



VOICE OF
INSTITUTE OF CHEMISTRY
OF IRELAND
INSTITIÚID CEIMICE
NA HÉIREANN

14th December 2020

Dear Fellows, Members, Graduates and Associates,

Welcome to the VOICE, the annual Christmas Newsletter of the Institute of Chemistry of Ireland. I sincerely hope you are all keeping safe and well. What an extraordinary year it has been. When the World Health Organisation declared Covid-19 as a global pandemic on the 12th March, 2020, little did we know the impact the virus would have at a human as well as at a societal level. We are enormously grateful to all those who have worked and continue to work tirelessly on the front lines to not only keep us safe and well but to keep our economy open. It has been so important also that our schools and universities have been able to continue to deliver their educational programmes, supporting our young people academically as well as emotionally during these most challenging of times. The pharma sector has done extraordinary work developing vaccines, with vaccination programmes already starting in some countries. Earlier this month, the CEO of the HSE, Paul Reid, said that Ireland has now the capacity to acquire 16 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines but he added a cautionary note that the vaccine should not be 'our first line of defence', that we need to continue to adhere to the public health guidelines of wearing masks, washing hands and keeping our social distance and social contacts to a minimum.

Like most other organisations, the Institute had to reschedule or cancel events in 2020 including the ICI Congress as a result of the pandemic. Notwithstanding this, I am delighted to report that we have had some new and exciting developments during 2020. A brief update in relation to the membership of Council, the ICI awards and some of the exciting developments of the Institute is provided on the following pages.

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1. ICI Council Membership

May I first and foremost take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank our Council members for their unwavering dedication and commitment to the Institute. Council members give generously of their expertise and time on a voluntary basis. A special word of thanks to Dr. Patrick Hobbs, the editor of the Irish Chemical News (ICN). As you can imagine, there is a significant workload in compiling each ICN issue. Pat is to be congratulated for publishing four issues in 2020. This is a testament to not only his passion but also his commitment to sharing recent updates and developments in chemistry, particularly this year in relation to the coronavirus, while also showcasing the many and varied achievements of Irish chemists.



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Our sincere thanks also to Ms Mary Mullaghy the Institute's honorary secretary. Mary stepped down in this role during the AGM in November of this year. Our congratulations to Mary who has just been appointed deputy principal in her school. We wish Mary every success and happiness in her new role. I am delighted to say that Mary will remain on Council and will also continue to provide ICI updates via our Twitter account (@irishchemistry). I am also delighted to let you know that Dr Emma Coyle (DCU) was elected honorary secretary during our AGM. Our sincere thanks to Emma for taking on this responsible role. Our thanks also to Dr John Keegan in his role as honorary treasurer and to Dr Odilla Finlayson in her role as registrar. May I also extend our heartfelt thanks to Dr Raymond Leonard who has resigned from Council having served on Council as a valuable member over many years. We are enormously grateful to Ray for all that he did during his time on Council to promote chemistry in Ireland. He is to be particularly commended for establishing the ICI Annual Award for Chemistry (Eva Philbin Public Lecture series) in 2005 during his tenure as President. May we wish Ray and his family every good health and happiness. May we also sincerely thank Professor P. Robertson (our ICI Council Northern Ireland representative) who has also retired from Council. A special welcome to Professor Steven Bell, Head of the School of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering, Queen's University Belfast, who replaces Peter as our Northern Ireland representative. We wish Peter and his family every good health and happiness also.

Council membership is currently as follows:

President (Professor C.J. Marmion, RCSI); Vice President (Professor P. Guiry, UCD); Immediate Past President (Professor J.F. Cassidy, TU Dublin); Honorary Secretary (Dr Emma Coyle); Honorary Treasurer (Dr. J.R. Keegan); Assistant Honorary Treasurer (Dr. E. McGarrigle, UCD); Registrar (Dr. O. Finlayson, DCU); Irish Chemical News Editor (Dr P.T. Hobbs); International Representative (Dr. A.A. Walshe)

Ordinary Members: Dr. R. Elmes (MU); Ms M. Mullaghy; Dr. C. Quigley (GMIT); Ms. E. McCarron (State Laboratory); Dr. M. Kelada (Young Chemist Representative)

Additional members: Dr. S.F. Ó Muirchartaigh

Regional Representatives: Dr. B.A. Murray (TU Dublin, East representative); Dr. S. Donegan (WIT, South East representative); Professor J.D. Glennon (UCC, South representative); Dr. T. Kennedy (UL, South West representative); Professor P. Crowley (NUIG, West representative); Dr. S. Reidy (AIT, Midlands representative); Professor Steven Bell (QUB, Northern Ireland representative)

2. ICI Award Ceremony

A highlight of the Institute each year is the awarding of several honours. This year, because of the pandemic, the ICI annual award ceremony, which was due to take place in RCSI, University of Medicine and Health Sciences on the 16th April 2020, had to be deferred. We were delighted however to be able to host a virtual award ceremony on the 19th November, 2020. The following awards were presented:

2.1 The ICI Annual Award for Chemistry (Eva Philbin Public Lecture Series)

This award was inaugurated by the Institute of Chemistry of Ireland in 2005 and since 2007, is named in memory of the late Eva Philbin, who was Professor of Organic Chemistry at UCD. The award, consisting of a commemorative plaque, is made to a practicing chemist, who has made a significant contribution to the advancement of chemistry and who is also an excellent science communicator. The recipient may be employed in academia, industry or in the state sector. The purpose of this award is to promote the benefits of chemistry to the widest possible audience. The recipient presents their award lecture in Dublin and in two other locations in Ireland and the lectures must be open to the general public. Again, there was an open call for nominations for this award. **Three independent reviewers reviewed these nominations.** Our warmest congratulations to **Professor Declan McCormack from TU Dublin** on being the 2019 recipient. Professor McCormack delivered an outstanding award lecture entitled 'Sizes, Shapes and Surfaces in Chemistry'. In the spirit of this award which is intended to be open to the public, Professor McCormack very kindly agreed to have his award lecture recorded so that it could be made available on the Institute's website: <https://www.chemistryireland.org/awards-events/#awards>



Professor Declan McCormack
receiving his award from
Professor Celine Marmion in RCSI on the
morning of the virtual ICI Annual Award
Ceremony, 19th November, 2020

I am delighted to say that the call is now open for nominations for this award for 2020. The delay in announcing this call is as a direct result of the delay in hosting the award ceremony this year due to the pandemic. Details on the nomination process are available on the ICI website: <https://www.chemistryireland.org/awards-events/#awards>

The deadline for nominations is: **Friday, 29th January, 2021.**



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2.2 The ICI Postgraduate Award

This award is a relative new award of the Institute. First established in 2018, it recognises a registered PhD student in any Chemistry discipline working in an Irish Higher Education Institution. The student must have demonstrated excellence in research through publications. They must also have demonstrated a commitment to supporting and promoting Chemistry within their Institution (e.g. through active participation in public engagement initiatives).

We received a significant number of outstanding nominations this year from several HEIs across Ireland. Again, the nominations went out **for independent review**. All nominations were highly competitive but two particularly stood out not only for their extraordinary research outputs from scholars so early in their careers but also for their work on promoting Chemistry to the wider community. I am delighted to say that a joint award this year was presented to **Conor Crawford** from UCD who worked under the supervision and mentorship of Professor Oscarson and to **Priyanka Ganguly** from IT Sligo who worked under the supervision and mentorship of Professor Pillai and Dr Breen. It is a testament to both awardees that they are now postdoctoral researchers. Conor has recently taken up his position in the Max Planck Institute of Colloids and Interfaces in Berlin and Priyanka is a Marie Curie Early Stage Researcher in the University of Glasgow. We wish them both continued success.

The Institute of Chemistry of Ireland
is delighted to announce this year's recipients of the
ICI Postgraduate Award 2020



Conor Crawford
School of Chemistry,
University College Dublin

Priyanka Ganguly
Institute of Technology, Sligo

Professor Stefan Oscarson (supervisor)

Professor Suresh Pillai and
Dr Ailish Breen (joint supervisors)



Currently postdoctoral researcher
Max Planck Institute of Colloids and Interfaces
Berlin, Germany

Currently Marie Curie Early Stage Researcher
University of Glasgow, Scotland

2.3 The ICI Second Level Education Award

The Second Level Education Award recognises a student who has achieved the highest grade in Ireland in their Leaving Certificate Honours Chemistry course. These students are presented with an ICI medal and their respective schools and teachers are provided with a Certificate from the Institute.

Warmest congratulations to **Mr. Óran O'Sullivan (Coláiste Choilm, Ballincollig, Co. Cork)** and **Mr. Brian Durkan (St. Muredach's College, Ballina, Co. Mayo)** on being the 2019 recipients and to their schools and teachers. Both Óran and Brian, together with their school principals, Chemistry teachers and proud parents attended the special ICI virtual award ceremony. Their award medals were posted to them in advance. Brian is now studying Chemistry in the University of Oxford in the UK and Óran is studying mathematically sciences in UCC. On behalf of the Institute, may I wish Óran and Brian continued success in their future endeavours.

May I also thank **Dr Fiona Desmond**, the Chief Examiner for Chemistry and Physics and Chemistry from the State Examinations Commission who delivered a very informative presentation on the leaving certificate chemistry examination process. It also put into context Brian and Óran's exceptional achievements on being the top two students in Ireland in leaving certificate higher level chemistry in 2019.

The Institute of Chemistry of Ireland
is delighted to announce that the recipients of the
ICI Second Level Education Award 2019
who attained the highest grade in the leaving certificate
chemistry examination in Ireland in 2019



Brian Durkan
(St. Muredachs College,
Ballina, Co. Mayo)

Oran O'Sullivan
(Coláiste Choilm, Ballincollig,
Co. Cork)

Ms Clíodhna Boyce (teacher)

Ms Elizabeth Horgan (teacher)



3. The Boyle Higgins Gold Medal and Lecture Award

One of the most prestigious honours that can only be bestowed on a member of the Institute is the Boyle Higgins Gold Medal and Lecture Award. This award, which was established in 1985, is an award for research work carried out in chemistry under the headings: (a) Pure Chemistry, (b) Applied and Industrial Chemistry or (c) Chemical Education. The award recognizes a chemist of any nationality working in Ireland or a chemist who is an Irish citizen working overseas who has made an outstanding and internationally recognised research contribution to the advancement of chemistry.

A call for nominations for the 2020 award was sent out to all members of the Institute and to all Heads of Schools and Heads of Departments of Chemistry in July 2019. The Institute received a number of outstanding applications.

All nominations were sent out for external review to three independent, international experts. All reviewers commented on the excellent standard of the nominations with one reviewer congratulating the Institute 'on such an exquisite choice of candidates'. Our warmest congratulations to **Professor A.P. De Silva (QUB) who is the 2020 recipient of this most prestigious award.** This is the 35th anniversary since the establishment of this award. Professor De Silva was due to deliver his award lecture during the ICI annual award ceremony in April of 2020 but unfortunately the award ceremony had to be postponed as a result of the pandemic. We very much look forward to Professor De Silva's award lecture in 2021. Further details to follow early in the New Year.



Professor A.P. De Silva
Boyle Higgins Gold Medal
and Lecture Award Recipient 2020

4. ICI Honorary Fellowship

I am delighted to let our community know that Dr Peter Childs was awarded an ICI Honorary Fellowship during the ICI AGM, which took place immediately following the ICI Award Ceremony on the 19th November, 2020. This is in recognition of his outstanding contributions to chemical education nationally and internationally. Our warmest congratulations to Dr Childs on receiving this honour.

5. Postgraduate Chemistry Research Symposium

As a result of the pandemic, the 72nd Irish Universities Chemistry Research Colloquium, which was due to take place in UL in June 2020, had to be deferred to 2021. I am delighted to report however that, in lieu of the Colloquium this year, the ICI hosted its inaugural **ICI Postgraduate Chemistry Research Symposium**, which took place *virtually* on the 9th September 2020, with over 150 registered delegates joining the conference throughout the day. Flash and oral presentations by postgraduate chemists made up the bulk of the programme, organised into four thematic sessions, with topics ranging from medicinal and synthetic chemistry to supramolecular and



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analytical chemistry. In total 43 PhD students from all over the island of Ireland shared their work with their peers. The symposium also hosted the first ever mental health seminar delivered at an Irish chemistry event. Delivered by Miffy Hoad of Mental Health Ireland, delegates were given concrete methods on how to stay connected, reduce stress, increase mindfulness and cope with these unprecedented times. The recipient of the ICI Postgraduate Award 2019, Dr Saoirse Dervin, also delivered her award lecture and Dr Adela Gabba, the recipient of the inaugural ICI Postgraduate Award 2018 shared her very personal insights into her career to date. On behalf of the Institute, may I congratulate the organising committee, co-chaired by Dr Joseph Bryne (NUIG) and Dr Mark Kelada (our ICI Young Chemist representative and Council member), and comprising a number of postgraduates from different higher education institutions across Ireland for all that they did to ensure the success of the symposium.

6. ICI Young Chemists' Network (ICI YCN)

On behalf of Council, I am delighted to report the establishment of the **ICI Young Chemists' Network (ICI YCN)** – a new division of the ICI representing the interests of all young chemists in Ireland. A sub-committee of the ICI Council oversees all the activities of the ICI YCN. It is chaired by the ICI's Young Chemist representative and Council member, Dr Mark Kelada, and membership includes postgraduate scholars from third level institutions across Ireland. The aim of the ICI YCN is to promote networking and collaboration opportunities for early stage researchers by organising conferences and networking events for young chemists. It also aims to support young chemists by providing a platform to promote upcoming positions suited for young chemists. The ICI YCN will host their first networking event on the 27th January, 2021. Further details in relation to this and other activities will be posted on the ICI website: <https://www.chemistryireland.org/young-chemists-network/>

Last, but by no means least, I am delighted to say that we recently upgraded our ICI website: <https://www.chemistryireland.org/> I would also like to draw your attention to the date of our next AGM: **Thursday, 29th April, 2021.**

Finally, on behalf of Council, may I thank you for your ongoing support and may I take this opportunity also to wish you and your loved ones every happiness and good health this Christmas and in 2021.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Celine Marmion".

Professor Celine J. Marmion FICI
President, Institute of Chemistry of Ireland

