



### IN MEMORY: PROFESSOR AIDAN MORAN 1956-2020

Prof. Aidan Moran was an alumnus of UCD, a longstanding faculty member of the UCD School of Psychology, and a friend and colleague to many in the UCD community. He studied at UCD between 1974 and 1978 and, from the beginning, he excelled. He was awarded first class honours and first place in his class for both his

BA and MA in psychology. Between 1978 and 1979, he worked as a research psychologist for FÁS (then AnCo) in Dublin, before taking up his first academic appointment as a lecturer at the Department of Psychology at University College Galway (now the National University of Ireland Galway). While at Galway he completed his PhD in cognitive psychology, with Prof. Donald Broadbent acting as his external examiner. He returned to UCD in 1985 to take up an appointment as college lecturer in psychology, at the then Department of Logic and Psychology, making UCD his academic home for the next 35 years.

Aidan's central area of academic expertise was cognitive psychology. He was a leading thinker on the processes of attention, concentration, thinking, reasoning, decision-making, memory, imagery, mental practice, and skilled behaviour. His work was published widely in high impact international psychology journals. He wrote over 20 books, many in the field of sports psychology, and delivered keynote addresses at international congresses around the world. Aidan was the recipient of many awards including a Fulbright Scholarship, the University of Florida Stevens International Research Award, the Psychological Society of Ireland's Special Merit Award, and the British Psychological Society's Distinguished Contribution award for his research in cognitive and sport psychology. He received a UCD President's Research Fellowship to fund collaboration with colleagues in Imperial College London, and Harvard University. He was a fellow of the Irish and British Psychological Societies and the Association for Psychological Science, USA. Aidan was especially interested in applying what is known about the psychology of cognitive processes to facilitating excellent performance in athletes. He had an international reputation as the Irish sports psychologist and his contribution in this area is described later, in a piece written by UCD graduate and staff member, Dr James Matthews.

One of Aidan's most significant contributions to psychology at UCD was in his role as Director of the UCD Psychology Research Laboratory. Originally based in Thornfield House on the Stillorgan Road opposite RTÉ, Aidan oversaw the move of the "labs", first to the Science Lecture Building (now part of the UCD Science Centre), and then to their current home in the Newman Building. In this role, Aidan revolutionised the way undergraduates were taught experimental psychology at UCD and for many UCD graduates, it was their engagement with Aidan in his beloved labs, that has stayed with them. He developed a rigorous system for teaching undergraduates how to use the scientific method, and up-to-date equipment to investigate psychological phenomena. This system which Aidan pioneered, opened the door for UCD psychology graduates to be highly competitive when applying for

admission to postgraduate psychology programme at international centres of excellence. To this day, Aidan's *Thornfield Manual* (which has been revised regularly since its first edition in the 1980s) is still a central resource guiding the way in which experimental psychology is taught at UCD. When students remember Aidan, one of the things they note is how he remembered everyone's name on his regular visits to undergraduate lab sessions, and of course, his annual attendance at the UCD PsychSoc Ball was a highlight for many cohorts of students. Aidan served as Honorary Treasurer on UCD PsychSoc and was one of the strongest advocates for students in the school. Aidan also published books and audio books for a general student readership on how to use insights from cognitive psychology to manage the learning process at university and to write academic papers.

Professor Aidan Moran was a leading UCD academic and researcher, a highly respected international psychologist, a wonderful colleague and mentor, an inspirational teacher, and a dear friend to all who worked with him. Many will know he excelled in sport; he was particularly known for his love of tennis and soccer, with some UCD graduates being lucky enough to play on his team in five-a-side football! However, some may be surprised to know he was also a skilled musician. He will be sadly missed by all who have been lucky enough to know him. He leaves behind his beloved wife Angela and their lovely son Kevin, his brothers Ciaran, Dermot and sister Patricia, and his extended family.

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Alan Carr & Suzanne Guerin, UCD School of Psychology, with thanks to Seamus McLoone and Ruth Curtis, National University of Ireland Galway

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### Supporting the Profession through PSI

Aidan Moran was a long-standing member of PSI, not only holding a number of formal roles with the Society, but also serving as a constant source of expertise and support to many members. He joined the Society in its first decade, serving as Chair of the Western Group of PSI and a member of PSI Council. Aidan was always hugely supportive of my own involvement in PSI and he also recognised the importance of getting students involved in the Society. It is not surprising to see the number of his students who went on to be active members of PSI. He was hugely supportive of the development and establishment of the Division of Sport, Exercise and Performance Psychology, serving as a member of the inaugural committee. Lisa Stafford (PSI Head of Communications) remembers fondly his support with a number of initiatives and events in her time with PSI including sharing fantastic exam tips in 2013 for PSI's advice to Junior and Leaving Cert students. He was particularly supportive of the public lecture series organised for the 40th Anniversary of the Society, and his closing lecture of the series drew the largest audience across the events. When asked by the PSI President about possible keynote speakers for the 50th Anniversary Conference, my view was that we needed to represent the best of the Society and Aidan was top of my list. Unfortunately, it is not to be. Aidan's death leaves the Society richer for his contribution, but poorer for his loss.

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Suzanne Guerin  
PSI Editorial Team

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## The Sport Psychologist in Ireland

"Although sport is played with the body, it is won in the mind." This illuminating sentence captures Prof. Aidan Moran's brilliance in engaging audiences on the topic of sport psychology. Aidan was a full Professor of cognitive psychology, and he applied this expertise to understand and enhance the performance of athletes and teams. In particular, his research on the theoretical and conceptual processes of concentration, motor imagery, mental practice and expertise has been published in leading sport psychology journals for many years. In 2006, he was appointed founding editor and Editor-in-Chief of the *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology* (IRSEP, published by Taylor & Francis, Oxford), which under his stewardship quickly became the preeminent journal in the field. Alongside this considerable contribution to research, Aidan introduced, inspired and challenged students around the world to *think critically* about the discipline of sport psychology through three editions of his leading international textbook, *A Critical Introduction to Sport Psychology*. His contribution to the development of the field of sport psychology in Ireland is unmatched. He was a founding member and strong advocate for the Psychological Society of Ireland's Division of Sport, Exercise and Performance Psychology, speaking regularly at annual symposiums. He was a former official Psychologist to the Irish Olympic team, and a frequent contributor to the media. Indeed, as Assoc. Prof. Suzanne Guerin and Prof. Alan Carr noted in a recent tribute, Aidan was *the* sport psychologist in Ireland. Through this pioneering role, he brought sport psychology to a wider audience, demystifying it for many people and generating acceptance of its validity as a scientifically derived approach to sport performance. Perhaps most importantly, as all great psychologists and inspirational teachers do, Aidan always put the person at the centre of the experience, demonstrating kindness and compassion, be it to a first-year undergraduate student tentatively raising their hand to ask a question or a much-decorated elite athlete seeking support. He will be greatly missed, and forever remembered.

James Matthews

Chair of the PSI Division of Sport, Exercise & Performance Psychology and UCD School of Public Health, Physiotherapy & Sports Science

## A Commitment to Students

I was fortunate to have been taught by Aidan as an undergraduate psychology student in UCD in the late seventies. My abiding memory of Aidan is his incredible kindness and humility. He had a vast knowledge of his subject matter, which he shared with passion and enthusiasm.

Over the years I heard that same passion in many media interviews and was reminded of his intelligence and his dedication and commitment. An ability to relate to others in a compassionate way reinforced his genuine nature and credibility.

It was such sad news to hear of his untimely passing. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a nam.

Marie Mulryan

NUIG School of Psychology

## Dedicated to My Academic Dad

16th March 2020 – etched on my brain forever – having to say goodbye to my wonderful mentor and dear friend, Aidan. I have affectionately referred to Aidan as my Academic Dad for many years, something we often joked about. I met Aidan as an 18-year-old, second year science student in UCD, when I decided to major in Psychology. Aidan was my cognitive psychology lecturer and our first conversation after my first class with him changed my life. It paved the way for what has become my beloved career.

Aidan supervised my final year thesis for my BSc, as well as my MSc and my PhD. He became an ever-present advisor, the person I could email, message or speak with any time I wanted a second opinion, career or life related. He was never too busy to chat. He would often just check-in randomly to say hi, to ask how I was doing and to send his regards to my family. He constantly encouraged me to lecture, write and research, activities we did together too, many times. When I signed my first solo book contract in 2016 for *Sport Cyberpsychology* (Routledge, 2018), I didn't even consider asking anyone else to write the foreword.

I'll cherish the memories I have of Aidan, from dancing together until our feet hurt at many UCD PsychSoc Balls and PSI Conference dinners, to long conversations in his office, on the phone and over coffee. The heartache I feel now at his untimely passing is matched only by the gratitude I feel for having had Aidan walk by my side throughout the first twenty years of my career. He will remain the voice of calm and reason, now in my head. Every crossroad I face I will continue to ask myself: "What would Prof. advise?" I know he will be there, the auditory image in my ear, nudging me toward the best options. I cannot begin to imagine the grief and loss Aidan's beloved Angela and Kevin are undoubtedly experiencing at this time. I hope it will provide them with some comfort to know that he lit up every time he spoke of them.

As I have said, many times, over the past few days – Aidan, one of the most uniquely intelligent, talented, supportive, committed and kindest people I've had the privilege to know – for me, you made it all possible and I will miss you, my Academic Dad, forever.

Olivia Hurley

PSI Council Member and Lecturer in Psychology, DunLaoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology



Aidan presenting at the very successful public lecture series marking PSI's 40th Anniversary in 2010.