



Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh
University College Cork, Ireland

Securing Our Future

Academic Plan 2026–2028

Contents

Introduction	1
Academic Portfolio & Programme Development	2
Key Principles	3
Our Values	3
Priority Areas	4
a) Widening Access and Diversifying Student Cohorts	5
b) Embedding Inclusion Across our Learning and Assessment	6
c) Enhancing our Innovation and Research Culture	7
d) Strengthening and Developing Curricula and Quality Assurance Systems	8
e) Empowering Academic Excellence and Advancement for Staff	9

Introduction

UCC's Academic Plan is aligned directly with [Securing our Future: UCC's Strategic Plan 2023-28](#) and, in particular, [Goal Two](#) which is focused on Student Success.

The plan centres our students and their experience at its heart and provides a series of targeted actions that enhance the UCC journey and empower students to flourish in an inclusive environment.

At UCC, we envision our students' higher education journey to be transformative and guided by curiosity, creativity, and purpose. Students are encouraged to explore diverse perspectives and through a culture of discovery and innovation, learners are supported to challenge convention, critique orthodoxies, and co-create solutions for a changing world.

Our students will develop their skills and expertise in a world-leading teaching and research environment that nurtures their academic abilities and cultivates a culture of excellence.

Grounded in this shared commitment to excellence, UCC's Academic Plan will promote an environment of inclusion, equity and respect, acknowledging that there are structural barriers faced by our students including the lack of adequate and affordable accommodation and recognising that commuting is a reality for many of our students.



For our staff, UCC will cultivate an environment rich with opportunities for skills development and advancement across all areas of their roles.

Acknowledging that significant barriers also exist, the Academic Plan ensures that career development takes account of how the competing priorities of research, teaching and administration continue to put pressure on our academic staff at different levels.

[Securing our Future: UCC's Strategic Plan 2023-28](#) provides a clear roadmap of UCC's immediate future trajectory. The Academic Plan works alongside the Global Engagement Plan and the People and Culture Plan, setting out the direction for the size, shape, and sustainability of UCC's academic endeavour. It establishes parameters for programme viability, enrolment mix, portfolio alignment, and student staff ratios, ensuring that

academic planning decisions are informed by evidence, institutional priorities, and are financially sustainable.

The Academic Plan builds on the success of recent Change Programmes in relation to Data and Software, for example the introduction of new systems Pure, Curriculum Inventory Management (CIM) and Graduate Education Manager (GEM). It is articulated in response to a range of external forces including the [Programme for Government 2025: Securing Ireland's Future](#) and the [National Skills Bulletins](#) which continue to be key drivers nationally in terms of the development and consolidation of our programme portfolios.



Academic Portfolio & Programme Development

UCC's academic portfolio is key to delivering on the University's mission as a research-intensive institution and on the ambitions set out in [UCC Futures](#). [UCC](#) is committed to maintaining a comprehensive and diverse academic portfolio serving global, national and regional communities.

Our focus will be on ensuring a student mix enrolled on a diverse range of degree offerings that are academically and financially sustainable. It is envisaged that the overall student body in UCC will remain stable, with no planned growth in student numbers and a commitment to a minimum target of 70:30 split of undergraduate and postgraduate students, We will continue to internationalise our student body with a target of 25% of students, with a particular focus on Undergraduate opportunities.

Any new programme will be of strategic importance and be resourced sufficiently in alignment with the Strategic Plan. At postgraduate levels, we will centre our efforts on increasing our intake of doctoral students, with a target to reach an annual intake of 383 students by 2028 in accordance with the Strategic Plan.

Each [UCC Futures](#) [UCC](#) area will develop at least one signature taught postgraduate programme, either through the evolution of existing offerings or the development of new, interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary degree programmes which will further strengthen the research excellence in those domains.

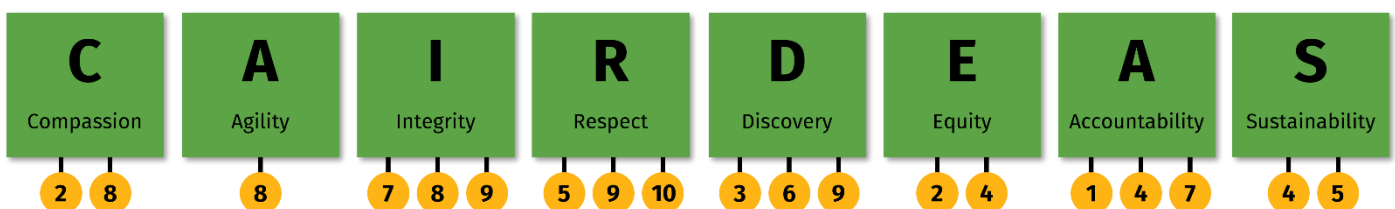
Continuous portfolio planning and review will ensure that our degrees remain distinctive, rooted in research excellence, and responsive to emerging national and international societal, environmental, and technological opportunities.

Key Principles

- 1 Continuing to ensure we achieve Academic Excellence across all programmes, rooted in world-leading research.
- 2 Embedding our commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion and compassion.
- 3 Encouraging new and creative approaches to teaching, research, innovation and problem-solving.
- 4 Supporting inclusion at all levels within student experience. admissions, assessment and teaching methods.
- 5 Creating and sustaining an inclusive environment and culture to enable transformative research and learning for the enrichment of society and stewardship of our planet.
- 6 Enhancing interdisciplinary learning and emerging fields of study in programmes led by outstanding researchers.
- 7 Promoting responsible and innovative research practices and ethical decision-making in the academic community.
- 8 Developing research-based learning within an inclusive and sustainable learning environment.
- 9 Deepening and widening our local, national and global community partnerships.
- 10 Ensuring our academic mission champions global citizenship to promote mutual understanding.

Our Values

Our values are represented in the mnemonic **CAIRDEAS**, the Irish for ‘friendship’, as they underpin our relationships and engagement with the local and global UCC community and all our partners. Each principle takes inspiration from our values.





Priority Areas

To drive maximum impact, the following Priority Areas have been identified:

- a** Widening Access and Diversifying Student Cohorts
- b** Embedding Inclusion Across our Learning and Assessment
- c** Enhancing our Innovation and Research Culture
- d** Strengthening and Developing Curricula and Quality Assurance Systems
- e** Empowering Academic Excellence and Advancement for Staff

Widening Access and Diversifying Student Cohorts

Optimising access into our degree programmes through targeted expansion and diversification of our student cohorts involves innovating the ways in which we deliver our programmes.

Diversifying the flow of cultures and nationalities that make up our research and learning spaces will enhance our globally focused curriculum and strengthen the development of intercultural communication skills to prepare our students to be global citizens of the future.

STRATEGIC PLAN	ACADEMIC PLAN PRIORITY ACTIONS
<p>2.1 Implement an academic plan to further embed the Connected Curriculum and lifelong learning, enabling educational and professional success for all students.</p>	<p>Advance development of Apprenticeship models for undergraduate and postgraduate offerings to meet societal needs.</p> <p>Collaborate with Further Education (FE) partners to deliver tertiary offerings including the development of Tertiary Degrees in relevant areas of strategic importance, a toolkit to help academic units, and leadership of research into opportunities for enhancing tertiary education at national level.</p> <p>Strengthen Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) as a pathway into our programmes at all levels.</p> <p>Commit to PATH (Programme for Access to Higher Education) projects dedicated to increasing participation by under-represented groups in higher education and develop initiatives to enhance student experience.</p>
<p>3.2 Significantly improve UCC's external reputation and brand impact, including the acceleration of UCC's improved position in the global university rankings.</p>	<p><i>An Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn a thuilleadh ar fud an champais faoi réir ag ár gcuid dualgas in Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (Leasú), 2021.</i></p> <p>Strengthen promotion of the Irish language in alignment with our responsibilities under the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021 ↗</p>
<p>3.3 Internationalise our curriculum and our research through strategic partnerships and mobility.</p>	<p>Enhance internationalisation of our curriculum through increased mobility and participation in targeted initiatives to widen students' exposure to a globally informed curriculum.</p>
<p>3.4 Promote greater diversity among our staff and students in line with our values, including through UCC's role as a University of Sanctuary.</p>	<p>Foster greater diversity among our students through the diversification of our international student cohorts at Undergraduate and Postgraduate level in line with our University of Sanctuary values.</p> <p>Widen diversity amongst our staff via the Global talent programme and wider recruitment processes.</p>

b

Embedding Inclusion Across our Learning and Assessment

In line with our mission as a university to create and sustain an inclusive environment and culture, we will prioritise projects that embed these core principles across our research, teaching and learning.

STRATEGIC PLAN	ACADEMIC PLAN PRIORITY ACTIONS
<p>2.1 Implement an academic plan to further embed the Connected Curriculum and lifelong learning, enabling educational and professional success for all students.</p>	<p>Deepen Connected Curriculum priorities through mapping of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Graduate Attributes into the Curriculum Inventory Management system, recognising that a connected university offers enhanced synergy between teaching, research and innovation.</p> <p>Streamline Marks and Standards for Undergraduate and Postgraduate programmes and develop Assessment Policy and Guidelines for staff and students in partnership with our student body.</p> <p>Establish Lifelong learning UCC to deliver greater coherence and to integrate the provision of flexible learning meet societal, regional and national development goals for all students.</p>
<p>2.3 Develop and provide excellent equipment, facilities, services and accommodation.</p>	<p>Develop a timetabling model that results in an enhanced on-campus learning experience for our students in state-of-the-art facilities, resulting from the Space Utilisation review and the Space Audit of the Hub.</p>
<p>2.4 Support student success, health and wellbeing, informed by the student voice.</p>	<p>Roll-out of Jumpstart Your Success: Everyday Matters.</p>
<p>2.5 Provide a digitally enabled learning and teaching experience, equitable to all, which incorporates Universal Design principles.</p>	<p>Adopt and establish an oversight group and implementation plan to embed the Altitude Charter: The National Charter for Universal Design in Tertiary Education, with regard to the areas of 1) Learning, Teaching and Assessment, 2) Supports, Services and Social Engagement, 3) Physical Environment and 4) Digital Environment.</p> <p>Roll out Universal Design (UD) frameworks through all new programmes and modules in partnership with our students.</p> <p>Embed Universal Design (UD) internship programmes for students to recognise value of partnership between academic staff and our student body.</p> <p>Revise student policies in line with the Athena Swan Silver Action Plan, recognising the specific needs of different cohorts and supporting academic and extra-curricular success for all UCC students.</p>



Enhancing our Innovation and Research Culture

We are committed to creating an innovation research culture underpinned by an ethos of creativity and discovery as part of our mission to connect and empower people to create knowledge that shapes a sustainable and inclusive world.

STRATEGIC PLAN	ACADEMIC PLAN PRIORITY ACTIONS
<p>1.3 Increase PhD enrolment numbers, enhance research student experience, embed research and innovation into our curriculum.</p>	<p>Establish a Doctoral Institute serving all Postgraduate research students.</p> <p>Develop doctoral training and employment-based PhD cohorts.</p> <p>Develop innovative new programmes in areas of emerging importance informed by ground-breaking research, including Generative AI.</p>
<p>1.4 Transform UCC’s research culture through the implementation of engaged research and open research, underpinned by academic integrity, and ethical and responsible practice.</p>	<p>Expand capacity for Health and Social Care programmes and other areas of national and global strategic priority.</p> <p>Position UCC as the national leader under the Public Service and EU Career Pathways Initiative.</p>
<p>2.1 Implement an academic plan to further embed the Connected Curriculum and lifelong learning, enabling educational and professional success for all students</p>	<p>Enhance Undergraduate involvement in research to cultivate next generation of knowledge transformation through Undergraduate research internships and other initiatives.</p>
<p>2.2 Be the university of choice for postgraduate study in signature areas of excellence and develop pathways to widen access into programmes at all levels.</p>	<p>Map postgraduate programme portfolio against academic priorities including UCC Futures and national and global objectives to identify opportunities for Signature programmes.</p> <p>Develop robust policy and action plans to meet challenges of Generative AI including a Literacy Action Plan and the embedding of training on Academic Integrity and ethical use of Gen AI into Undergraduate programmes.</p> <p>Strengthen Work-Integrated-Learning (WIL) frameworks and integrate WIL into all Undergraduate programmes.</p>
<p>3.4 Promote greater diversity among our staff and students in line with our values, including through UCC’s role as a University of Sanctuary.</p>	<p>Identify opportunities for attracting global talent through targeted government and other initiatives in all areas.</p>



d

Strengthening and Developing Curricula and Quality Assurance Systems

Our plan prioritises a student-centred, inclusive and digitally enhanced learning environment underpinned by a Connected Curriculum supported by strong quality assurance mechanisms to ensure an outstanding student experience:

STRATEGIC PLAN	ACADEMIC PLAN PRIORITY ACTIONS
<p>2.1 Implement an academic plan to further embed the Connected Curriculum and lifelong learning, enabling educational and professional success for all students</p>	<p>Establish a 5-year rolling Programmatic Review process that is aligned with and supports the Quality Review Processes of UCC.</p> <p>Reintroduce module-level surveys across all Undergraduate and taught Postgraduate programmes.</p> <p>Develop models to provide further flexibility to student experience including the development of credit accumulation framework to further enable part-time learning opportunities.</p>
<p>2.3 Develop and provide excellent equipment, facilities, services and accommodation.</p>	<p>Implement a digital project to enhance the student experience and ensure adequate IT systems and supports are in place for online provision of key support services across campus in line with our Digital Education and Digital Master Plans.</p>
<p>3.2 Significantly improve UCC's external reputation and brand impact, including the acceleration of UCC's improved position in the global university rankings.</p>	<p>Review and publish an enrolment planning model that will ensure programme sustainability in line with our Global Engagement Plan.</p> <p>Explore opportunities for the expansion of Transnational Education (TNE) degrees in line with our Global Engagement Plan.</p>



e

Empowering Academic Excellence and Advancement for Staff

UCC’s academic staff are central to the quality of our teaching, research, and engagement that define our University’s mission. Strategic workforce planning will ensure that staff development and workload are aligned with our institutional and national priorities.

The Plan prioritises transparent and equitable pathways for career progression so that every member of academic staff has access to opportunities and recognition and where career development frameworks and structured programmes will support all categories of staff on their career journey.

STRATEGIC PLAN	ACADEMIC PLAN PRIORITY ACTIONS
<p>4.2 Embed a culture of equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging in UCC, embracing our differences as a key institutional strength.</p>	<p>Review and enhance the distribution of an Academic Workload model that aligns with our Promotional Criteria and will inform future data driven Athena Swan applications.</p>
<p>4.3 Implement a Future of Work model, which is driven by a culture of high-performance, professional development, excellence and effective communications.</p>	<p>Continue to provide Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and range of development programmes in pedagogy and digital education.</p> <p>Provide opportunities for all staff to be upskilled in an Artificial Intelligence enabled world.</p>
<p>4.4 Establish career development frameworks and structured programmes to support all categories of staff on their career journey.</p>	<p>Design career development frameworks and opportunities to support all categories of academic staff throughout their career trajectory at UCC.</p>



UCC

Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh
University College Cork, Ireland