a wonderful reception and dinner afterwards. Since five of my sisters are also very active in the world of education, education is a major topic of conversation when we get together. And that is not the end. Following the ceremony, I call into the National College of Ireland nearby to join members of the NCI governing body at a farewell dinner for myself and three other outgoing governors – chair of the board Denis O'Brien, Billy Attley and Eddie Sullivan.

The dinner is hosted by the newly-appointed dynamic and enthusiastic president of the NCI, Gina Quinn. The NCI has a long history of commitment to young people from less advantaged backgrounds in the Dublin Docklands and its early learning initiative ensures involvement of the local community from babyhood.

FRIDAY
In the afternoon I phone Danny O'Hare to discuss the proposed new children's science museum, Exploration Station. Being Science Week, this is an appropriate week to celebrate this long-awaited development. Exploration Station has been almost 15 years in gestation and we are delighted that the project is reaching a successful conclusion. Planning permission has been given for developing the west wing of the National Concert Hall building for the museum and we are delighted with the exciting and innovative architectural design.

I chair the education committee of Exploration Station, which will advise the board on the fitting out of the building and on interactive exhibits which will complement and enhance the primary and second-level science curriculum. We look forward to the opening of the museum in 2018.