

University College Cork
2024

Annual Quality Report (UCC)
Reporting Period 2022-2023

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PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM
Reporting Period 2022-2023

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PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

Introduction and Overview of Institution

This is the AQR for University College Cork for the reporting period **1 September 2022 - 31 August 2023**. It is to be submitted by **Friday, 23 February 2024**.

The AQR has been approved by the **University Leadership Team** on the recommendation of the **Quality Enhancement Committee**.

University College Cork (*Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh*) is a constituent university of the [National University of Ireland](#), and located in [Cork](#). University College Cork, five-time winner of the Sunday Times Irish University of the Year and Ireland's premier university for sustainability, has a tradition of independent thinking stretching back over 170 years. We are one of Ireland's leading universities with amongst the highest postgraduate or graduate employment rates of 94% for undergraduate studies and 95% for postgraduate studies.

Proud to be ranked in the top 2% of universities in the world, a degree from UCC ensures that graduates are 'World Ready and Work Ready'. UCC is unrivalled in the quality of its academic [programmes](#) and [research](#), its collaborations with [industry](#), the beauty of its campus and its vibrant [student life](#), enjoyed by over 22,000 students from over 104 countries. With over 3,400 students and one third of our staff from overseas, UCC is a true place of international learning.

1.0 Internal QA Framework

1.1 Governance and Management of Quality

Quality at UCC

The University Strategy confirms an institutional commitment to a quality culture based on enhancement:

“By embedding a strong quality-enhancement ethos, we will use our quality processes to ensure a culture and experience of best practice in the delivery of our academic mission, demonstrating our commitment to continuous evolution and improvement.” Strategic Plan 2017 – 2022, p. 23.

Quality Enhancement Policy

The University has a published Quality Enhancement policy which guides its activities:

An enhancement ethos both challenges and supports the systematic examination of what we do as a University to enable excellence in serving learners, stakeholders and our wider community in terms of our education, research and other activities. Our approach to quality is founded on openness, systematic self-evaluation, engagement with peer review processes and a commitment to enhancement-based outcomes that are responsive, creative, enabling and student-centred. Through our quality enhancement approach, we seek to: preserve our institutional autonomy through accountability and transparency which will enable the diversity of our activities; recognise and share good practice; increase our reflexive capacity; support institutional learning and development to encourage responsiveness across all our activities.

In our quality enhancement approach, we are committed to:

- Building and embedding a culture of quality which is engaged, reflective and connected;
- Working collaboratively to develop effective evaluation approaches that allow critical reflection on achievement of strategic goals and objectives and an appraisal of the known and anticipated needs of stakeholders;
- Engaging students as active partners in the quality enhancement process to embed a student-centred approach;
- Developing quality processes that promote creativity, excellence and innovation;
- Using peer review as an important reference point for confirming and developing the quality of the University's activities;
- Undertaking institutional reflection on the outcomes of quality review processes to contribute to ongoing institutional planning, resource allocation and institutional development;
- Ensuring that quality processes facilitate the sharing of good practice internally and externally;
- Developing our evidenced-based approach to quality enhancement informed by relevant research and good practice nationally and internationally.

Quality assurance and enhancement policy at UCC is informed by international best practice and has regard to the requirements of the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012* and the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015)*.

Governance of Quality: Quality Enhancement Committee

The [Quality Enhancement Committee](#) (QEC), chaired by the President, reports to the University Management Team and annually to Governing Body. The QEC's role is to support the University's mission and strategy for excellence in learning, research and related services through developing and embedding a culture of quality enhancement based on the outcomes of robust expert peer review and informed by ongoing analysis of key quality indicators. The Committee has oversight and acts as a reference point for the work of the Quality Enhancement Unit.

In fulfilling its remit, the Quality Enhancement Committee advises UMT and Academic Council on key quality issues arising with implications for strategy or policy development. It provides an [Annual Report to Governing Body](#) to meet the requirements of the Universities Act 1997 and the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act 2012. Governing Body refers the report to Academic Council for consideration and review of relevant issues.

Management of Quality

The Director of Quality Enhancement reports to the President and is responsible for planning and implementing the University's periodic quality assurance and enhancement procedures and related quality projects University-wide. The Director is supported by a team of professional staff who work with oversight from the Quality Enhancement Committee to ensure that quality processes support the University's strategic mission and are fit for purpose. Overall, this helps to ensure that the University's quality processes are informed by, and developed in light of, international good practice for quality in higher education policies for the European Higher Education Area including, Bologna, the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) and national policies and procedures as outlined in Quality and Qualifications Ireland's (QQI) Guidelines. The Director of Quality is a member of Academic Council, Academic Board and its sub-committees to ensure that relevant quality considerations arising from internal or external quality processes are taken account of.

Quality Assurance and Enhancement policies and procedures

University-wide there are a range of quality policies and procedures which link to, and support quality assurance and enhancement of the university's activities. These approaches are based on the principles of expert external peer review, external stakeholder engagement, internal stakeholder engagement and robust internal approval, review and monitoring approaches. Such approaches are exemplified by:

- Periodic quality review by external peers of academic, support and research activity;
- External examiner system and reports;
- External stakeholder engagement in the design and review of educational provision;
- Student engagement and participation in University decision-making processes and student representative structures within programmes;
- Student participation as reviewers in periodic quality review;
- Policy and procedures for programme, module approval and curriculum review;
- Policy and procedures for approval, review and enhancement of doctoral programmes;
- Procedures for the appointment and on-going professional development of staff;
- Internal monitoring, review and evaluation of key quality processes through the University's Academic Council committee structure;
- Strategic review and monitoring of key outcomes of quality processes through the University Management Team.

Implementation of these approaches allows the University to assure the quality and standards of its awards as specified by the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act 2012.

Periodic Quality Review

The University's periodic quality review process is comprehensive of education, research and support areas and follows a periodic seven-year cycle. The overall quality review process operates in accordance with the expectations of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality (ESG). Quality assurance and enhancement policy at UCC is informed by international best practice and has regard to the requirements of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012 and with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015). Our [guidelines](#) are comprehensive and include our objectives, principles and process. <https://www.ucc.ie/en/qeu/>

The key components of the periodic quality processes include review methodologies for: academic quality, research quality, support quality, thematic and topic specific issues. Review methodologies are based on self-assessment and an expert assessment model involving external peer review, national and international benchmarking and analysis of good practice. They are underpinned by key data and indicators emerging from internal approval, review and monitoring mechanisms. Periodic review takes account of national and European guidelines as well as good practice in higher education quality. The methodology for the periodic review process follows the 4-stage process of:

- Self-evaluation
- Appointment of a peer review panel and site visit
- Publication of a peer review panel report
- Follow-up and quality enhancement

In addition to periodic quality reviews of education, research and services, Thematic Reviews are also undertaken. The function of Thematic Review is to support the development of priority strategic actions through peer review and benchmarking. These reviews take an enhancement-led strategic evaluation of a topic encompassing University-wide processes, practices or policies to assess their current stage of effectiveness and identify international good practices that can inform future developments.

Strategic Plan and UCC Context

UCC 2022: Delivering a Connected University

The current [Strategic Plan 2017-22 Independent Thinking – Shared Ambition](#) finishes in December 2022 and work is underway to develop the new Strategic Plan.

[UCC 2022: Delivering a Connected University](#) replaces the final two years of the *Strategic Plan 2017-2022* It sets out a thematic prioritisation of our strategy, as well as the transformative changes to our core operations in response to geopolitical challenges, the escalating climate crisis and accelerating societal and economic pressures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. This strategic pivot identifies our key strategic priorities for the period 2021-2022, clustered within five interconnected thematic pillars: Learning and Teaching; Research and Innovation; Student Success; People and Organisational Culture; and Infrastructure and Resources. Deeply rooted in extensive collaboration both within and outside UCC, this two-year plan builds on our strengths in

student focus, sustainability, and community and global engagement, to identify actions to respond to the current crisis and position UCC for long-term success.

Academic Governance and Policy Development

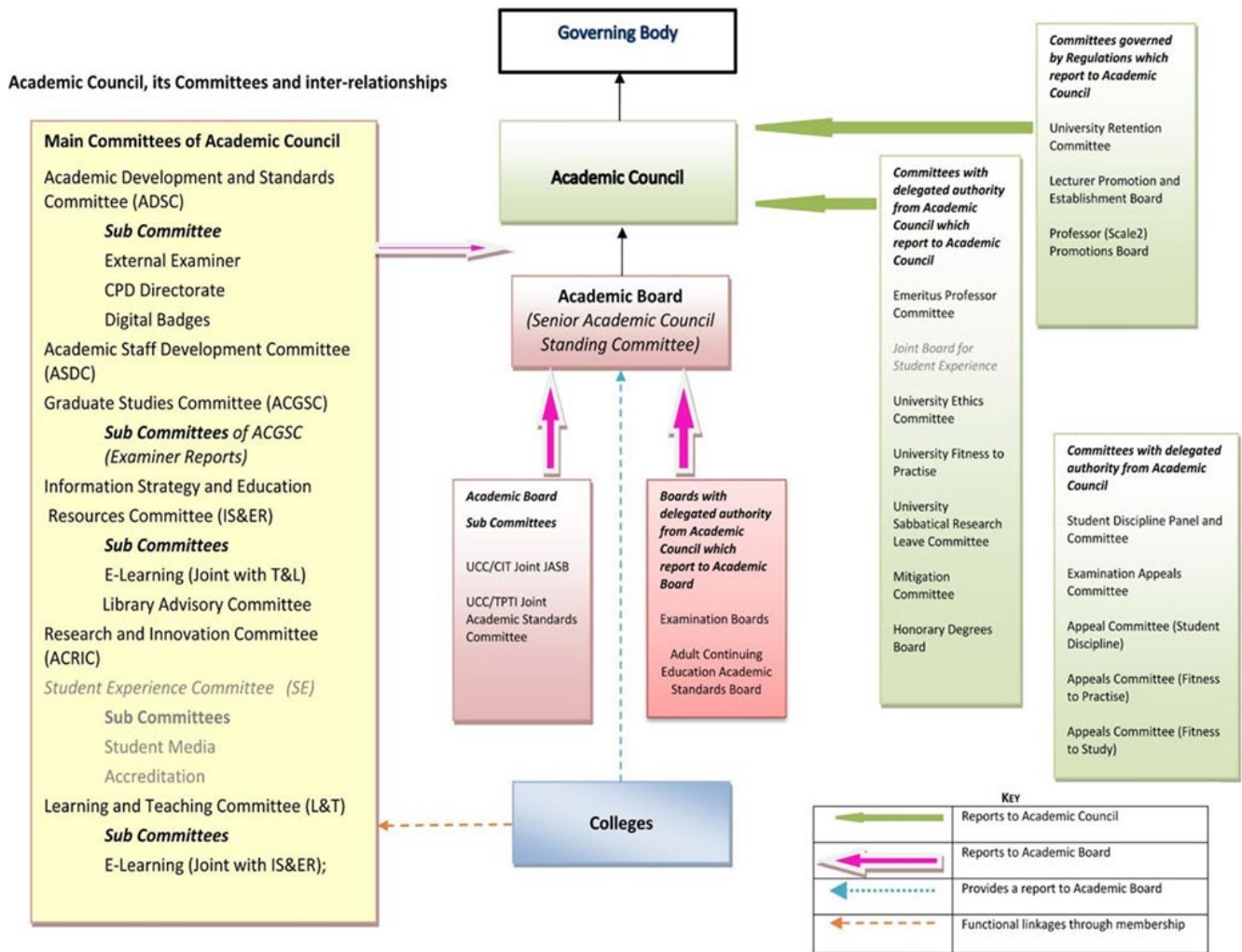
At the organisational level, the University has established an [Academic Policy and Document Portal](#) which brings together in one place all University policy on academic matters. This development ensures that the correct policy version is being used across the University and allows easy access and consultation. The portal is maintained by the Office of Academic Affairs & Governance (which also manages Academic Council and its subcommittees) and is part of the ongoing development of academic governance provided for in Priority 6 of the University's Academic Strategy. This has seen a strengthening of representation and expertise on Academic Council through a new panel of 30 co-opted members to provide a strong central policy framework. Central academic policies are given effect at the School and College level through the principles of subsidiarity, assurance and central oversight. As an example, work has commenced on establishing formal academic governance at the programme level to allow more local and responsive curriculum change (subsidiarity) within a new University-wide system and structure of Programme Boards of Studies (assurance and oversight). These developments will be underpinned by the introduction of a new Curriculum Management System across the University.

Academic Council and Academic Board

The responsibilities of Academic Council [Academic Council | University College Cork \(ucc.ie\)](#) for managing and controlling the academic affairs of the university including curriculum, instruction and education are defined by [statute](#). Academic Council, in law, is the primary internal authority responsible for academic affairs. Internal revisions in academic governance must not undermine the legal powers granted to Academic Council but must enable it to discharge its responsibilities effectively and, in practical terms, must enable the alignment and integration of University/College academic governance arrangements with an appropriate balance being struck between accountability and autonomy. Operationally this means that Academic Council retains authority on policy matters with University-level Committees and College Councils advisory to Academic Council, whilst in fact undertaking much of the preliminary work for purposes of efficacy.

Academic Council is supported by an Academic Board [Academic Board | University College Cork \(ucc.ie\)](#) with delegated authority on certain matters; established standing committees and a range of sub- committees to manage academic affairs across the scope of the University's education, research and related services. The work of these sub-committees is engaged in coordinating and implementing governing structures, policies and procedures. The work of the Academic Council is supported by the Office for Academic Affairs and Governance and the governing procedures for the conduct of committees is set out in the [Academic Council Committee Handbook](#)

[UCC Organisational Structure | University College Cork](#)



During the COVID-19 pandemic 2 additional committees were established: It was agreed by Academic Council on 09-04-2020 that ALF would become an executive subcommittee of AC empowered to make decisions on behalf of Academic Council. The Examinations Business Continuity Group (EBCG) was similarly empowered in relation to urgent decisions on examination matters.

1.2 Linked Providers, Collaborative and Transnational Provision

UCC engages with other educational institutions in the development of research, staff and student mobility and the provision of education. It also engages with appropriate professional statutory bodies, sectoral and industry representative and learned organisations in accordance with its objectives as a research intensive and comprehensive university.

Educational collaboration

UCC adopts a systematic process for the approval of all new collaborative academic programmes offered in collaboration with other degree awarding bodies or programmes involving external partners. This aligns with the process followed for UCC wholly owned awards, namely Stage 1 which comprises Outline Programme Approval by Academic Board and Stage 2 which comprises the quality assurance procedures for full programme approval by a Programme Approval Panel. In addition, a Memorandum of Agreement or other suitable agreement in relation to academic cooperation for inter-institutional joint programmes or programmes involving external partners (inclusive of annexes/consortia agreements concerning detailed programme management arrangements), is considered during Stage 2 of the approval process. Under the Signing Authority and Approval Policy, the MOA signing authority is the Deputy President & Registrar (with the Academic Secretary deputising). The President may also sign MOAs, where appropriate.

Current activities for programme collaboration are guided by the overarching principles of the [IHEQN Guidelines for the Approval, Monitoring and Review of Collaborative and Transnational Provision](#).

All Academic Agreements must be approved at University level and signed off as appropriate. The University Signing Authority Policy is here: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/ocla/policy/>

There is a systematic process for the approval of new academic programmes developed and delivered by UCC and a partner degree-awarding body. Due diligence of the proposed curriculum to be delivered by the partner institution must be performed as outlined in the [UCC handbook governing curricular approval](#). A [Linked Providers procedure](#) was previously approved by the Quality Enhancement Committee.

Collaborative Programmes

Collaborative programmes offered in partnership by UCC and MTU (formerly CIT) are governed by the MTU-UCC Joint Board. The Cork Institute of Technology and University College Cork Joint Board formally changed its name to the MTU-UCC Joint Board at their meeting of 15 November 2021. This was subsequently ratified by the MTU Academic Council and UCC Academic Board.

The MTU-UCC Joint Board is a Joint Board of the Academic Council of Munster Technological University (MTU) and the Academic Board of University College Cork (UCC). Its primary purpose is to ensure that the academic standards and procedures applying to collaborative and joint programmes delivered in partnership between MTU and UCC satisfy the requirements of both institutions. It also functions to encourage further cooperation between the two universities including the development of new programmes. The Board reports by way of minutes to the Academic Council of MTU and the Academic Board of UCC in the case of programme issues. The Board reports issues relating to resources by way of submission of relevant document(s) and Joint Board minute(s) to the MTU Executive Board, UCC Academic Council and/or UCC University Management Team. The

Board is kept informed by the appropriate Officers and management bodies of the institutions of strategic and policy issues relevant to collaborative and joint programmes.

The University College Cork-Turning Point Institute (UCC-TPI JASC) Joint Academic Standards Committee is responsible for the governance and academic quality of the programmes offered under this partnership. The primary purpose of the JASC is to ensure that the academic standards and procedures applying to deliver the programme by TPI fully satisfy the requirements of UCC.

Transnational Education

The situation regarding collaborative provision with universities in China has changed as the Chinese Ministry of Education promote models with less outward mobility for Chinese students and more time spent in the home institution. The global pandemic has accelerated this trend. As a result, a number of articulation programmes have come to an end and new models of collaboration are underway. The first of these is the agreement with Minzu University of China (MUC) for a dual degree programme (BSc (Hons) Environmental Science and Management with the UCC of School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences.

Professional Registration & Statutory Bodies / Recognition Bodies

The University engages with a range of professional, statutory, and other bodies in the provision of the educational portfolio and in the maintenance of high professional standards. The outcomes of professional accreditation inform on-going programme development, monitoring and review processes through curriculum committees at School and College level. Enhanced monitoring of [accredited programmes](#) has been introduced with information being held centrally in the Office of Academic Affairs & Governance and quarterly reports are provided to the Heads of Colleges. During the pandemic, the University worked closely with PRSBs to ensure that they were kept informed of curriculum and assessment changes. UCC also worked with QQI and IUA on national initiatives in this area.

2.0 Programme Development and Delivery

2.1 Programme Development and Approval

UCC has a clearly defined process for the approval of new academic programmes and modifications to existing programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. Policies and procedures for the development and approval of programme design are regulated by Academic Board via a sub-committee of Academic Council, the Academic Development and Standards Committee and the Office for Academic Programmes and Regulations (APAR).

New Academic Programmes

The University adopts a strategic approach to the introduction and approval of new academic programmes. The main components of the approval process for new academic programmes includes the clear articulation of Stage 1 and Stage 2. Stage 1 comprises initial consideration of an outline of the proposed programme by the lead College. The proposal is assessed against the College Strategy, its alignment to the University's Strategic Plan and the management of its overall portfolio of programmes as well as financial viability. Once endorsed by College, outline programme proposals are forwarded to Academic Board for review. Academic Board, as the body with responsibility for the management and oversight of the University's academic portfolio, is the ultimate authority for the approval of outline programme proposals for any new programme. Membership of Academic Board includes representation from all Colleges and ensures University-wide consultation of the proposed new programme. Academic Board considers the outline proposal for the new programme, requests (as appropriate) additional information or consultation, approves the proposed programme title and NFQ Level and recommends the appropriate review panel for Stage 2. Following Stage 1 approval, the programme team progresses to full programme development, designing the programme with reference to the relevant award type descriptors and in accordance with institutional policies and procedures.

Stage 2 – Full Programme Approval - is specifically configured to ensure the quality and standards of the programme, its adherence to institutional policies and procedures, confirmation of its positioning at the appropriate level on the NFQ and consideration of academic and pastoral support for students. The remit and authority of the programme approval event includes, for example, the requirement to ensure that the aims and programme learning outcomes are clear and coherent and the proposed NFQ level of the award is in accordance with National Framework of Qualifications. The full remit of the panel is enabled through peer review by external subject experts, internal academic and professional services expertise and employer/industry and student involvement. Stage 2 has been designed specifically to facilitate Programme Team engagement with external peers and industry/employers to promote good practice from elsewhere in the higher education sector nationally and internationally. In the case of collaborative provision, due diligence of the proposed curriculum to be delivered by the partner institution must be performed as outlined in the [UCC handbook governing curriculum approval](#).

Changes to existing programmes

Changes to existing approved academic programmes are classified as either major or minor. All changes require approval by the relevant School(s)/Programme Board of Studies and the anchor College (in liaison with participating College(s), where appropriate). Certain major changes require final approval by Academic Board. Major and minor changes are regulated by the Office for Academic Programmes and Regulations.

Information on the Academic Council approved process, policies, guidelines and procedures governing new programme approval and change may be found in the [handbook governing curriculum approval](#) and the policies and guidelines governing curriculum approval.

The output from the new academic Programme Approval and Change processes is recorded annually in four separate, but inter-linked publications, namely:

[University Undergraduate Calendar*](#)

[University Postgraduate Calendar](#)

[Book of Modules](#)

[Marks and Standards](#)

**Curriculum and examination related information for programmes offered through Adult Continuing Education may be found on the [Adult Continuing Education Website](#).*

These are published annually on the University web page and contain the curriculum and examination related information which form the basis of the University's contract with the student and fulfils the University's obligation to students in this regard

The *University Undergraduate and Postgraduate Calendars* contain information on: Programme title, NFQ level; Programme Entry Requirements; the groupings of core and elective modules that make up each year of a programme and their associated credits values; Regulations governing Selection and Change of Modules, Information on Subject Quotas, Transfers within and across Faculties/Colleges, Work Placement options; Regulations governing Admission, Supervision and Examination of Research Degrees.

The *Book of Modules* contains information on each module listed in the University Calendar. Module Descriptions contain data on: Module Title, Credit Value, Teaching Periods; Maximum no. of Students, Pre-requisites, Co-requisites; Teaching Methods/Student Workload; Module Co-ordinator, Lecturers, Learning Outcomes, Module Objective; Module Content, Assessment type and weighting, Compulsory Elements, Penalties, Pass Standard and any Special Requirements for Passing Module, Examination Profile, Requirements for Supplemental Examinations (where applicable).

The *Marks and Standards Book* contains the assessment rules and standards at academic programme level and govern whether or not a student may progress to the following year of study or graduate and the parameters that define the class of the degree to be awarded. It contains information including: Time of Examination Boards, Credits, Modules; Marks Maxima; Pass Standard for the programme, Exit Awards, Pass and Progression/Calculation of Honours Rules; Carrying Forward of Marks Towards Final Degree Result; Eligibility for Honours at Programme Level, Conditions Governing Supplemental and Repeat Year Examinations; Exemptions, Time-limiting Rules.

2.2 Admission, Progression, Recognition & Certification

Student Journey

The student journey through UCC is of key concern to the University. The Office of Recruitment and Admissions leads the strategic development and direction of policy and practice related to student recruitment, admission and retention. The development of the Graduate Attributes Programme (GAP) is an initiative advancing the development of students' academic, specialist and technical competencies, equipping them with transferrable skills that can be applied in different environments. With a focus on developing core values and graduate attributes, these initiatives are integrating with the academic curriculum, taking a holistic educational approach to develop character, professionalism and the capacity for critical and creative thought.

UCC graduates will be recognised as well-rounded, curious, self-aware, individuals who continually learn new skills, are open to new ideas, and make things happen.

Programmes are created to nurture students in advance of attending UCC and throughout their time in the University. **Nurturing Bright Futures** is a six-module course that has been designed to equip potential students with the information they need to prepare to transition into third level education. It is especially helpful for those who cannot access our campus easily, for a range of different reasons. Through the use of video lessons, podcasts, articles, exercises, quizzes and other helpful resources, these six modules will give potential students the opportunity to engage with a variety of resources and introduce them to ways and approaches to college life and college degrees.

This course is also a resource for Guidance Counsellors, teachers and parents/guardians, to help them to help students with this transition. It is designed to provide information and stimulate conversations with these key people in their lives, and to get them thinking in a structured way so that they can consult and make informed decisions about their post-secondary school options. Regardless of whether they are considering coming to UCC or elsewhere, Nurturing Bright Futures will give them insights, skills and knowledge that they can apply in any third level context.

Downloadable publications have been produced to accompany the Nurturing Bright Futures programme: [Guide for Parents and Guardians](#)

[Guide for Guidance Counsellors and Teachers](#)

[Compendium of print-friendly worksheets and infographic posters](#) [Year Planner booklet](#)

Delivery of a suite of initiatives within the GAP focuses on the different stages of students' Transition In, Through and Out of the university. The overarching objective of the GAP is to enable a successful student journey, which will prepare students for their future through three main projects.

- **Transition In** initiatives are guiding students into the right programme of study for them, whilst simultaneously widening access of under-represented cohorts and improving first year retention rates.
- **Transition Through** initiatives are providing targeted supports, delivering skills training and developing graduate attributes that go beyond disciplinary content knowledge and can be applied in life-wide contexts.

- **Transition Out** initiatives are preparing final year students to transition into professional environments, delivering on the ambitions of our Institutional Employability and Employment Guide.

Admissions Policies

All of UCC's Admission policies can be found at the following link: [Admissions | University College Cork \(ucc.ie\)](#). This includes links to our HEAR, DARE, Mature Student and QQI FE Widening Participation routes, as well as advanced and deferred entry policies.

UCC's Overarching Admissions policy: [Overarching Admissions Policy](#)

UCC admits students to accredited programmes from NFQ level 6 to level 10 and also to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Modules. This Policy applies to applicants and UCC staff involved in the admissions process for UCC programmes/modules and CPD programmes/modules. This Policy does not currently apply to the Language Centre/Irish Management Institute (IMI) / Adult Continuing Education (ACE).

Recognition of Prior Learning

UCC is engaged in a national sectoral project on RPL. The UCC RPL policy is available at:

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/ovptl/documents/RecognitionofPriorLearningPolicy.pdf>

There is a separate RPL policy for research students:

<https://reg.ucc.ie/curriculum/calendar/live/postgraduate/Doctor/Recognition%20of%20Prior%20Learning%20Policy%20for%20Admission%20to%20Research%20Degrees.pdf>

The Office of Recruitment and Admissions

The Office of Recruitment and Admissions comprises a suite of eight Professional Services, namely: Admissions Office, International Office, Graduate Studies Office, Student Recruitment Office, Quercus Talented Students' Programme, Graduate Attributes Programme, Centre for Professional Development (CPD), and the Scholarship and Prizes Unit.

The **International Office** has responsibility for coordinating strategy and administering operational processes to deliver on UCC's strategic internationalisation goals. The International Office manages the admission of Non-EU undergraduate (full time as well as Visiting and Exchange Programme Students) and postgraduate taught and research students. The Office supports applicants from initial enquiry stage, through to application, registration and orientation. The International Office also provides a dedicated support service from pre-departure stage and throughout the student journey for international students. It also facilitates the logistics of visiting delegations, in addition to coordinating Staff Teaching/Training exchanges and placements.

International Office webpage: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/international/>

The **Graduate Studies Office** manages the admission of EU postgraduate taught and research students. It supports applicants through the full recruitment cycle from initial enquiry stage, through to application, registration and orientation. Furthermore, it manages the examination and record keeping for all research students.

Graduate Studies Office webpage: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/study/postgrad/>

The **Student Recruitment Office** has responsibility to develop and implement the strategy for student recruitment of all undergraduate and postgraduate students. The office supports and coordinates the cross-functional operational service delivery of all student recruitment activities in close collaboration with the four Colleges, Marketing and Communications and other Central Professional Services.

[Student Recruitment Office](#)

The **Quercus Talented Students' Programme** supports and promotes excellence in academia, sport, creative and performing arts, active citizenship and innovation/entrepreneurship. In addition to administering the prestigious scholarships in these areas, it also manages the three Quercus Academic Scholarships. It nurtures talent through the provision of a deep programme of supports, challenge and mentoring.

Quercus Talented Students' Programme webpage: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/quercus/>

The **Graduate Attributes Programme** delivers a suite of initiatives focussing on the different stages of students' Transition Into, Through and Out of university and has a parallel focus on students' development and acquisition of core values and graduate attributes. These initiatives are integrating with the academic curriculum as well as with student support services, to enable a successful student journey, to foster and embed a holistic educational approach, and to equip our students and graduates with real-world transferable transversal skills that can be applied in different contexts and environments throughout their lives.

Graduate Attributes Programme webpage: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/graduateattributes/>

The **Centre for Professional Development** manages the admission of students onto CPD modules, both credit and non-credit bearing. It supports applicants from initial enquiry stage, through to application and registration.

Centre for Professional Development webpage: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/cpd/>

The **Scholarships and Prizes Unit** brings a coordinated and streamlined approach to the more than 1,000 scholarships and prizes in the UCC portfolio. It supports the policies, procedures, workflows and systems to administer university, and external, scholarships and prizes. The Unit affords greater clarity, coherence and cohesion to university staff with responsibility for managing the administration of individual scholarships and prizes.

Scholarships and Prizes webpage: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/scholarships/>

The **Admissions Office** oversees the recruitment and admission of EU undergraduate students and the support of first year students.

Pre-Entry Information Provision for UG EU

Prior to entry, the Admissions Office supports prospective students through the provision of information regarding all undergraduate programmes, entry requirements and application procedures and policies. This information provision is done through close collaboration with the Student Recruitment team who oversee the production of relevant literature in print and online, through events such as Open Days and Parent Information

Evenings, and school visits. Following are links to the online resources used to disseminate information on the programmes offered:

www.ucc.ie/prospectus

www.ucc.ie/study/undergrad/courses

www.ucc.ie/study/undergrad/entryreqs

www.ucc.ie/cao

www.ucc.ie/openday

Once prospective students have become applicants to undergraduate programmes, either via CAO or via the local applications process, the Admissions Office provides information regarding important dates (offer dates etc.), accommodation, registration and orientation.

The policies pertaining to admission include entry requirements, deferred entry, Student Garda Vetting, infectious disease policy, fitness to practice, etc. These are clearly published in the Academic Policy Portal and on the Admissions webpages. These can be found on the following links:

www.ucc.ie/en/academicgov/policies/admissions-policies/

www.ucc.ie/en/study/undergrad/admissionspolicies/

First Year Support

The Admissions Office provides a comprehensive range of supports for first year students which are managed and developed by the First Year Experience Co-ordinator. These supports include (but are not limited to) the distribution of the [First Year Guide to Success](#) to all offer holders following CAO offers, one- to-one meetings with first year students throughout the year and a range of events including Orientation, Freshers' Fest, the Open-Door Welcome for Family and Friends, and various academic and pastoral support workshops and seminars. Details of these events and activities can be found on:

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/study/undergrad/firstyear/>

UCC is fully compliant with the QQI Access, Transfer and Progression Policy. Students entering UCC on Access routes are also supported in UCC and information on these routes can be found at the following pages:

www.ucc.ie/en/dss/dare/

www.ucc.ie/en/uccplus/

www.ucc.ie/en/uccplus/hear/

www.ucc.ie/en/study/undergrad/entryreqs/matureapplicants/

www.ucc.ie/en/mature/matureprospective/

www.ucc.ie/en/study/undergrad/fetac/

www.ucc.ie/en/cpd/

Support for students is also provided by UCC's [International Office](#), [Graduate Studies Office](#) and [Adult Continuing Education](#).

Advanced Entry

First year students who have completed undergraduate modules prior to commencing their studies in UCC may be eligible for an exemption from the corresponding UCC module or for Advanced Entry to a year beyond first

year. Exemptions are approved at School/Department level after the student has registered. Module exemption most often comes into consideration for students who have come into UCC through the Advanced Entry process (to a year beyond first year). Information regarding such transfers is available at www.ucc.ie/en/study/undergrad/entryreqs/transferadvancedentry/.

Data relating to retention and progression is compiled annually by the Office of Recruitment and Admissions and considered at University Management Team meetings and by Academic Council.

Access

Access in University College Cork comprises of three core services who work with the wider university, students, teachers, communities, families, businesses, and advocacy groups to ensure that all students who have the interest and motivation to access higher education are enabled to do so.

The core access services are the UCC PLUS+ Programme (students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds), the Mature Student Office and the Disability Support Service. A comprehensive range of outreach programmes, dedicated admissions pathways and post admission supports are in place to ensure that students have equal opportunities to progress and succeed in University College Cork. The support of non-traditional students in UCC is not confined to the core access service; strong working relationships have been established between access services and professional services and academic departments <https://www.ucc.ie/en/accessforall/>

University College Cork is recognised as a leader in the area of Access to Higher Education in 2019/20 over 23% of undergraduate admissions were through Access Admissions routes.

The key services delivered by Access & Participation include:

Disability Support Service (DSS): The Disability Support Service works to increase access and retention of students with disabilities and specific learning difficulties and does this by delivering a very proactive and innovative pre-entry programme to engage with primary and secondary schools as well as students with disabilities and their parents. The DSS also provide a post entry support programme to identify reasonable accommodations to support student to undertake their studies in UCC. Supports extend to students on placement, Erasmus or mentoring/internship programmes.

UCC PLUS+ Programme: The UCC PLUS Programme, aims to increase the number of young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds accessing and succeeding in University. There are three central strands to the work of the UCC PLUS+ Programme:

- an outreach programme
- a special admissions route - HEAR, and
- a post entry support programme in UCC

Mature Student Office: The Mature Student Office (MSO) works with full-time undergraduate students who are over the age of 23 on 1 January on the year of entry to third level, in addition to supporting first year students entering via QQI/Further Education route. The role of the MSO is twofold:

- Recruitment - to promote and encourage mature student entry to UCC and
- Retention & Progression - to support registered mature students to stay on their course of study.

Student Financial Support and Advice: Providing financial support to students is key to enabling participation and success for students from low-income background. A range of funds are administered by the Student

Assistance Fund office. The Student Budgetary Advisor is on hand to provide advice, guidance and support to students experiencing financial challenges.

The SOAR Project is an inter-institutional collaboration on Access, which is led by Access & Participation in UCC. It brings together the South Cluster – Munster Technological University, Institute of Technology Carlow, Institute of Technology Tralee, University College Cork and Waterford Institute of Technology together with community partners to collaborate on devising and delivering strategies to increase access to higher education for under-represented groups. The Project is funded by the Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) Strand 3.

Sanctuary Scholarships Scheme

An exciting initiative that has been developed as part of UCC's University of Sanctuary Status is the [Sanctuary Scholarships scheme](#). This scheme provides free tuition to 7 asylum seekers and/or refugees living in Ireland annually who would otherwise have to pay international student (non-EU) fees to access third level education. In partnership with the Tomar Trust and other private donors, bursaries will also be provided to successful students.

2.3 Procedures for Making Awards

All academic programmes and modules are aligned with the ECTS and published in the [University Calendar](#) and [Book of Modules](#). Assessment details for individual modules are recorded in the [Book of Modules](#).

The criteria required to pass a particular module and progress to the next stage of a programme are detailed in the Marks and Standards for each programme <http://www.ucc.ie/admin/registrar/marksandstandards/> and in the Book of Modules for each module (<https://www.ucc.ie/admin/registrar/modules/>). The Marks and Standards describe the timing of assessment, the total credits and marks required at each year of a programme, the pass standard and the criteria that must be met for students to progress to the next stage of a programme.

The Marks and Standards also describe the conditions where Supplemental Examination and/or Repeat Year Examination is appropriate, and additional conditions such as the awarding of honours by year and/or for the programme, requirements for exit awards, exemptions and rate of progression limits.

Changes to Marks and Standards require approval by the relevant College. The Marks and Standards for each year of each programme are applied by the University's Student Records and Examinations Office. Application of Marks and Standards generates a provisional final mark and award for each student. University Appointed External Examiners participate in Internal School/Department Examination Boards. These provisional marks and awards are presented for ratification by a University Examination Board, where the Examination Officer or nominee acts as Secretary; the University Examination Board make the appropriate final approval recommendations to the University's Academic Board.

Regulations governing the preparation for and the execution of examinations can be found at: www.ucc.ie/en/exams/procedures-regulations. This includes information on the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, regulations and procedures with respect to the monitoring and evaluation of examination processes and outputs and the retention of data. The assessment process for each discipline also makes provision for mitigating circumstances <https://www.ucc.ie/en/exams/procedures-regulations/>. There is also provision for [examination rechecks](#) and [Appeals](#).

External Examiners play a vital role in the assessment of programmes, assuring academic standards and advising on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The External Examiner confirms that the academic standards of programmes, modules and the awards to which they lead are consistent with the academic outcomes specified and are comparable to those achieved in the subject area in equivalent universities internationally. The Guidelines for External Examiners <https://www.ucc.ie/en/academicgov/externs/> includes information on the role of the Extern Examiner and the role of the Head of School/Department/Discipline.

UCC has a clearly defined process for the development of programme learning outcomes for new academic programmes and modifications to the programme learning outcomes for existing programmes. For new programmes, the programme team proposes programme learning outcomes which are reviewed as part of the programme approval process. Individual module learning outcomes and the assessment strategy for the programme collectively contribute to the overall programme learning. This review by internal and external peers ensures they are appropriate to the level of the award within the National Framework of Qualifications, are comparable to equivalent awards internationally and are in-line with the programme aims and content. Changes to programme learning outcomes for existing programmes require approval by the relevant School(s)/Programme Board of Studies and the anchor College (in liaison with participating College(s), where appropriate).

2.4 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Policies, Procedures and Governance

The delivery of research-based teaching and learning with a world class student experience is a key strategic goal ('Pillar 1') for UCC as outlined in the University's recently revised strategic plan, [UCC 2022: Delivering a Connected University](#) and is further articulated in UCC's [Academic Strategy 2018-2022](#). The UCC 2022 roadmap contains five thematic pillars, of which Learning & Teaching is Pillar 1, with each Pillar being divided into sub-Actions, assigned to named individuals/teams and with dates for delivery. There are seven Actions under Pillar 1. Each Action owner provides regular periodic updates to executive staff and to the relevant Governing Body sub-committee – in this case, the Governing Body for Student Experience.

In June 2021, the University's Academic Board approved the University's first *Assessment Framework*, developed by the Vice President for Learning & Teaching (VPLT) and the Head of Student Records & Examinations, and the Framework is implemented across the University. The development of an assessment policy and operations guidance was one of six key priorities identified by the *Academic Strategy 2018-2022*. It supplements and incorporates existing UCC regulations such as the *Guide to Examinations and Assessment for Staff and Students* and it provides a coherent anchor for relevant policy development. Similarly, UCC is developing a whole suite of policy and resources on Academic Integrity which is being led by [the Skills Centre](#), a unit that reports to the Vice President for Learning & Teaching. This literacy enhancement work builds on established policies and procedures such as UCC's [Plagiarism Policy](#); [Fitness to Practise](#) policy, and UCC's [Guide to Examinations and Assessment for Students and Staff](#)

The following link provides an A-Z list of all UCC policies and regulations in respect of academic governance, including teaching and learning related policy and guidelines such as UCC's [External Examiners](#). Further policy continues to be generated by relevant standing committees of UCC's Academic Council such as its Learning & Teaching Committee (AC-LTC), its Academic Development and Standards Committee and various sub-committees such as the Digital Education Advisory Group (DEAG). The Students' Union is very well-represented on committees such as the AC-LTC, and the Vice-President for Learning & Teaching and the Students' Union Education Officer meet monthly. The purpose and Terms of Reference for the above-mentioned committees are set out in the Academic Council Committee Handbook <https://www.ucc.ie/en/academicgov/secretary/council/academic-council-handbook/>. The VP for Learning & Teaching and several Office of the Vice President for Learning & Teaching (OVPLT) staff are committee members and/or secretariat for many of the Academic Council standing committees.

In 2020, the Vice-President for Learning & Teaching initiated a Thematic Quality Review of digital education at UCC whereunder an external evaluation panel of national and international experts were invited to offer recommendations for improvement of UCC's approach to digital education from an organisational structures point of view. A recommendation that a senior management level forum of the key individuals heading units that provide digital education infrastructure and digital education training be established to ensure cohesion and communications. A Digital Education Leadership Forum (DELFL) was established in September 2021 and is chaired by the VPLT. A key policy currently undergoing revision, with oversight from DELFL, is the University's Lecture Recording Policy.

Operations and Staff Professional Development

The Office of the Vice President for Learning & Teaching (OVPLT) advises and contributes to the development of policy for learning and teaching and, through national and international engagement, ensures that policies and practices at the University are appropriately benchmarked and informed by good practice. In tandem with other quality assurance controls and procedures (such as external reports, external professional bodies accreditations and standards, policies such as “Fitness to Practice” etc.), OVPLT is actively engaged in the promotion and elevation of a culture across the University of developing, disseminating and celebrating quality and excellence in teaching – for example its annual President’s Awards for Excellence in Teaching, the oldest such scheme amongst Irish HEIs. In November 2021, it ran a university-wide, week-long showcase of learning & teaching highlights across UCC under the inaugural national ‘Valuing Ireland’s Teaching & Learning (VIT&L) Week’. The programme of talks, workshops, tours etc. can be read at <https://www.ucc.ie/en/cirtl/events/vital2021/>

The role of OVPLT is to enhance the staff and student learning experience through staff development opportunities and through engagement in innovative research-informed teaching to ensure that innovative learning and teaching approaches are fostered and supported and a student-centered approach to research-based teaching is rooted in the culture (<https://www.ucc.ie/en/teachlearn/abouttheovplt/>). OVPLT issues a weekly short email to all staff on teaching ‘tips and tricks’ as well as links to further reading and internal and external resources/supports, highlighting for example national seminars provided by the IUA/QQI/National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning. OVPLT’s quarterly e-newsletters issued to all UCC staff (and beyond) is another way that it disseminates information on good practices locally and elsewhere (<https://www.ucc.ie/en/teachlearn/ovpltnewsevents/>). During the pandemic, it developed and promoted a new ‘Teaching Today’ webpage which has become a one-stop shop for staff seeking information on relevant policies and guidance on training and ‘how to’.

UCC’s reputation in the area of learning and teaching is recognised internationally as UCC is regularly selected to participate in EUA projects and Erasmus+ capacity-building projects. For example, UCC (through OVPLT) has participated in the 2017, 2018, 2020 and 2021 EUA Learning & Teaching Thematic Peer Groups (TPGs) around such theme as “[Improving the link between research and teaching](#)”, “[Promoting active learning in universities](#)”, and “[Meeting skills and employability demands](#)”. The TPGs gather a selected group of EUA member universities each year to discuss and explore practices and lessons learnt in organising and implementing learning and teaching at the institutional level. They also identify good practices on the given theme, and support quality enhancement in learning and teaching. The groups’ work feeds into EUA’s ongoing policy work and debates on [learning and teaching](#) by providing direct feedback from an institutional perspective on the key challenges in the area, as well as recommendations. UCC (through OVPLT) was also selected as one of 29 HEIs to participate in the EUA’s Leadership and Organisation for Teaching and Learning at European Universities (LOTUS) programme. The LOTUS project’s purpose was to contribute to capacity building and strategic change management for learning and teaching at higher education institutions across Europe. UCC (through OVPLT) continues as a partner in numerous Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership and Capacity Building Initiatives. These initiatives focus on a range of topics related to Learning and Teaching in Higher Education and are transnational projects designed to develop and share innovative practices and promote cooperation, peer learning, and exchanges of experiences. As a programme partner in these projects, we support eligible Partner Countries (e.g., Haiti) to modernise, internationalise and increase access to higher education, and address the challenges facing their higher education institutions and systems.

OVPLT supports a wide range of CPD activities for staff through the Centre for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning (CIRTL) www.ucc.ie/en/cirtl/ which provides support for all staff and postgraduate students in their teaching and learning roles. Credit bearing programmes in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education up to and including NFQ level 9 (Postgraduate Certificate/Postgraduate Diploma) are available online and free of charge to all categories of staff who support student learning, along with tailored modules for postgraduate students engaged in teaching. All newly appointed staff are required to enrol in and complete the Postgraduate Certificate programme, and participation rates in the programme are an institutional performance measure through the HEA Compact process. The Postgraduate Certificate programme is UCC's largest – as measured by enrolment numbers – postgraduate programme, and over 70% of all staff have successfully completed the certificate. The Centre staff also run regular seminar workshops on Teaching and Learning and Assessment theories and practices and these are advertised to all staff.

The [Centre for Digital Education](#) (within OVPLT) provides support to UCC staff around the application of educational technology to education. It offers bespoke training sessions to academic and other staff across the University around their digital skills, confidence and competence, to enhance the learning and teaching experience. Members of the CDE team sit on many committees across UCC including the academic-led Digital Education Advisory Group, a sub-committee of Academic Council, and is heavily involved with cognate units such as IT Services in procurement and fitting of hard and software technologies. The CDE team also publishes regular newsletters, blogs and FAQs and runs regular training sessions on topics informed by staff feedback on their needs. As well as group training sessions open to all staff, the CDE also offers 1:1 consultations for individual staff members and departmental-level advice/bespoke training.

The [Centre for Adult Continuing Education \(ACE\)](#) within UCC provides lifelong learning opportunities (credit and non-credit bearing) at a number of outreach centres in Cork and beyond, including at Cork Prison and through the municipal library network and the credit unions network, and well beyond the Munster region. ACE also designs and delivers bespoke training courses for local industries (such as Pharma companies) and manages [UCC's Springboard+](#) involvement through which several programmes at NFQ levels 7, 8 and 9 are delivered to jobseekers and workers who wish to upskill and increase their employability chances. ACE has an extremely strong working relationship with counterpart education providers across Cork city (such as MTU, Cork ETB, Cork City Council) through the 'Learning Cities' network.

The University's [Language Centre](#) (housed within OVPLT) is an accredited ACELS English language provider and as such conforms to the regulations and guidelines of its recognition scheme <https://www.acels.ie/acelsregulations> in respect to teaching, learning and assessment. The Centre's credit-bearing modules and courses are validated by the University. The Centre's suite of pre-sessional courses provide direct entrance to UCC undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. A special standardisation and moderation calendar ensures student performance is mapped to marking criteria and outcomes. Teacher training courses leading to a qualification are accredited by an external awarding body. The Centre complies with the awarding body regulations and complies with their requirements for internal and external verification regulations: <https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/teaching-english/professional-development/cambridge-english-teaching-framework/>

The student-facing Skills Centre (housed within OVPLT) is an additional resource available to all students offering group and 1:1 assistance in such areas as "Transitioning into College Life" "Developing your academic writing"

etc. A number of its resources are available to students 24/7. More on the Skills Centre here <https://www.ucc.ie/en/skillscentre/about/>

Since 2018, the Exams Appeals Officer reports to the VP for Learning & Teaching (and OVPLT provides all Exams Appeals administrative function). The learning that OVPLT has gained from the incorporation of this function has been invaluable and has contributed to (through the identification of gaps) the development of previously absent policy frameworks such as a “Reasonable Accommodations” policy and set of procedures for DSS students. The articulation of practices (e.g., Reasonable Accommodations) at UCC hithertofore undocumented is a further shift towards greater coherency and transparency. The Exams Appeals Officer also prepares annual reports for Academic Board.

Process and Procedures for External Examining

External Examiner Sub-Committee

The [External Examiner Sub-Committee \(EESC\)](#) is a sub-committee of the [Academic Council's Academic Development and Standards Committee \(ADSC\)](#).

The EESC’s role is:

- to approve nominations of External Examiners for undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes.
- to prepare an annual report on matters identified by External Examiners in their reports to the University.
- to oversee policy on the appointment and role of taught External Examiners and to report to ADSC and Academic Board (AB)/Academic Council (AC) as appropriate.
- The EESC is responsible for processing nominations and reviewing Externs’ reports from:
 - i. the four Colleges (College of Medicine and Health [CoMH], College of Business and Law [CBL], College of Science, Engineering and Food Science [CSEFS] and College of Arts, Celtic Studies & Social Sciences [CACSSS]);
 - ii. the Office of the VP for Learning and Teaching (OVPL&T) academic units (Adult Continuing Education [ACE], Centre for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning [CIRTL] and the Language Centre);
 - iii. the Irish Management Institute (IMI).

Nomination and Appointment of External Examiners

External Examiners for undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes are nominated and appointed in accordance with the procedure and criteria set out in the [Guidelines for External Examiners Primary Degree and Taught Postgraduate Courses](#) and the [Briefing Note to Colleges \(June 2017\)](#).

These procedures are designed to ensure that UCC’s Externs are highly qualified and experienced and have no conflicts of interest that would undermine, or be seen to undermine, their independence as examiners.

Externs are appointed for a three-year term, with the possibility of a one-year extension. Externs may not be re-appointed unless there is a gap of at least five years. Former UCC staff and students are not eligible for appointment until 10 years after their departure from the University but in exceptional circumstances nominations of those with a gap of 5-10 years will be considered by the EESC.

Externs are nominated by Heads of Academic Units. If the nomination is in order and in accordance with prescribed criteria the nomination is approved by the Chair of the EESC or by another committee member if there is a conflict of interest (such as if the nomination originates from the Chair's own Academic Unit).

Duties of External Examiners at UCC

The role of External Examiners at UCC is:

- to assure academic standards and advise on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- to ensure that the academic standards of programmes, modules and awards are consistent with the academic outcomes specified and are comparable to those achieved in the subject area in equivalent universities internationally.
- to guarantee the fairness, validity, and rigour of assessment at the University.
- to provide feedback on the quality of programmes and modules and the overall learning experience in the subject area, and on how teaching, learning and assessment may be enhanced.
- to review and enhance the assessment process. They will not however routinely act as an additional examiner alongside internal examiners.
- to exercise their functions with due regard for professional standards and the requirements of regulatory bodies.

External Examiner Report

Each year of term External Examiners are required to provide a report on their findings to the University. Reports from External Examiners are received by the designated officer in the Academic Affairs & Governance and distributed to the relevant Head of Academic Unit.

The Academic Unit Response

The Head of Academic Unit or a designated nominee is obliged to provide a written response to the Registrar and to the External Examiner on the recommendations arising from the External Examiner's Report. These Academic Unit Responses include a summary of the key points raised in each report and information on how the academic unit intends to progress any issues raised by the External Examiner. As part of the feedback on their comments and recommendations, all responses also automatically sent to the external examiner who submitted the original report. This process enables Schools/Colleges/Units and the University's External Examiner Sub-Committee (EESC) to monitor how external examiner feedback is processed.

Optional Confidential Report to Registrar

Where the External Examiner has significant concerns, they may provide a confidential report to the Registrar via Academic Affairs and Governance. The Academic Unit is then obliged to provide a formal response to the Registrar in a timely manner indicating what actions if any are being taken in response to this report of the External Examiner. The University advises the Registrar of the National University of Ireland where such a circumstance arises.

EESC'S Annual Report to Academic Board

On behalf of Academic Board the EESC prepares an annual consolidated report based on the External Examiner Reports and Academic Unit Responses returned for each College or Unit (OVPLT, IMI, etc.) and, in consultation with the Registrar, as a result of quality improvement processes in UCC proposes policy or procedural adjustments as appropriate.

All External Examiner Reports and Academic Unit Responses for the College/Units are divided between the EESC's members for review, ensuring that members are not assigned to review their own College or Unit. These members are then tasked with writing a College-level Review Report. These College-level Review Reports are reviewed by the EESC Chair and form the basis of the Chair's own University-wide Annual Report which is submitted to Academic Board. The College-level Review Reports are also provided to the individual College Heads and Managers (or their equivalent in the other Units) to close the feedback loop and ensure that action is taken on the ground as appropriate.

Reporting to the NUI

Each year, the designated officer within Academic Affairs & Governance forwards collated External Examiners Reports, Academic Unit Responses and a list of new appointments for the year to the National University of Ireland.

3.0 Learner Resources and Support

UCC Library

[UCC Library](#) is a contemporary university library containing rich collections and archives, multi-media, information and knowledge management systems. Its mission is to deliver excellent information services to meet the needs of the University and regional scholarly community; to support the University's mission which is *'creating, understanding and sharing knowledge and applying it for the good of all.'* and to contribute to the preservation of the cultural heritage of the region. It delivers on this mission by providing extensive information resources, high quality spaces and excellent services.

The Library has three locations, the Boole Library located on main campus, the Boston Scientific Health Sciences Library located in the Brookfield complex, and an offsite repository at Pouladuff Road, Togher, Cork. In addition, UCC Library partners with the Mercy University Hospital Library in assisting with professional Librarian support. The [Library Strategic Plan](#) is user focused and central to this is a clear commitment to enhancing the student experience by creating supportive spaces, acquiring top-quality information resources, supporting digital and information literacy, and providing an inclusive environment to inspire learning. UCC Library prides itself on having an excellent service that is proactive, innovative, timely and responsive to user needs. Librarians collaborate with users and guide them in the use of high-quality information resources which contributes to creativity and innovation and provides evidence in leading-edge research.

The Library provides learning supports and training resources to students through webinars, online modules, and one-to-one research support. The [Digital & Information Literacy Framework](#) guides the development of a comprehensive and coherent approach to digital and information literacy within UCC Library, and determines the appropriate infrastructure required to develop consistently high-quality, equitable programmes and resources. The Framework enables future collaborations with university colleagues so that learning opportunities on offer are enriched by a diverse set of skills and expertise that will reach more students, teaching staff and researchers.

The [Library Learning and Teaching Team](#) provides self-directed [Information Literacy courses](#) on Canvas (UCC's VLE) with live follow-up Q+A sessions, and general [Training Courses](#) such as Citing, Referencing & Plagiarism.

The [Ask Us](#) team offers an online query service for students, using a comprehensive knowledge base of FAQs, ticketing service, and live chat function. The service acts as a first level of support for students with general research/ library related queries, such as locating and searching online resources, and citing & referencing.

The Academic Success Librarian offers a second level of student support and allows for more in-depth support at point of need. Individual research consultations are available online or face-to-face and are bookable online.

The [Research Data Coordinator](#) offers training and support to researchers in the area of Data Management. Staff & students can book an appointment.

More focused support is available online through [Subject Support](#) guides (LibGuides) and through website links to topical information. The guides act as a one-stop-shop and gather all subject-based information resources together and cover general library topics too. The website links are to topics such as ["Access Assignment Help"](#) or ["Learn the Basics"](#).

A snapshot of Library facilities:

- The Library provides a variety of student social and study facilities and has a stock of over 900,000 volumes. Currently, it has the longest [opening hours](#) of any academic library in Ireland. Hours increase even more around exam time.
- The Boole Library has a total of 2,233 study spaces and Boston Scientific Health Sciences Library has 200. These spaces are configured to optimise user experience.
- The Creative Zone offers a flexible technology-rich space for all students and staff in UCC. The space can be re-configured easily to suit presentations, group work or study. A wide range of events organised in association with the schools, societies, and student services, take place there and the facility is available to all the student body.
- There is some evidence that relaxing or napping for short periods of time can increase alertness and productivity. With this in mind, the Library purchased an Energy Pod which can be used by all students for 20 minute sessions.
- In support of UCC's commitment to creating an inclusive environment, the Library, in collaboration with the Disability Support Service (DSS) provides a Study Pod. This is a bookable sound-proofed booth that offers a stress-free study environment for students.
- Supporting students in their [digital experience](#) is a key component of the Library strategy.
- The Library provides [Laptop Loans](#). 72 Chromebook laptops are available for students to borrow in the Boole Library and 24 in Brookfield Library.
- The [Library Studio](#) is available to all students and staff and offers a bookable state-of-the-art video and audio recording facility.
- [3D printing](#) supports a wide variety of projects and is available in the Boole Library.
- A [Virtual Reality Lounge](#) has been developed in the Boole Library where students can immerse themselves in a virtual world. This resource provides support for students of all disciplines as students can "visit" the International Space Station, Titanic, White House etc.

The dual role of [Special Collections](#) is to facilitate research and to ensure the care and conservation of UCC Libraries' unique and distinctive materials. The [Archives](#) service provides access to archival collections and facilities which have been developed to satisfy the research and information needs of the Library's users.

By collaborating with other UCC student services, the Library has been able to host a range of services to offer a more inclusive student experience. The DSS runs the Assistive Technology Unit supporting students with a disability, which is located within the Library. The laptop loan system was established in partnership with the Access Office, and some laptops are reserved for use by their students and the DSS.

Cooperation and collaboration includes developing programmes of formal cooperation with European and Chinese libraries in support of the international students who come to UCC from these countries. The Library maintains active links with a range of local public, voluntary, and private organisations, many of whose information and preservation requirements we readily support through advice and helpful intervention. Cork Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) is a cooperative agreement between all the main libraries in Cork city and county, with a view to ensuring wider access to learning materials for all the people of Cork and beyond. This is in support of the Library's community outreach Strategic Theme.

Cooperation between libraries offers dividends for UCC students as it provides physical access to primary materials in other institutions. UCC Library is an active participant in all [available schemes](#) namely SCONUL

Access, ALCID, Cork PAL and Music PAL. [Inter Library Loans](#) supports students who don't need physical access but need materials from elsewhere.

The student-facing Skills Centre in the Library (also housed within OVPLT) is an additional resource available to all students offering group and 1:1 assistance in such areas as "Transitioning into College Life" "Developing your academic writing" etc. A number of its resources are available to students 24/7. More on the Skills Centre here <https://www.ucc.ie/en/skillscentre/about/>

IT Infrastructure

University College Cork has a distinguished digital legacy stretching back to the mid-18th century. George Boole, the architect of Boolean logic, was Professor of Mathematics. Ireland's first website was www.ucc.ie and one of the first international networks in Cork, was built in UCC. Building on this tradition of innovation and value creation, IT Services in UCC wants to enable and develop a digital University for the 21st century student, one that is centred on the needs of our present and future students. IT Services in UCC is focused on building exciting digital products and services to support the student experience and student learning outcomes.

The current team within IT Services is one of the largest in the region, with over 60 IT professionals and almost 40 Students helping to provide support and develop new digital products and services.

IT Services provide services and support for 20,000 students and 5,000 staff. Our campus spans over 100 acres at the centre of Cork City. This service portfolio includes the UCC corporate systems (Finance, HR, Student), the largest private network in Cork (Wi-Fi, VOIP), 2 data centres, over 7000 desktops and we support 300+ websites and social media presence, 190 large classrooms, including the teaching technology and also research infrastructure. The clip in the attached link explains our services and ambitions, <https://www.ucc.ie/en/it/about/> IT Services are focused on building and developing digital services to support the students' journey from application to graduation. A full list of services is available IT Services in UCC is listed in the URL, <https://www.ucc.ie/en/it/services/>

The University is embarking on a Digital Strategy and a Data Strategy, which is University led and Technology enabled. These strategic initiatives will transform UCC and will support the development of a more Digital University. Enhancing and modernising the services to students is central to these proposals. IT Services partner with key administration, academic and research units to develop agile, intuitive IT solutions. Using concepts such as DevOps, Agile Product Development, Infrastructure as a Service as key enablers to achieving this suite of IT Systems. A full list of IT policies in UCC can be found at <https://www.ucc.ie/en/it-policies/>

The IT unit has been a pivotal part of UCC throughout the COVID-19 pandemic with so many University services now running online. There has been a phenomenal transformation in the services provided to the staff and students of UCC over the period of our strategic plan and will form the backbone of our plans over the years to come. We have recognised the impact our services now have on our students, and the University Management Team therefore approved a new Digital Master plan to support the priorities identified in UCC 2022.

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/news/ucc-launches-digital-master-plan.html>

The Digital Master plan also contains a revised update on the Universities digital Roadmap which is available at the following link, <https://www.ucc.ie/en/digitalroadmap/>

Student Supports

The UCC Strategic Plan states that “UCC is committed to delivering strong student-focused support services which address the physical, psychological, spiritual, social, cultural and welfare needs of students by focusing on the students’ transition into UCC, time in UCC and transition out of UCC.”

The Student Experience Office <https://www.ucc.ie/en/studentexperience/> co-ordinates student support services and leads the strategic development and direction of policy and practice related to the UCC Student Experience in a wide range of functions and activities.

Student policies and procedures include: Student Charter, Student Mental Health: Policy for Staff, Student Alcohol Policy, Fitness to Continue in Study Policy, Support for Pregnant Students Policy, Procedure for Responding to Reports of Missing Students, Protocol for Responding to the Death of a Student and Code of Practice for Students with Disabilities are available on: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/academicgov/policies/>

The Student Experience Office uses a thematic approach to supporting and developing the student experience. Student Supports are grouped under five headings: Student Life, Access, Career Services, Sport & Physical Activity and Student Health & Wellbeing. There is a focus on a collaborative approach to developing cross-service projects (such as improving the use of technology across all services), supporting transition into UCC, supporting students to progress and achieve their potential, facilitating high levels of engagement in student life, providing a focus on employability and transition to the world of work, and supporting student health and wellbeing.

The Student Experience Office coordinates an array of supports for students and encompasses Access UCC which includes Disability Support, Mature Student Office, PLUS Programme Student Budgetary Advisor and SOAR Projects; Career Services which includes Careers Advisors, Employer Engagement and Work Placement; Student Health & Wellbeing which includes Student Health, Student Counselling & Development, Chaplaincy, Peer Support and Niteline; Sport & Physical Activity and Student Clubs; Student Life which includes Accommodation & Community Life (encompassing Campus Watch), Health & Safety for Student Activities, Radio & Student Media, Student Societies; Students’ Union, all of which provide a range of specialised services to students.

The full range of student supports available across UCC is displayed in the [Student Support Tree](#).

Student Central

The onset of COVID-19 expedited a re-design of student administration services in UCC. A successful pivot to online service delivery was made possible through the recently established *Student Central* and the development of a *Digital Student Hub*. *Student Central* provides both in-person and remote service delivery to prospective and current students. This service provides a single-entry point to an effective triage and routing function for all incoming enquiries. The *Digital Student Hub* delivered a range of new and innovative service to support students which included the following features:

- Self-Service Attendance Letters
- Web enquiry forms for current and prospective students with in-built routing to back-office subject matter experts
- The ask.ucc.ie knowledge bases articles
- Online Deferred Entry forms

- Online Garda Vetting Process
- Online First Year Change of Course
- Online Payment Plans
- Online Mitigation and Deferral Application forms
- Online Examination Appeals Request
- Online ID verification
- Upload of Student Photo ID for ID Cards

Student Health

The Student Health Department provides a comprehensive range of student health care services to all registered students, during office hours operating a blended service of both telephone, video and onsite consultations Monday to Friday, 12 months of the year. The Department has an FTE staff of 6.6 covering doctors, nurses, psychiatrist, physiotherapists and administration.

A combination of pre-booked appointments and emergency appointments facilitates appropriate access, according to clinical need. For those students not registered with a doctor locally, provision is made for out of hours care and home visiting for emergencies through a local general practitioner.

Student Health provide the following services:

- Primary care of acute and chronic illnesses that present in the community
- Contraception service including insertion of Long-Acting implants and IUCDs "Coils"
- Women's Health, Cervical smear screening services.
- Screening and immunisation against infectious diseases.
- Consultant Psychiatrist Service.
- Sexual Transmitted Infection screening
- Sexual Transmitted Infection diagnosis and treatment
- Travel Advice and Vaccinations.
- Health Promotion Programmes.
- Hospital referral service.
- Ante Natal Care.
- Injury assessment, treatment and referral service
- [Physiotherapy Service](#)

There is also a dedicated comprehensive vaccination programme offering immunisation against Hepatitis B, Tuberculosis, Measles, Mumps, and Rubella to students exposed to these illnesses during their course as well as travel medicine immunisation clinics.

Student Counselling & Development

Student Counselling & Development (SCD) is a free confidential service to all students. The Service provides individual counselling and support to students with emotional, psychological, academic or personal development needs. The Service also provides psycho-educational classes and workshops including *Understanding & Managing Stress*. In addition to interventions focused directly at students, SCD acts in an advisory capacity and contributes to the development of student welfare policies within the University. SCD provides training to staff for the purposes of resourcing them as mentors of students and in responding to at risk and distressed students.

The service has also developed a set of Guidelines for Supporting Distressed Students in addition to providing training in this area. SCD contributes to the learning and teaching mission of the University and to student retention and performance by reducing student distress which has an adverse impact in these areas.

Individual Counselling: In addition to individual counselling, SCD provides online and telephone counselling to students:

1. Support for Acute Exam Stress: SCD provides on call support for students in acute distress during the exam period, to enable them to successfully complete their exams.
2. Anxiety Management Workshops: Proactive intervention to provide students with strategies for recognising and managing stress.
3. Digital Offerings: SCD provides comprehensive evidence-based online resources to students.
4. Designated Liaison Point for Transgender and Non-Binary Students: SCD has been deemed the designated liaison point for transgender and non-binary students.
5. Staff Consultations: SCD provides support for staff in managing and responding to concerns about student well-being.
6. Student Consultations: Students are also offered consultations, both individually and in groups, to explore concerns about fellow students who are experiencing difficulties and may need support.

Peer Support programme

The Peer Support programme is a support service for students, by students. The programme runs on the principle of student-to-student support as we believe that many students feel more comfortable making initial contact with a fellow student for advice.

Students are welcomed into the UCC community on their first day by an experienced student volunteer from their own course. Each of these volunteers is trained thoroughly with information about the university and how to support those incoming peers who may find transitioning to their new life confusing or difficult. We are aware that shifting into a university mind-set will be one of the greatest changes the majority of our students have ever experienced and so we aim to provide the best possible support from those who have first-hand experience of what this transition is like – the students themselves.

The first representative of the university each new student meets on their orientation day is their Peer Supporter Leader. This Leader takes responsibility for ensuring these new students are given a good grasp of everything they would need to begin their journey at UCC (campus tour, IT workshop, library tour, etc.) UCC's Peer Support Programme is one of the most successful and comprehensive in the country. Each Peer Support Leader receives extensive initial training and is offered on-going continuing personal development to ensure they can provide their students with the smoothest transition possible. Peer Support Leaders are rewarded for their voluntary work representing the university with each Leader receiving a UCC Works Award and being presented a Peer Support Certificate by the Deputy President & Registrar. The Peer Support Programme ensures all of our students gain a sense of belonging to the UCC community.

UCC Niteline

UCC Niteline is a listening service run by student volunteers. All student volunteers receive a UCC Works Award upon completion of their duties. They provide a non-judgmental, non-directive and confidential listening service via a free phone number and anonymous instant messaging chat. All student volunteers go through 6 training sessions with the Cork Samaritans prior to interacting with callers.

The service operates 9pm-1am 5 nights a week during term time. The caller remains anonymous throughout their conversation and can raise any issue, concerns or worries that they have in a confidential manner.

Chaplaincy Services

As one of the oldest service departments in the university, UCC chaplaincy engages with students and staff of all faiths and none. With a team of two full-time chaplains, two visiting chaplains, and an administrator, the need for outreach by our team continues to be a high priority. While the nature of chaplaincy is pastoral in nature, it also provides opportunities for developing social awareness through spirituality and liturgy.

UCC chaplaincy accompanies many students who may feel isolated in their environment – creating a safe space for them to encounter community and friendship. It is noticeable that many who use the service have confidence in chaplaincy and that their various spiritual, human and pastoral needs are met. To this end, chaplaincy engages with all other relevant services within the student experience area to create a holistic approach to the needs of students and staff. Chaplaincy takes a lead role at times of trauma and bereavement and acts as a point of reference for follow up support to families and students after such events.

Department of Sport & Physical Activity

UCC Sport is run by full-time Department of Sport and Physical Activity staff with the support of students in the form of Clubs Executive committee which represents 55 clubs within University College Cork.

The Department of Sport and Physical Activity in UCC aims “to provide high quality facilities and services to students, graduates, staff and the wider community”.

The Department enhances and supports UCC student’s development and university experience, by promoting positive health and well-being, leadership and activities from social participation to elite. The Department focuses on supporting student clubs who provide invaluable experience both on and off the “field of play”. UCC sports clubs are run by the students for the students.

Student Clubs provide a fantastic opportunity for students to develop their skills outside of the classroom. With 55 sports clubs in UCC ranging from water sports, to outdoor pursuit type activities, to martial arts, to indoor and outdoor team sports, UCC students have a great opportunity to get involved in some form of sport and recreation activity whilst at UCC. The clubs help foster lifelong friendships and provide opportunities for students to learn valuable life skills by becoming administrators within their club. Each year clubs appoint officers and administrators to run their clubs & these operations are overseen by the Clubs Executive and the Sports Department. There are many opportunities for students to represent the university in their chosen sport throughout their time in UCC either locally, provincially, nationally or even internationally (e.g., Olympics).

Accommodation and Community Life

The Office of Accommodation and Community Life has responsibility for:

Student Accommodation

- Accommodation advice and advocacy service for UCC students
- Support all current and incoming students with their search for safe and affordable accommodation
- International Student Accommodation Placement Service – Full year and single semester EU and non-EU students
- First Year Student Accommodation Placement Service

Campus Watch

- First and second stages of student discipline
- Promoting respect and responsibility in the local community

Community Relations

- Engaging with the local community, relevant stakeholders and resident groups to actively and positively engage with neighbourhood issues

Students' Union

UCC Students' Union is a democratic organization run by 6 fulltime officers elected by the student body. The principal officers are the President, the Communications and Engagement Officer, Welfare Officer, Education Officer, Commercial and Finance Officer and Entertainments Officer. There are also eleven non sabbatical officers contributing to the organisation. The SU's main functions are to offer academic assistance to students, to provide pastoral and financial support to students in need, to lobby the University and the government on issues affecting students, and to facilitate entertainment on campus. The SU also runs a Common Room on campus and in Brookfield, and a reception desk in the Hub.

Student Societies

Student Societies provide a fantastic environment for students to develop their skillset outside of the lecture halls. With over 100 societies in UCC ranging from academic, charitable, creative, debating, political, religious, and social student societies aim to produce a variety of interests to get involved in.

UCC Student Media

UCC 98.3FM, UCC Express and Motley magazine aim to promote balanced student programming and writing, encouraging access to and involvement in radio and online resources for individuals and groups to present their ideas and views while being a trusted and informed voice for the student body of UCC.

Career Services

The [UCC Career Services](#) facilitate students' professional development and successful career transition through and out of UCC by providing access to careers advice and coaching, employability skills development classes, industry-led workshops and events, work integrated learning opportunities and postgraduate opportunities, both nationally and internationally. Students are provided with access to online, digital, self-serve resources to support them in making job applications and securing their first graduate role.

The [UCC Career Services](#) helps UCC students to achieve their career objectives by:

- Working in partnership with university colleagues to deliver customised employability workshops and events to meet the bespoke needs of students.
- Offering a personal, bespoke service to create employer-student connections that form exciting futures for learning, living and working in a global society.
- Working collaboratively with students, academic departments, and industry representatives as partners.
- [Managing work placement](#) accredited modules in collaboration with almost 40 academic programmes.
- Organising Career and [Graduate Recruitment events](#) such as recruitment fairs, jobs roadshows etc. which facilitate graduate employer and student interactions.
- Providing UCC students with access to high quality employment opportunities in Ireland and internationally.
- Making UCC students aware of a wide range of postgraduate study opportunities.
- Providing one to one advice and coaching to students.

To deliver these services to students, the Service is organised around the following team structure

- Employability and Employer Engagement Team
- Work Integrated Learning Team
- Careers Consultancy Team
- Cross-Collaborative Working Groups

Employability and Employer Engagement Team

The main activities of this team are to:

- Organise initiatives and events that support UCC students to develop their employability skills in preparation for entering the world of work. This is achieved through initiatives such as Graduate Recruitment activities, the [UCC EmployAgility Award](#) in which Student Volunteering and Community Engagement activities are a core part.
- Ensure that UCC students and graduates can avail of a wide range of employment opportunities both in Ireland and internationally. This is achieved by sourcing and promoting graduate employment opportunities to UCC students and graduates using a range of communication platforms including [web based vacancy databases](#), social media and traditional on-campus events.
- Support the other Career Services teams in the day-to-day administration of their responsibilities.

Work Integrated Learning Team

This team supports the delivery of [accredited work placement](#) modules in Academic Programmes in the Colleges of Business and Law, SEFS and CACSSS. Responsibilities include:

- Support each individual student through the work placement selection process until they successfully get an offer of a role with a partner employer.
- Deliver class contact hours to prepare students for work placement, interviews, workplace skills, etc.
- Contact employers to identify and acquire suitable work placement opportunities for students.

- Work Integrated Learning officers have a joint reporting relationship to the Head of Career Services and the Head of their respective College.

Careers Consultancy Team

Careers advice is a key element of our service where we aim to provide accurate, impartial careers advice and coaching based on the student's needs, qualifications and circumstances. A number of options are available to students:

- Small group workshops on topics such as CVs and job applications, interview technique,
- Sector specific talks such as careers in teaching, Study in EU/US etc. as well as employability related workshops and lectures.
- [One to One Careers](#) advisory consultations by appointment with a careers consultant where students can discuss a wide variety of topics from CV's to interviews to general advice on career paths. Where a visit to the Career Service is not practicable (e.g. student is abroad) we endeavour to facilitate students by the use of phone or video calls.
- [Profiling for Success](#): administer a range of psychometric tools designed to improve self-awareness in students, thereby supporting their transition to professional life.
- [Career Set](#): Artificial Intelligence algorithms have been configured to generate personalised CV feedback and the tool has been designed using recognised best practices, applicable across industries and academic disciplines. All current students and recent graduates of UCC can access the tool to score the impact, style and brevity of their CV. The tool can also help applicants target their CV to a specific job description.
- [Big Interview](#): An AI-based Practice Interview Tool is also supporting students. Once registered on the platform, students and recent graduates can use the 'Learn' option to undertake short courses to help them understand the interview process and STAR technique. Users will also get hands-on practice with interactive mock interviews tailored to specific industries, jobs, and experience level.

Careers Education

Career consultants also work closely with academic departments and other UCC units to deliver bespoke employability and career related workshops and events to their students within the curriculum.

Additional Policies for Career Services

- [Student Placement Policy](#)
- [Placement Risk Assessment](#)
- [Preparation of Students Going on Placement \(Procedure\)](#)
- [Monitoring and Communication During Student Placement \(Procedure\)](#)
- [Management of Critical Incident \(Procedure\)](#)

Access

UCC is committed to ensuring that all students entering via Access pathways (HEAR, DARE, Mature and QQI/FET admissions routes) are afforded every opportunity to succeed. A wide range of post-admission supports have been developed by a dedicated team of Access practitioners in collaboration with students and staff.

- A range of [financial supports](#) are available for students from low-income households. A dedicated student budgetary advisor is also on hand to provide support, guidance and advice to students experiencing hardship.
- Extensive reasonable accommodations and supports are available for students who are registered with a [disability](#). Students are invited to meet with a disability advisor for a [needs assessment](#) at the start of semester 1 where reasonable accommodations and any other supports required will be agreed.
- Additional academic support in the form of small group or one-to-one tutorials and academic skills sessions are delivered in collaboration with the UCC [Skills Centre](#).
- Coffee mornings, breakfast clubs, group meetings are run on a regular basis to provide social support for students.
- Access students have dedicated student advisors who are available to meet with students for a face to face or virtual consultation at any stage during the academic year to discuss any issues they may have and seek advice and assistance.
- [Laptop Loan](#) service is available to students from low-income households who do not have the resources to purchase their own device. Students are given a laptop for the duration of the academic year.
- UCC has committed to being an [Autism Friendly University](#) by making the physical, social and academic environments of the campus more 'autism-friendly' by undertaking a multi-year project to achieve these aims. There is an [Autism & Uni Student Toolkit](#) along with a new dedicate space of calm and respite for students – [the Calm Zone](#).
- An [employability programme](#) for students with Disabilities has been expanded. The programme aims to increase the number of students with disabilities securing post-graduation employment.

International Students

The international Office provides both pastoral and practical support to international students through a variety of services outlined below.

Before Arrival

- Nurture Emails
- Welcome Email/ Preparation Email/ Final Countdown Email
- Dedicated web support <https://www.ucc.ie/en/international/studentinfohub/beforeyouarrive/>
- Visa and Immigration
- Fees and Cost of Living
- Accommodation
- Key Dates
- Getting to Cork
- Health Insurance
- In Person Advisory Sessions

On Arrival

- Airport meet & greet *for some
- Bespoke Orientation
- Bespoke Welcome Programmes
- Assistance with Registration
- How to Thrive when you Arrive – GAP Sponsored Infographic
- Dedicated web support <https://www.ucc.ie/en/international/studentinfohub/afteryouarrive/>
- Orientation and registration
- Opening a Bank Account
- Working in Ireland
- Immigration Information
- Welcome Programme
- Getting Connected
- Essential Information Sessions
- Visa and Immigration
- Snapshot of UCC Supports and Services
- Practical Tips
- Culture and Transitions
- Live sessions recorded for playback viewing on Canvas.
- Canvas Internationalisation Module

Ongoing Support

- Nurture Email every 2nd week
- Facebook Community - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/449676442673958>
- In Person Appointments with Staff
- Booking System for online Appointments with Staff
- Immigration & Visa Advice and Advocacy
- Dedicated Website - <https://www.ucc.ie/en/international/studentinfohub/living/>
- Practical life
- Student Services
- Irish Culture
- Student Support Tree [SupportTreeInfographic.pdf \(ucc.ie\)](#)
- Keep Well Website - <https://www.ucc.ie/en/keep-well/>
- Silvercloud – wellbeing support <https://www.ucc.ie/en/keep-well/silvercloud/>
- After Hours on Call Emergency Contact Service for students
- Dedicated COVID-19 webpage
- Skills Centre for academic mentorship

Online/Blended Learning

The following supports are provided in regard to online/blended delivery programmes:

- Teaching Today in UCC is an internal SharePoint Communications site for those who teach in UCC, providing advice on options to consider for engaging students in a blended context during COVID- 19
- Centre for Digital Education [website](#), where staff can access training and information and request one to one consultations with Instructional Designers to enhance the online learning experience. The vision of the CDE is to empower staff to improve student learning through the best practice application of technology.
- The [Teaching with Technology](#) Canvas course. All staff are enrolled and this is our one-stop location for information on how to use Canvas, Panopto and Teams to teach online. This resource bank is maintained by the CDE and IT Services so it is kept current.
- The Teaching with Technology MS Team is a live forum where any staff member can ask a question about any aspect of their online teaching and receive a prompt response from a dedicated team who monitor the channel.
- Canvas's 24/7 help system ensures that any student or staff member in UCC can request assistance from a dedicated Canvas support team around the use of Canvas in teaching and learning. Where this team cannot answer a question, it is referred back to the appropriate UCC office.
- The [Teach Digi](#) project has been running since 2019. This is UCC's contribution to the HEA-funded national Enhancing Digital Teaching and Learning project. In Teach Digi, the [five pillars of UCC student feedback](#) are used to inform discussion and support for teaching staff around student engagement.
- [UCC's Lecture Recording policy](#) sets out how this approach should be used by teaching staff to ensure greater and timely access to learning by students.
- The [Success Zone](#) Canvas course is managed by the Skills Centre within the Office of Vice President for Learning and Teaching. All UCC students are enrolled in this student-facing course which provides guidance around a myriad of topics, including online learning.

4.0 QA of Research Activities and Programmes

Research Activity

University College Cork (UCC) is an internationally competitive, research-led University that plays a key role in the development of Ireland's knowledge-based economy. Our institutional research strategy focuses on creating and supporting world-leading clusters of researchers, building on the research strengths of the University and is aligned with key Government strategies including the *Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (Hunt Report)*, and *Ireland's Strategy for Research and Development, Science and Technology, Innovation 2020*.

The [UCC Strategic Plan for Research and Innovation \(2017-2022\)](#) details performance targets for research and economic development that seek to position UCC as Ireland's leading research-performing institution to be a premier European research university, and to be a key national contributor to the ongoing development of Ireland's knowledge-based society. In 2020, the institution launched *UCC 2022: Delivering a Connected University* to replace the final two years of the institutional Strategic Plan (2017-2022). This strategic pivot set out a thematic prioritisation of our strategy, as well as the transformative changes to our core operations in response to geopolitical challenges, the escalating climate crisis and accelerating societal and economic pressures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

A key element of the plan from the perspective of research and innovation was recognising the strength in diversity of UCC research expertise and activity, but also acknowledging that a distinctive characteristic of high performing universities globally is regular and responsive priority setting, enabling the enhancement of key areas of strength, while also identifying and empowering emerging areas. This prioritisation process was initiated in the *Research & Innovation Strategic Plan 2017-2022* and has been continued under *UCC 2022*. A key output of this work is the development of a Research Charter that will differentiate UCC as a research-intensive university.

UCC has formally endorsed the revised version of the [National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland](#). To ensure alignment with this policy and international developments in the key area of research integrity, and informed by UCC's Vice President for Research & Innovation role as Chair of the [National Forum on Research Integrity](#), the UCC [Code of Research Conduct](#) (updated October 2019) provides a robust framework for the proper conduct of research and provides guidance for researchers on the standards expected at UCC. The Code details the responsibilities of the University and the research community with respect to the conduct of research including; principles of good practice, ethical approval, competence, responsibility, integrity, rights and dignity of research participants, data management and dissemination. In the light of the revised European Code and National Policy, Statement of Research Integrity, and taking on board experience in its use, the UCC Code of Research Conduct was revised in both 2018 and 2019 to ensure that the Code is up to date with the pace of national and international developments in the field. The UCC Digital Badge in the Responsible Conduct of Research has been widely recognised as a very impactful initiative to raise awareness among the research community of current policies and approaches in ensuring the highest standards in the conduct of research.

The [UCC Policy on the Governance of Research Centres and Institutes](#) provides clarity on how research institutes centres and units interface with academic Schools and Colleges. In 2020, a new approach to the annual reporting process was successfully piloted in the College of Business & Law and, as a reporting mechanism, has proven highly effective. The EUA Institutional Evaluation Report (IEP) highlighted the importance of ensuring effective

engagement between RICUs and academic schools, as enabled by this policy, to foster research excellence and maximise synergies and impact. To ensure that the policy continues to remain ‘fit for purpose’ in the context of a rapidly evolving external research environment, the document is currently under review, with an updated policy scheduled to be launched in Q1 2022.

The development and implementation of a comprehensive employment and career management structure for research staff, including a career development programme for the *circa*. 1000 researchers employed in UCC, was one of the most substantial change management projects undertaken in recent years, initiated in 2011 as a partnership between HR and the OVPRI. Indeed, UCC has influenced national thinking in this area through implementation of this career structure, including a research support track to complement the traditional postdoc / senior postdoc / research fellow path.

On the basis of this and supporting initiatives, and reflecting the progress made to support researcher career development within the University, UCC received the European Commission’s *HR Excellence in Research Award* at first attempt in 2013. Since then, the institution has successfully renewed the award on two occasions – in 2018 and, most recently, in 2021. UCC now proactively assists other universities throughout Europe in their efforts to attain the *HR Excellence in Research* award.

Similar to the challenges it has brought to bear at all levels of society, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a very significant impact on UCC research and our research community. The Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS), through the Higher Education Authority (HEA), provided funding to UCC to support research activities that were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In a process managed by UCC Research, three calls to distribute this funding to postgraduate students and contract researchers impacted by the pandemic, have been completed. Following panel evaluation, 446 awards were made to the most affected UCC researchers and students with a combined value of €6.2 million.

The positive impact that this funding has had on UCC researchers and, in particular, early career researchers whose work was severely compromised by the pandemic has been enormously beneficial. A sector report on the significant benefits of these interventions, including contributions from UCC, is available here: <https://www.iaa.ie/COVID19/positive-impact-of-the-hea-COVID-19-fund-on-researchers-in-the-university-sector/>.

Research Quality Review

UCC has procedures for the quality assurance and enhancement of research and a method for review via the Research Quality Review. UCC has undertaken two Research Quality Review exercises with reports published for both exercises in 2009 and 2015 ([RQR Reports](#)). In the 2015 RQR all units in UCC, including research centres, were reviewed by 15 panels comprising more than 300 international peer reviewers.

Building on the experience garnered from the first two institutional-wide initiatives, and cognisant of very significant changes as to what constitutes best practice in relation to research/researcher assessment in the open research era, planning the methodology for the next RQR is underway, while maintaining the overall objective of continued enhancement of research quality across the University.

Research Programmes

The [Graduate Studies Office](#) supports our postgraduate student body throughout their time in UCC. Research students, doctoral and Masters, are a key component of the research community in UCC. As an autonomous university, UCC has developed its own [internal policies](#), having regard to the Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Research Degree Programmes (2017), the National Framework for Doctoral Education, Ireland's Framework of Good Practice for Research Programmes, and the HEA's Principles of Good Practice for Research within Irish HEIs (2020). UCC's Academic Council Graduate Studies Committee are actively reviewing and updating UCC's Graduate Studies' policies.

In UCC there is oversight from when each research student applies to the university and has a supervisory team appointed, to peer review as part of the panel for Annual Progress Reviews, to the appointment of External and Internal examiners for the examination of the research thesis. From 2020, an Independent Chair became a compulsory member of the viva voce for doctoral students and a viva voce has been introduced for MD students. The reports of the Examiners for every research student are examined by UCC's Academic Council Graduate Studies Committee and recommendations are sent to Academic Council for approval.

Research students are supported in the research journey by workshops run by the Dean of Graduate Studies, from orientation at the start of the research degree through to training for the viva voce. Orientation for new research postgraduates is held twice per year (April and October), highlighting policies and procedures, an overview of the Structured PhD modules, the Irish Universities [Doctoral Skills Statement](#), as well as the range of supports available in UCC. Similarly, a range of workshops and webinars are run to support supervisors. A digital badge is available to supervisors who undertake the supervisor training workshop and assessment which is run by UCC's Centre for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning (CIRTL). Responsible research conduct and integrity is an integral part of the training of research students, including a dedicated [5-credit module](#).

5.0 Staff Recruitment, Development and Support

University Recruitment and Post Approval

University recruitment is subject to a comprehensive framework of regulations, policies and guidelines underpinned by the provisions of the [University Principal Statute](#) and subject to relevant external guidelines and legislation in this regard. Detailed [appointment regulations](#) relating to individual grades and cohorts of staff and a [policy on conflict of interest in relation to recruitment and promotions](#) act as the foundation of the day-to-day management of all recruitment activity. A fundamental principle of university recruitment practice is equality of opportunity for all applicants and all recruitment regulations have a mandatory training requirement for all internal committee members with a specific focus on unconscious bias. UCC has an e-recruitment system in place for core funded positions since August 2017 and for research funded positions since August 2019. E-recruitment has significantly improved our capacity to analyse and report on all recruitment activity including gaining a deeper understanding of pattern of application and a detailed breakdown of proportional representation at shortlisting and interview.

UCC has completed calls for promotion for professional services staff (2016/2017 & 2019/2020). [The Administrative Promotion Scheme](#) is a cross University scheme where candidates are assessed within a grade. The scheme is highly competitive with all eligible applicants provided with an opportunity to meet with the nominated interview board. Interviews are competency-based focussing on the six competencies identified for each grade in line with best practice in the public and civil service. All interview boards are gender balanced and all members undergo training in competency-based interviews. The University also provides a series of supports for staff including education and guidance generally on a competency based promotional process.

The regulations for the appointment of adjunct staff can be found here <https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/ocla/statutesregulations/documents/RegulationonVariousAppointmentProcedures-April2020.pdf>

Probation and Establishment Process – Academic Posts

A [probation period](#) applies to provide a reasonable period during which the new appointee can benefit from additional support and guidance in order to establish teaching and appropriate academic administrative activities and to establish research activity. The probation period also allows the University to be assured as to the quality of the appointment and that the new appointee will be able to carry out all responsibilities required and to an appropriate high standard. There is an establishment period of progress review and support by a senior academic board chaired by the President. Therefore, there is a minimum of one-year support during probation and, where the appointment is permanent there is a three-year period of support in total.

Staff Training and Development

UCC is committed to the support and promotion of [staff development and training](#). There is also an [employee assistance programme](#) in place.

[Performance Management](#): Performance enhancement support for all staff and teams via dedicated resources and workshops complementary to the PDRS process is available. UCC has a Performance Management Policy and

Capability Policy as a means of local and individual discussion on the role of performance and staff development: <http://www.ucc.ie/en/hr/performance/pdrs/forms/>

New staff are assigned a named mentor on appointment and there is a [mentoring programme](#) in place to support academic staff with less than five years' experience as an academic. UCC has conducted a review of academic promotion schemes and competitive calls have been processed for promotion to Senior Lecturer and Professor (Scale 2). UCC has an Academic Mentoring panel which will mentor on a diverse range of topics/ areas of need relevant to academic life.

The Office of the Vice President for Learning and Teaching supports a wide range of CPD activities for staff through the Centre for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning (CIRTL) www.ucc.ie/en/cirtl/ which provides support for all staff and postgraduate students in their teaching and learning roles. Credit bearing programmes in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education up to and including NFQ level 9 (Postgraduate Certificate/Postgraduate Diploma) are available online and free of charge to all categories of staff who support student learning, along with tailored modules for postgraduate students engaged in teaching. All newly appointed staff are required to enrol in and complete the Postgraduate Certificate programme, and participation rates in the programme are an institutional performance measure through the HEA Compact process. The Postgraduate Certificate programme is UCC's largest – as measured by enrolment numbers – postgraduate programme, and over 70% of all staff have successfully completed the certificate. The Centre staff also run regular seminar workshops on Teaching and Learning and Assessment theories and practices and these are advertised to all staff.

Staff Wellbeing and Development

UCC has a strong tradition of investment in Staff Wellbeing and Development and we are proud of the work that has been achieved in supporting and enhancing staff wellbeing and development over several years. As set out in our strategic plan *UCC 2022 Delivering a Connected University*, UCC strives to deliver an inclusive and respectful environment where staff and students can all progress and develop. We are committed to enhancing our policies and procedures to provide the conditions and opportunities for undertaking quality work and creating impact which connects with our strategic goals. We seek to facilitate career progression by acknowledging and rewarding staff for their endeavours and creating opportunities for colleagues to enhance their skills to achieve excellence. We are committed to equality, diversity and inclusivity at all career stages and maintain a strong focus on wellbeing. We work actively to foster a dynamic and inclusive culture by investing in staff to help recognise and maximise their contribution to the collective success of UCC.

Staff Wellbeing & Development produces a broad and extensive annual schedule of development opportunities and wellbeing initiatives, activities, workshops, talks, UCC events and programmes. We work actively to respond to development and wellbeing needs identified through the Performance and Development Review System, the University's Strategic and Annual Operational Plans, feedback from our annual survey and in response to local, institutional, national and international developments. We provide advice, guidance and support in the area of professional development planning across the university. We oversee personal development initiatives including [coaching](#) and [mentoring](#) which are available to all UCC staff members.

Staff Wellbeing supports are offered to staff through [training](#), activities, talks and events to assist them meet their personal and professional goals and to provide additional assistance during life's planned and unplanned challenges. Work in the area is ongoing in particular to create a localised culture of employee engagement in

development and wellbeing and to promote and develop further initiatives facilitated by staff members for UCC staff. UCC is proud of our achievements in being the first Irish university to attain the national IBEC Keepwell Accreditation standard, of being shortlisted for awards in three areas in the first national IBEC Keepwell awards in 2019 and of winning the award for Physical Activity.

Further details of the work of Staff Wellbeing and Development can be found at <https://www.ucc.ie/en/hr/wellbeingdevelopment/> UCC's [Employee Assistance Programme](#) is provided by Spectrum.Life.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

UCC has been a signatory to the Athena Swan Charter since its launch in Ireland in 2015. In 2020/2021, UCC's Schools of Pharmacy, Chemistry and Biological, Earth & Environmental Sciences became the first UCC Schools to successfully renew their bronze Athena Swan accreditation. First-time bronze UCC awardees in 2021/2022 included the School of Microbiology and the School of Biochemistry & Cell Biology. Tyndall National Institute also become the first research institute in UCC to receive a bronze award. The School of Mathematical Science and the School of Applied Psychology submitted applications in 2021/2022 and await results, with Applied Psychology the first School applicant from CACSSS. UCC now holds 12 institutional awards and an institutional Bronze award. A new Athena SWAN Charter was launched in November 2021 - UCC is a signatory of same and is committed to enacting the new Athena SWAN principles.

UCC's four-year institutional [Athena SWAN gender equality action plan](#) (UCC GEAP) aims to ensure that values of equality and diversity inform University policies and practices for the recruitment, development and support of University staff. For example, UCC GEAP includes commitments to revise UCC's recruitment materials to encourage historically underrepresented groups to apply for roles across all staff categories (Action 5.1.1), to ensure gender balance on recruitment selection committees (Action 5.1.2), to build our capacity for equality monitoring in recruitment (Action 5.1.5) and in promotion schemes (Action 5.1.9). Work is underway to develop an EDI Digital Badge (free micro-credential) available to all staff (Action 5.3.3). UCC is developing guidelines to set standards for the ethical recruitment and employment of staff on casual ("hourly occasional") contracts (Action 4.1.4). While progress has been impacted by the pandemic, implementing UCC GEAP AP is an explicit priority in UCC 2022, the University's Strategic Plan.

In addition to the Athena SWAN Charter, UCC's Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Unit supports a range of equality initiatives to support both staff and students. UCC's Gender Identity and Expression Policy and Guidelines offers supports to UCC's transgender and non-binary staff and students. The EDI Unit supports the work of UCC's Equality Committee and Race Equality Forum, and also UCC's LGBT+ Staff Network, which provide an extensive range of outreach and support to UCC staff and students and help create and sustain a working environment that values equality, embraces diversity and promotes inclusion. All policies can be found [here](#).

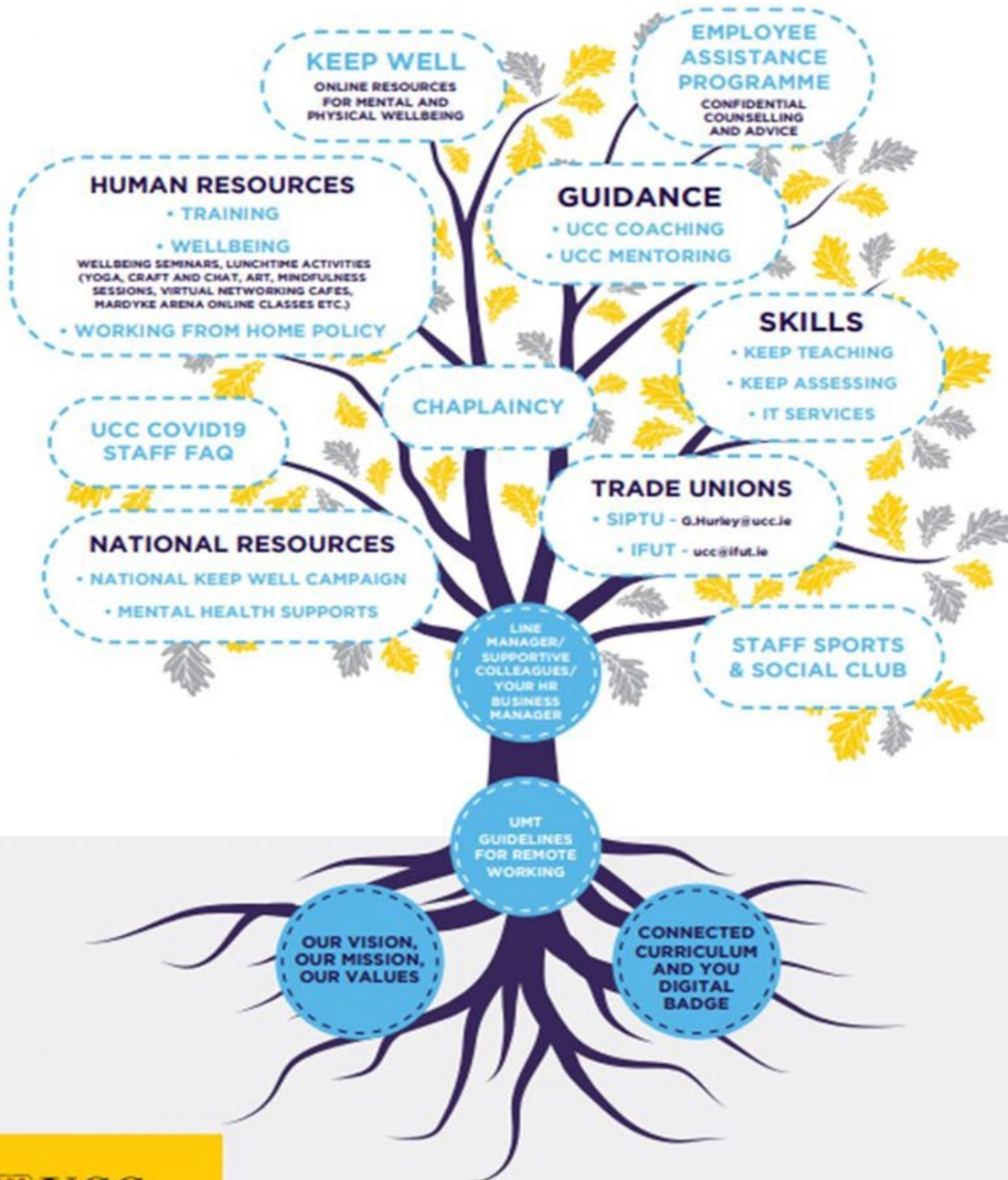
Resource Tree Showing Staff Supports

SUPPORTING UCC STAFF IN 2020/21

RESOURCE TREE SHOWING STAFF RESOURCES

The "Acorn to Mighty Oak" has come to symbolise students' academic and professional development journey throughout their time at UCC. We believe this is also true for our staff. In alignment with this rich metaphor, the support services available to our staff are presented in the form of a [Resource Tree](#).

This tree depicts the support services and resources available to staff and provide links to further information about each service.



6.0 Information and Data Management

Records and Data Management

Records and Data Management policies and procedures have been updated and continue to evolve through UCC's ongoing Digital Records Management (DRM) Project. This project seeks to ensure that records and data in all formats are managed effectively through policies, procedures, and systems which

- support business processes,
- enable legal and regulatory compliance and
- preserve archives of the University's history,

while protecting the security and integrity of records and data, including personal data.

Records retention schedules, based on functional areas (academic and administrative), set out what records the University maintains in order to function and carry out its responsibilities. They detail how long those records have to be retained, and the final disposition of those records, through controlled destruction, review, or permanent retention as University archives as appropriate. The layout and structure of electronic records storage for units within the University will align to the unit's records retention schedule on completion of the DRM project.

The records management policy assigns responsibilities and sets out the structures for University staff to ensure the efficient management of records.

Policy is supported by procedures providing practical instructions and by best practice guidance on related areas, e.g., version control, email management.

Schedules, policy, and guidance are accessible to staff on the University Archives and Records Management section of the Office of Corporate and Legal Affairs (OCLA) website, which was updated in 2021 to include additional internal guidance and training materials on records management: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/ocla/archives-and-records/>

The UCC data protection policy details how the University meets its responsibilities under relevant data protection legislation such as the Data Protection Acts and EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) <https://www.ucc.ie/en/ocla/comp/data/dataprotection/>. The University also ensures researchers are supported to meet the requirements of the Health Research Regulations made under the Data Protection Acts. In 2021, the University added additional staff resources to its Information Compliance Unit including a Deputy Data Protection Officer for Research. Full details of our GDPR policies, process and services are available on <https://www.ucc.ie/en/gdpr/>

Like all public bodies, access to records held by the University is available under the Freedom of Information Act, 2014, (the procedure for this is available at: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/ocla/comp/freedom/howfoi/>.)

In addition, individuals can seek access to their own personal data under data protection legislation: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/ocla/compliance/DataSubjectRightsProcedurev5.0.pdf>

Records management at UCC informs and is also informed by relevant/related policies (and procedures) throughout the University. These include:

Data Classification Procedure: [DataClassification V1 2.pdf](#)

Research Data Management Policy:

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/research/researchatucc/policiesdocuments/ResearchDataManagementPolicy.docx>

Acceptable Usage Policy: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/it-policies/policies/au-pol/>

Externally Hosted Personal Data Policy: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/it-policies/policies/>

Records and archives are maintained by the Quality Enhancement Unit (QEU) for quality review-related records inclusive of quality reports, improvement plans, operation of the Quality Enhancement Committee including agendas, papers and minutes since the inception of the quality review processes. Early records are retained in hard copy and electronically; more recently records are archived wholly electronically. Reports for all quality reviews conducted are published on the University website at <https://www.ucc.ie/en/qeu/>.

Records related to the quality policies and procedures for the academic affairs of the University governed by Academic Council are managed by the Office for Academic Affairs and Governance and held on the Academic Policy Portal. <https://www.ucc.ie/en/academicgov/policies/>

As part of the [Connected University](#) programme of work, UCC is currently in the midst of an ambitious multi-year investment in its core student and curriculum management systems. This investment will further enhance how the University manages its information and data. Highlighted below are some of the expected benefits from this investment.

- The establishment of an intuitional Data Hub will better support enrolment planning and analysis of student retention and performance data.
- Usage of the full capabilities of a recently implemented Virtual Learning Environment (Canvas) will create new opportunities for learning analytics.
- A new curriculum management system will allow the capture of new curriculum meta-data and attributes and further enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the programme approval process.
- A new best-of-breed student placement system is being implemented across the university and will bring with it additional institutional level oversight of placement as a key form of student assessment.
- Collectively, all of the above will provide the University in a better place to explore and support the introduction of more flexible learning such as micro-credentials.

The University tracks and measures the availability and integration of its information records using agreed Key Performance Metric's. Each year, information technology KPI's are considered and discussed by the management team.

7.0 Public Information and Communication

Website and Social Media Communications

UCC operates a significant digital estate for communications (the various digital platforms and channels that we use to communicate) for both internal and external communications. This includes:

- The <https://ucc.ie> domain (which at last count encompasses over 500 individual websites)
- Official University Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn pages and profiles
- Social media profiles across various platforms for Individual School, department, research institutes, research centres, research units, and other UCC organisational units
- Internal SharePoint websites
- Internal Workvivo comms platform
- Digital signage
- Individual newsletters from various parts of the organisation

These channels allow us to communicate to our various audience groups that include:

- Prospective students (including undergraduate, postgraduate, adult continuing education, international, continuing education)
- Parents and Guidance Counsellors of prospective undergraduate students
- Current students
- Current Staff
- Prospective staff
- The wider academic community
- The wider community in general
- Business and Enterprise
- Our alumni
- The research community

UCC website

The UCC website has been in existence since 1993 and was the 1st website in Ireland (and the 9th website in the world). The website is overseen by the Web Content Team in the Office of Marketing and Communications in close collaboration with the Digital Services team in IT services through a collaborative working group called the “Digital Estate for Communications Group”. Governance of the website is underpinned by the University’s Web and Social Media policy. The Office of Marketing and Communications provides content for the upper levels of the website while individual organisational units (Colleges, Schools, Departments, Centres, Units and Institutes) provide content for their local websites. Strategies, reports, governance, quality assurances and policies and procedures for staff, students and the wider public are all accessible from the website. The UCC domain has received over 5 million visits over the last year with over 9 million individual page views.

Education and Training Programmes

Our prospective student portion of the website covers:

- [Courses](#)
- [Undergraduate](#)
- [Postgraduate](#)

- [International Office](#)
- [Adult Continuing Education](#)
- [UCC Online](#)
- [Continuing Professional Development](#)
- [Scholarships and Prizes](#)
- [Transition-In Programme](#)
- [Graduate Attributes](#)
- [Ask](#)
- [Incoming First Year Students](#)
- [Apply to UCC](#)
- [Collaborative Programmes](#)

This information is collated and managed by the Recruitment and Admissions offices, who work with Schools and Colleges, to get all programme and module information up-to-date, Graduate and International students can apply through the dedicated UCC Apply website.

Social Media

The university operates a number of official pages and presences on:

- [Facebook](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)
- [YouTube](#)

The official channels are managed by the Marketing and Media teams from the Office of Marketing and Communications and provides regular news, information and updates from UCC to current students, alumni and interested parties.

Outreach and General Public

The Visitors' Centre engages with the public in the following ways:

Revisit UCC Podcasts: This is a series of podcasts produced by the Visitors' Centre which looks at different aspects of life, research and history at UCC. The podcasts are available on all podcasting platforms and are advertised regularly on social media.

We also run public, private and school tours which communicate the university, story, messaging and gives a top line view of the Universities research priorities.

Other channels for and public dissemination activities include:

- regular news and press releases on research stories, student success, rankings, partnerships and key announcements from UCC which are published on the home page of our website, through social media channels and media outreach.
- Independent Thinking digital magazine which contains a round-up of high impact stories from across teaching and learning, student experience, research and alumni.

Quality Processes

Quality assurance policies and procedures and the evaluation and findings from quality reviews are published in full on the Quality Enhancement Unit website. <https://www.ucc.ie/en/qeu/>

8.0 Monitoring and Periodic Review

Periodic Review

Quality assurance and enhancement policy at UCC is informed by international best practice and has regard to the requirements of the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012* and with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015)*. Our [guidelines](#) are comprehensive and include our objectives, principles and process. <https://www.ucc.ie/en/qeu/>

UCC's approach to peer review is informed by the Quality Enhancement Policy; the University is committed to institutional reflection on the outcomes of quality review processes to contribute to on-going institutional planning and development. In light of this the University has taken the enhancement decision to have senior university officers as Chairs of Panels to further augment their connection into the quality review process. Chairs are, for the most part, members of UMT (University Management Team). UMT is the senior executive management committee whose membership includes senior university officers, Vice-Presidents and Heads of College and its purpose is to assist and support the President in leading the development of the University and the delivery of University Core functions in accordance with the strategic plan and the Universities Act. This is part of the Quality Enhancement strategy for shared engagement and shared responsibility for quality across the University.

The key components of the periodic quality processes include review methodologies for: academic quality, research quality, support quality, thematic and topic specific issues. Review methodologies are based on self-assessment and an expert assessment model involving external peer review, national and international benchmarking and analysis of good practice. They are underpinned by key data and indicators emerging from internal approval, review and monitoring mechanisms. Periodic review takes account of national and European guidelines as well as good practice in higher education quality. The methodology for the periodic review process follows the 4-stage process of:

- Self-evaluation
- Appointment of a peer review panel and site visit
- Publication of a peer review report
- Follow-up and quality enhancement

All review reports and recommendations arising from periodic review are considered by the Quality Enhancement Committee and senior management. Recommendations arising from review are responded to by the area under review and are subject to a follow-up process. Key issues arising from review are analysed and reported to the Quality Enhancement Committee and the University Management Team as part of the integration between quality and strategic planning actions and processes. Annually, the QEC reports on the key issues, improvements and themes from University-wide periodic review to Governing Body, which then refers the report to Academic Council for consideration and action. <https://www.ucc.ie/en/qeu/>

Thematic Review

In addition to periodic quality reviews of education, research and services Thematic Reviews are also undertaken. The function of Thematic Review is to support the development of priority strategic actions through peer review and benchmarking. These reviews take an enhancement-led strategic evaluation of a topic encompassing University-wide processes, practices or policies to assess their current stage of effectiveness and identify international good practices that can inform future developments. Each review has a customised scope which is developed by the Quality Enhancement Unit in consultation with the senior sponsor and the Quality Enhancement Committee.

Specific features of Thematic Review include:

- A holistic policy to practice approach to a strategic theme
- A horizontal scope which transcends units and includes multiple stakeholders across an activity
- External expert panel
- Strategically aligned and sponsored

The conduct of Thematic Reviews follows broadly the same methodological steps as periodic review, with some adaptation to the self-evaluation report to reflect the strategic and University-wide scope of the review process.

External Peer Review

External peer review is a central part of the University's overall approach to quality and in this regard the University engages extensively with other higher education institutions, nationally and internationally. Objectivity of external peer review for periodic quality review, external examining and new programme approval is preserved through the rigorous application of criteria to ensure that peer reviewers have appropriate expertise and experience to fulfil their roles.

All peer reviewers must be free of any conflicts of interest including current or recent prior close association with the University including as a student, staff member, or peer.

Role of the External Assessor in new programme approval:

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/apar/curriculumapproval/handbook/>

Extern Examination procedures for taught programmes: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/academicgov/externs/>

Extern Examiner policy: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/academicgov/policies/standards/#external-examiners>

Supporting Self-Evaluation

The University's Quality Enhancement Unit provides advice and guidance to units engaged in self-evaluation as part of the periodic quality review processes and guidelines are accessible and available through the University website: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/qeu/guidelines/>. As part of the self-evaluation process, all academic units prepare a Case Study of Good Practice <https://www.ucc.ie/en/qeu/casestudiesofgoodpractice/> to highlight existing practices which are effective in supporting and enhancing student learning.

Through partnership with Staff Development & Well Being support is provided for SWOT Workshops for all units at the outset of the self-evaluation process. Ongoing work with the Centre for Integration of Research, Teaching & Learning (CIRTL) and Research Support Services provides ongoing support and connection to self-evaluation and review methodologies for education and research.

Each unit undergoing review is assigned a Review Coordinator from the QEU. The Review Coordinator works with the unit from the outset to the conclusion of the process; this role provides dedicated support, advice and guidance on all aspects of the periodic review process. The Review Coordinator also works with the Panel for each review, acting as a key point of liaison between the Peer Review Panel and the University, supporting the Panel throughout the site visit, facilitating the development of the Peer Review Report and coordinating follow-up.

9.0 Details of Arrangements with Third Parties

9.1 Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies

Type of arrangement	Total Number
PRSBs	40
Awarding bodies	0
QA bodies	0

1. Type of arrangement	PRSB
Name of body:	Dental Council of Ireland - Dental Council
Programme titles and links to publications	Diploma in Dental Hygiene and Diploma in Dental Nursing
Date of accreditation or last review	11/01/2023
Date of next review	11/01/2028

2. Type of arrangement	PRSB
Name of body:	Institute & Faculty of Actuaries - IFoA
Programme titles and links to publications	BSc Financial Mathematics & Actuarial Science and BSc Risk & Actuarial Studies (BTBU 2+2)
Date of accreditation or last review	08/01/2023
Date of next review	08/01/2028

3. Type of arrangement	PRSB
Name of body:	Institute of Biomedical Science - IBMS
Programme titles and links to publications	BSc (Hons) Biomedical Science (joint with CIT) - MT871
Date of accreditation or last review	12/10/2023
Date of next review	

4. Type of arrangement	PRSB

Name of body:	Institution of Chemical Engineers - ICHEME
Programme titles and links to publications	BE Process and Chemical Engineering and ME Process and Chemical Engineering
Date of accreditation or last review	01/12/2022
Date of next review	01/12/2027

5. Type of arrangement	PRSB
Name of body:	Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland - NMBI
Programme titles and links to publications	Higher Diploma in Midwifery - MWC01
Date of accreditation or last review	25/05/2023
Date of next review	21/09/2027

6. Type of arrangement	PRSB
Name of body:	Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland - NMBI
Programme titles and links to publications	MSc Advanced Practice Nursing/Midwifery - CKX46
Date of accreditation or last review	15/03/2023
Date of next review	21/09/2027

9.2 Collaborative Provision

Definitions:

QQL's Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes, and Joint Awards, 2012 defines collaborative provision as a process that occurs where two or more providers are involved by formal agreement in the provision of a programme of higher education and training.

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (as amended) defines 'joint award' as a single award made jointly by two or more awarding bodies

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (as amended) defines 'linked provider' as a provider that is not a designated awarding body but enters into an arrangement with a designated awarding body under which arrangement the provider provides a programme of education and training that satisfies all or part of the prerequisites for an award of the designated awarding body.

Type of arrangement	Total Number
Joint research degrees	2
Joint/double/multiple awards	25
Collaborative programmes	5
Franchise programmes	0
Linked providers (DABs only)	0

1. Collaborative provision	Collaborative programme
Name of body (/bodies):	Riga Medical College of the University of Latvia
Programme titles and links to publications	The Combat Medical Simulation and TCCC Instructor Course
Date of last review	24/09/2022
Date of next review	

2. Collaborative provision	Joint research degree
Name of body (/bodies):	NATO Special Operations Headquarters - NSHQ
Programme titles and links to publications	PG Cert/Dip in Special Operations Medicine
Date of last review	29/09/2022
Date of next review	31/07/2023

3. Collaborative provision	Collaborative programme
Name of body (/bodies):	National Ambulance Service College - NASC
Programme titles and links to publications	BSc Paramedic Studies
Date of last review	28/12/2022
Date of next review	26/09/2026

4. Collaborative provision	Joint research degree
Name of body (/bodies):	Health Service Executive - HSE
Programme titles and links to publications	Joint PhD Degree
Date of last review	27/10/2022
Date of next review	

5. Collaborative provision	Joint research degree
Name of body (/bodies):	Università degli Studi di Verona-UNIVR
Programme titles and links to publications	Joint PhD Degree
Date of last review	07/03/2023
Date of next review	03/03/2026

6. Collaborative provision	Joint research degree
Name of body (/bodies):	University of Toulouse-Jean Jaurès- UT2J
Programme titles and links to publications	Joint PhD Degree
Date of last review	17/07/2023
Date of next review	17/07/2027

7. Collaborative provision	Joint/double/multiple award
Name of body (/bodies):	Ruhr University Bochum - RUB
Programme titles and links to publications	MSc Redesigning the postindustrial city (RePIC)
Date of last review	12/04/2023
Date of next review	31/12/2029

9.3 Articulation Agreements

Definition:

Per the IHEQN Guidelines for the Approval, Monitoring and Review of Collaborative and Transnational Provision, an articulation agreement may be defined as a process whereby all students who satisfy academic criteria on one programme are automatically entitled (on academic grounds) to be admitted with advance standing to a subsequent stage of a programme of a degree awarding body. These arrangements are subject to a formal agreement between the parties.

Articulation agreements - Total number	15
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1. Articulation agreement	Articulation agreement
Name of body (/bodies):	China Foreign Affairs University - CFAU
Programme titles and links to publications	BSc
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	30/09/2022
Date of next review	30/09/2027
Detail of the agreement	New agreement

2. Articulation agreement	Articulation agreement
Name of body (/bodies):	University of Algarve - UAlg
Programme titles and links to publications	BSc Environmental Sciences
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	21/12/2022
Date of next review	21/12/2027
Detail of the agreement	New agreement

3. Articulation agreement	Articulation agreement
Name of body (/bodies):	Communication University China - CUC
Programme titles and links to publications	Taught MA pathways
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	16/01/2023
Date of next review	17/01/2031
Detail of the agreement	Addition to Existing Agreement

4. Articulation agreement	Articulation agreement
Name of body (/bodies):	The Teaching Council
Programme titles and links to publications	Higher Diploma in Spanish for Teachers (Post-Primary)
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	14/02/2023
Date of next review	
Detail of the agreement	Addition to existing agreement

5. Articulation agreement	Articulation agreement
Name of body (/bodies):	Minzu University of China - MUC
Programme titles and links to publications	BSc Environmental Sciences with Environmental Management
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	27/04/2023
Date of next review	06/09/2026
Detail of the agreement	Addition to existing agreement

6. Articulation agreement	Articulation agreement
Name of body (/bodies):	Hainan University - HNU
Programme titles and links to publications	MSc, PhD
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	25/04/2023
Date of next review	25/04/2028
Detail of the agreement	Addition to Existing Agreement

University College Cork

2024

Annual Quality Report (UCC)
PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE
ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT
Reporting Period 2022-2023

PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE ENHANCEMENT AND IMPACT

1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments

1.1 Strategic QA Updates

UCC 2022: Delivering a Connected University

[*UCC 2022: Delivering a Connected University*](#) was developed in 2020 in response to changes to the higher education landscape, particularly geopolitical challenges, the escalating climate crisis and societal and economic pressures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to the rapidly evolving external environment, UCC reviewed the final two years of its five-year strategic plan, and replaced them with a bespoke two year plan, *UCC 2022: Delivering a Connected University*, to maintain stability and prioritise strategic priorities.

Completed in December 2022, this strategic pivot was very successful, enabling the University to deliver its core priorities and maintain standards in learning, teaching, research and core operations during the COVID-19 crisis, including during periods of campus closure. During the two-year implementation of this plan from January 2020 to December 2022, UCC delivered significant outputs and impact, retaining accreditation for our 64 accredited programmes, graduating more than 12,000 students and generating substantial research and non-exchequer income. *UCC 2022* provided an effective framework to support the delivery of key priorities across five thematic pillars including [*impactful projects*](#) across the University. These included maintaining or improving our position in relevant global university rankings, delivery of our Academic Strategy; delivery of the Graduate Attributes Programme; completion of Schoolification; delivery of a Digital Masterplan; launch of *UCC Futures*; securing 9 new Athena SWAN awards; and the launch of our Arts & Culture Plan: Igniting UCC's creative potential.

Against this backdrop, a Strategic Plan Coordination Group was convened to undertake an extensive consultation to develop a plan for the next strategic planning period 2023 – 2028.

UCC Strategic Plan 2023-2028: Securing our Future

UCC is operating in a challenging national and international environment where the pace of societal change is unprecedented, making strategic planning for our future more important than ever. Following extensive consultation across the University during 2022, including two Special Town Hall meetings and four Consultation Cafes, in February 2023 UCC published its five-year strategic plan [*Securing Our Future*](#). We are committed to securing a bright future for our university, our staff and our students and our new Vision and Mission will guide our institutional focus. The plan will see a step change in research impact, support our evolution as the university of choice for postgraduate education, and action to widen student access to higher education. Our vision is to connect and empower people to create knowledge that shapes a sustainable and inclusive world.

Our mission is to create and sustain an inclusive environment and culture to enable transformative research and learning for the enrichment of society and stewardship of our planet. Our ultimate power is our individual and collective decision making and in implementing this plan, our behaviour and our decision-making will be guided by our values of Compassion; Agility; Integrity; Respect; Discovery; Equity; Accountability; and Sustainability.

Our plan has five goals related to: Research & Innovation; Student Success; Global Engagement; Our Staff & Culture; and Our Place & Footprint as defined in the image below.



The success of the Strategic Plan will be dependent on a number of enablers working and interacting across goals, approaches and actions. The key enablers include: People, Wellbeing and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI); Effective Communications; Resources; Philanthropy and Stakeholder Engagement; Operational Excellence; Strategic Partnerships; Digital Capabilities and Quality Data; and Governance.

Goal 1 of *Securing our Future* aims to deliver impactful research and innovation that addresses global grand challenges in signature areas of excellence through the *UCC Futures* framework resulting in a distinctive research reputation. Notable accomplishments include the launch of two *UCC Futures* thematic areas – Collective Social Futures (March 2023) and Pharmaceuticals (April 2023). This brings the total to six of ten UCC Futures thematic areas now launched. Three Advanced and two Consolidator ERC grants have been secured by UCC researchers (25% of overall strategic goal to secure 20 ERC grants by 2028). Funding has been secured from the Wellcome Trust for “The External Voice in Defining an Engaged and Inclusive Institutional Research Culture: Engaged & Inclusive Research Culture Alliance” and a UCC Engaged Research Seed Funding Scheme established with nine projects awarded funding to date.

Goal 2 aims to provide a student-centred, inclusive and digitally enhanced learning environment, a *Connected Curriculum* and an outstanding student experience, to prepare UCC graduates to make a positive impact. UCC’s new state-of-the-art Student Health Medical Centre opened at the Crow’s Nest complex in July 2023, while an Elite Athlete and Team High Performance Strength & Conditioning Gym was opened at the Mardyke Arena in July 2023. A project to assess and remediate Canvas course content for accessibility was completed over the summer by a team of 18 Inclusive UCC interns. Ninety modules were reviewed and updated with an average 27% improvement in accessibility impacting 4,600 students. Policies on Reasonable Accommodations and Recognition of Prior Learning were approved by Academic Council in June 2023 and a new suite of Student Service Delivery Principles were launched in August 2023.

Goal 3 aims to grow UCC's international reach to amplify our global impact. The appointment of Vice-President for Global Engagement in June 2023 is key to the delivery of this objective. UCC has consolidated its position in the 301 – 400 band of the Shanghai University Rankings (August 2023) and remains joint second in Ireland (with UCD); increased 11 places in the QS Rankings and 4 places in the THE World University Impact Rankings. €11.6m has been raised since October 2022 from trusts, companies and individuals for university priorities. A Brand Refresh Project was commenced by in May 2023, and the roll out of the new branding next year will ensure a coherent and consistent approach to our brand that maximises our global impact.

Goal 4 aims to implement a progressive and inclusive *People and Culture Plan* to attract, develop and retain our talent. Key accomplishments to date include the appointment of Chief People & Culture Officer (with effect from November 2023); completion of the first cycle of Promotions to Senior Lecturer; Staff Wellbeing Week, which brought 475 attendees across 17 events; and The Future of Work survey which launched in September 2023.

Goal 5 aims to radically reform our practices and use of space and technology to meet our ambitious sustainability and climate action goals. In February 2023, jointly with Queen's University Belfast, UCC launched the *Sustainable Development Solutions Network Ireland* (SDSN Ireland) launched with Queen's University Belfast, and a new Sustainability & Climate Action Plan was launched in June 2023. The purpose-built student accommodation facility at the Crow's Nest was completed in March 2023, in time for summer 2023 lettings and was formally opened in September prior to its occupation by students for the 2023/2024 academic year.

UCC's Office of Strategic Planning & Institutional Research, in consultation with each of the five Goal Owners, has agreed a set of 14 Measures of Success to support and measure progress towards the five goals of the Strategic Plan, and the identification of targets for each to be achieved by the end of the Strategic Planning cycle in 2028. The Data Services team in IT Services has built a new Key Performance Indicator (KPI) data dashboard to support the monitoring and delivery of these targets. This provides a simple visual access to the data required to track progress.

1.2 Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR

No.	Planned objectives (Previous AQR)	Update on Status
1	Institutional Review	UCC's Institutional Review was undertaken in 22/23. The recommendations will be addressed on an ongoing basis with reference to UCC's Strategic Plan Strategy 2023-28 Securing our Future
2	Programme Review	<p>A pilot programme review approach will form part of the self-evaluation for periodic academic quality review in 2022-24. The development of a new Curriculum Management system (CIM Project) has focused on review, redesign and approval of modules as part of a broad-based curriculum review and curriculum systems implementation during 2021/22 (Part 1). Part 2 will focus on systems development and implementation for CIM programmes review.</p> <p>A pilot programme review was undertaken in 22/23, the outcomes of which will be considered and form the basis for systematic programme review.</p>
3	Recalibration of the Quality Review process	<p>UCC is nearing the end of the 3rd cycle of Periodic Quality Review, based on a methodology which was developed at sectoral level prior to the establishment of QQI (2012).</p> <p>Before commencing the 4th cycle there will be a re-calibration process to ensure that the methodology for Quality Review is strategically aligned, referenced to current/emergent good practice internationally and nationally and consolidates incremental and current ongoing enhancements to the model.</p> <p>This re-calibration process will take place during 2023/24 and once complete will allow the required period of 12 months preparation for units engaging in review from 2025/26 onwards.</p>
4	Indicators of Quality	In 2022/23, UCC's Indicators of Quality focused on aligning indicators with reference to the recently agreed HEA System Performance Framework KPIs and the metrics underpinning UCC's new Strategic Plan which was published the same year. The project will be progressed during 23/24 to identify a working sample of indicators that will be used in the development of a proof of concept Indicators of Quality dashboard.

5	Good practice Symposium	<p>QEU will hold a Good Practice Symposium in 2023/24. Identifying and celebrating Good Practice is an important component of how an organisation, and those who drive its success, approach self-evaluation and enable enhancement.</p> <p>Using a Case Study, the learnings and enhancements that emerge from this self-evaluation will be shared to support greater awareness, improve quality and increase effectiveness.</p> <p>The scope of the Good Practice case studies to be submitted for selection and showcased at the symposium directly aligns with the Strategic Goals of UCC's Strategy 2023-28 Securing our Future</p>
6	Joint Sectoral Protocol	<p>A review of current practices will be undertaken in 23/34 along with a roundtable discussion to ensure that key personnel are conversant with the Joint Sectoral Protocol and to confirm that that all elements of the Protocol are embedded within UCC policies and procedures.</p>

1.3 Governance and Management

1.3.1 QA Governance Meetings Schedule

Body	Meeting dates
Governing Body	13 September 2022 25 October 2022 06 December 2022 07 February 2023 14 March 2023 (special meeting) 04 April 2023 13 June 2023
Academic Board	21 September 2022 24 November 2022 07 December 2022 01 February 2023 05 April 2023 31 May 2023 07 June 2023
Academic Council	07 October 2022 04 November 2022 22 November 2022 (special meeting) 13 January 2023 03 March 2023 05 May 2023 16 June 2023
Quality Enhancement Committee	26 September 2022 03 November 2022 26 January 2023 30 March 2023 13 June 2023

1.3.2 QA Leadership and Management Structural Developments

There were no structural changes during the time period.

1.4 Internal Monitoring and Review

1.4.1 Overview of Periodic Reviews

Schedule for reviews included in previous AQR

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Date of last review
Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation	2022/23	April 2013

Unit of review for which report has been published during reporting period	Date of completion/reason for conducting review (if not planned) or non-completion (if planned but not conducted)	Links to relevant publications
MSc Integrative Counselling and Psychotherapy, Turning Point Institute	October 2022	Turning Point Report
Finance Office	June 2023	Not yet published
Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation	Rescheduled for 2023/24	

1.4.2 Expert Review Teams/Panels¹ involved in IQA

(i) Expert Review Team/Panel Size and Related Processes

	Total	Academic Schools/ Department	Professional Services/Support Unit	Approval/Review of Linked Provider	Programme Approval	Programme Review	Other
Number of review/ evaluation processes	2		1			1	
<i>of those:</i>							
On-site processes	2**						
Desk reviews							
Virtual processes							
Average panel size for each process type*	4.5						

* excluding secretary if not a full panel member

**The standard UCC Quality Review is hybrid - both onsite and virtual

¹ QQI acknowledges that the terminology used to describe the groups of individuals that conduct peer review/evaluation varies from institution to institution.

(ii) Composition of Expert Review Teams/Panels involved in IQA

	Total	Gender			Internal	National	International			Institution Type	
Type of Expert/ Role on Panel		Male	Female	or unspecific			UK, incl. NI	Other European	Outside of Europe	Similar	Different
Chair	2	1	1			2				2	
Secretary	2	1	1		2						
Academic/Discipline Specific	4		4		2		2			4	
Student Representative	2	2			2						
QA	1		1			1				1	
Teaching & Learning											
External Industry /Third Mission	1	1					1				1

2.0 IQA System – Enhancement and Impacts

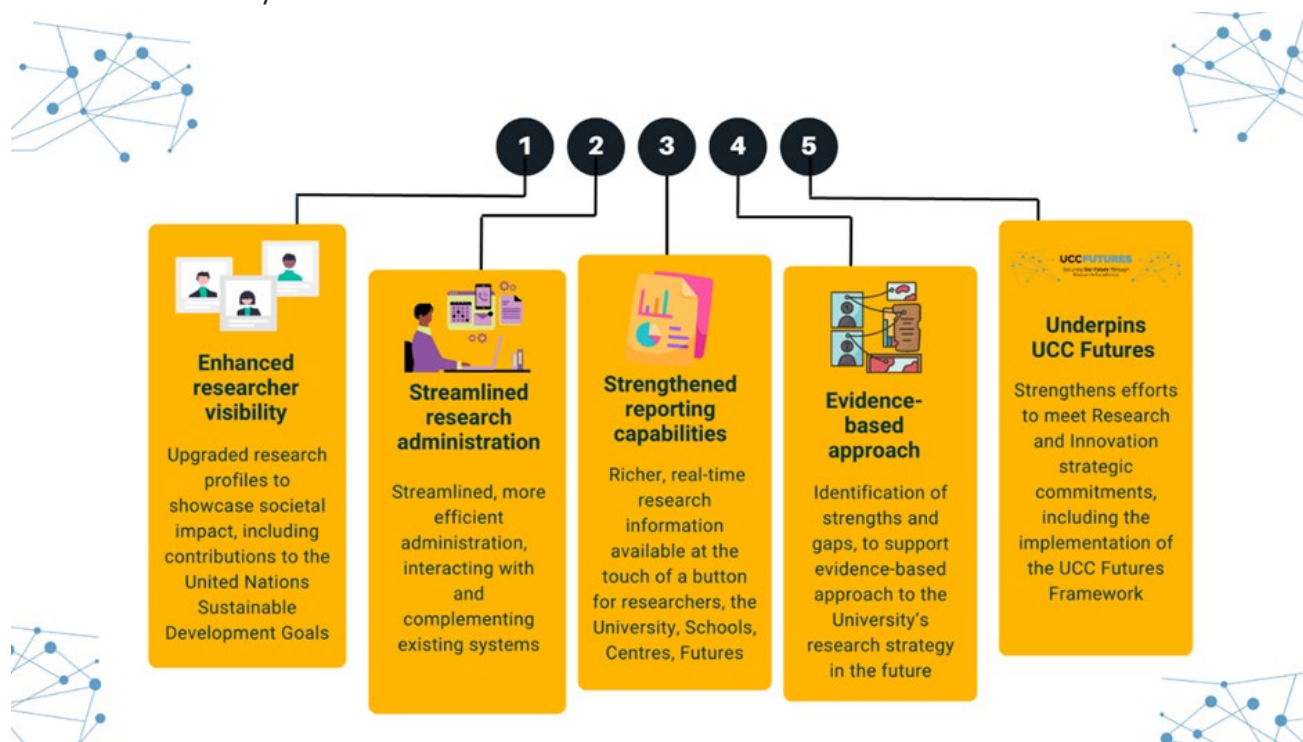
Information and Data Management

Research Information System Project

UCC has recently launched a new project to source and implement a new, cloud-based end-to-end research information system. This system will provide a single integrated platform for researchers and research managers to capture, manage and report on key research life-cycle activities and associated metrics.

A new research information system is a strategic priority under action 1.2(v) of [Securing Our Future 2023-2028](#), which commits to “*Deliver a Digital Enablement programme to leverage better data and infrastructure that supports institutional strategic objectives across the research lifecycle.*” This is also a key project under [UCC’s Digital Masterplan](#).

Benefits of the new system will include:



Information and Data Management

National Student Survey

For the purposes of StudentSurvey.ie, student engagement reflects two key elements. The first is the amount of time and effort that students put into their studies and other educationally beneficial activities. The second is how institutions deploy resources and organise curriculum and learning opportunities to encourage students to participate in meaningful activities linked to learning. Development and implementation of StudentSurvey.ie is driven by the intention to inform, support, and encourage enhancement discussions and activities throughout institutions. UCC undertakes the StudentSurvey.ie annually and our participation rate has been gradually increasing.

3,514 UCC students responded to StudentSurvey.ie in 2023 (4,083) in 2022. This represents a response rate of **25%** which is in line with the national average for universities which currently sits at **25.7%**. This provides a large and robust evidence base to inform policy and institutional actions. Due to the satisfactory number of respondents – a statistically valid sample size of **25%** of all eligible UCC students – the surveys are a reliable and relevant source of information and highlight the experiences of current UCC students.

Consulting widely across all levels of the organisation, communicating the benefits of continued participation in StudentSurvey.ie and maximising the outcomes on foot of the survey results, is a key focus of our institutional strategy. How we use the responses, optimising key findings for maximum reach and visibility and showcasing enhancements is part of a larger cycle of activity in achieving impact. The ability to capture and analyse data on the student experience is a key component of our commitment to quality. Responses are analysed at institutional, College, School, and programme level serving as a guide for continued enhancement of teaching and learning and encouraging local dialogue on quality priorities.

As part of the work of the University Student Surveys Board, reports on the results by college, programme and by cohort are prepared and considered by the Heads of College and shared with the Learning and Teaching representatives for each college to discuss and reflect on key outcomes and thereafter to provide to the University Student Surveys Board, a summary of planned actions in semester one. Building on this, a university level report will also be prepared and presented to Academic Council in October 2023.

Strengthening engagement with our Students' Union over time has also made direct contributions to positive outcomes, whereby the executive officers have gone from passive partners to active collaborators. Our continued progress ensures strategies for (1) closing the feedback loop through visible reporting on findings and (2) optimising use of the data is included on agendas of appropriate meetings, specific briefings, internal publications and across popular social media platforms. Continuing the wide dissemination of results:

- Aggregated feedback is shared with colleagues across all support areas i.e., IT Services, UCC's Societies, UCC Library, UCC EDI Unit etc. so that the data can be used to improve and enhance facilities, supports, and the learning environment for all students.
- Data are provided to key offices in support of submissions for the Education Awards 2023, UCC were successful winners in the following two categories: **Best Collaboration Project** and **Excellence in Sustainability**
- Building on the UCC results report, data are available and can be accessed via the [In Touch dashboard](#), a Power BI driven data analysis and visualisation tool which will help colleagues to analyse the results of StudentSurvey.ie. Given the complete redesign of the In-Touch data visualisation dashboard in 2023, a series of impact sessions are planned to encourage the use of the tools developed to gain the most value from the data.

Staff Recruitment, Management and Development

School Managers Community of Practice

In the report of the 2023 Institutional Review of UCC, the Review Panel identified School Managers as a staff group that could benefit from enhanced opportunities to connect and engage in peer learning for their career development, and stated:

Noting how difficult it can be in any large university structure to disseminate best practice across functional units, the review team suggests that UCC should encourage school managers to set up informal networks within and across the colleges to share expertise and innovative practices. (Report, p 19)

Following the Institutional Review panel visit, two School Managers who had been involved in Institutional Review panel discussions engaged with the Director of Quality Enhancement and the HR Manager, Staff Wellbeing and Development to pursue the idea of a community of practice for School Managers within UCC. A consultation hosted by QEU was held with several additional School Managers in September 2023, where support for this concept of engagement was expressed. The development of a Community of Practice for School Managers will be beneficial in ensuring delivery of the Operational Excellence enabler driving Securing Our Future: UCC Strategic Plan 2023-2028.

Information on Principles and Objectives Communities of Practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991^[1]) presents a theory of learning based on engagement within groups of people informally bound by shared expertise and joint enterprise. People in Communities of Practice share their experiences and knowledge in free-flowing, creative ways that foster new approaches to problems. Members collaborate to share resources, skills and mutually learn about specific subjects. Communities of Practice also enable commonality of purpose, and the sharing of best practice among colleagues with shared functional expertise who work in different units, as is the case with School Managers in the HE context. Below are several of the key concepts which will underpin the Community of Practice.

Collegiality – peer support and sharing of good practice amongst colleagues fulfilling similar roles across the university.

Connected Curriculum and UCC Strategy – opportunity for School Managers to discuss, consider and support the implementation of same across the university.

Communication – sharing and disseminating information to all Schools around strategy, systems, policy and procedures.

Complementarity – a community or practice which will complement other leadership fora across the university.

Constructive – a key objective will be to develop a community of practice which will benefit and enhance members of the Community of Practice, the Schools they work in and the wider university.

Collaboration – provide opportunities for collaboration between Schools and central services in the best interests of PSS colleagues across the university.

Given the link to the recent Institutional Review, and the focus on sharing good practice, it was agreed that sponsorship of the Quality Enhancement Committee would help to progress the development of a 'community of practice' for School Managers within UCC.

The group will provide a short annual summary of activities and impact, following the first year of operation, which will be included in UCC's Institutional Review Action Plan.

All UCC School Managers will be invited to participate. The support of QEU has been kindly offered for the invitation of guest speakers who may bring new perspectives to discussions to enhance knowledge and skills development.

Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Student Feedback Ecosystem Project

The UCC-wide Student Feedback Ecosystem Project (SFEP) was co-designed and led by the Quality Enhancement Unit and CIRTIL in 2021-23. It was rolled out in 2022-23 by the Quality Enhancement Unit, with the support of a cross-functional team, having been awarded SATLE funding by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. It culminated in the development of a new integrated student module surveying tool – combining consistency of core questions with module-specific inputs. Such 'Proof of Concept' student feedback survey was piloted in 2023 by virtue of an IT integration of Canvas and Qualtrics, thus offering an opportunity to test the technical application of a potential systematic student feedback approach, which integrates with Canvas and utilises the newly acquired and preferred Qualtrics survey software. After an initial call for pilot modules, 21 were identified. The Module Coordinators for each module received a briefing on the objectives, as well as receiving some guidance materials they could share with their students on the pilot.

The final stage of activity and output entailed an independent, user-focused evaluation, carried out by a post-doctoral researcher from May to June 2023. Its overall objective was to assess the effectiveness of the survey tool based on information gathered from user experiences. The ensuing report of the key findings is expected to be presented in the academic year 2023/24.

On the basis of this report, together with other key relevant considerations, UCC will deliberate on the future of student module and programme surveying institution-wide and, hence, make substantial progress towards closing the student feedback loop.

Overall, the outputs of this project strongly align with the objectives of Goal Two - Student Success Pillar of UCC 2023-28 supporting student success and enhancing student experience informed by the student voice and supporting students as co-creators of their learning experience.

Background and rationale

While there are a range of formal and informal student feedback mechanisms in operation, UCC currently does not have a systematic process for gathering student feedback following the suspension of the SysEval survey in 2016. This has been a consistent point raised across different institutional reviews of UCC, including the EUA Institutional Evaluation Programme 2020, UCC's Institutional Quality Review in 2012 and within analysis of the outcomes of periodic review at UCC.

As a response to this, the main aim of the project was to develop a set of principles and approaches to gathering student feedback informed by current good practice nationally and internationally in higher education, developed through a comprehensive consultation with UCC students, staff and external colleagues.

Pilot Survey Completion Statistics

The pilot modules consisted of 1,137 registered students (1,095 individuals, 42 were registered for more than one pilot module) across each of the four Colleges and included both undergraduate and postgraduate modules. After the survey deadline on 13th December 2022, 527 submissions were received, of which 393 were fully completed representing a total submission rate of ~35%. Submission rates across each of the modules ranged from 17.5% to 100% with an average across all modules equaling 50.9%.

User-focused Evaluation

The final stage of activity and output entailed an independent user-focused evaluation. Its overall objective was to assess the effectiveness of the survey tool based on information gathered from user experience. More specifically, its remit considered:

1. Overall user experience of survey
2. Campus-wide survey future requirements
3. Different approaches that best serve the requirements identified by users

To provide an appropriate level of objectiveness to the evaluation, a postdoctoral researcher was recruited for three months, completing the evaluative task by the end of June 2023. The ensuing report of the key findings is expected to be presented in the academic year 2023/24.

The Inclusive UCC project

In under three years, the Inclusive UCC project at University College Cork (UCC) has remarkably transformed the University's commitment to Universal Design and accessibility. Initiated during the 2020 shift to blended learning, the project harnessed the rapid technological advancements and innovative practices of the pandemic era. Despite the challenges, the University staff's unwavering dedication ensured that UCC students continued to receive a quality learning experience. Launched in February 2021, the project's chief aim is to integrate universal design and inclusive practices throughout UCC, aspiring to mould the University into a fully inclusive institution. This aligns with promoting student success as part of UCC's Connected University framework, underpinned by a comprehensive mainstreaming approach.

The project has been instrumental in instigating cultural change within UCC, focusing on ingraining universal design across various organisational levels. This includes initiatives like providing staff training, hosting workshops, fostering collaborations with Schools and Colleges, and embedding universal design into the strategic planning of the University. These concerted efforts have not only augmented the student learning experience but have also significantly contributed to creating a more inclusive and progressive academic community.

Furthermore, the project has introduced [student intern projects such as Accessibility Allies](#), aligning seamlessly with the "Securing Our Future" strategic plan. This alignment is underscored by the focus on enhancing student success through a digitally enhanced, inclusive learning environment. A prime example is the ["Teaching for All" Canvas Course](#), which, since its launch in 2021 and subsequent update in 2023, has trained over 300 staff members in digital inclusion and accessibility. Such initiatives are critical in promoting Universal Design and

extending its principles beyond academic curriculum development. In conclusion, the Inclusive UCC project, through initiatives like "Teaching for All", Inclusive College Research, and Accessibility Allies, has not only enriched the learning experience at UCC but also established a benchmark in higher education for cultivating an inclusive and technologically progressive learning environment.

[Learn more about the Inclusive UCC project here](#)

Programmes of Education and Training

Graduate Attributes

As a socially minded, civically engaged institution, our core values and graduate attributes are the bedrock of our student experience. Graduate attributes refer to the skills, knowledge, and abilities of our graduates, beyond disciplinary content knowledge, that are applicable in a range of contexts in their lives. They advance the development of academic, specialist and technical skills.

Based on extensive consultation with stakeholders, the following core graduate attributes are being prioritised for the lifecycle of this Academic Strategy:

- Creators, evaluators, and communicators of knowledge
- Independent and creative thinkers
- Digitally Fluent
- Socially Responsible
- Effective global citizens, who recognise and challenge inequality

The following core values are being prioritised for the lifecycle of this Academic Strategy: Respect, Ambition, Compassion, Resilience, and Integrity. In the 2022/2023 academic year, the following initiatives were rolled out to support successful student transitions.

Transition In initiatives are guiding students into the right programme of study for them, whilst simultaneously widening access of under-represented cohorts and improving first year retention rates.

[Nurturing Bright Futures](#) (NBF) is a six-module online course that has been designed to equip second-level students with the skills they need to successfully transition to third-level education and make the right degree choice.

- Since its introduction to the suite of transition in supports available to pre-entry level and first year UG students, UCC have been leaders amongst Irish HEI's with a retention rate of 87%.
- A pilot project is currently underway to support local DEIS secondary schools to embed NBF in the TY curriculum and increase rates of progression to HE. Current UCC students will be role models and facilitate NBF workshops in the classroom.
- **1707** pre-entry level students are enrolled in NBF this academic year with users from Ireland, India, and Brazil. This year the ISSU has partnered with UCC to promote NBF at a grassroots level.

Interactive virtual reality video tours of UCC and each of its four Colleges have been developed to increase accessibility of the campus to national and international pre-entry level audiences. To date, they have received **39,706 views**.

A suite of resources that support students in their transition into university is available on the UCC Student Success Zone online hub and attracts an average of **10,500 visits per week**.

Transition Through initiatives are providing targeted supports, delivering skills training and developing graduate attributes that go beyond disciplinary content knowledge and can be applied in life-wide contexts.

[*Your UCC Graduate Attributes and Values Compass*](#) or *Your Compass* for short, launched in September 2022, is the flagship initiative of the Graduate Attributes Programme. In partnership with multiple academic and professional services units across the university, this self-assessment tool has been created to support and facilitate students in the development of their graduate attributes and values. The learning experiences available on the platform have been curated by some 20 professional services and academic staff, with the aim that all students are enabled to develop their graduate attributes and values, in a manner reflective of their personal goals and programme of study. Last year some 1500 students took the *Your Compass* self-assessment and engaged with 5351 learning experiences. This academic year students were invited to take the self-assessment on the 4th of October with 803 students completing the self-assessment in the first week of rollout.

LinkedIn Learning

Over the last two years, the GAP has provided some 1400 penultimate year students and some 1000 Postgraduate Taught and Postgraduate Research students with access to LinkedIn Learning. The initiative supported students in their development of employability skills as they prepared for their placement year and as they prepare to transition to the workplace. Users completed 5654 LinkedIn Learning courses and viewed 37,100 skills development videos. In line with the UCC Strategic Plan 2023–2028 [*this year's project*](#) (targeted at Postgraduate Taught and Postgraduate Research students) aimed to:

- 1.3. ... **enhance the research student experience** and embed research and innovation into our curriculum.
- iv. **Enhance the experience of PhD students**...tracked and informed by the Research Administration Project... embedded and **aligned with our Graduate Attributes Programme**.

In January 2023 the *In-Person Learning: Make the Most of Your Degree* campaign was launched. This collaboration with the College of Business and Law resulted in the development of resources that encourage students to participate in in-person learning to support their effective use of academic time and to support their development of graduate attributes and core transferable skills.

Transition Out initiatives are preparing final-year students to transition into professional environments, delivering on the ambitions of our Institutional Employability and Employment Guide.

The UCC EmployAgility Award (Digital Badge) is delivered by the Graduate Attributes Programme in partnership with UCC Career Services and provides students with formal recognition for their development of graduate attributes, values, and employability skills through extra-curricular activity. Since the partnership was established in 2020, some **1856** students have received an award. To meet award criteria, students must reflect on their development of attributes and values and how their learnings will support their career development plan.

To support students on their transition out ten bespoke videos were launched in 2021 to provide students with the information and skills needed to make graduate applications. To date, they have received **3,756 views** and have been embedded in support materials provided to graduates at this stage of their journey.

In 2021 the Graduate Attributes Programme supported the rollout of the Career Set AI CV review tool and to date some **3,104 students** have utilised the support.

In October 2022 the programme supported the acquisition of AI Interview preparation software and some **3,736 students** have utilised the software to date.

Conferences and Awards

The Programme has been showcased at the Living Knowledge Conference 2022, University of Groningen, and the EUA Teaching and Learning Forum, University of Deusto, Spain 2023.

A paper by Dr Mike Murphy, UCC School of Psychology, examining the development of the *Your Compass* self-assessment has been [published by the EUA](#).

In December 2022, the Graduate Attributes Programme Team were honoured with a **UCC Staff Recognition Award** for enhancing the student experience and in May 2023 won a **Best Collaborative Project Award** at The Education Award, in recognition of the role the programme played in hosting the **International Association of Student Affairs and Services 2022 Global Summit Conference**. The programme was also presented to an international audience at the latter.

Sustainable Development Goals

Academic Year 2022/23 saw UCC continue to lead globally in sustainability and climate action. UCC was named 7th globally in the UI Green Metric ranking, 68th in the Times Higher Education Impact Ranking and the “Most Sustainable Institution” worldwide at the International Green Gown Awards. In 2023, UCC’s total waste tonnage was 40% lower than pre-pandemic levels. Printing has reduced from over 19 million pages per year in 2019, to just over 5 million in 2022. Scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions have been reduced by 21%. On November 30th 2022, UCC launched a report and website outlining “*The contribution of UCC Research to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals*”. Almost 500 researchers, across all 27 Schools, engaged with the mapping project, which found that over 5,000 SDG-related publications were produced over a three-year period - <https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/research/sdgs/SDGsinUCCResearchReport.pdf>.

Launch of SDSN Ireland

In February 2023, the All-Island Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN Ireland) was officially launched at an event at NUI Headquarters in Dublin. The Network, which is co-hosted by UCC and Queen’s University Belfast and is a North-South cooperative focused on developing context-specific solutions and mobilising local action for the SDGs. The launch event was attended by representatives from HEIs across the Island of Ireland as well as the SDSN International Secretariat. The day also marked the first meeting of the Network’s Leadership Council, which has membership from government, higher education, civil society, and the SDG Academy. Ambassador David Donohue chairs its Executive Committee. <https://www.ucc.ie/en/news/2023/ucc-and-queens-university-establish-first-all-island-sustainability-network.html>

Significant Appointments

In April 2023, UCC appointed its first Associate Vice President for Sustainability, Professor Brian O’Gallachoir. Professor O’Gallachoir is also the new Director of UCC’s Environmental Research Institute. UCC also appointed a Head of Sustainability and Climate Action Office, as well as a Greenshoots Coordinator, SDSN Manager and Research Support Officer within the Office of Sustainability and Climate Action. These new posts significantly enhance the University’s capacity to drive sustainability across all elements of its activities. The posts complement the 27 academic posts created through UCC Futures: Sustainability and strengthens the University’s standing as the leading institution for sustainability in Ireland.

Sustainability and Climate Action Plan

In June 2023, UCC launched its Sustainability and Climate Action Plan 2023-28. The Plan replaces the University’s Sustainability Strategy (2016) and supports UCC’s Strategic Plan 2023-28, in particular Goal 5: Our Place, Our Footprint. The plan contains 62 actions aimed at ensuring that UCC continues to be a globally leading institution for sustainability and minimises its impact on the environment. It also sets sector-leading targets for the University to be net zero across all scopes of emissions by 2040 and zero waste by 2030. The plan was officially launched by Minister for Finance Michael McGrath. <https://www.ucc.ie/en/news/2023/ucc-launches-sustainability-and-climate-action-plan.html>

Single Use Plastics and Leadership in Green Procurement

This year UCC made a bold statement by banning all disposable cups and plastic bottles from campus catering, restaurants, cafes and vending services in January. Working with colleagues in KSG and the Student Centre, a deposit return scheme was implemented across campus. By October, the University had reduced the number of disposable cups going to landfill by over one million units. In May, UCC hosted a conference highlighting the impacts of our Green Procurement policy with the Munster network of Business in the Community Ireland. UCC’s Procurement Officer, Head of Sustainability and SDG Research Fellow produced a Brainstorm article and research paper on the subject of Green Procurement.

Leadership in Decarbonisation

UCC continues to be sector leading in its approach to energy management, continually reducing consumption through its ISO50001 programme and Saver Saves Scheme. In October 2022, UCC won both the “Energy Team of the Year” and “Excellence in Energy Research” awards at the SEAI Annual Awards. In February 2023, UCC President presented at the SEAI Annual Conference on the topic of Leadership in Action. This year, UCC was also successful in gaining funding under the government’s Pathfinder Programme for a deep retrofit of the Enterprise Centre.

Supporting a whole institution Living Laboratory

In July 2023 a third round of funding for the UCC Green Campus Living Laboratory was announced. The aim was to fund projects supporting UCC’s Sustainability and Climate Action Plan. One MSc and six demonstration projects were funded. The MSc will investigate the impact of UCC’s no-mow policy on invertebrate diversity while the demonstration projects include, amongst others, one that will seek to green UCC’s website.

Leadership in sustainability research

UCC continues to demonstrate its leadership both in sustainability research excellence and in using that research to achieve significant societal impact. During the academic year 2022-2023, three of UCC's research leaders in the Environmental Research Institute were the highest cited academics globally in the areas of offshore wind energy, energy modelling and electrofuels respectively. UCC recruited 30 new academics under the exciting UCC Futures Sustainability initiative to lead our in new areas of sustainability research including sustainable business, clean energy futures and environmental law. Sustainability researchers secured over €20 million additional researching funding, including a prestigious European Research Council Consolidator Grant for research into child/youth climate justice. In October 2022, UCC was involved in the design and implementation of Ireland's first Children's and Young Persons' Citizens Assembly on biodiversity loss. UCC won the inaugural SFI Engaged Research Award in November 2022 for the multi-award winning Dingle Peninsula 2030 rural energy transition project. ESB and Shannon Foynes Port announced support for collaborative research with UCC on floating offshore wind energy in September 2023.

2.1 Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity is at the heart of all academic endeavour and is critical to the reputation of the University; the integrity of awards and qualifications; the assurance of quality and standards; good research quality; ethics, and institutional academic leadership. The University has clear policy on plagiarism and provides support and advice to students on academic integrity across all aspects of their academic work. The Students' Union also provide advice and update to their members.

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/academicgov/policies/student-policies/#plagiarism-policy>

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/skillscentre/academic-integrity/>

<https://libguides.ucc.ie/academicintegrity/referencing>

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/research/support/integrity/epigeumonlineresearchintegritytraining/>

UCC is an active member of the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN), established by the QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland) in November 2019. In May 2022, the Research Support Officer for the SATLE 2020 Academic Integrity Project transitioned to the role of Academic Integrity Education Officer, based in the UCC Skills Centre and funded for three years through SATLE 2022 funding. A counterpart role, Academic Integrity Assessment Officer, based in Student Records and Exams, will be responsible for putting in place a coherent framework of strong policies, standard processes and clear communication to ensure a consistent approach in identifying, penalising and recording academic misconduct; this role is due to commence in September 2023.

The Academic Integrity Education Officer represents UCC in the NAIN along with a representative from the Academic Council Learning & Teaching Committee, the Head of Student Records & Exams and the Student Union Education Officer. Notes from NAIN masterclasses and NAIN academic integrity updates are regularly shared with the Registrar, Vice President of Learning and Teaching, the staff Academic Integrity Champion Network (two representatives from each of the four colleges, Adult Continuing Education, and Student Engagement) and relevant committees (Teaching & Learning) as well as integrated into resources for both staff and students. The Academic Integrity Education Officer also reports contract cheating providers and their targeting of UCC students and staff to QQI and is a member of the NAIN Working Group 5: Capacity Building & Professional Development.

During Academic Year 22/23 new academic integrity resources were made available at UCC and several related sessions and activities were carried out as part of the Academic Integrity Project. These all aim to raise awareness of academic integrity and provide educational opportunities and support in this area. They include:

- Academic Integrity Awareness training for all Skills Centre tutors and for all Academic Class Reps in collaboration with the Student Union Education Officer (approx. 250 students trained).
- Academic Integrity Workshop for students available and delivered through the Skills Centre and by request to specific cohorts. This informs students about the fundamental values of academic integrity, separating this from academic misconduct, and then goes on to cover the various forms of misconduct, raising awareness of particular risks of contract cheating and file-sharing.
- During National Academic Integrity Week (Oct. 17-22) students engaged with academic integrity through a variety of methods. A social media campaign of 79 posts across 3 platforms (impressions/reach: 14,949, engagements: 438) gave information about the fundamental values, related skills and risks of file-sharing/contract cheating. Pop-up stands were set up across campus each day of the week where student Academic Integrity Champions engaged their peers (approx. 1000) in conversations around

academic integrity and supports available at the Skills Centre. Discussion prompts from the Academic Integrity Wheel (spin to land on a word related to academic integrity) were used to increase engagement. Finally, several events took place across the week including a full programme of skills sessions, a joint Academic Integrity workshop with Koç University as part of a UNIC collaboration, and Academic Integrity Bingo.

- An [Academic Integrity Symposium](#) for Staff with a keynote address from Professor Cath Ellis (UNSW, Sydney) on *Courageous Conversations as part of a Restorative Justice and Responsive Regulation Approach to Academic Integrity*. The Symposium also marked the launch of the “Fostering Academic Integrity in Learning and Teaching” Digital Badge for staff and included a panel discussion with contributors to this course.
- The [Fostering Academic Integrity in Learning and Teaching Digital Badge](#) was made available for Staff from 20/10/22. This short course, with approx. 25 hours of learning content supports staff to: identify the core principles of academic integrity; describe key points of engagement or intervention across the student journey in relation to academic integrity; analyse reports from plagiarism detection software from different disciplinary perspectives; evaluate responses to potential academic misconduct examples based on their understanding of relevant policies and procedures; reflect on their role in fostering a culture of academic integrity in the university. In AY 22/23 there were 84 participants in this course and 17 badges awarded. All staff completing the course are required to identify an intervention in their practice that will foster academic integrity.
- An Academic Integrity and Assessment Design workshop as part of Centre for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning (CIRTL) Seminar Series in response to generative artificial intelligence.
- A Technical Assessment of Respondus LockDown Browser was completed (tested with 155 students and academic staff / instructional designers (Medicine, Pharmacy, Marketing), Disability Support Services, IT/Learning Technologies Unit, Student Union Education Officer) to determine the viability of using this software for in-person invigilated exams, maintaining the integrity of the exam while allowing students to use their own devices (digital exams).
- A [UCC Harvard Referencing Guide](#) was developed and made available to all staff and students as an additional resource to support academic integrity.
- The #LoveYourWork social media campaign in Feb. 2023 raised student awareness of risks of contract cheating services (posts: 32, reach: 6,558, engagements: 261).
- Academic Integrity Video Competition open to all students.
- SATLE 22 funding awarded for the [\(AI\)² - Artificial Intelligence and Academic Integrity](#) project which commenced in April 2023. This students-as-partners project paired students and staff across the four Colleges at UCC to experiment with ChatGPT and assessment in their disciplinary contexts with the aim of developing guidance in the form of a Toolkit for the Ethical use of Generative AI in Learning and Teaching. This project will conclude in AY 23/24.

These activities, resources, and projects aim to develop a shared understanding of academic integrity across the university and to foster an environment that supports it, taking preventative actions against misconduct. Together they offer advice and support for both students and staff in this area that is responsive to ongoing and developing risks (i.e., contract cheating and generative AI).

3.0 QA Improvement and Enhancement Plans for Upcoming Reporting Period

3.1 QA and QE supporting the Achievement of Strategic Objectives

No.	CINNTE recommendations following Institutional Review, March 2023	Planned actions and indicators
1	Recognising the ambition of the new UCC Strategic Plan, the review team recommends that UCC should set sufficient income growth targets which include substantial non-exchequer components. The developing financial model should prioritise 'quick wins' to boost university income, such as the development of high-volume economic-fee-based postgraduate taught programmes informed by market research.	<p>This recommendation is addressed under the University Strategic Pillar 2 Student Success Actions 2.1 & 2.2 and Pillar 3 Global Engagement Action 3.5.</p> <p>This recommendation will be addressed by the Deputy President and Registrar, the Vice President for Learning & Teaching and the Vice President Global.</p>
2	The review team recommends that the university reviews the size of the 'President's Strategic Fund', benchmarks it against other research-intensive universities and adjusts it accordingly.	<p>This will be reviewed under the university budget allocation process.</p> <p>This recommendation will be addressed by the President.</p>
3	The review team recommends that, given the weight attached to the role of the newly appointed Vice President for Global Engagement, UCC should develop an appropriately and strategically resourced Global Strategy which includes a student recruitment plan with specific College and University targets based on sound market research and marketing.	<p>This recommendation is addressed under the University Strategic Plan Pillar 3 Global Engagement actions.</p> <p>This recommendation will be addressed by the President</p>
4	The review team recommends that UCC's strategic goal of increasing the number of postgraduate (particularly PhD) students should be more coherently elaborated (including clearly specified targets,	Thematic Review of Doctoral Student Learning Experience (scheduled for AY 23/24) along with progression of the Research Administration Project

	timelines and implementation mechanisms) and should avoid over-reliance on exchequer funding.	(RAP) will inform and provide the necessary infrastructure to support increases in PhD student numbers. This recommendation will be addressed by Deputy President & Registrar; Vice President Research & Innovation; Dean of Doctoral Studies; Director of Quality Enhancement; Head of Graduate Studies
5	The review team recommends that UCC should undertake careful and robust business planning and granular monitoring guided by clearly-defined KPIs to optimise the implementation of its ambitious industrial engagement strategy.	This recommendation is addressed under University Strategic Plan Pillar 1 Research and Innovation actions (1.5) This recommendation will be addressed by the Vice President for Research and Innovation.
6	The review team recommends that, taking into account proposed changes to governance, the university should update its published governance scheme to clarify accountability and associated decision-making workflows, and further recommends that UCC should develop a system for ongoing monitoring of the implementation of university policies and procedures across the Colleges to identify potential inconsistencies in their application and where appropriate, to remedy these.	This recommendation is addressed in the University Strategic Plan Implementation: Strategic Enablers (Governance, p47) This recommendation will be addressed by the Corporate Secretary/ Deputy President and Registrar
7	The review team recommends the consistent implementation of Workload Models across the university which include provision for research supervision (particularly that of PhD students).	The University has a methodology for Academic Workload Distribution (AWD) (see: https://www.ucc.ie/en/registrar/awdm/). Implementation issues will be addressed at future discussion Heads of School Consultative Forum convened by Deputy President & Registrar.
8	The review team recommends that UCC should address the slow delivery of a career development infrastructure for administrative and	This recommendation is addressed in the University Strategic Plan Pillar 4 Our Staff, Our Culture actions 4.4 & 4.5

	<p>technical staff in order to provide a fit-for-purpose mechanism to ensure equitable and timely recognition and reward for staff.</p>	<p>A Community of Practice (CoP) for School Managers, has been established, with the support of President and Quality Enhancement Committee in response to the dialogue with School Managers during the Institutional Review Site Visit (report p 27). The CoP will provide a forum for enhanced connectivity between School Managers and the exchange and fostering of good practice.</p> <p>This recommendation will be addressed by the Chief People and Culture Officer and the Convenors of School Managers CoP.</p>
9	<p>The review team recommends that UCC should ensure, via the ongoing pilot project and related initiatives, that student satisfaction data is appropriately gathered and factored into the assessment of the quality of modules and programmes across UCC.</p>	<p>The University Student Surveys Office manages the University's engagement with Irish Student Survey, data analysis and internal reporting via Academic Council and across Colleges. The University is increasing its engagement with In-Touch to facilitate programme-based engagement with student data. The University Student Feedback Project piloted module surveys in AY22/23 and a user-focused evaluation of the project (completed September 23) will inform next stages of development.</p> <p>This recommendation will be addressed by the Deputy President & Registrar, Vice-President Learning & Teaching, Director of Quality Enhancement, Quality Enhancement Manager.</p>
10	<p>The review team recommends that UCC should implement mechanisms to promote connection between graduate students in different Schools & Colleges as a means of promoting cross-disciplinary collaboration.</p>	<p>This recommendation is addressed in the University Strategic Plan Pillar 1 Research and Innovation actions (1.3).</p> <p>The post of Dean of Doctoral Studies was established May 2023 and working in conjunction with Deputy President& Registrar, Vice President</p>

		<p>Research and Innovation will take forward development initiatives and policies to support the enhancement of the graduate student experience.</p> <p>This recommendation will be addressed by the Vice President Research and Innovation and the Dean of Doctoral Studies.</p>
11	<p>Given the university's strategic aim to increase postgraduate and international student numbers substantially, the review team recommends that UCC should undertake comprehensive resource planning to ensure that Student Services provision is scalable to meet the increase in demand.</p>	<p>As part of self-evaluation process for periodic Quality Review of Deputy President & Registrar's functional area, the process of SWOT and self-evaluation of Student Services Directorate (2023) along with the outcomes of the review will inform resource planning for 2024/5 onwards.</p> <p>This recommendation will be addressed by the Deputy President & Registrar and the Director of Student Experience.</p>
12	<p>The review team recognises the quality of support services provided to students at UCC but recommends, in support of that, the development of an omni-channel Communication Strategy to optimise student awareness of and engagement with the services available.</p>	<p>This recommendation is addressed in the University Strategic Plan: Strategic Enablers (pp46-47) for communication and operational excellence.</p> <p>This recommendation will be addressed by the Director of Student Services/ Director of Communications.</p>
13	<p>The review team recommends that UCC should introduce formal processes for annual Module- and Programme-Monitoring enabled by the new Curriculum Management IT System.</p>	<p>Implementation of the re-defined Curriculum Management System will enable annualised monitoring approaches for modules and programmes, through embedded quality assurance rules for the approval of updated curricula and additional reporting capability to inform internal monitoring.</p> <p>This recommendation will be addressed via the Curriculum Management Project & Academic Secretary.</p>
14	<p>The review team recommends that UCC should prioritize the development and implementation of comprehensive assessment rubrics (including marking schemes) to ensure equivalence of grading –</p>	<p>University Strategic Plan Pillar 2 Student Success (Action 2.1)</p> <p>Continued work on University Assessment Strategy, inclusive of review and rationalisation of Marks and Standards.</p>

	especially at exit degree award level – between disciplines, Schools and Colleges.	<p>Consultation with the Centre for the Integration of Research, Teaching & Learning (CIRTL) to support the development of assessment rubrics through training and resources.</p> <p>This recommendation will be addressed by the Deputy President & Registrar, Vice President Learning & Teaching and Chair of Academic Development and Standards Committee, Director of CIRTL.</p>
15	The review team recommends that examination papers submitted to External Examiners for review should be accompanied by the cognate sample answers where feasible / appropriate, which is standard practice across the third level sector in Ireland.	<p>Review and revision as appropriate of current policy and procedures for External Examiners, including guidance to Schools. This will be informed by the outcomes of the national policy research project on External Examining (ExPERA) being led by the IUA Quality Directors during 2023/24.</p> <p>This recommendation will be addressed by Academic Board (External Examiners Sub-Committee).</p>
16	The review team recommends that, given the crucial importance of Library & IT services to the quality of the student experience, UCC should strive to protect existing budgetary allocations for these services against competing internal demands, and to continue to lobby for greater exchequer funding support to permit their adequate resourcing.	<p>This recommendation is addressed in University Strategic Plan Pillar 2 Student Success (Action 2.3).</p> <p>Strategic planning for Library of the future underway, led by the University Librarian.</p> <p>This recommendation will be addressed by the University Librarian & Vice-President for Learning & Teaching.</p>
17	The review team recommends that UCC should seek to maximise the value of its significant investment in IT systems and data-capture through the appointment of a Chief Information Officer charged with the development of a Data Strategy for the university to support data-	<p>This recommendation is addressed in the Strategic Plan Strategic Enablers: Digital Capabilities and Data Quality.</p> <p>The development of integrated high quality data resources is underway as an enabler of strategic plan implementation. This will allow the development of real-time data, that is configured to be easily visualised</p>

	<p>driven decision making and quality enhancement at all levels within the university.</p>	<p>and interrogated at various levels of activity. The capability to support this development is incorporated through the functions of the Chief Financial and Operations Officer (CFOO) role. This recommendation will be addressed by the CFOO.</p>
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3.2 Reviews planned for Upcoming Reporting Periods

3.2.1 Reviews planned for Next Reporting Period

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Date of last review
School of Applied Social Studies	October 2023	2012/13
School of the Human Environment	November 2023	2013/14
School of Nursing & Midwifery	January 2024	2012/13
School of Medicine	February 2024	2013/14
Deputy President and Registrar	March 2024	2013/14
School of Public Health	April 2024	First review (new entity)
Office of the Vice-President for Research & Innovation	April 2024	2012/13

3.2.2 Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period

Quality Reviews planned in UCC beyond the next reporting period can be found at the following link: [Quality Review Schedule | University College Cork \(ucc.ie\)](#)

4.0 Additional Themes and Case Studies

Empowering Learners with Universal Design at UCC

At University College Cork (UCC), addressing student diversity is central to our ethos, as evidenced in our strategic plan. Universal Design (UD) is at the heart of this, ensuring an inclusive and equitable educational environment. UD in learning, teaching, and assessment is tailored to meet the diverse abilities and needs of all students who walk through the gates of UCC.

The global trend of increasingly diverse student demographics is evident at UCC. Our strategy is to integrate UD principles university-wide, building on our long history of inclusive practices. Our Strategic Plan, *Securing Our Future (2023–2028)* sets ambitious goals for this, particularly under Goal 2, "*Student Success*," which includes Priority Action 2.5: *Provide a digitally enabled learning and teaching experience, equitable to all, which incorporates Universal Design principles*," highlighting our drive to integrate UD into all facets of learning, teaching, and the broader university experience.

A key initiative in this endeavour is the **Accessibility Allies project** within Inclusive UCC. This project aligns with UD principles and the EU Web Accessibility Directive, ensuring all content on our Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) is accessible. The project aimed to empower staff to deliver personalised learning experiences and enhance learner success by creating inclusive environments and improving digital content accessibility.

We used the software Anthology Ally to evaluate and improve accessibility across Canvas modules. The tool identifies and suggests fixes for content issues, enhancing accessibility.

The Ally rollout involved key phases over 24 months:

1. Pilot with the College of Business and Law: Tested on 18 modules, involving four student interns to help academics, resulting in a 22% increase in content accessibility.
2. Staff Pilot: Nine staff across 23 modules from all academic colleges tested the software, improving accessibility and creating internal advocates.

Now available to over 24,000 students and staff, the project aligns with the EU Web Accessibility Directive, offering flexible learning options and supporting equal access for all UCC students. This initiative is a strategic step in embedding UD in UCC's operations.

In summer 2023, we expanded the initiative across all UCC colleges, involving 18 interns over eight weeks, culminating in a staff showcase with training sessions run by the interns.

Programme Key Features:

1. Student-Centred Approach: Focused on students affected by digital accessibility issues.
2. Efficient Tool Use: Interns used Anthology Ally within Canvas for content assessment and enhancement.
3. Diverse Intern Recruitment: Included interns with disabilities, mature, and international students.
4. Ongoing Feedback and Collaboration: Continuous communication between staff and interns for content improvement.

INCLUSIVE UCC

Accessibility Allies 2023

4,900+

students benefitting from more accessible content in their modules



103

modules remediated by interns over the summer

27%

improvement in overall course accessibility score after intern work (avg.)



80%+

over half the modules now at this score or over

6.1

days average to complete a module



Outcomes

- Enhanced 103 modules, exceeding the 80-module target.
- Achieved a 27% average increase in module accessibility.
- Most modules now have an accessibility score over 80%.
- 62 staff members participated in the intern showcase, which included training led by interns.
- Interns contributed to UCC's new Canvas template, now widely adopted.



Feedback

Positive testimonials from staff and students highlighted effective collaboration and impact.

Prof Louise Crowley (staff) – *“A terrific staff-student partnership on bringing in software that ensures meaningful accessibility for all.”*

Interns felt empowered and valued in their contribution to UCC's student community.

[Hear from the interns on their experience of the internship](#) (2-minute YouTube video)

The Accessibility Allies project represents a significant stride in educational excellence, fundamentally enriching the learning experience at UCC. This initiative, underpinned by cutting-edge technology, has been instrumental in revolutionising our approach to digital learning, ensuring it is inclusive, accessible, and student-centred