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## Introduction to IJAP Special Edition - Polytechnic Summit PS2021

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# Global Partners European Alliance

*Coventry University, Coventry, UK*  
*Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences, Darmstadt, Germany*  
*Technological University Dublin, Dublin, Ireland*  
*Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Lucerne, Switzerland*  
*Purdue University, Indiana, USA*  
*University of Wisconsin – Stout, Wisconsin, USA*

The charter members listed above came together to develop relationships and strategic collaborative opportunities through successful development and delivery of university level degree programs, applied research, professional development programs, and community outreach activities.

Each of these charter members brings unique strengths to the overall membership in creating an alliance addressing increased effectiveness, professionalism, and performance of our institutions while promoting broad and positive economic impact. Additional Alliance members will be recruited as and when additional initiatives and target activities are identified. The recruitment of additional members requires the mutual agreement of two-thirds of the founding members. We are currently in discussions with several candidate member institutions.

## Polytechnic Summit

Among the scope of activities set out in the GPEA charter is the hosting of annual conferences and symposia. The largest such event is the annual Polytechnic Summit (PS) that has been running since 2009. Most recently this summit was hosted in the following years and locations:

- 2017 – Purdue, Indiana
- 2018 – UTEC, Lima
- 2019 – UW-Stout, Wisconsin
- 2021 – Technological University Dublin, Ireland

This special edition of the Irish Journal of Academic Practice presents a selection of the papers, posters and other materials presented at the PS2021 event hosted virtually at TU Dublin in June 2021. The themes of PS2021 were as follows.

### **Design (Programmes, Curriculum, Organisation)**

Under this theme, PS2021 explored the concept of design – looking at how the university itself can be designed, how the curriculum can be designed, and the programmes within that curriculum. Speakers addressed the challenges of creating a new university in different parts of the world. They also explored the no-less-challenging aspect of developing or innovating a connected curriculum that contains core elements that define the identity of the university, and which are distilled through every programme.

### **Practice-Based Learning**

Together with Pedagogy and Learning Spaces, this theme of PS2021 explored how the defining philosophy and approaches of polytechnic education are implemented within

today's polytechnics. The theme included the physical and virtual environment in which students learn, and how the learner best engages with their learning and their teachers.

### **Employability and Graduate Skills**

A defining feature of the modern polytechnic is that it seeks to cultivate learners with career-ready professional competences, while at the same time not losing sight of the intrinsic value of education. While the contexts of many of the PS2021 faculty participants were varied, they all shared a common challenge of nurturing employability and graduate skills within students. This theme discussed what those skills should be, and how acquiring such competences them could be built into the curriculum. There is also the natural tension between the needs of employers, and the needs of the individual with regards to these skills. This theme was explored with input from industry and university leaders from different countries.

### **Internationalisation, Global Teaching & Collaboration**

The modern university is an international oasis, in which learners from many different countries and regions converge in-person and virtually to acquire and share knowledge and skills. The act of being immersed within an international learning environment itself can be an enriching experience, and universities actively seek to broaden their student base and that of their faculty. This theme was explored from the perspective of the benefits of internationalising the university and the curriculum, but also from the perspective of the inherent advantages and challenges in doing this.

### **Sustainability Theme**

TU Dublin has set as one of its ambitions to drive societal changes, to be a voice for sustainability, and a way of living and working in a new, more balanced way, a way that protects our planet for future generations. This PS2021 theme invited submissions from across the globe on how others are championing sustainability and incorporating it into strategic goals, curricula, and programmes. This theme included more than environmental sustainability, also featuring equity, social justice, and economic development.

The above themes of PS2021 were intended to inspire authors to join our community and to contribute to successive Polytechnic Summits. These themes were not seen as exclusive, and we welcomed papers and posters from a diverse range of topics related to the Polytechnic ethic. We hope to engender a community spirit among contributors and to develop relationships that will thrive from year to year and from summit to summit.

We hope you enjoy reading this journal and learning about the various initiatives and research being undertaken under the GPEA umbrella in member institutions as well as in partner institutions globally.

Thank you,

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Arnd Steinmetz, Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences

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At the time of publication, the archive of the Polytechnic Summit 2021 site is still available  
at:

<https://www.tudublin.ie/explore/events/all-events/polytechnic-summit-2021.php>