

## Title: Inaugural UCC Student Forum

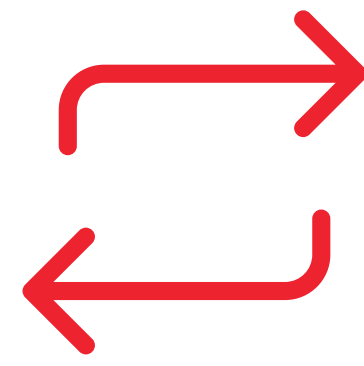
Presenter: Verdi Ahern, Student Experience Office



## Case Study Synopsis

UCC's student population is almost 23,000 and growing. Furthermore, the University has over 2,000 Continuing and Professional Development students, 1,100 Adult and Continuing Education short course students and a Language Centre cohort. As diversity increases it is imperative to create further options for representation.

The Forum brings together 68 students and is an exercise in deliberative and participatory democracy that places students at the heart of important strategic and policy issues facing UCC as a community. It provides a richer understanding of 'high level' queries, rather than one to one interviews or surveys thus leading to more contextualised and developed responses by UCC. Born out of UCC's Strategic Plan, UCC 2022, Action 3.3.3 was to 'Establish a forum that captures the inclusive student voice, representative of our diverse student population'.



## Intended Changes

From the outset of this project the following practices were agreed:

- A 'good practice' model should be the guiding force to ensure a fit for purpose, enduring 'student voice' platform;
- The 'hard to reach, easy to ignore' voices would be actively sought out and included;
- A relational model based on an ethic of care & solidarity with students to ensure best overall outcomes to underpin operations;
- Conceptual frameworks be used that reflect the intellectual capacity of the Forum members to stretch their thinking and scaffold their proposed solutions.



## Key Impacts

### Immediate Impact

1. Delivery of a fully accessible & inclusive Student Forum in line with current operational strategy of promoting an on campus, in person experience.
2. Signposts document delivered to Governing Body, UCC Students & to inform new Strategic Plan.

### Medium Term Impact

3. Evidence that UCC has led out in systematising the use of democratic innovations by developing existing structures, encouraging experimentation and creating new spaces for participation.
4. Facilitation of quality outputs, therefore ensuring the Forum becomes a permanent structure & process, creating a centralised, coherent, 'other' option for representation.
5. UCC acknowledged as the first Irish University to take Student Voice to such an inclusive, embodied and accessible level.



## Additional Information

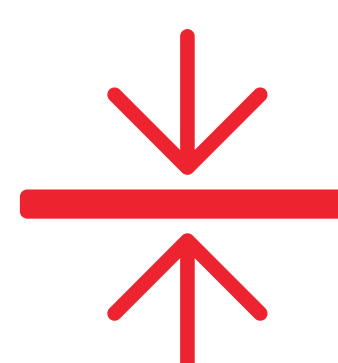
The model chosen for the Student Forum is based on that of the Irish Citizens' Assembly. The main aims are to (a) be inclusive and diverse; (b) Strengthen transparency and integrity in decision making; (c) create a wider mandate for action; (d) champion 'political equality'; (e) incubate democratic skills and enhance public trust in the democratic system and finally, (f) facilitate good decision making.

**Expert Advisory Group:** Art O'Leary, CEO Irish Electoral Commission, Prof. Kieran Keohane (Department of Sociology & Criminology, UCC), Dr Clodagh Harris, (Senior Lecturer in the Department of Government & Politics).

**UCC Working Group:** SU President Asha Woodhouse, Paul Moriarty, Director of Student Experience, Deirdre Kearney, Student Surveys Manager, Stephen O'Riordan, SU Education Officer, Michael O'Halloran, User Services, Computer Centre, Ann-Marie Curtin, Office of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, UCC, Martin Flynn, Access Office, UCC & Verdi Ahern, Student Experience Project Officer & Action Owner.

### Stratified Random Selection/Sortition

- (a) SRS as a sampling technique is preferred because it minimizes selection bias and ensures representation across the entire community.
- (c) In order to ensure equality of participation, an in-house expert, Dr. Liam Weeks, assisted the Working Group with discussion on SRS.



## Area of Alignment

Student Success

