

Basic info about South East Technological University (IRELAND)

For the past 50 years, Institutes of Technology at Waterford and Carlow have helped students master the skills they need to prepare for careers in exciting fields, locally and internationally. On 1 May, these Institutes merged to form the South East Technological University. This is the foundation for a new type of university option in Ireland. Since 2015 Ireland has been developing technological universities which will have deep local engagement and global outreach. South East Technological University aims to establish the south east of Ireland as a thriving place to work and study and overcome the talent exodus. The South East of Ireland also has many social challenges.

Program / efforts in introducing spirituality in SETU

A little piece of history was made in Ireland on 15 August 2016. For the first time ever a postgraduate program in spirituality studies commenced at an Institute of Technology in Ireland. The MA is located institutionally in the School of Humanities and the Department of Arts at SETU, Waterford Campus: www.setu.ie This MA was inspired by and derived from a similar and very successful MA program that ran in All Hallows College (Dublin City University) from 2010-15. That MA, in turn, was inspired by and derived from a similar and very successful MA program that ran at Milltown Institute (National University of Ireland) from 2001-11. The MA program is supported in its delivery by the Spirituality Institute for Research and Education (SpIRE – see www.spiritualityinstitute.ie). SpIRE has hosted two very successful spirituality conferences at SETU (Waterford Campus) in 2018 and 2019. SpIRE launched a specialist library in March 2020 – the first library catalogued explicitly for spirituality studies and research. A spirituality research group has also been established. (www.setu.ie/spirsop).

Successes and failures

The main success of spirituality studies in Ireland is that it has survived a migrant journey across three academic institutions. As it migrated between institutions it had to be re-designed and re-conceived, but each time it became stronger. One new addition to the current core modules has proved particularly attractive to students – each person writing his / her spiritual autobiography. Regarding failures, the most obvious may be the present lack of formal collaboration between groups of similar interest, thus leading to fragmentation in our common efforts to advance spirituality as an academic specialization.

Major obstacles

One of the main obstacles that the study of spirituality faces is that it is an emerging discipline. Thus, it can fail to fit the categories that funding agencies prescribe for applications. Another minor obstacle, is that Ireland is a small island and networking with relevant academic partners generally requires flight travel.

Opportunities/plans for the future

Plans for the future are currently focused on building collaborative research projects through making applications to various research-funding agencies. There are quite a few opportunities available through the Horizon Europe, the European Union's new research and innovation programme that runs until 2027 with rolling 'calls for proposals'. Philanthropic opportunities through agencies like the John Templeton Trust are also being contacted.