Lives less ordinary

Finished your primary degree and bored with the obvious choices of career on offer? It might be time for you to take the road less travelled, through a postgraduate course in an unexpected discipline.

Peter McGuire

1 MSc in humanitarian logistics and emergency management NUI Maynooth: The two biggest news stories of the past 20 years—the September 11th attacks and the Indian Ocean tsunami—are linked in infamy by the fallout from Hurricane Katrina, the Madrid and London bombings, earthquakes in Haiti and Pakistan, and fire and floods in Australia.

Responding to these disasters is a complex and precise science.

This brand new programme from NUI Maynooth takes a multidisciplinary approach, providing academic and practical training for personnel working in humanitarian relief. How can goods and services get to people affected by a disaster, negotiating their way through different regulations and cultures?

Aimed at future managers and employees in public, private, and non-governmental organisations, this course will also provide a set of management and business tools. It will be of interest to people looking at roles in project management, emergency management, communications, business continuity, and more. The course is graded through continuous assessment; there are no end-of-term exams.

2 Graduate diploma/MSc in healthcare acupuncture University College Dublin: UCD’s postgraduate course in acupuncture, based on traditional Chinese medicine, has proven both popular and controversial. Acupuncturists hold that inserting needles into specific parts of the body can restore an energy force they call ‘qi’.

Critics say it is a pseudoscience, but acupuncture is increasingly practised in a range of clinical settings, including GP surgeries, private clinics and hospitals. According to the HSE, there is reasonably strong scientific evidence to suggest that acupuncture is effective in the treatment of certain conditions, including chronic back pain, dental pain and headache.

3 MPhil/postgraduate diploma in English-language teaching Trinity College Dublin: Teaching English as a foreign language — 'TEFL' — is a well-worn path for recent college graduates. Some stay in Ireland, while others head to Korea, Japan, or South America for a year or two.

Many get their TEFL certificate through independent course providers, but few make a career of it. This may be a mistake, for there are work opportunities in the sector and it can be a very rewarding and specialised job. Trinity’s one-year, full-time course is mostly aimed at experienced English language teachers. It explores theory, grammar and practical issues. Students undertake a research project. UC Differ’s similar postgraduate courses.

4 MA in ritual chant and song University of Limerick: If medieval chanting, mystical intrigue and stories from the Middle Ages sound like your bag, you might be interested in ULI’s one-year, full-time programme which tackles ritual vocal repertoires, liturgical history, Irish traditional religious song and numerous world ritual vocal repertoires.

Students will have weekly, one-to-one vocal training classes as well as masterclasses with internationally renowned performers. The course is designed in association with the Benedictine monks of Glenstal Abbey.

The University of Limerick is particularly strong on performing arts courses, and also offers an MA in traditional Irish music. Students may be required to audition.

5 MA in writing NUI Galway: It’s not just fiction and poetry that NUI Galway’s one-year full-time course. Students also tackle non-fiction, journal writing and journalism, with visiting writers at seminars.

Assessment is based on weekly journal writings. The course also explores Irish playwrights since the 1960s, the literature of North America, oral history and travel literature.

Students will share classes with those on NUI Galway’s MA in literature and publishing, and MA in drama and theatre studies. A minimum 2:2 degree is required, as is a portfolio of recent writing. There are 15 places available.

6 MSc in end-of-life healthcare ethics University College Cork: A major research project conducted by the Irish Hospice Foundation, UCC, and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland led to the development of this groundbreaking programme, which tackles end-of-life issues in healthcare and hospice setting.

The multi-disciplinary course, offered on a part-time basis over two years, explores the ethical, professional, legal and philosophical issues surrounding this complex subject.

The course is not just for health professionals; it is also of interest to those in allied professions such as hospital and nursing home administrators, social workers and psychologists, as well as theologians, solicitors, journalists, or anyone with an interest in palliative care or issues surrounding death. A 2:2 primary honours degree is normally required for entry, although other applicants will be considered.

7 MA in political and public communication Dublin City University: PR has a major effect on public policy. It’s about setting the agenda, moulding public opinion, political advertising and, of course, spin.

DCU’s long-established programme focuses on the interplay between media, politics and the public, and also explores the processes of government and policy making, including in the NGO sector.

The course is aimed at those with an interest in PR, media journalism, public policy, politics and public communication. Its combination of journalists and politicians sharing their knowledge as guest speakers and lecturers makes for an interesting and lively experience. One year full-time, or two years part-time.

8 MSc in culinary innovation and food product management Dublin Institute of Technology: This new arts undergraduate programme is widely recog-
risied as an excellent training for budding chefs and caterers. This postgraduate course builds on its success, offering elements of science and food science, culinary arts and business.

Students can expect to learn about the history and science of gastronomy, food regulation, how to create a new food business, technology and innovation, marketing, and more. Optional modules include sports and exercise nutrition and food packaging design. The course is one year full-time or two years part-time. Applicants should have a minimum 2:2 grade primary degree in a food-related discipline.

**9**

**MEng Sc in innovative technologies**
Waterford Institute of Technology. This course for inventors, of sorts, aims to prepare students for a career in industry or academic research. It is designed to develop the knowledge and skills necessary for innovation management, product design and development, and perhaps most importantly—getting that product to market. Industry-based research is an essential component of the course.

- Modules include: nanotechnology, green technologies, novel materials, entrepreneurship and quality management.
- Graduates might find careers in the medical devices and pharmaceutical industries, academic research and new business development, ICT or green technologies. A 2:1 primary degree is normally required; the course is suited to engineering graduates.

**10**

**MA in cognition and culture**
Queen's University Belfast. This multidisciplinary course explores the interplay between human culture and cognition. Led by the disciplines of anthropology and psychology, the course looks at patterns of culture through the prism of cognitive and evolutionary sciences.

Evolutionary psychology, research methods and social cognition are key modules. Students will also delve into the cognitive science of religion, a burgeoning field which seeks to explain how and why humans develop, influence and change religious and religious ideas as they spread from person to person.

A 2:1 honours primary degree is normally required.

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The NUIG writing course also explores the literature of North America, oral history and travel literature.

The UCC MSc tackles end-of-life issues in healthcare and hospital settings.

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- Other choices: culinary innovation; ritual chant and song, with the monks of Glenstal Abbey; humanitarian logistics; cognition and culture; and innovative technologies. Photographs: IAN MARTIN; CONNOLLY; BRANGWYN; REUTERS; GETTY