



GMIT SPECIAL REPORT

GALWAY-MAYO INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
INSTITIÚID TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA NA GAILLIMHE-MAIGH EO

A supplement with the *Western People*

Your future is in your hands



A message from Barbara Burns, head of the GMIT Castlebar campus

THIS historic grey stone building on the edge of Castlebar houses a vibrant campus of the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT). The second largest GMIT campus, it offers programmes ranging from accounting to heritage, from nursing to computer science, and from construction to applied social studies. The diversity of our programmes means that students have the opportunity to meet other students with a range of interests. They also have the chance to customise their own degree with electives from other programmes. Opening in September 1994, GMIT Castlebar has grown to approximately 1,100 students, comprising full-time and part-time students, from across Ireland and over ten foreign countries.

Approximately two-thirds of our current students enter directly from the Leaving Certificate; the others are returning to education as mature students. The nursing and applied social studies programmes account for almost 250 students, with the remaining students in such diverse programmes as business, computer services management, personnel services management, art & design, and outdoor education. Why do students come to Castlebar? The location, programmes on offer, and the character of the campus. Castlebar's location is particularly important for the outdoor education course, with access to excellent water and mountain facilities, and for the heritage course, with the nearby presence of historic sites and the National Museum. As well as the surrounding natural

beauty, the town offers a wealth of cultural and social activities ranging from international performances to local festivals. Our programmes combine the highest standards of education with a personal approach. Our students have access to excellent computer and library resources. Our class sizes are generally small, and students have easy access to lecturing staff. Our graduates have gone on to success in graduate programmes and careers. Our programmes have gradually changed since our beginning to keep pace with student interests, new technologies and social change. Programmes in applied social studies were added in 2008 and a new programme in social multimedia innovation is currently in review.

Our campus encourages students to take a wider view of the world through language trips abroad, study exchanges, and summer volunteer projects. We have developed a number of European links with universities and institutes in countries such as France, Germany, Austria, Spain and the US. Life on campus is enriched by the strong Student Union, clubs and societies ranging from archery to music, an active and successful sports programme, and a sense of community. Our economic contribution to the community is significant. Our annual spend is between €7.5m and €8m. We employ a staff of 100, comprising full-time and part-time staff. In addition, we use the services of local companies for maintenance and upgrade of the facilities, provision of equipment and services, and student services.

GMIT FACTFILE

1086 - Total no. of students incorporating full-time and part-time students

€8m - Annual spend by the Castlebar campus of GMIT.

100 - No. of staff comprising full-time and part-time staff.





SINEAD WORTH, BELMULLET B.SC (HONS) IN PSYCHIATRIC NURSING



"I am married and have five children. About seven years ago my husband and I decided to relocate to lovely Belmullet from Dublin, a brave move but it has been well worth it. Around three years ago I made a decision to apply through the CAO for the Psychiatric Nursing degree programme at GMT Castlebar. I worked as a care assistant for more than sixteen years and it seemed to be a natural next step. It just took me a bit longer than most to get round to it. The process for a mature code applicant for a nursing programme can be a lengthy one. You have to pass an Aptitude test and also an interview. Places are limited and competition is high so I was delighted to secure a place. I'm now about to finish my second year. The course itself comprises approximately six modules and students are also required to complete a number of clinical placements throughout the four years of this level 8 (honours) programme. I will really enjoy the placements as they give you invaluable learning

opportunities. The college itself offers a wide range of support structures and for mature students this is really invaluable, especially when it comes to study tips, and financial and career advice. The campus is warm and friendly and because of smaller student numbers compared to bigger colleges I consider it to be a very conducive learning environment. The lecturers and study advisers are always on hand to offer advice as are the librarians. My biggest challenge so far is, like many other mature students, juggling family life with my studies. I do however have a great support network - thanks Dave! Overall the decision to return to college is one of the best decisions I have ever made. I feel very privileged to be studying in this particular discipline of nursing and look forward to the next two years. I don't even mind the kilometers I clock up daily between Belmullet and Castlebar."

Preparing for a caring future

Geraldine Murray, head of the Department of Nursing and Health Sciences at GMT Castlebar, tells Keith Bourke why demand for places there is at an all time high

NURSING and the Health Sciences programmes have become one of the flagship offerings of GMT Castlebar. General and psychiatric nursing have been on the college's curriculum for the last 10 years. "The world cannot do without nurses, the country cannot do without nurses," said the Head of Department of Nursing and Health Sciences, Geraldine Murray. A Roscommon native, Ms Murray has experience of working in both the psychiatric and general nursing fields all over the world before moving to GMT in 2005. "We believe we give our nursing students an excellent education. There is much greater interaction between students and lecturer because of the class size. The systems and processes we have in place means that with smaller classes our lecturers are far more available to individual students for discussion and explanation. We must be doing something right because we get a lot of students from other colleges seeking transfers to our courses every year," said Ms Murray. The college has two fantastically equipped clinical laboratories for its nursing students with Mayo General Hospital and Mayo Mental Health Services on its doorstep for student placements. "Mayo General Hospital is our main clinical site for our general nursing programme. But we also use Roscommon County Hospital, Bon Secours in Galway and the Galway clinic among others. The course involves many hours of clinical placement and we are always open to new clinical sites," said Ms Murray. "For the Psychiatric Nursing programme, placements are just in County Mayo but other counties too and, on occasion, in the UK. We are currently exploring international opportunities in line with redesigning the curriculum."



Geraldine Murray, head of Department of Nursing and Health Sciences.

Geraldine Murray, Head of Dept of Nursing and Health Sciences, GMT Castlebar, with John Gately, Clinical Skills Technician, in the Clinical Skills Laboratory. A view of the Clinical Skills Laboratory Training Unit, far right. Photos © KWP Studio



“With smaller classes our lecturers are far more available to individual students for discussion and explanation”

GERALDINE MURRAY



PAUL WUENSCH, WESTPORT BA IN ACCOUNTING AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT



"I came to Ireland about five years ago and am living in Westport. My plan was in fact only to work here for a year and go back to Germany to study. But as it happened, the great atmosphere in Westport, the lovely people of Mayo and my girlfriend changed my mind so that I finally started my studies here in GMT Castlebar in 2007. The degree programme is quite demanding. The first two years we had 35 hours of lectures and tutorials a week and now in my third year it's about 30. The programme also requires a lot of reading outside of class hours. My favourite modules are Management Accounting and Financial Accounting. I really enjoy studying here as it's not too small

nor too big, that means that we have a really great relationship with our lecturers. Although I never studied back home in Germany I love the fact that classes here have a good mix of mature students and young students as compared to Germany where we have barely any mature students. It's like studying in a big family. My plan is to stay on for another year here in Castlebar to do my honours degree and to go out then to work, hopefully in the area of management consulting or as an accountant. I'd really love to stay here in Mayo as it's a great part of this country. People are friendly and I've made a lot of friends by now."

MARTEEN LANE, BALLINROBE BA IN HUMANITIES IN HERITAGE STUDIES



"I'm in my second year of college studying towards a degree in Heritage Studies and I love every minute of it. There are so many dimensions to this course with literature and topographical writing, history, archaeology and built environment, earth processes, natural environment, ecology and environmental management with rural development, society and nature, and tourism and folklore. What really appealed to me about this course when I was first considering applying was the ecology and environmental management with rural development, society and nature, and tourism and folklore. I did a FETAC Level 5 Animal Care course and was delighted to see this aspect of the course as I hope to work in the field of wildlife conservation. I am enjoying archaeology so I might even decide to go down that career path. The

greatest thing about this programme is there are so many career options out there after graduation and also further study options, from working in the field of conservation, secondary school teaching, working as a curator to working as a heritage officer, archaeologist and working in eco-tourism. The list is endless. Another aspect of the course is that we're not always confined to classrooms; we get to go on fieldtrips to interesting places. I'm really enjoying Castlebar campus life too. There is a great community spirit throughout the college. There is a great choice of clubs and societies to join so it doesn't take long to make friends. Anyone who's thinking of studying Heritage Studies in GMT Castlebar will enjoy the challenge. I definitely am."

The time to improve your skills is now

Michael Gill, head of the Department of Business, Humanities and Technology on what makes a GMT Castlebar course so worthwhile

BY KEITH BOURKE

THE sharing of ideas and skills is one of the focal points of GMT, Castlebar, according to the head of the Department of Business, Humanities and Technology, Kiltimagh native Michael Gill leads up the college's largest Faculty. "Here at GMT there is quite a lot of overlapping between programmes where students can take part in modules with students from other disciplines. "That creates a fantastic opportunity for the cross-pollination of ideas between people on different programmes with different interests," Michael says. "I think that is definitely a big selling point of the Department and the college," said Mr Gill. The Department of Business, Humanities and Technology offers a wide range of programmes across the three disciplines. The main business programme takes students through to Bachelor of Business at ordinary and honours levels. The Higher Certificate in Business in Computer Applications focuses on the use of IT in business while the BA in Tourism provides graduates with a range of career options in the service sector. In the Humanities programme students can study Heritage which includes a broad range of modules from history, archaeology and environmental science to literature and folklore. Also

included in the area of Humanities is the hugely popular Outdoor Education programme. The programme comprises of an academic component and extensive fieldwork. "Our outdoor education programme is quite unique and would have a real national appeal," said Mr Gill. "We are very fortunate with our location with the likes of Westport, Belmullet and Connemara so close in relation to the delivery of that course," he added. GMT's technology programmes are in the areas of Construction, IT Support, Computer Services Management and Architectural Technology. Mr Gill said that with the downturn in the construction industry, the college has seen a significant number of students return to education and upskill. "We are certainly seeing more enquiries in relation to returning to third level education. We are a third level education provider in the Mayo area offering educational opportunities to individuals who may not have had an opportunity to study in the past," said Mr Gill. The college has a diverse mix of nationalities on campus with plans to foster more links with colleges abroad. "We have a diverse student body from the local area and around the country and from further afield. "That type of mix enriches the campus here in Castlebar. Part of the GMT Vision for the future involves looking at developing links with more universities and colleges abroad."



Michael Gill, Head of Business, Humanities and Technology, with Accounting & Finance students Naim Uddin, Mary Bourke, Michelle Kilkoyne and Clodagh McDonagh. Photo © KWP Studio

ALAN JUDGE, KILDARE, NOW BASED IN CASTLEBAR GRADUATE OF THE BA (HONS) IN OUTDOOR EDUCATION, PRESIDENT OF THE GMT CASTLEBAR STUDENTS' UNION



"I found out about this course when I finished my Leaving Cert. At the time I was more concerned with kayaking and did a course in The Kinsale Further Education Centre (KFEC), gaining a FETAC award in Outdoor Education. I travelled the world for two years and on my return applied to manage a centre in Dublin working with inner city youth. I was selected in the final two but with no level 7 or level 8 degree I was not awarded the job. The biggest challenge was getting back into the mindset of academia. I had plenty of drive and passion for the course and it has been very fulfilling to gain a distinction in my ordinary degree (L7). Being the only third level institute to offer this degree in the country the job prospects are good and our graduates are sought after. Some opt to

work as senior instructors in the outdoor industry, entrepreneurs in a host of businesses and services, others as educators in colleges or managers in business. The course has unique challenges associated with each academic year. My favourite subjects were anatomy, ecology and education and training, and of course the outdoor sports especially Kayaking which is my life passion. I intend to do a masters in experiential education. I am President of the Students Union in GMT Castlebar, my second year in this role. I have always been involved with the SU as a class rep. Then last year as a fourth year rep, the vice president asked me to put my name forward for President and this year I ran unopposed, a first in the 15 year history of the campus' Students Union. GMT Castlebar has been home to me for the past five years. My girlfriend is from Galway and we hope to eventually settle here in the west.

The campus has distinct advantages over larger colleges in that most of the students and lecturers know each other by name and there's a great mix of characters from all over the country and exchange students from all over the world. I myself got to study my second year in North Carolina in the US as part of my course. It was an amazing experience I will never forget. There are a number of clubs and societies in the college, many of them winning great accolades. This year the Girls' GAA team were All-Ireland winners, the Kayak Club came third in the intervarsities, the Archery Club were top contenders in the Archery Leagues, the Heritage Club host the popular Heritage Days, and the French Society have just returned from a week of 'cultural enlightenment' in the southern Alps. We are a very active student community, gaining recognition for our activities and achievements, yet one of the smaller campuses in the country."

MARIA MCGOLDRICK, WESTPORT BA IN APPLIED SOCIAL STUDIES



"I have always had a keen interest in becoming a social care worker, working with children or caring for older members of the community and am now a first year full time mature student on this new degree programme in GMT Castlebar. To be eligible as a mature student for this course, you need to have voluntary work experience and show a keen interest in social care work; I had done three evening courses in GMT and the VEC - Health Promotion, Health & Safety and Development training. I also continue to do voluntary work, with the Cove Youth Cafe in Westport and Western Care in Castlebar. Both organisations are always looking for more volunteers. This is my first time in full time education and I am having a fantastic time learning. I love it and could see myself, finance permitting, doing a doctorate at

some stage. My favourite subjects so far are psychology, sociology, philosophy and law. Time management is a particular challenge - getting a balance between family life and study. Finance is another challenge, but I am one of the luckier students as I qualified for the Back to Education Fund. This however is somewhat a come down in income from when I was working full time as unfortunately mortgages and bills etc are not taken into consideration. GMT Castlebar is a relatively small campus, just over 1,000 students, therefore everyone knows each other or can get to know each other quite easily. There is a very friendly atmosphere about the place. Lecturers and staff are as a whole very approachable and due to the smaller numbers of students have more time to help or advise on assignments."

GMT GALWAY-MAYO INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY Full-Time Programmes 2010-2011

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, HUMANITIES & TECHNOLOGY

- Higher Certificate in Business in Computer Applications
- Bachelor of Business
- Bachelor of Business (Honours)
- Bachelor of Arts in Accounting and Financial Management
- Bachelor of Business (Honours) in Accounting
- Higher Certificate in Science in Information Technology Support
- Bachelor of Science in Computing in Information Technology Support
- Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Computer Services Management
- Bachelor of Science in Construction Management in Refurbishment and Maintenance
- Bachelor of Arts in Humanities in Heritage Studies
- Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Humanities in Heritage Studies
- Bachelor of Arts in Outdoor Education and Leisure
- Bachelor of Arts in Tourism
- Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Outdoor Education
- Bachelor of Arts in Outdoor Education and Leisure with Geography
- Foundation Certificate
- Bachelor of Arts in Art and Design
- Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Social Multimedia Technology (pending approval)
- Bachelor of Science in Architectural Technology
- Bachelor of Science (Honours) in General Nursing
- Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Psychiatric Nursing
- Bachelor of Arts in Applied Social Studies
- Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Applied Social Studies

Note: In addition to these full-time programmes, Castlebar Campus offers a comprehensive range of part-time programmes under its Lifelong Learning programme. Please contact the campus for a copy of the Lifelong Learning Prospectus.





Innovation Centre fosters student spirit of endeavour

THE entrepreneurial spirit and creativity of GMIT students are fostered through the GMIT Castlebar Innovation in Business Centre (iIBC). Established in 2006 the Innovation Centre aims to support and facilitate the emergence of new market-led and knowledge-based companies in the region and forge strategic links between the college and the world of industry and commerce.

The annual GMIT Innovation Awards Competition gives students at the Castlebar campus a unique opportunity to test their creative business ideas. The competition is now in its fourth year.

The top prize in this year's competition went to Mary Burke from Williamstown, Co Galway, Maria Coll from Ballinlough, Co Roscommon, and Michelle Kilcoyne from Castlebar, Co Mayo, for their educational software product called Or. The three students are currently in the second year of a BA in Accountancy and Financial Management (L7).

They won €1,000 cash, incubation space in the Innovation Centre for two months and mentoring from The Discovery Partnership, a client company in the GMIT Castlebar Innovation Centre.

Second prize was awarded to Richard Carr from Castlebar, Co Mayo, for his project called "Bluetooth Proximity Marketing". Richard is a fourth year student on the BSc (Hons) in Computer Services Management (L8). He won €500.

Third prize went to Damien Daly and Daniel O Morche both from Castlebar, Co Mayo, who are fourth year students on the BA (Hons) in Outdoor Education (L8). They won €300. Fourth prize went to Gareth Gargan from Belcarra, Castlebar, Co Mayo, and Alan Dowling from Stradbally, Co Laois, who are also studying a BA (Hons) in Outdoor Education (L8), winning €100.

All prizes were sponsored by Shell Ireland for the competition. Each group/individual had submitted a Business Plan and were interviewed

“
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”

Maria Staunton
iIBC Manager

throughout the day by a panel of judges comprising Alan Mee, Shell Ireland, Robert Grealis, Consulting Partner with The Discovery Partnership and former CEO of Knock Airport, and Brian Mulhern, Lecturer in Computing at GMIT, Castlebar.

Maria Staunton, iIBC Manager, commended the finalists for their hard work and commitment: "All finalists have shown great aspirations to be the entrepreneurs that we will read about in the future. In the current economic climate it is vitally important that we encourage young people to look at setting up their own businesses."

"Innovation and entrepreneurialism are vital to creating future eco-

nommic growth, equipping young people with the knowledge and confidence to set up their own business and work for themselves. It is about nurturing and developing entrepreneurial thinking in young people so that we will have a generation of well informed business people".

Robert Grealis, Consulting Partner with The Discovery Partnership congratulated all the participants and was impressed with the diverse range of innovative ideas presented by the finalists.

"The energy and creativity of the projects was refreshing and I am certain we will see commercial businesses develop from this initiative," he said.

Judith Feehan, Marketing Assistant, and Maria Staunton, GMIT Innovation Centre manager. Photo © KWP Studio



The annual GMIT Innovation competition judges and winners, Alan Mee, Shell Ireland, Maria Staunton, iIBC Manager, Castlebar, Brian Mulhern, lecturer in Computing, GMIT Castlebar, winning students Mary Burke, Maria Coll and Michelle Kilcoyne, Robert Grealis of the Discovery Partnership and Michael Gill, Head of Dept of Business & Technology, GMIT Castlebar.

LIFE AFTER GMIT CASTLEBAR JOHN GALLIGAN, CAVAN. NOW LIVING IN TOKYO. BSc (HONS) IN COMPUTER SERVICES MANAGEMENT, 2007

"I was managing a hotel in Galway when I decided to return to college to study computing at GMIT Castlebar. I started off doing a Higher Certificate in Science in IT Support, and progressed onto the BSc (Level 7) in Computing in IT Support, and the Honours B.Sc (Level 8) in Computer Services Management. I now live in Tokyo, Japan, working as a Project Manager and IT Technician for Eire Systems, IT Services company.

During my final year in 2007, I came across the post graduate Overseas Graduate Programme offered by Fás. I applied for positions in both Japan and China and after completing an interview in Dublin was offered a two-year contract with EIRE Systems in Tokyo. Before I began my studies in GMIT Castlebar I had never considered working overseas but lecturers encouraged me to take these opportunities.

Eire is based in Tokyo's financial district. It offers IT solutions ranging from IT support and infrastructure upgrades to office relocation and new office setup. Business Continuity Planning and Disaster Recovery is a major factor for businesses in Tokyo as Japan has a high amount of seismic activity and businesses must be prepared in the event of a disaster. It is a law requirement for all financial companies in Japan. Areas of work that I

have been involved in include: BCP/disaster recovery planning and implementation, office cabling design, network roll-out and upgrades, hardware and software upgrades and roll-outs, office relocation and new office setup, IT support and troubleshooting. Work ethics in Japan are different to any place I have worked previously. There are procedures for all tasks and high volumes of documentation for each procedure.

My degree provided me with a firm structure for my current career. The course covered ITIL studies, researching techniques, document writing skills and project management knowledge. It gave me technical and managerial skills that I use daily. I often reference material gained through my studies at Castlebar. Areas of my current work include office setup, network builds and upgrades, and disaster recovery planning. This work entails high levels of communication and planning between the business departments and the technical departments.

I enjoyed my time in GMIT Castlebar. Lab classes were always a joy and a great time for testing and knowledge gathering. Classes were interactive and debates were frequent with topics thrashed out in a positive manner. Best of all was winning the highest academic award for each year."

