

Dr Niamh O'Brien | Hibernia College

General Biography

Dr Niamh O'Brien was awarded her PhD in Education from University College Cork in 2020, her M.Ed. from Waterford Institute of Technology in 2015, and her B.Ed. from Froebel College of Education in 2010. Niamh has eight years of extensive experience in primary school teaching. Her teaching expertise pertains to Autism Spectrum Conditions and social skills learning, literacy and numeracy in special education, inclusion, positive behaviour management and wellbeing in schools. In 2017, Niamh worked for Down Syndrome Ireland and lead an evidence-based literacy programme for adults with Down Syndrome in the South-East of Ireland. More recently, Niamh held an academic post in the School of Education in UCC from 2018-2021. She has lectured in the areas of inclusion in education, physical education, wellbeing in education, research methods, sports medicine, health and health promotion across both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. She has also supervised postgraduate students at Master's and PhD level and contributed to the development of Leaving Certificate Physical Education resources for the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

Niamh was a recipient of The Éadbhard O'Callaghan Award for Excellence in Youth Mental Health Research in 2020 from the National Suicide Research Foundation, a teaching Hero Award in 2021 from the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education and has been nominated for the UCC Presidents Award in Education and has been nominated for the UCC Presidents Award in Teaching Excellence in 2021.

Niamh's teaching and research expertise are in the realm of wellbeing in schools and organisations. She is research active, with five peer-reviewed publications and multiple engagements with national and international conference proceedings. Currently, she is involved in European and global projects that investigate mental health in education among various population groups and communities, including a European student teacher wellbeing study during Covid-19, Intinn, an Irish Youth Film & Mental Health Programme UCC, and TEAM, The Transplant Education & Activity Movement with the IKA, UCC, Birmingham University and Coventry University.

I wish to be a RiRS panel member as I have the skills and knowledge to further enhance the development of wellbeing in schools in Ireland. From my research, I determine, that well teachers, promote well students, therefore working with teachers in schools and bringing wellbeing research to life in the context of the schools is imperative for communities and the children who grow up in them. It is my intention to develop personal and organisational wellbeing through interventions developed in consultation with school stakeholders. I aim to develop upon Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development to prevent mental illness and promote positive mental health effectively in the school settings, both primary and post-primary. Through mapping interventions to the layers of the school socioecology, the project in mind will equip teachers and schools to appreciate and deepen their understanding of wellbeing, and as a result the wellbeing needs of others. Using a mixed-methods approach, I will measure the outcomes of personal behaviour and socioecological interventions using psychometric scales and focus group interviews.