

# UCC EDI Annual Report 2024/25

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## Executive Summary

University College Cork’s commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is grounded in a robust global, national and institutional framework. International human rights instruments—including the UN Sustainable Development Goals (especially SDG 5 and SDG 10), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Ireland’s 1922 Constitution—affirm equality as a fundamental principle. These foundations guide UCC’s internal governance structures, including College-level EDI Committees and four specialist Working Groups focused on Gender/Athena Swan, Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment, Race Equality and LGBT+, with a Disability and Neurodiversity Working Group to follow.

UCC maintains strong internal oversight of EDI. Multiple governance bodies—including the Governing Authority People and Culture Sub-committee, the Strategic Plan Implementation ULT Sub-committee and the EDI ULT Sub-committee—receive regular progress updates. The Director of EDI reports monthly to the Deputy President and

Registrar, with additional reporting through the President's Report, the institutional Annual Report and the annual EDI Report.

The *Belonging at UCC: Strategic Framework for EDI* (2024), aligned with *Securing Our Future: UCC Strategic Plan 2023–2028*, sets out strategic actions to strengthen culture, transparency, inclusive teaching, research and institutional systems. UCC also meets extensive external reporting obligations, including HEA reporting, Athena Swan accreditation and disability reporting, exceeding the 6% statutory employment target for staff with disabilities. UCC's alignment with national legislation and fulfilment of the Public Sector Duty further reinforce its institutional responsibilities. Notably, the University has reduced its Gender Pay Gap significantly since 2022, reflecting progress driven by Athena Swan-aligned actions.

Since 2022, UCC's EDI work has been shaped by extensive consultation—whole-community surveys involving over 3,000 staff and students, focus groups, town halls and Students' Union engagement. These consultations informed major strategic developments, including the *Belonging at UCC* framework and the Athena Swan Action Plan 2024–2029, as well as forthcoming Race Equality and LGBT+ Action Plans.

Together, these mechanisms ensure UCC's EDI priorities are evidence-based, community-informed and aligned with best practice.

Objective 1 focuses on embedding EDI across UCC's core systems, governance and quality frameworks. Since 2024, significant progress has been achieved, including establishing the EDI University Leadership Team Sub-committee to oversee the EDI Framework 2025–2028 and appointing Vice Deans for EDI in two Colleges. In 2025, UCC secured its first Silver Athena Swan institutional award, alongside new departmental awards. EDI is now integrated into the revised Quality Review methodology and included in Internal Audit processes. Digital tools such as MicroStrategy reports, Data Hub resources, Power BI dashboards and the ESS Diversity Tool have expanded EDI data monitoring, creating a strong foundation for long-term, evidence-based transformation.

Objective 2 strengthens UCC's culture of respect, equity and inclusion through key initiatives. The EDI Unit has completed benchmarking and is drafting a new EDI Statement, while staff progression is supported through the Women's Leaders' Initiative, the Contribution and Growth PDRS, and enhanced promotion and recruitment processes. A Dignity and Respect Support Hub and the HEA ESVH Action Plan are advancing. UCC will launch its first Race Equality Action Plan in 2026, alongside an Irish Sign Language Policy and ongoing university-wide consultations and recognition initiatives.

Objective 3 strengthens staff and student success by advancing inclusive teaching, learning and working practices. UCC is improving digital accessibility through Anthology Ally and the Accessible VLE template, while developing the next-generation Contribution & Growth PDRS and implementing a comprehensive Work Life Balance Framework. Significant new family-friendly and wellbeing policies support staff, alongside resources for managers and hourly workers. UCC's University of Sanctuary work was further enhanced through a dedicated Head of Sanctuary and continued supports for refugee students.

Objective 4 advances inclusive education, research and scholarship across UCC. Key initiatives include the launch of the first EDI micro-credential and new Universal Design digital badges, expanding staff capability in inclusive teaching and student support.

Inclusive pedagogy is strengthened through Irish Sign Language classes, an EDI Summer School, Race Equality and Bystander training, and updated teaching programmes. Work also progressed on a First Year Assessment Review, digital accessibility development, and EDI-focused postgraduate research, with future plans for an EDI Centre of Excellence and Early Career Grants Scheme.

UCC delivered a wide range of EDI engagement initiatives in 2024–2025, strengthening a culture of respect and belonging. Orientation included Bystander ESVH sessions and a Students' Union Consent Wall. Cultural events such as *Mycelial*, National Coming Out Day celebrations, and the launch of the Staff Carers' Network deepened visibility and inclusion. Class Reps received ESVH training, and UCC showcased sectoral leadership at Equitas 2025. During Cork Pride, the President's Pride Lunch featured a Living Pride Quilt symbolising unity and progress.

UCC demonstrated strong institution-wide commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion through extensive initiatives across units and community partnerships. Key activity included disability-inclusive recruitment training, expanded id+ inclusive assessment workshops, and major Sanctuary initiatives such as Refugee Week and EU-Passworld sponsorship. The Glucksman advanced community inclusion through creative collaborations, while campus engagement was strengthened through high-profile events including Sally Hayden's talk, Inclusive Dance micro-credentials, Bystander Intervention Week, and a wide programme for International Women's Day 2025.

In 2024/25, the UCC Students' Union and 116 societies delivered over 2,000 inclusive events, from large concerts to wellbeing activities. Societies achieved major national and international awards, undertook global trips, and led advocacy initiatives. Inclusive practice was strengthened through initiatives such as a sensory-friendly film screening.

## Context for our work

### Overarching Context

Globally, equality is embedded in the UN's 17 [Sustainable Development Goals](#), particularly in Goal 5, Gender Equality (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls), and Goal 10, Reduced Inequalities (Reduce inequality within and among countries). The SDGs were preceded by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states: "Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world ...", echoing the reference to the "dignity and freedom of the individual", which in turn was preceded by the 1922 Constitution of the Irish Free State which in Article 3 refers to "Every person, without distinction of sex ...". These documents form the basis of the work done here.

### Irish Legislative Framework

The university engages with EDI under a number of different legislative instruments.

Under the [Universities Act 1997](#), S36 requires that the university develop and adopt an Equality Policy, while the [Higher Education Authority Act 2022](#) requires the development of an Equality Statement.

[The Employment Equality Acts 1998–2015](#) seek to do the following:

- promote equality
- prohibit discrimination across nine grounds
- prohibit sexual harassment and harassment across nine grounds
- prohibit victimisation
- require reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities in relation to access, participation and training in employment
- allow positive action measures to ensure full equality in practice across nine grounds.

The Acts also implement the following EU Directives: [The Framework Directive 2000](#), [the Gender Recast Directive 2006](#), and [the Race Directive 2025](#).

[The Equal Status Acts 2000-2018](#) have similar requirements and apply to people buying and selling goods and services, accommodation, and education. They also set out the Equal Status Grounds (also known as the Grounds or the nine grounds):

- Age
- Civil Status
- Disability
- Family Status
- Gender
- Race
- Religion
- Sexual Orientation
- Traveller Community (member of)

Also: Housing Assistance Ground and Victimisation Ground. UCC engages with socio-economic necessity under the HAP Ground.

## Public Sector Duty - What is it? Our responsibilities

[Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission \(IHREC\) Act 2014](#) sets out the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty (also known as The Duty or the Public Sector Duty, or PSD). It requires a public sector body to, in the performance of its functions, to have regard to the need to (A) eliminate discrimination, (b) promote equality of opportunity and treatment of its staff and the persons to whom it provides its services and (c) protect the human rights of its members, staff and the persons to whom it provides its services. To achieve this, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (known as the IHREC) set out the following steps:

1. Assess - Carry out an assessment of equality and human rights issues, relevant to the functions of the public body.
1. Address- Identify the actions/policies/plans the public body propose to take to address the equality and human rights issues identify during the assess step.
2. Report – Report on progress made under the Assess and Address steps in your organisation’s annual report in a manner that is accessible to the public.

How UCC has engaged with this process and implemented these steps will be laid out in [Address](#) below.

## EDI Governance in UCC

EDI is a strategic priority for UCC. Between 2014 and 2024, the UCC Equality Committee, chaired by a member of the Governing Authority, oversaw EDI in UCC. Following a comprehensive governance review of EDI in 2022-23, new EDI governance was established, with the a) People & Culture Forum and b) Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB) Sub-Committee of ULT were established in 2024 to advise on all matters relating to People and Culture and EDIB.

The purpose of the EDIB Sub-Committee of ULT is to lead, promote and advance EDI across the university community and implement the *Belonging at UCC: A Strategic Framework & Action Plan for EDI 2025-28* (launched November 2024). This Committee is chaired by the Director of EDI. Membership includes key decision makers from functional areas and representatives from key staff and student EDI groups across the university. The Committee has five permanent sub-committees/working groups: a) Athena SWAN SAT; b) Ending Sexual Harassment and Violence; c) Race Equality; d) Disability & Neurodiversity; and e) LGBT+.

The Director of EDI (within the remit of the Office of the Deputy President and Registrar) is responsible for leading and working together with the university community to develop and implement the EDI Framework and Action Plan across the university. The EDI Unit team is responsible for supporting the operations and delivery of the university's EDI Framework in partnership with key stakeholders.

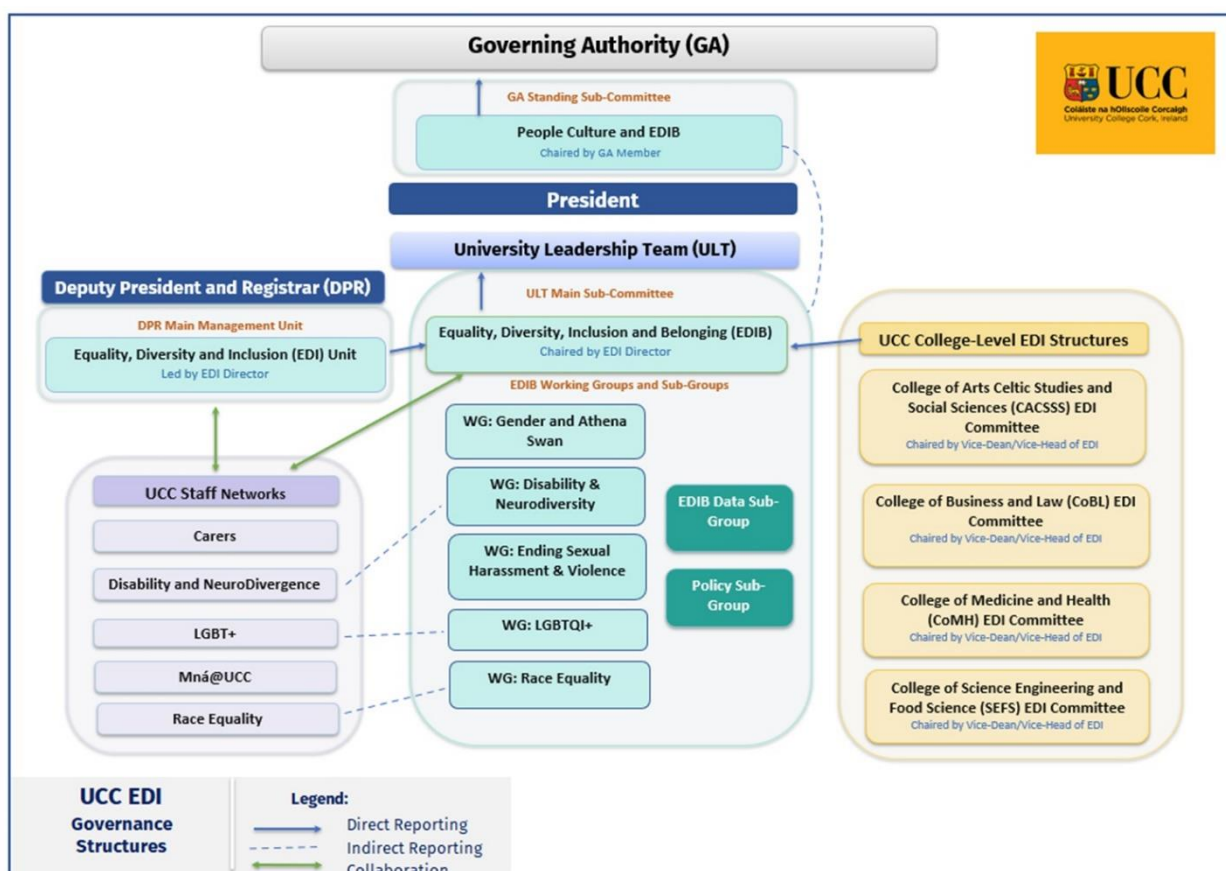


Figure 1: EDI Governance structure in UCC

Each of the four Colleges have an EDI Committee (details here: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/edi/governance/college-edi/>), each of which report into the EDIB ULT Sub-committee.

There are four EDI Working groups: 1) Gender and Athena Swan 2) Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment (ESVH), 3) Race Equality Action Plan and 4 LGBT+ Action Plan. The Disability and Neurodiversity WG is scheduled for development in 2026. The Policy sub-group and the Data sub-group meet quarterly and report into the EDIB ULT SC.

## Strategic Plans and Frameworks

### Belonging at UCC: Strategic Framework for EDI

UCC's first EDI Framework and Action Plan, launched in 2024, aligns with [Securing Our Future: UCC Strategic Plan 2023-2028](#) and underpins our university's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). It sets out clear objectives and actions to realise EDI here at UCC over the next four years. This Framework and Action Plan was informed by a comprehensive Values and Culture/ EDI consultation process which took place in 2022 and again in 2024 (more details below). The UCC community and its constituent partners who participated in this consultation demanded greater focus on EDI and we listened. As such, this Framework seeks to address responses around the need for culture change; increased transparency; embedding EDI in teaching, learning and research; transformation of our university systems; and a broadening of our institutional commitment to EDI to encompass more fully all equality grounds. (See [Assess](#) below.)

## Reporting Obligations

### External Reporting

HEIs have separate reporting obligations beyond the PSD.

Under the HEA's [Performance Agreement 2024-2028](#), Performance Objective 7 requires the university "To demonstrate substantive progress on enhancing gender equality within the institution through achieving an institutional Silver Athena Swan Ireland award and five new unit/departmental Bronze awards, and to address barriers that have inhibited engagement to date."

Annually, the university reports to the HEA on:

*Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (including both Gender and Race Equality):*

In 2022, the HEA undertook a Second National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions. The Expert Group findings and recommendations were published in [the Report of the Expert Group: 2<sup>nd</sup> HEA National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions](#) in November 2022. In 2021, the HEA Centre of Excellence for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion ran the first National Race Equality Survey of all HEIs, the findings of same were publishing in October 2021 in the report [Race Equality in the Irish Higher Education Sector](#). The [Race Equality Implementation Plan for Higher Education Institutions, 2022-2024](#) was launched by the HEA in September 2022. The purpose of this report is to

capture updates on progress against the recommendations that emerged from the 2nd Review and the HEI actions contained in the *Race Equality Implementation Plan*. [Report-of-the-Expert-Group-ESVH-Framework-Review-2025.pdf](#)

### *Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment:*

*Safe, Respectful, Supportive and Positive: Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish Higher Education Institutions*, [Layout 1](#), commonly referred to as the ‘Framework for Consent in Higher Education’ or ‘ESVH Framework’, was published by the Government in April 2019. Since then, HEIs have submitted three progress reports to the HEA, most recently in February 2024.

The structure of this report aligned with the 15 outcomes in the Framework, which fall under the following pillars or key outcome headings:

- Effective structures in place
- Recording of incidents
- Institutional policies
- Targeted initiatives
- Governance Structures

The HEA’s [Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Higher Education Institutions Implementation Plan 2022-2024](#) was published in October 2022, followed in 2025 by the [Report of the Expert Group: Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment Framework](#), endorsed by UCC.

### *HEI Staff Profiles by Gender and Ethnicity and EDI Progress Reports:*

The HEA Centre for Excellence in EDI requires all HEIs reporting to the authority to return two separate reports annually:

- **“HEI Staff Profiles by gender and Ethnicity”** - a statistical summary of all staff profiles by gender and ethnicity as recorded on the 31st of December each reporting year. A composition of the decision-making bodies (e.g., Governing Authority) and gender equality monitoring in academic recruitment and all contracts is also requested. The most recent data available is for 31/12/2024 and presented in Tables 1, 2 and 3. In December 2024, all key decision-making bodies (i.e., AC, GA, ULT) had gender balance (i.e. a minimum of 40% of either female or male gender). No change from December 2023.

**Table 1.** Headcount and Gender Breakdown of UCC Staff, and Composition of Decision-Making Bodies (31/12/2024).

31/12/2024	Headcount	%F	%M
Academic Council	330	40%	60%
Governing Authority	19	42%	58%
University Leadership Team	15	47%	53%
ALL STAFF	3636	58%	42%
All Academic Staff	1003	48%	52%

All Professional, Support and Managerial Staff	1385	68%	32%
All Research Staff	1248	52%	48%

**Table 2.** Headcount and Gender Breakdown of Academic Appointments (31/12/2024).

Academic Appointments- 2024	F	M	%F	%M
Professor- Applicants	7	31	18%	82%
Professor- Appointed	2	1	67%	33%
Professor Scale 2 - Applicants	25	61	29%	71%
Professor Scale 2 - Appointed	0	5	0%	100%
SL - Applicants	49	96	34%	66%
SL- Appointed	18	14	56%	44%
Lecturer (BB/AB) - Applicants	514	556	48%	52%
Lecturer (BB/AB) - Appointed	17	16	48%	52%

Academic appointment figures (Table x) include recruitment and promotion calls. Application numbers and appointments at the Lecturer (Below Bar and Above Bar) grade are gender balanced (48%F/52%M); the same is true for appointments at the Senior Lecturer Grade. In all other cases, the applications and appointment rates are not balanced: there are considerably more male applicants for Professor (82%M), Professor Scale 2 (71%M) and Senior Lecturer (66%M) posts. The same was true in the December 2023 report for Professor (72% of applicants). 40% of female applicants for Professor Scale 2 posts were reported in 2023, versus 75% of female appointments. Both application (40%F) and appointment (47%F) rates for SL posts were balanced in 2023. Applicants (43%F) and appointees (49%F) for all Lecturer-graded posts were gender-balanced in 2023.

**Table 3.** Headcount and Gender Breakdown of Academic Appointments (31/12/2024).

Core Staff Contracts - 2024	F	M	%F	%M	Total
Permanent FT	1036	844	55%	45%	1880
Permanent PT	226	41	85%	15%	267
Temporary FT	114	52	69%	31%	166
Temporary PT	52	23	69%	31%	75
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1428</b>	<b>960</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>2388</b>
Non-Core Staff Contracts - 2024	F	M	%F	%M	Total
Permanent FT	133	151	47%	53%	284
Permanent PT	42	10	81%	19%	52
Temporary FT	426	366	54%	46%	792
Temporary PT	94	26	78%	22%	120
<b>Total:</b>	<b>695</b>	<b>553</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>1248</b>

Out of 3636 contracts in December 2024, 34% are for Non-Core staff (same as in 2023), and 32% are temporary (27% in 2023). 32% of females (n=686) and 31% of males (n=476) had

temporary contracts. Most part-time contracts were issued to female staff (85%F for permanent and 69% for temporary core part-time; and 81%F for permanent and 78% for temporary non-core part-time contracts), [Table x](#).

- **HEI EDI Progress Report – a narrative progress update**

This report presents narrative updates on the university's annual progress and impact across the recommendations that emerged from the *2nd Review* (i.e., organisational culture, available EDI training, implementation of gender action plans, support for staff with caring responsibilities, engagement of men in the process of change, intersectionality, eradication of SVH, equality monitoring in career development, data capture and reporting), and the HEI actions contained in the *Race Equality Implementation Plan* (i.e., Anti-Racism Principles, institutional Race Equality Action Plan, equality data, Race Equality Training, and transparent Race Equality Policies).

#### *Part 5 of the Disability Act 2005:*

Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) and the National Disability Authority (NDA) request annual returns

The statutory minimum target of employees with disabilities is 6%. In 2024, the percentage of employees who reported a disability (using the definition of disability as defined in the "Disability Act" 2005) was 7.5%. This statistic is calculated by comparing the available disclosure with the actual 2024 staff headcount. The available disclosure from the 2024 EDI Staff Survey indicates 18% (N=270 of 1516), with 42.2% of staff completing this specific question.

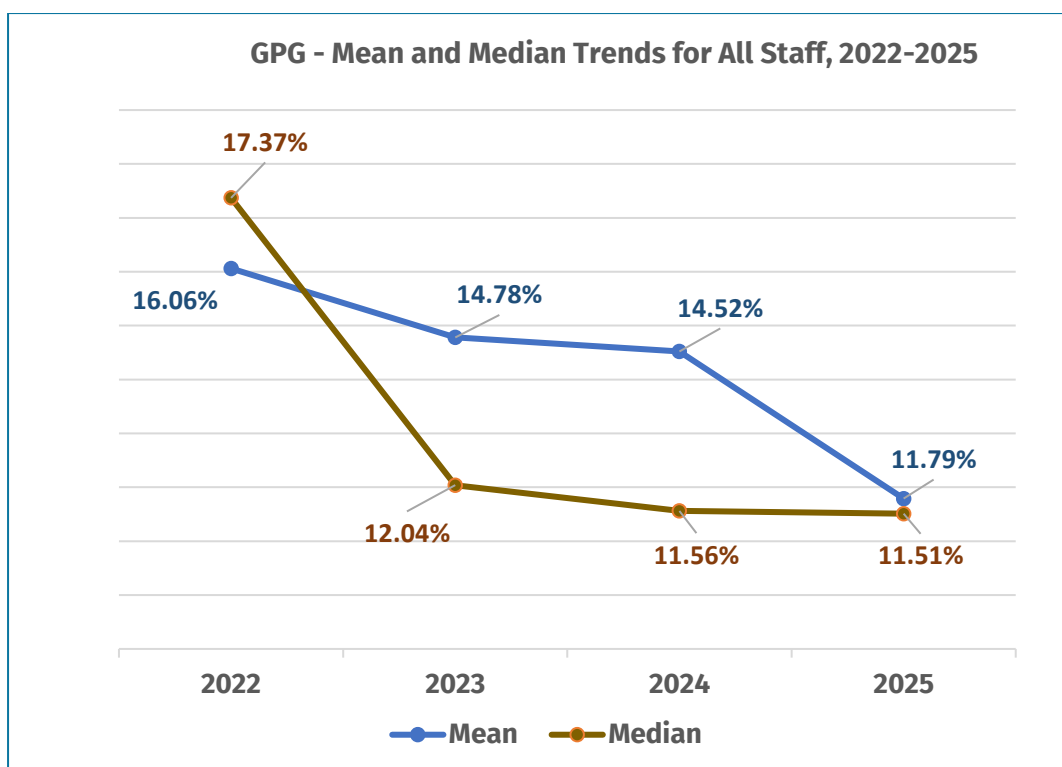
Key statutory requirements for staff include support with reasonable accommodations, inclusive policy and practice, awareness raising and education and accessible communications.

UCC is compliant regarding headcount and the suite of reasonable accommodations, and staff report (Values and Culture/EDI Staff Survey 2024). Work is ongoing to progress IT, the built environment, and onboarding processes. This is being addressed through actions set out in the [EDI Framework 2025-28](#) and the recently launched [People and Culture Plan](#).

The most recent reports, centred on the academic year 2023-24, were submitted in 2025.

#### *Gender Pay Gap*

UCC has reported annually on its Gender Pay Gap since 2022. The gender pay gap is the difference in average hourly earnings between women and men within an organisation. It looks at the pay of all employees—regardless of role, grade, contract type, or working hours. It compares the pay of all working men and women, not just those in similar jobs, with similar working patterns, or with similar competencies, qualifications, or experience. This is different from equal pay. Equal pay means paying women and men the same for the same work or work of equal value. UCC is fully committed to equal pay. A gender pay gap can still exist even when equal pay laws are followed. The gender pay gap is not about equal pay for equal work, which is a legal requirement and a core University principle. Instead, it shows the average pay gap between women and men across the entire workforce. It is an indicator of representation, progression, contract types, and career patterns. [Past reports can be read here](#).



**Figure 2.** UCC GPG Mean and Median Trends for All Staff, 2022-2025.

Since 2022, the mean and median GPG have narrowed from 16.06% to 11.79% (mean, 2022 v. 2025) and from 17.37% to 11.51% (median, 2022 v. 2025) (Figure x).

This reflects the success of the University's Athena Swan Bronze Action Plan (BAP) 2019-2024 interventions in improving female representation at higher grades across all roles, primarily through improvements in recruitment, promotion, and opportunities processes, as well as through the promotion of flexible working and support for career development. In 2024, UCC was in the middle of the IUA benchmarking (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Benchmarking of UCC GPG data for All Staff to IUA Universities, 2024.

GPG Total - UCC vs. IUA Universities (2024)		
HEI	Mean GPG	Median GPG
Dublin City University	5.11%	8.30%
Maynooth University	9.38%	8.86%
RCSI University of Medicine and Health	16.40%	14.50%
Trinity College Dublin	7.60%	11.00%
<b>University College Cork</b>	<b>14.52%</b>	<b>11.56%</b>
University College Dublin	7.43%	7.14%
University of Galway	15.90%	14.40%
University of Limerick	12.10%	8.60%

## Internal Reporting

### *Governing Authority People and Culture Sub-committee*

An EDI progress report and actions/policies for endorsement are submitted and presented to the Governing Authority People and Culture Sub-committee four to six times a year.

### *UCC Strategic Plan Implementation ULT Sub-committee*

Goal Four People and XXXX (TITLE?) of the UCC Strategic Plan (Action 4.2) is dedicated to EDI implementation. Progress reports are submitted and presented to the UCC Strategy Group, chaired by the President of UCC, six times per annum.

### *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion University Leadership Team Sub-Committee (EDI ULT SC)*

The EDI ULT SC was established in January 2024 and is responsible for implementation the EDI Framework 2025-2028. This is a University Leadership Team committee and [convenes quarterly](#). It reports to the President/ULT four to six times a year.

### *Director of EDI and EDI Unit Team*

The Director of EDI is a member of the DPR Senior Management team and reports monthly to the DPR.

The Director of EDI chairs the EDI ULT SC and is also a member of UCC People and Culture Forum and the Green Forum.

The EDI Unit team provide progress/status reports to the President's Report for Governing Authority six times per year.

EDI Unit Team meet bi-weekly and team members have regular 1-1s with the Director of EDI.

The EDI Unit convenes quarterly meetings with the five EDI Staff networks and four college-level committees.

## Annual Report

### *UCC Institutional Annual Report*

There is a dedicated [EDI section in the UCC Annual report](#) each year (pp40-1 in linked report).

### *EDI Annual Report*

The UCC EDI Annual Report is [published annually on the EDI website](#) since 2021/22.

These reports provide a narrative overview of key achievements related to EDI and belonging at UCC.

From 2025, the EDI Annual Report focuses on the impact of the University's Key Performance Indicators in the area of EDI, as outlined in the strategic [Belonging at UCC: EDI Framework and Action Plan, 2025-2028](#), and Athena Swan Silver/Gender Equality Action Plan, 2024-2029, and also as the university's submission/public progress report under the Public Sector Duty (PSD).

## Assess

The EDI Unit consults with the university community through a number of different fora – surveys, focus groups, gatherings, and through referring matters to relevant committees and networks for review or comment.

### Whole university consultations – Values and Culture/EDI staff and student surveys 2024

A comprehensive Values and Culture/EDI survey issued to all staff in March 2022 and March 2024. Over 1600 staff (46% response rate) contributed to this consultation process which helped to identify priority areas for progress and development in EDI. Sixty-four staff participated in focus groups in 2022. The results of the 2022 staff engagement were relayed to the university community at a [President's Townhall](#) in September 2022. The next survey is due in spring 2026. Two EDI student surveys also issued in 2022 and 2024 with over 1500 providing input, and the UCC Student Union was consulted as part of this process.

The purpose of the surveys to date was to inform the development of the UCC Strategic Plan 2023- 2028 and to inform the development of the first institutional Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Framework. These data-gathering exercises also had the purpose of streamlining Athena SWAN assessment processes and informing future Athena SWAN applications.

The survey has multiple thematic sections:

1. Who we are: demographics
2. UCC Culture and Values
3. UCC Leadership and Strategy
4. Working Environment at School/Unit Level
5. Recruitment and Induction at UCC
6. Working Life at UCC
7. Flexible Working
8. Representation
9. Academic Promotion and Progression
10. Workload Allocation
11. Career Progression (Professional, Management and Support Staff)
12. Performance Development and Review
13. Research Staff
14. Caring Responsibilities
15. Discrimination and Unfair Treatment
16. Bullying and Harassment
17. Sexual Harassment
18. EDI at UCC

The EDI Unit also engaged with alumni and external stakeholders across other higher education institutions (HEIs) and the public and private sector to ensure the framework and action plan is benchmarked and in line with national and international best practice.

### In-person Consultations

In June 2024, a dedicated roundtable in-person gathering for staff and students of UCC was held by way of further consultation to develop the action plan, with participants invited

through an open call to all staff. A separate consultation was also held with the Chairs of EDI staff networks, and over one hundred staff also participated in one-to-one interviews.

In 2025, further in-person consultations were held. The Race Equality Network and the EDI Unit ran internal and external consultations with staff, students and external stakeholders as part of the development of a UCC Race Equality Action Plan in April 2025, as well as working with the University Leadership Team with training and awareness. Following this, UCC's LGBT+ Action Plan Consultation took place on 5 June 2025. This internal and external consultation has fed into the development of UCC's first LGBT+ Equality Action Plan, in alignment with Action 5.2 of [“Belonging at UCC”: A Strategic Framework and Action Plan for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#) (2025-2028), and the [Athena Swan Silver Action Plan 2024-2029](#).

## Who is UCC? (Diversity self-reporting tool for staff)

In 2025, a self-reporting tool for staff for gathering diversity data was developed. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) have been a central part of university life in UCC for many years. UCC's commitment to EDI is enshrined in the [UCC Strategic Plan 2023-2028](#), [EDI Framework Action Plan 2023-2028](#), and the [Athena Swan Silver Action Plan 2024-2029](#).

This tool will help us to reach our aim of reflecting the richness of our community in how we operate and how people feel when studying, working, and engaging with us on our campus and beyond.

The EDI Diversity Tool allows the University to gain a more accurate overview of its staff profile. It will help the University understand our staff, enhance our EDI (and beyond) offering, and successfully deliver our commitments, as outlined in aforementioned strategic plans. It enables the University to design targeted interventions to promote fairness and equal opportunities. For example, data on recruitment rates, leadership profiles, or educational attainment can highlight inequalities based on gender, race, disability, or other characteristics. It promotes accountability, as it can be used to hold the University accountable for its actions and ensure it meets its obligations to promote equality and non-discrimination. It ensures better [EDI Data Collection and Monitoring](#).

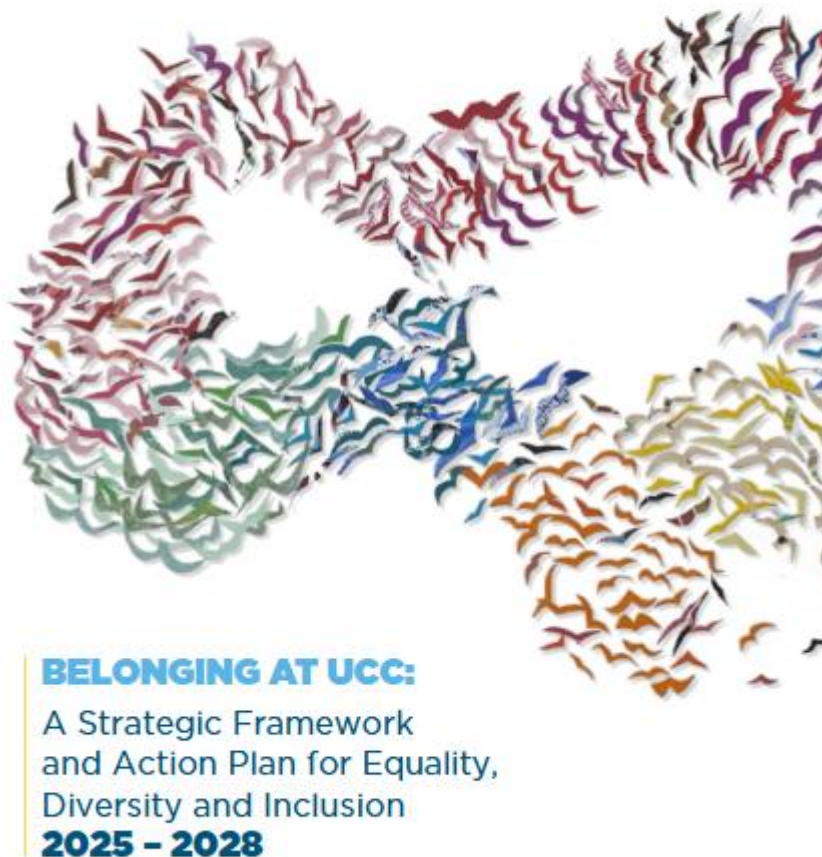
# Address

Through these consultations (above), equality and human rights issues of importance and relevance to the university were identified, areas were prioritised for action, and drafted action plans to address these matters. It is intended that these plans will align with the development of the university's strategy, with the EDI Framework (below) set to be completed in tandem with [Securing Our Future: UCC Strategic Plan 2023-2028](#).

## Strategic Frameworks and Action Plans

EDI in UCC operates under the following frameworks and action plans:

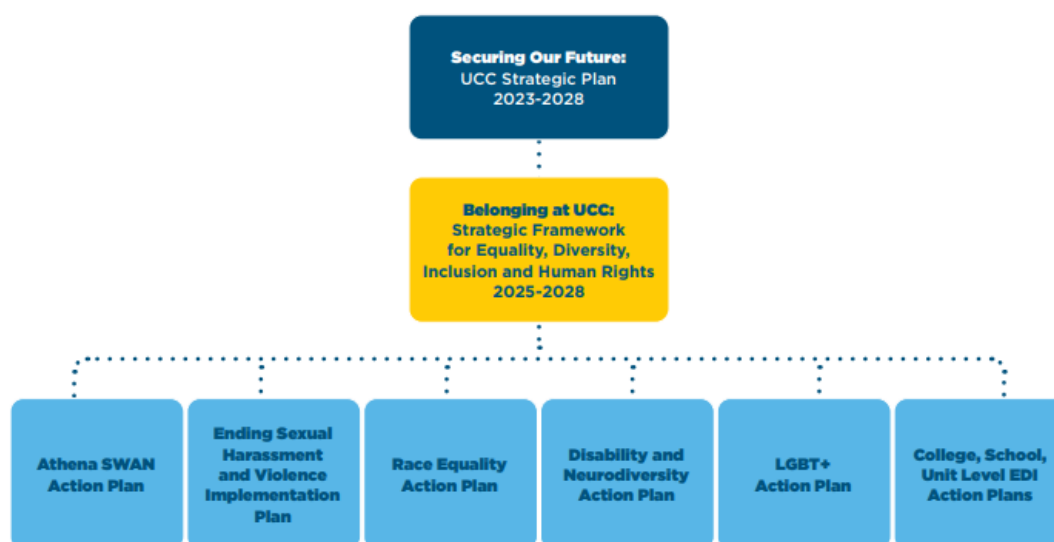
- [Belonging at UCC: A Strategic Framework and Action Plan for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion 2025-2028](#) (SFAPEDI) and
- The [Athena Swan Action Plan 2024-2029](#) (ASAP).



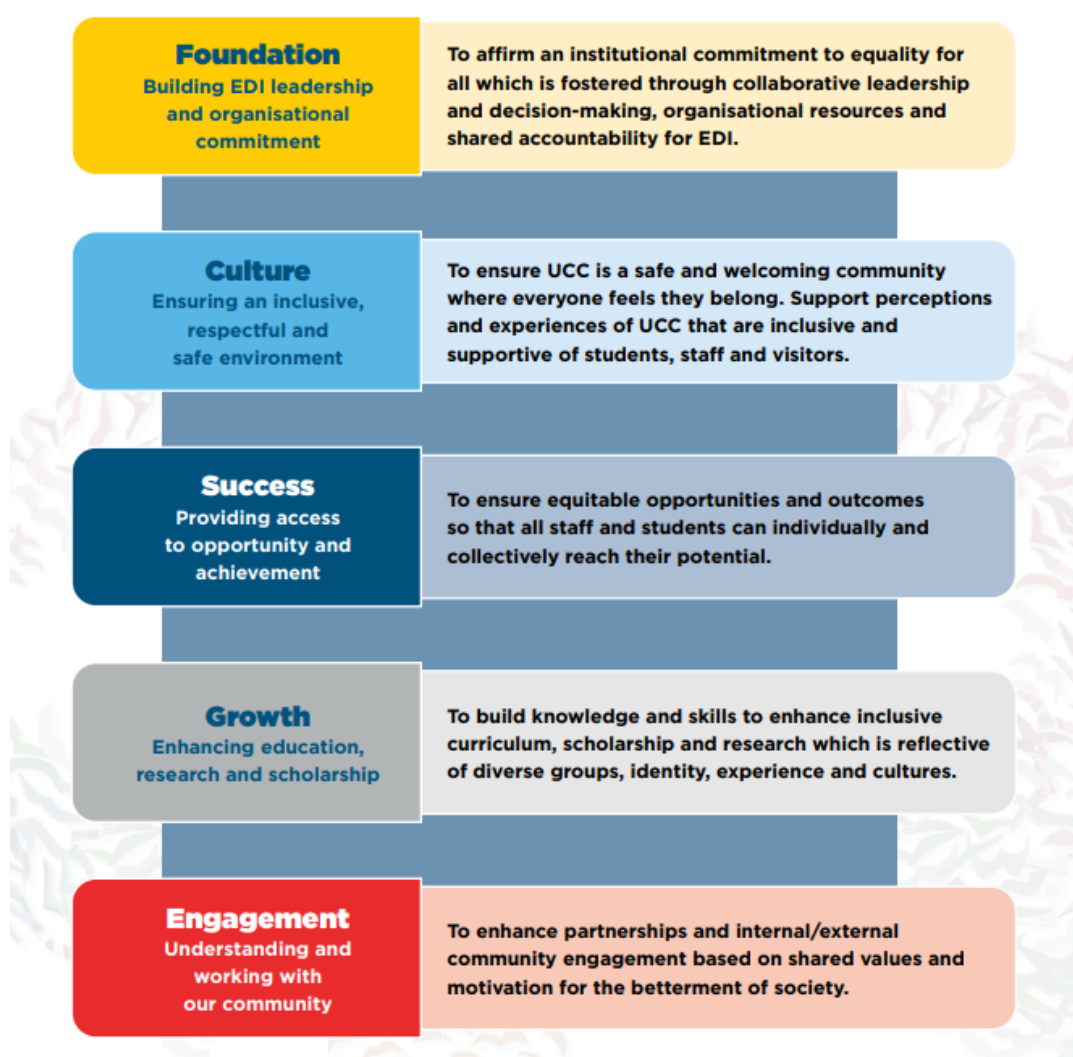
President John O' Halloran launched *Belonging at UCC: A Strategic Framework for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion 2025 - 28* in November 2024.

This Framework and Action Plan aligns with [Securing our Future: UCC Strategic Plan 2023-2028](#) (and is itself an action arising from this - action 4.2 (i)) and underpins our university's commitment to EDI. It sets out clear objectives and actions to realise EDI here at UCC over the next four years. This Framework and Action Plan was informed by a comprehensive Values and Culture/ EDI consultation process which took place in 2022 and again in 2024. This Framework seeks to address the need for culture change; increased transparency; embedding EDI in teaching, learning and research; transformation of our university systems; and a broadening of our institutional commitment to EDI to encompass more fully all equality grounds.

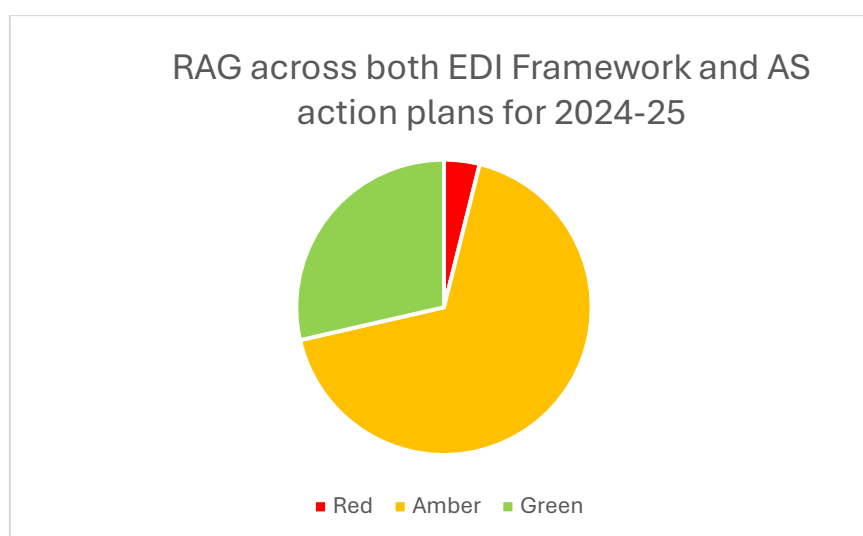
### *The EDI Framework*



## Strategic Objectives



Below are updates on actions under the EDI Framework to be commenced or carried out over the time period September 2024-December 2025, framed using the RAG rating index (Red – to be started, Amber – underway, Green – completed).



## EDI Framework Objective 1: Foundation

<b>Objective 1: Foundation</b>			
<b>Building EDI Leadership and Organisational Commitment</b>			
<b>No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Progress</b>
1.1	Establish a new EDI Sub-Committee of the University Leadership Team	Q4 2024	
1.2	Develop EDI Champions Network across key schools/departments and units.	Q2 2025 onwards	
1.3	Appoint Vice-Deans for EDI across the four colleges.	Q1 2025	
1.4	Achieve Athena SWAN Silver award.	Q3 2025	
1.5	Appropriately resource EDI through core internal funding and capitalise on external funding opportunities to deliver EDI programmes.	Ongoing	
1.6	Embed EDI as a core pillar of the UCC quality assurance process.	Q1 2025 2025	
1.7	Embed EDI as a core pillar of the institutional audit process.	Q2 2025 onwards	
1.8	Identify areas for digitisation and automation within EDI.	Q1 2025 onwards	
1.9	Expand capabilities of the EDI Data Hub and develop dedicated EDI dashboard.	Q1 2025 onwards	
1.10	Develop an EDI toolkit to support university leaders and unit level decision makers in intentionally considering EDI as part of their decision-making processes.	Q1 2026	Not due yet
1.11	Develop EDI impact assessment for institutional policy and practice.	Q2 2026	Not due yet

## Embedding EDI across Key University Activities/Units

**Action 1.1** The EDI ULT SC was established in January 2024 and is responsible for implementation the EDI Framework 2025-2028 (see above). Further embedding EDI within the university has been the appointment of two out of four Vice Deans for EDI at college level, with two more to follow in 2026.

**Action 1.2** The establishment of UCC EDI Champions is paused subsequent to the development of People and Culture Champions and Well being Champions in 2025-6. This model will be revisited in Q4 2026.

**Action 1.3** Two out of four Colleges appointed Vice Deans/Heads for EDI in 2025: College of Business and Law Frank/Fiona Donson and CACSSS Rachel McS

### **Action 1.4**

In 2025, UCC achieved its first-ever Silver Athena Swan institutional award, marking a major milestone in the University's leadership on gender equality. Also in 2025, UCC's first-ever Silver Departmental Athena Swan award was awarded to the School of Food & Nutritional Sciences. The School of Applied Social Science earned its first Bronze Athena Swan award,

and the Dental School & Hospital successfully renewed its Bronze award, bringing the total number of UCC Schools holding Athena Swan awards to eighteen.

In the November 2025 submission round, the School of Law applied to renew its Bronze award, while the Schools of Pharmacy and Chemistry applied for Silver awards; results are pending, with outcomes expected in late spring 2026. Four School-level applications are planned for 2026, including first-time applications from the School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures and the School of Education, a Bronze renewal from Tyndall National Institute, and a Silver application from the School of Applied Psychology. These applications are supported by the extended Athena Swan Starter Grant Scheme, now encompassing Professional Unit applications through 2026/27.



UCC receives its Silver Athena Swan award. L to R: Ms Ann King, Athena Swan Project Officer, UCC EDI Unit; Deputy President & Registrar Prof. Stephen Byrne; Dr Avril Hutch, UCC EDI Director; Ms Angela O'Donovan, UCC People & Culture; Ms Katarzyna (Kasia) Pyrz, EDI Data Analyst.

**Action 1.5** Yet to commence.

**Action 1.6** The University Quality Enhancement methodology is based on a seven-year cycle of periodic review. The third cycle of review completed in October 2025 and, in advance of commencing the next cycle of review 25/26 onwards, a re-appraisal of the quality methodology was undertaken in light of external national and international quality policies, systems performance requirements and institutional strategy.

Within the new model, which also consolidates incremental and ongoing enhancements to the model, EDI is explicitly integrated in the revised methodology, ensuring that the latter is strategically aligned, informed by current and emergent good practice at national, international and institutional levels, including the UCC EDI Framework and Action Plan

2025-2028. Specifically, quality enhancement activities pursued by the QEU align most closely with two EDI strategic Objectives of the University: 'Foundation - Building EDI leadership and organisational commitment' and 'Culture - Ensuring an Inclusive, respectful and safe environment'.

The currently implemented University Quality Enhancement methodology embeds an explicit Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) lens across all stages of the revised Quality Review model from unit's self-evaluation onwards, with particular resonance for 'unit planning and performance', 'student learning and access' and 'staffing and research'. One of the distinctive features of the enhanced quality review methodology at UCC is a revised model of academic quality review based on six domains: 'School Context', 'Academic Standards', 'Student Learning Experience', 'International Student Experience', 'Research Activities' and 'Staffing' with the inclusion of EDI and Academic Integrity as transversal themes.

Furthermore, as part of its implementation of an EDI-informed approach, the QEU has committed to having a QEU staff member responsible for EDI in the team; carrying out continuing monitoring of the composition of Peer Review Panels in terms of equality, diversity and inclusion; including enhanced opportunities for a wider range of staff to become involved in the quality review process, particularly in supporting self-evaluation activities, as well as facilitation roles for issues such as programme review and quality.

**Action 1.7** in UCC's EDI Framework and Action Plan for 2025–2028 is an action for the Internal Audit Office to Embed EDI as a core pillar of the institutional audit process. The Internal Audit Office aims to provide assurance over the EDI Framework implemented within UCC. This is done through periodic audits conducted across the University that look into EDI practices at the College, School and Functional level. Note that these audits are not specific to EDI but are broad operational/compliance audits that cover EDI as an auditable component. However, they have an impact as, due to recent audit observations, the roles of Vice Deans for EDI in some of the Colleges were clarified or the position filled. In addition, on a periodic basis, IAO may conduct a bespoke audit specifically on EDI. In 2025, an audit of ESG Risk Management was conducted. Specifically, the 'S' aspect (Social) looked at how the University treats its students, staff and the broader community. In relation to EDI, this audit included:

- Review of Governance Structures: Assessing the clarity of roles, responsibilities, and oversight mechanisms related to EDI initiatives to ensure accountability and effective decision-making.
- Evaluation of Policy Implementation: Examining the application of EDI policies and action plans across the university to verify that strategies translate into tangible practices.
- Monitoring of Data Integrity: Ensuring the accuracy and reliability of data related to diversity metrics, which is vital for tracking progress and informing policy decisions.
- Assessment of Compliance with Standards: Verifying adherence to internal policies and external frameworks, such as the Athena SWAN Charter, to maintain and enhance UCC's standing in EDI efforts.

- Recommendation of Improvements: Identifying areas for enhancement in EDI practices and suggesting actionable steps to address gaps and strengthen initiatives.

The IAO is also guided by the Audit & Risk Committee. In May 2025, a report was presented to the ARC benchmarking UCC's Gender Pay Gap Report with other universities in Ireland to determine the accuracy and appropriateness of the assumptions used in preparing this report. Finally, due to resourcing constraints within the IAO, comprehensive audit coverage is a challenge. To help mitigate this key risk, the IAO is increasingly relying on Continuous Audits to expand audit coverage. It is anticipated that a high-level review of EDI metrics could be included in this Continuous Auditing process in the future.

### **Action 1.8** Input on digitisation

Digitisation of EDI includes the development of a suite of tailored **EDI data reports** for staff and students using MicroStrategy and Data Hub (to be moved to Data Lake in due time); additionally, establishing trackers for the EDI framework and Silver Athena Swan Action Plans using **MS Lists**. The trackers enable live collaboration between the action owners and co-owners and the EDI Unit, accountability, and a systematic and transparent assessment of progress.

The [ESS Diversity Tool](#), launched in January 2026, will systematically collect staff diversity data and close an important gap in the collection of demographic data across all nine equality grounds.

In 2026, we aim to digitise **EDI queries** via MS Forms to ensure confidentiality, adequate tracking and monitoring, and engagement with staff, students and the public.

### **Action 1.9**

#### **Data Hub and EDI Dashboard**

Since a permanent EDI Data Analyst post was established in 2022, a large-scale EDI data-gathering and monitoring plan has been put in place. In 2023-2024, the EDI Unit led the development of a suite of EDI data reports:

- **48 MicroStrategy reports** are accessible to an EDI Data Analyst, ranging from staff and student headcount by gender to contracts, recruitment, and training data. This facilitated, for the first time, streamlined data delivery for equality projects (such as Athena Swan) and for wider equality monitoring and reporting. In 2025, work began on further refining and migrating these reports to a new UCC-wide data infrastructure (i.e. Data Lake within the Data-As-A-Service, DaaS Project).
- **Athena Swan Gender Analytics**, part of the [UCC Data Hub](#), was developed to facilitate Self-Assessment Teams in accessing data related to their academic units. This enabled ongoing gender-equality monitoring at the local level. This resource will be subsequently developed to include signposting to staff and student Power BI Dashboards and the EDI dashboard (see below).

An **EDI dashboard** is in development to improve transparency, trust in, and engagement with EDI work, and to increase engagement with EDI activity. This Power BI-powered solution will capture key EDI-related achievements and milestones over a given time-period and will build on manually constructed dashboards already presented to all staff in 2025 during the President's and Deputy President's town halls.

In other EDI data-related projects commenced in 2024-2025:

- Monitoring of **grant applications and awards by gender** has commenced.
- The **Hourly Occasional Staff Portal** was developed to collect and monitor hourly occasional contract data, including demographic categories across nine equality grounds. This is the first time that this type of data has been recorded centrally for equality monitoring purposes.
- The current **Administrative Promotion Scheme** is also being monitored for application and success rates by gender.

**Action 1.10** - Yet to commence

**Action 1.11** - Yet to commence

## Highlight Action: Women on Walls

Accenture's Women on Walls at UCC is a campaign that seeks to make women leaders visible through a series of commissioned portraits that will create a lasting cultural legacy for Ireland. The campaign began in 2016 with the Royal Irish Academy, followed by a second campaign with RCSI in 2019, and a third with DCU in 2020. In 2023, UCC was delighted to join this campaign for the fourth chapter of Women on Walls and the first outside of Dublin.

Following a powerful public response to an open call for subject nominations, more than 600 submissions were received in 2024. 11 subjects were then selected by a panel of UCC staff and student leaders.

The commissioned portraits were created by Irish-based artists Gerry Davis, Vanessa Jones, Vera Klute, and Julianne Guinee, selected following a competitive open call for artists led by Business to Arts.

The series of four portraits (one group portrait and three individual portraits) are as follows:

**Julianne Guinee** - group portrait of:

- **Brigid Carmody**, Coordinator of Cork Traveller Women's Network, a grass-roots community organisation that works for Traveller rights, leadership, culture and heritage.
- **Mary Crilly**, feminist activist and founding member and CEO of the Sexual Violence Centre Cork.
- **Dr Myra Cullinane**, medical doctor, barrister and Senior Dublin District coroner who held the Stardust inquests.
- **Dr Evelyn Grant**, musician, broadcaster, educator, arts advocate, social entrepreneur and co-founder of the Cork Pops Orchestra.
- **Dr Naomi Masheti**, psychologist, three-time UCC graduate and Programme Director of the Cork Migrant Centre.
- **Dr Patricia Sheahan**, consultant palliative care physician and head of palliative care at University Hospital Kerry.
- **Caitríona Twomey**, volunteer co-ordinator of Cork Penny Dinners, a charity that offers food and support to anyone in need.
- **Dola Twomey**, therapist/activist at the Sexual Violence Centre Cork.

**Gerry Davis** - individual portrait of **Edna O'Brien** (1930–2024), novelist, memoirist, playwright and poet

**Vanessa Jones** - individual portrait of **Honora "Nano" Nagle** (1718–1784), pioneering educator and founder of the Presentation Sisters

**Vera Klute** - individual portrait of **Joanne O'Riordan**, sports journalist, disability activist and motivational speaker

The portraits were unveiled in UCC's Aula Maxima on 27 November 2025.

Professor John O'Halloran, President of UCC, said: "We are deeply proud to unveil these portraits of extraordinary women at UCC today. Each of these trailblazers has shaped our society with courage, conviction, and a vision for a more inclusive and just world. They have broken barriers, challenged convention, and redefined what leadership looks like. By placing their portraits at the heart of our campus, we honour their remarkable legacy and reaffirm our commitment to inspiring future generations to lead with purpose, compassion, and courage."

Dr Michelle Cullen, Managing Director and Inclusion & Diversity Lead, Accenture in Ireland, said: "Accenture's Women on Walls is about who we see, and who we celebrate, in our public institutions. Too often women's contributions go unseen and uncelebrated. These magnificent portraits of eleven remarkable Munster women help redress that imbalance. We are honoured COMPLETE THE QUOTE

Women on Walls at UCC builds on this commitment by making the contributions of outstanding Munster women permanently on display in the Aula Maxima, inspiring current and future generations.

[Watch the video here](#) or click on the image below.



Pictured l-r: Julianne Guinee, Gerry Davis, Vera Klute, Dr Evelyn Grant, Joanne O'Riordan, Dola Twomey, Mary Crilly, Brigid Carmody, Dr Naomi Masheti, Dr Myra Cullinane, Caitríona Twomey, Sr Sharon Fagan (Congregational Leader of the Presentation Order), Dr Patricia Sheahan and Vanessa Jones standing in front of the new portraits.

Further information about Accenture's Women on Walls at UCC is available at [www.accenture.com/womenonwalls](http://www.accenture.com/womenonwalls) and [www.ucc.ie/en/edi/women-on-walls](http://www.ucc.ie/en/edi/women-on-walls)

## EDI Framework Objective 2: Culture

<b>Objective 2: Culture</b>			
<b>Ensuring an Inclusive, Safe and Respectful Culture</b>			
<b>No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Progress</b>
2.1	Develop dedicated EDI Policy and Statement for Staff and Students.	Q4 2025	
2.2	Develop a new professional behavioural framework for staff, which translates our university values and culture to foster an inclusive working environment.	Q4 2025 - Q1 2026	
2.3	Scope establishment of independent dignity and respect/report and support hub.	Q1 2025-Q2 2027	
2.4	Implement HEA Consent Framework, including UCC Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedure and associated supports for staff and students.	Q1 2025-Q3 2025	
2.5	Implement HEA Race Equality Action Plan for staff and students.	Q1 2025 - Q4 2028	
2.6	Enhance supports and accommodations for disability and neurodiversity.	Q1 2025 - Q4 2028	
2.7	Enhance supports for older staff.	Q1 - Q4 2026	Not due yet
2.8	Develop a framework for staff and students who are carers.	Q1 - Q4 2026	Not due yet
2.9	Establish EDI awards scheme.	Q3 annually	
2.10	Establish annual EDI Gathering.	Q2 annually	
2.11	Undertake bi-annual Values & Culture/EDI Consultation with staff and students.	Q3 2026; Q3 2028	Not due yet

### Action 2.1

The desk study and benchmarking have been completed, and the EDI Unit team is drafting the EDI Statement.

### Action 2.2

Staff progression is being supported by the allocation of funds to allow for the roll out of the UCC Women's Leaders' Initiative in Q1, 2026, supporting women's progression to the most senior grades, development of a new Professional Development Review Scheme (PDRS) process, entitled 'Contribution and Growth', that takes into account work-life balance, workload and blended work, and including EDI criteria in the process. A presentation was made on increasing researcher engagement with their Personal Development Planning (PDP) process to the PI Forum planned for Q4 2025. A promotion pathway to full professor is in development and the existing academic promotions process is under review with on-going gender monitoring of academic progression, with a formal review of revised schemes on a phased basis, and dedicated support sessions run prior to Prof Scale 2 launch. Recruitment processes are also being examined to increase representation of women and under-represented cohorts. And to support student retention and progression, a review of undergraduate assessments across all degree programmes is in the planning stage. For more detail on this please see the [UCC People and Culture Plan 2025-2028](#).

### **Action 2.3**

The development of a Dignity and Respect Support Hub is under development along with a staff communications plan for same once it is launched.

### **Action 2.4**

A dedicated policy on sexual harassment is in development, informed by consultation with internal and external stakeholders. Consent and Bystander information is incorporated into all undergraduate, postgraduate, international and staff orientations. Regular information stalls on ESVH are held across campus, and training is provided to staff and students. UCC has partnered with other HEIs to secure 150,000 in funding for the development of initiatives targeting those who may commit sexual violence, and 75,000 for the development of a stalking awareness toolkit, with both starting development in 2026. Support services and reporting pathways are advertised at multiple points throughout the campus, as well as online on the UCC ESVH hub. The 2024-2025 UCC Safe and Sound pilot program produced printed content such as posters, flyers, and badges to disseminate ESVH messaging beyond the classroom and partnered with internal and external stakeholders such as the Cork Sexual Violence Centre.

### **Action 2.5**

In 2026, UCC will launch its first Race Equality Action Plan 2026-2028. UCC's approach to race equality is informed by key national and sectoral developments:

- **National Action Plan Against Racism (2023):** UCC aligns its actions with the strategic goals of this national framework.
- **HEA Anti-Racism Principles:** Signed by the UCC President in 2023, with full endorsement of the HEA Race Equality Implementation Plan.
- **Race Equality Network (est. 2023):** The Race Equality Network (REN) is a staff- led network which aims to create a safe, inclusive and diverse working environment

The UCC Race Equality Action Plan (REAP) 2026 - 2028 has been developed through an extensive and collaborative process involving staff, students, and partners across the University College Cork community. It reflects not only the commitment of the institution to advance race equality, but also the lived experiences, perspectives, and aspirations of those who make up our university.

The development of this plan was shaped by widespread engagement and open dialogue. In 2025, the Race Equality Working Group (REAPWG) undertook a series of consultations, focus groups, and feedback sessions with UCC staff, students, leadership and external partners. These conversations provided essential insights into the realities of racial and ethnic diversity, including members of the Traveller community, at UCC, where progress has been made, and where further effort and structural change are required.

This document is both an action plan and an invitation. It asks every member of the UCC community to contribute to a collective transformation, to ensure that race equality is embedded not only in our policies and systems and a zero-tolerance approach to racism, but in our daily practices, our classrooms and our culture.

**Action 2.6** An Irish Sign Language Policy is under development.

**Action 2.7** – Yet to commence

**Action 2.8** – Yet to commence

**Action 2.9**

Renowned academic, feminist and LGBT+ activist Ailbhe Smyth visited UCC in April 2025 to accept the University's first Athena Swan Trailblazer Award. The award was presented to Smyth by the Deputy President & Registrar, Professor Stephen Byrne, as part of the University's celebration of its first Silver Athena Swan awards.



The Deputy President and Registrar, Professor Stephen Byrne with Ailbhe Smyth, inaugural EDI Trailblazer Award recipient, at the Athena Swan Silver Celebration.

**Action 2.10**

In person consultations or gatherings with staff and students take place annually, with two themed in person consultations taking place in 2025 to feed into the development of the Race Equality and LGBT+ Action Plans.

**Action 2.11**

Whole university consultations or surveys are conducted every two years since 2022, with the next scheduled for roll out in Q1 2026.

## Highlight Action: ENGAGE

The pilot ENGAGE: **E**mpowering **N**ew **G**enerations, **A**dvancing **G**ender **E**quality through Reverse Mentoring in Higher Education programme officially launched on September 2, 2024. Funded by the HEA Gender Equality Enhancement Fund, it opened with an inaugural training event. The programme aim is to foster knowledge sharing and an exchange of perspectives between early career women mentors and senior staff mentees in higher education institutions. Led by UCC, it was implemented across participating Irish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Ireland, University of Galway (UL), Munster Technology University (MTU), University of Limerick (UL) and the Technological University of Ireland, with 19 mentors and 19 mentees participating across five HEIs.

In 2025, the programme expanded to include students through ENGAGE Access Reverse Mentoring, an inspiring programme that places students at the forefront of institutional transformation. This pioneering initiative promotes inclusive and accessible campus cultures by amplifying student voices and experiences.

Rooted in the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), ENGAGE Access reimagines traditional mentoring by empowering students to serve as mentors. Through sharing their lived experiences, they offer staff mentees invaluable insights into teaching, learning, university life, and workplace expectations.

To ensure meaningful engagement, ten selected student mentors registered with Access UCC, and ten volunteer senior staff mentees participated in dedicated workshops designed to prepare and support them in their mentoring roles. This foundational training equips student mentors with the confidence and tools needed to foster impactful conversations with staff.

Funded by the HEA Path 4 Inclusive Environments Project, ENGAGE Access is more than a workshop, it's a movement. By highlighting student perspectives, this initiative aims to cultivate mutual understanding and drive meaningful change across UCC's academic and professional communities.

The ENGAGE Access programme is an innovative initiative designed and delivered by an interdisciplinary team from across the university including the EDI Unit, Staff Wellbeing and Development, Access UCC, UCC Careers Services, and Cork University Business School.

The third iteration, ENGAGE Digital is funded by the HEA Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Enhancement Fund, and focusses on advancing gender equality for women and under-represented gender identities (non-binary or other), expanding on the scope of gender equality from the initial ENGAGE pilot (2024-25) with a specified inclusion criterion for women in early career roles in HEIs. By explicitly inviting women, non-binary, and transgender participants, ENGAGE Digital upholds IHREC's mandate to protect all gender identities and ensures that programme materials, accessibility features and support structures reflect diverse lived experiences.

ENGAGE Digital recognises that mentors (early career staff in HEIs, this includes individual who may have experience working in a different sector and who recently joined a HE sector) have intersecting components of their identity that are encompassed in the experiences they bring to the programme and will organically become part of the conversations with their mentees.

Based on our analysis of the ENGAGE pilot programme, ENGAGE Digital will pursue three key themes as part of supporting and developing the reverse mentoring relationships between early career staff mentors and senior mentees related, but not limited to:

- Digital inclusion and accessibility
- Team and organisational belonging
- Career progression and work-life balance

Over time, our aim is that ENGAGE Digital's blended learning model of in-person and online learning modules and resources, will lead to participant-led policy outputs continuing to seed ongoing culture change, driving measurable improvements in gender equity across Irish higher education.



From left to right: Prof. Ciara Heavin, Dr Laura Lee, Olive Byrne, Mary Horgan, James Bilson, Prof. Nuala Finnegan, Dr Tanya Watson, and Aileen Waterman at the ENGAGE Access official launch.

## EDI Framework Objective 3: Success

<b>Objective 3: Success</b>			
<b>Providing Access to Opportunity and Achievement</b>			
<b>No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Progress</b>
3.1	Develop new EDI training programme for all staff and students.	Q1 2026-Q2 2027	Not due yet
3.2	Expand the use of Accessibility auditing software, Anthology Ally on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) to improve the accessibility of course materials.	Q1 2025 onwards	
3.3	Expand the adoption of the UCC Accessible VLE template to ensure a consistent student experience and a more inclusive accessible course design.	Q3 2025 onwards	
3.4	Ensure EDI is embedded in staff recruitment and induction processes.	Q1-Q2 2026	Not due yet
3.5	Ensure inclusion of EDI criteria in new staff performance review and career development process.	Q4 2025	
3.6	Develop a dedicated work life balance policy to support blended/flexible work for staff.	Q2 2025	
3.7	Develop a dedicated Staff Wellbeing Framework and Action Plan to embed a culture of staff wellbeing across the University in the development of systems, policies and resources to improve overall staff experience.	Q3 2025 onwards	
3.8	Renew accreditation to consolidate and further embed Sanctuary in UCC.	Q1 2025 onwards	
3.9	Undertake dedicated EDI consultation with research and research support staff to generate a baseline profile of understanding and practice of EDI in research and innovation.	Q2 2025 - Q2 2027	

**Action 3.1** – Yet to commence

### **Action 3.2**

Inclusive course design is being improved through the expansion of the use of accessibility auditing software, Anthology Ally, on the VLE to improve the accessibility of course materials. This work is in progress under the guidance of the Access Office.

### **Action 3.3**

Inclusive course design is being improved through the wider adoption of the UCC Accessible Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) template. This work is in progress under the guidance of the Access Office.

**Action 3.4** – Yet to commence

### **Action 3.5**

Next generation PDRS process 'Contribution & Growth' re-benchmarked and aligned to Competencies, Values etc. Awaiting ULT discussion and decision - scheduled for Q1 2026. Draft process embeds discussion point on workload, blended work and work-life balance.

### **Action 3.6**

The 'Work Life Balance Framework' established, encompassing the various flexible working policy elements (both statutory requirements and UCC offering). The 'Right to Request Remote Working' and 'The Right to Request Flexible Working for Caring Purposes' policies took effect on 1 September 2025.

### **Action 3.7**

New Family-Friendly Policies in UCC developed through collaboration between People and Culture, the EDI Unit and other groups, such as the Pregnancy Loss Research Group) include:

[Adoptive Leave](#)

[Domestic Violence Leave Policy](#)

[Fertility Treatment Leave Policy](#)

[Surrogacy Leave Policy](#)

[Remote Working](#)

[Flexible Working for Caring Purposes](#)

[Menopause Support Policy](#)

[Pregnancy Loss Support Policy](#) (see Highlight Action)

The Menopause Support Policy and Pregnancy Loss Support Policy and Guidelines were launched in Q4 2025.

In development are a Core Working Hours policy and a university EDI Statement and Policy.

Under review are the Pregnant Student Policy and Guidelines, and the impact of the new Menopause Policy.

To support the recently the Domestic Violence Leave Policy, launched in 2025, a guide and FAQ for Managers on the policy were published, guidelines have been made available to all staff, and information sessions for survivors and how to support Domestic Violence survivors have been provided.

Additionally, policy and guidelines for staff on precarious or hourly contracts have been published on a dedicated webpage: <http://ucc.ie/en/hr/policies/recruitment/hourly/>

### **Action 3.8**

UCC's University of Sanctuary work was consolidated under the new office of the Vice-President for Global Engagement and further strengthened by the appointment of a Head of Sanctuary in 2025. UCC achieved reaccreditation as a University of Sanctuary and continues to offer Sanctuary Scholarships and other supports to the refugee community. For more, please see here: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/global-engagement/universityofsanctuary/>

**Action 3.9** – Yet to commence.

## Highlight Action: Pregnancy Loss Support Policy

The first [Pregnancy Loss Support Policy](#) for staff in an Irish university was launched in October 2025 by University College Cork (UCC), marking a significant step forward in workplace wellbeing and inclusion.

The policy aims to provide employees with dedicated leave, resources and support they need following a pregnancy loss under 23 weeks. It outlines the entitlements, procedures and support mechanisms in place to assist both staff who are affected by pregnancy loss, and their partners. Staff are now entitled to ten leave days per 12-month calendar year should they experience pregnancy loss.

The policy was jointly developed by the Pregnancy Loss Research Group led by Professor Keelin O'Donoghue, UCC People and Culture and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Unit and informed by the findings of the [PLACES project report](#) (2024) which was funded by the Department of Children, Equality and Disability.

### **Closing a Gap in Statutory Leave**

Pregnancy loss affects approximately one in every four pregnancies. Currently, Irish law provides statutory maternity and paternity leave for pregnancy loss after 23 weeks (stillbirth or neonatal death), but no statutory entitlement exists for losses before this point.

The PLACES project—*Pregnancy Loss in Workplaces: Informing policymakers on support mechanisms*—highlighted the need for better supports in these circumstances. The PLACES project is informing Government policy around statutory leave provision and is led by Professor Keelin O'Donoghue with colleagues across University College Cork and the University of Galway.

### **Research informing action**

"Our mission within the Pregnancy Loss Research Group is to lead national research which is relevant, and which can influence policy and practice regarding all forms of pregnancy loss, to ultimately enhance people's experiences and outcomes. We are proud that our own university has developed this pregnancy loss support policy, informed by findings from the PLACES project, and that it is leading the way for other higher education institutions and other organisations within Ireland, and beyond, to do similar", stated Professor Keelin O'Donoghue.

"In UCC our research informs our thinking and our actions. This landmark policy is intended to be a much-needed support for any staff member affected by pregnancy loss and will assist them in such a difficult time. We as a UCC community must work together to continue to ensure the wellbeing of all our staff UCC is firmly committed to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion as set out in our UCC Strategic Plan," states Professor John O'Halloran, President of UCC.

### **Supporting Staff and Leading Change**

Research has shown that implementation supports are key to ensuring these policies are effective and UCC will be rolling out a comprehensive toolkit and training for managers to help them respond effectively and sensitively to employees affected by pregnancy loss.

"This important new policy arose following consultation with staff as part of our Athena Swan gender equality review process. We are delighted that this new policy is now in place

and will provide dedicated and much needed support to colleagues who experience pregnancy loss. We hope that other universities will also adopt similar policies and benefit from our learnings here in UCC” stated Dr Avril Hutch, Director of EDI, UCC.

“This policy is part of a suite of family friendly and reproductive health policies which are offered to UCC staff. A broad range of supports are available to anyone who experiences pregnancy loss and their managers through our Staff Wellbeing and Development team. As People and Culture, we recognise the vital need to support staff and we believe this policy will greatly benefit our colleagues here in UCC” states Ashley Flaherty, Director of People and Culture, UCC.

Tara Woulfe, Parent Advocate, Pregnancy Loss Research Group at the UCC INFANT Research Centre said: "The launch of a dedicated pregnancy loss support policy sends a powerful message of support and compassion to the women of UCC and their partners. It calls for an end to any stigma or silent suffering following pregnancy loss. It's fantastic to see UCC paving the way and hopefully other universities and workplaces in Ireland will follow suit. Workplace support helps normalise conversations around pregnancy loss, which in turn helps people to feel less alone."



Launching [UCC's](#) Pregnancy Loss Policy are (l-r) Tara Woulfe, Parent Advocate, Pregnancy Loss Research Group at the UCC INFANT Research Centre, Dr Avril Hutch, Director of EDI at UCC, Prof. John O'Halloran, UCC President, Dr Marita Hennessy, Postdoctoral Researcher, Pregnancy Loss Research Group and Prof. Keelin O'Donoghue, Consultant Obstetrician/Senior Lecturer at Cork University Maternity Hospital (CUMH) and UCC. (Photograph by Provision)

## EDI Framework Objective 4: Growth

<b>Objective 4: Growth</b>				
<b>Enhancing Education, Research &amp; Scholarship</b>				
<b>No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Progress</b>	
4.1	Establish EDI Centre of Excellence for Curriculum, Research and Innovation to coordinate and execute EDI training and education.	Q1 2026 onwards	Not yet	due
4.2	Develop EDI micro-credential and coordinate university-wide interfaculty initiative to bring courses together that relate to EDI in one offering.	Q1 2025 - Q2 2026		
4.3	Rollout of a Universal Design Badge for Professional Services staff.	Q1 2025 onwards		
4.4	Continue to demonstrate good practice and enhance inclusive teaching, learning and assessment.	Q1 2025 onwards		
4.5	Undertake a digital accessibility audit of teaching and learning resources.	Q1-Q4 2027	Not yet	due
4.6	Continue to support digital accessibility through provision of staff development offerings.	Q1 2025 onwards		
4.7	Undertake review of First Year Assessment across undergraduate programmes in four Colleges.	Q1 2025 - Q4 2026		
4.8	Audit UCC's research to the EDI/SDG 5 & 10 and support researchers to understand impact of their work in these areas.	Q2-Q4 2026	Not yet	due
4.9	Establish an EDI Early Career Grants Scheme for academics, researchers and practitioners.	Q1 2026	Not yet	due
4.10	Encourage scholarship on inclusive teaching, learning and assessment.	Q1 2026	Not yet	due
4.11	Develop/launch training course on intercultural competence and multiculturalism.	Q2-Q4 2027	Not yet	due

**Action 4.1** – Yet to commence

### **Action 4.2**

September 2024 saw the first intake to the new EDI Microcredential [SS6820: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education](#) (see Highlight Action below).

### **Action 4.3**

The Digital Badge on Universal Design (UD) Beyond the Classroom came online in 2025, led out by Access & The Centre for Digital Education. This course is designed specifically for colleagues who interact either directly or indirectly with students beyond the classroom setting. It provides practical knowledge and tips to empower and enhance student support across UCC. This course offers a unique opportunity for reflecting on inclusive practice, enhancing your skill set, and contributing to continuous professional development.

### **Action 4.4**

The Digital Badge in Universal Design for Learning promotes inclusivity and equity while also ‘future-proofing’ teaching. As our classrooms and lecture theatres become increasingly diverse, our practices must also adapt to reflect the changing landscape of higher education. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a research-based curriculum design approach that recognises and accommodates the variability and diversity of learners. This CPD course will give you an introduction to the concept of Universal Design for Learning and invite you to review and update your own Teaching and Learning practice.

Both the PG Cert and the PG Dip in teaching and learning are under continuous scheduled review, with new content delivery scheduled for A/Y 26/27 beginning September 2026 and further revisions to the PG Dip are planned for AY26/27. 125 are enrolled in the Inclusive assessment course and 10 have completed as a digital badge. 14 participants are on track to receive the UDL digital badge (semester 1 cohort 25/26) including thoughtful updates to curriculum. A second cohort is expected in semester 2.

2024/25 saw the continuance of the delivery of ‘Intro to Irish Sign Language’, provided to staff and students through the EDI Unit, which have proved popular and have been fully booked for each roll out. In June 2025, as a partnership between the EDI Unit, the Office of the VP for Learning and Teaching and other contributing colleagues across UCC, an EDI Summer School aimed to equip participants with the mindset, understanding and skills to enable inclusive learning and teaching. Additionally, training in Race Equality, Bystander Intervention and ESVH have been made available to staff and students, and ‘Equality and Diversity for Students’, an online programme on Canvas, was rolled out for students in Q3 2024.

ESVH and Bystander Intervention content is embedded into modules such as Youth Work, Law, and Midwifery, and the new degree course on sustainability will include content on ESVH. Students experiencing ESVH can request accommodations for exams or coursework and are offered a high level of support.

**Action 4.5 – Yet to commence**

#### **Action 4.6**

The micro-credential on ‘digital education for teaching and learning’ is live and will be open to all staff from September 2026. This content is already offered as a module in both the PG Cert and the PG Diploma. Other activities and initiatives included a summer school in inclusive practice run in June 2025, an L&T Showcase in December 2025 hosted by the OVPLT including posters that have Inclusive Practice as either their main focus theme or as an additional focus theme and an open call by CIRTLL with L&T Enhancement funding made available through the HEA’s SATLE scheme, of which 32 projects are led by UCC staff, 20 of which have Inclusive Learning, Teaching and Assessment as a focus.

#### **Action 4.7**

Work on the review of First Year Assessment across undergraduate programmes in four Colleges started in Q1 2025 as envisaged and is progressing.

**Action 4.8 – Yet to commence**

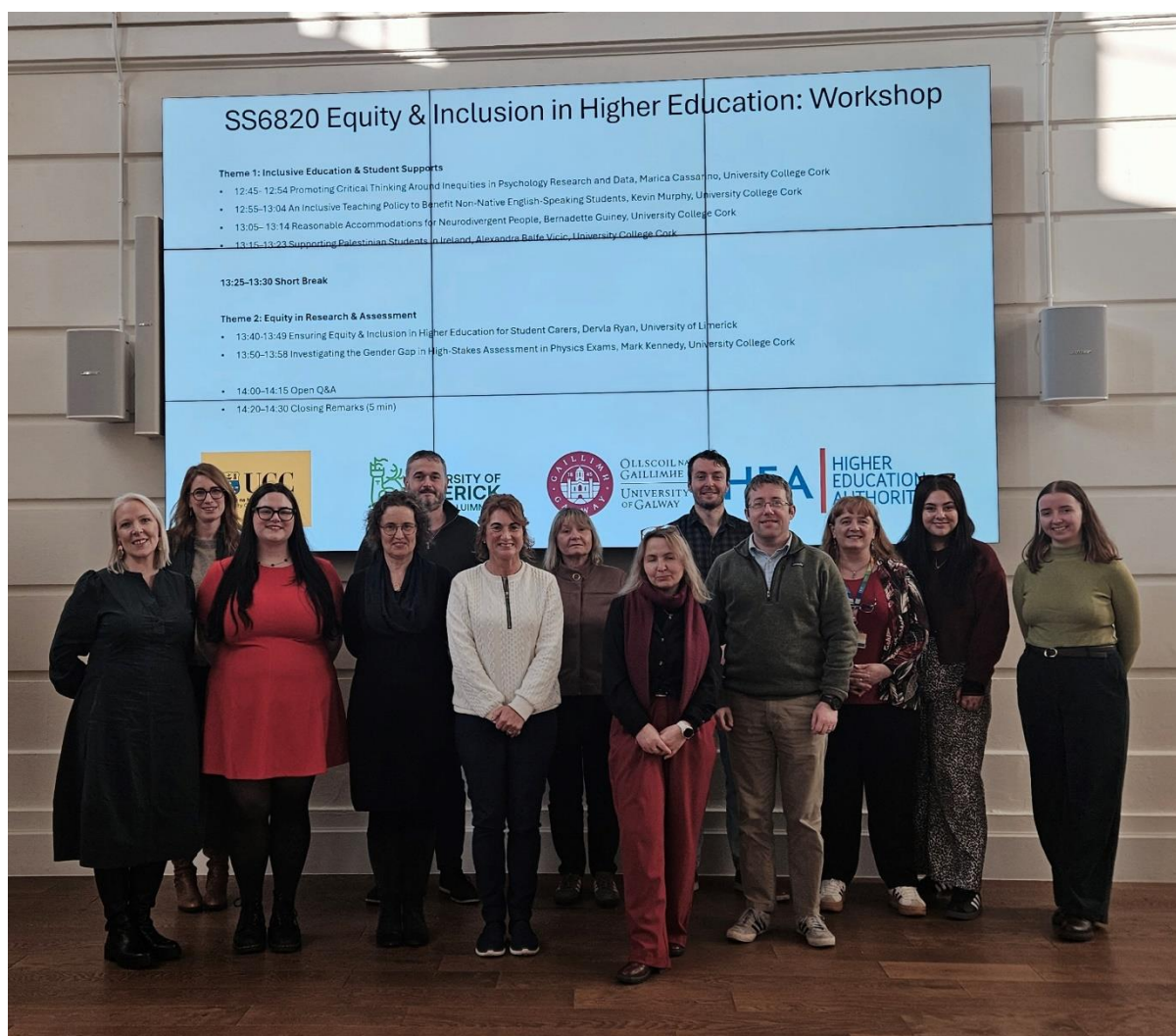
**Action 4.9 – Yet to commence**

#### **Action 4.10**

The MA in Teaching and Learning has 15 students this year engaged in an inquiry process related to teaching and learning. Four of these projects are focused on inclusion, diversity and belonging with potential insights relevant for colleagues across UCC.

MA and Doctoral supervision: Supervision of MSc student's thesis on the topic of neurodiversity and inclusive pedagogies in anatomy. Supervision of doctoral student on the topic of neurodiversity and psychology.

**Action 4.11 – Yet to commence**



Left to right: Dr Eileen Hogan, course director, and Dr Aril Hutch, EDI Director, with staff and students who took part in the EDI Microcredential Presentations 2025.

## Highlight Action: EDI Microcredential

Developed in 2024/25 with funding from the HEA EDI Enhancement Fund and in partnership with University of Limerick and University of Galway, the EDI Microcredential, EDI Framework action 4.2, launched in September 2025 with its first cohort of students. Competency in understanding and addressing equality, diversity and inclusion issues is a key skill and responsibility for all people working in contemporary higher education institutions. Informed by current research, this module explores issues relating to equality, diversity, and inclusion from a rights-based and social justice perspective, and it seeks to develop awareness and understanding of approaches to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in higher education in Ireland. Based on an intersectional and critical perspective, it draws on evidence-based research to illustrate how inequalities are experienced in university and social life. It equips participants with the knowledge and skills to advance an anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice, thereby positioning them to contribute to a supportive, enabling higher education environment for all students and staff.

This micro-credential module on EDI aims to -

1. facilitate awareness and understanding of what Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) mean,
2. create awareness of how inequality and exclusion are experienced, drawing from evidence-based research and first-person accounts,
3. support development of critical thinking about how Equality, Diversity and Inclusion can be promoted in workplace settings,
4. increase professional skills and competencies around promoting culturally sensitive, inclusive, and anti-discriminatory work practices, and
5. encourage discussion and implementation of EDI principles in the workplace, through practical ideas and innovations, including the opportunity to workshop key EDI issues.

The content explores how social discrimination shapes our everyday interactions and people's lived experiences of studying and working in higher education institutions. It considers how higher education professionals and colleagues can become better allies and accomplices, encouraging participants to imagine and develop better practices and strategies to produce a more welcoming campus and a more positive workplace.

Students will engage in a one-to-one discussion with university-based mentors about their ideas for enhancing policy and practice in higher education, thereby benefitting from their expertise in developing good practice. In this module we maintain a critical stance on how equality, diversity and inclusion are spoken about, addressed, challenged, ignored, resisted, rejected, belittled, etc. – in the organisations in which we work and in society more broadly. Students undertaking this module will be supported to think critically about equality, diversity, and inclusion with a view to translating these insights into actions that advance social justice in their institutions, professions, and personal lives.

## EDI Framework Objective 5: Engagement

<b>Objective 5: Engagement</b>			
<b>Understanding &amp; Working with Our Community</b>			
<b>No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Progress</b>
5.1	Continue to work in partnership with and resource staff networks.	Q1 2025 onwards	
5.2	Engage with the HEA to develop LGBT+ national action plan for higher education and corresponding reporting.	Q1 2025 onwards	
5.3	Establish new Parents and Age Friendly staff networks.	Q2 2026	Not due yet
5.4	Engage and partner with Students Union Equality Committee in delivery of EDI programme of work.	Q1 2025 onwards	
5.5	Develop and share EDI training and toolkits with UCC Student Clubs, Societies and EDI Staff Networks.	Q3 2025 onwards	
5.6	Develop and deliver an EDI checklist for UCC external suppliers/vendors.	Q3 2027 - Q3 2028	Not due yet
5.7	Organise and host annual National Conference for EDI at UCC.	Q2 2027	Not due yet
5.8	Create and deliver a cohesive communications and marketing framework for UCC, which includes an EDI-proofed internal communications action plan.	Q4 2025 onwards	
5.9	Develop and implement an EDI events calendar, with an annual event around EDI week.	Q3 2025 onwards	

### Action 5.1

Staff networks play a vital role in our university, and we are delighted to help develop and/or support such networks in UCC. By autumn 2024, UCC networks included the LGBT+, Mná, Race Equality, and Disability and Neurodivergence staff networks, and were joined by the most recent network to be developed, the Staff Carers Network, which was launched in October 2024. Both the 2022 and 2024 Staff Values and Culture survey gave a clear indication of the need for increased support, across the university, for staff who are carers. Two-thirds of all respondents in the staff surveys reported having a caring responsibility, of which approximately 20% had non-parental caring duties such as elder care or caring for a relative with disabilities or ongoing illness. The need to address this in a substantive way by the university is clear, and this network will help with supporting and advancing the needs of carers. The mnemonic for UCC values as set out in our Strategic Plan is CAIRDEAS, which is the Irish for friendship, and we came together last year in that spirit to launch our fifth staff Network – the UCC Staff Carers’ Network. The subject of the launch was ‘who cares for the carers?’ The EDI Unit holds quarterly meetings with all staff network Co-Chairs, to facilitate collaboration and to coordinate events. The EDI Unit supports the work of the networks through provision of a dedicated email address and website and assistance with event coordination, budget management and comms support. The

### Action 5.2

UCC has committed to developing an LGBT+ Action Plan, the first ever in an Irish HEI. Further to this, UCC is engaging with the HEA to develop an LGBT+ national action plan for higher education (with corresponding reporting obligations). The UCC LGBT+ Action Plan 2026–2028 (still in development) is the result of an extensive and inclusive process, shaped by the insights, experiences, and aspirations of our university community and our external partners.

The development of this Action Plan is grounded in:

- The UCC Values and Culture/ EDI Staff Survey (2024);
- a comprehensive consultation process across staff, students, and external organisations;
- expert facilitation workshops; and
- iterative review and feedback from university leadership.

It is our hope that this Action Plan, when launched, will act as a catalyst for systemic and sustainable change, supporting a culture where LGBT+ staff and students feel safe, respected, and celebrated. We look forward to its launch in early 2026.

**Action 5.3** – Yet to commence

#### **Action 5.4**

Engagement with the UCCSU takes place via regular meetings between EDI staff and individual UCCSU Officers and Representatives, and through inclusion of the UCCSU in key UCC EDI committees and working groups. The EDI Unit continues to engage and partner with Student Union Equality Committee in the delivery of the EDI programme of work. In 2024/25, monthly check-in meetings were set up between the UCCSU Equality Representative and the EDI Officer to share progress and practice updates and to explore collaboration and support possibilities, and the work of the EDI Unit continues to be a standing item on Equality Committee induction session. As noted above, student-focused EDI training was rolled out on Canvas in Q3 2024.

#### **Action 5.5**

A series of live trainings and workshops have been made available to staff and students, including Race Equality, Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment and Consent, Bystander, and Irish Sign Language. Additionally, an online course on Canvas, Equality and Diversity for Students, was rolled out for students in Q3 2024.

**Action 5.6** – Yet to commence

**Action 5.7** – Yet to commence

#### **Action 5.8**

While an institutional unified communication and marketing framework is being drafted through a collaboration between the UCC's VP Global Office and the EDI Unit, a number of initiatives were delivered successfully in 2025:

- **Engagement with the UCC Media & Communications and Marketing and Brand Impact teams** involves having EDI representatives in the media working group, and publishing high-impact, all-staff and public articles and social media posts that

highlight [EDI achievements](#) and [initiatives](#). Engagement with the [EDI Unit's LinkedIn](#) account increased by 31% (N=142 new connections) between June and December 2025.

- **Speak Out National Relaunch Campaign** – The online anonymous reporting tool, [Speak Out](#), was relaunched in 16 Irish HEIs in September 2025, following the establishment of the national office based in Trinity College Dublin. A UCC-based campaign involved all-staff Workvivo and social media posts issued by the UCC's Media and Communication Office and EDI Unit team. Information on Speak Out is also included in staff and student orientations. Additionally, digital screens across campus displayed promotional slides, and EDI Newsletters highlighted the tool to all staff and students. Once the first [Speak National Data Report](#) was launched in November 2025, UCC issued all-staff articles and social media posts. Additionally, the report and the tool were highlighted at ULT committee and working groups' meetings. **Action 5.9**

An [EDI events calendar](#) was developed and rolled out on SharePoint, which allows staff and students to add individual events to their own Outlook calendars. The calendar includes information on EDI-related events, training, dates of note both secular and religious, and meetings, and direct updating of the calendar by local units is encouraged. It is hoped that the calendar can become a comprehensive repository of EDI activity across the university.



Left to Right: Patrick Rice, Dr Jatin Nagpal, Emma Connolly, Niamh Kiely, Katie Marah, Dr Diarmuid Scully and Dr Sanaa Khabbar, Co-Chairs of the five staff networks with Dr Avril Hutch, EDI Director.

# EDI Engagement Examples

## ESVH/Bystander at Orientation - #students reached

This year, the EDI Unit were delighted to partner again with Celine Griffin and the Bystander Program in sharing a 40-minute slot in undergraduate orientations, international studies and postgrad student orientations. The Students Union were supplied with consent materials and they created a Consent Wall in the Student Union building, providing a visible commitment to addressing sexual violence in a high traffic area at such an important time of year.

In 2024, 7,914 incoming students received consent and Bystander Training at 2024 Orientation. This represents an 84% increase on 2023.

## Mycelial – Safe and Sound Theatre

On the 24 September, UCC Safe and Sound hosted a screening of the play Mycelial in partnership with Professor Maggie O'Neill from the School of Sociology, the Genders, Sexualities, and Families Research Cluster, UCC Futures network, and the Sexual Health Centre. The award-winning Open Clasp theatre company co-created this play with sex work activists from Aotearoa/New Zealand, Ireland and the UK, and was shown to a fully booked audience in the Shtepps. This event was part of marking the *International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers* in December.

## Launch of UCC Carers' Network 17/10/2024

We were delighted to be launching the UCC Staff Carers Network on October 17 from 14:00-15:00 in the CACSSS Seminar Room, Ground Floor, O'Rahilly Building, in the company of President John O'Halloran and invited guest speakers – Colin White (National Advocacy and Projects Manager, Irish Kidney Association), Yvonne Brewer-Spillane (full-time carer and UCC graduate), Peter Cox (Family Carers Ireland) and Trish Bourke (Senior Equality Officer, TUS) for a panel discussion on the theme 'Who cares for the Carers?'

## ESVH Class Reps trained 14/10/2024

On 14 October, Dr Caroline West delivered training on ending sexual violence at the Class Reps training, with 200 class reps present from all disciplines. Reps were advised on reporting processes, supports, further training such as the Bystander Program, and the approach of UCC towards building a culture of respect.

## National Coming Out Day marked – flags, lights 11/10/2024

To mark National Coming Out Day, the LGBT+ Pride flag and the Trans Pride flags flew over the North Wing ground level flagpoles. The main Quad was also lit in the rainbow colours.. This year's National Coming Out Day marks the third anniversary of President O'Halloran's inauguration of UCC's Rainbow Walkway - the first institution-led Rainbow Walkway on an Irish university campus. The recent re-painting of the Rainbow Walkway makes it a wonderfully bright and joyous symbol of UCC's commitment to its LGBT+ staff, students and Allies.

Sincere thanks for their support to the President's Office, the EDI Unit, Buildings and Estates, and General Services Duty Officers.

## Safe and Sound Soapbox

The UCC Safe and Sound project held a Staff Soapbox event on January 23rd 2025 in the Dora Allman Room, the Hub. The speakers at the event, who shared their work that is contributing to making UCC a more safe and sound place, were Dr Ciara Staunton, Gary Mulcahy, Dr Sharon Lambert, and Dr Caroline West.

## Equitas 2025

UCC was represented by Dr Avril Hutch at the **Equitas – EDI in Practice in Higher Education Conference 2025** on 18 and 19 June 2025 in Maynooth University, an annual conference open to EDI practitioners, academics across disciplines, researchers, graduate students, managers, administrators and all who are interested in ensuring equality, valuing and celebrating diversity, and promoting inclusion (EDI) in Higher Education.

## Pride in UCC (26 July – 3 August)

The President's Pride Lunch took place on Tuesday 29 July in the Hub Atrium. It is run annually as part of Cork Pride. This year's Cork Pride motto is "A Fearless Future. Your Pride, Your Culture." Well, we wanted to live up to that in UCC. Last year, we made murmurations. This year, courtesy of the LGBT+ Staff Network, attendees were invited to take part in making a Living Pride Quilt – a lovely initiative and a shared celebration of unity and pride and started this year to commemorate the 10th anniversary of both the Marriage Equality referendum and the Gender Recognition Act. This event was part of a wider series of events taking place in UCC to mark Cork Pride 2025. [For a full listing, click here.](#)

## EDI Activity Across UCC

There is much EDI-related activity across UCC. Here are some examples.

### Access Office

#### *Employability Internship programme*

On September 24, Access UCC held an information and training session for employers and other stakeholders on their [EmployAbility internship programme](#), covering areas such as disability-inclusive recruitment, and based on the lived experience of students with disabilities.

### Id+ Project

The id+ Project had a busy year in 2025. In April, as part of Cork's Lifelong Learning Festival, the id+ Certificate in Disability-Inclusive Practice students gave a presentation entitled 'My Student Journey'. In May, the Senior Teaching Fellows from id+ facilitated an online panel discussion- 'Reflections from a Co-Learning Classroom'. The same project in December held an online workshop, 'Co-Learning Inclusive Assessment Practices'. Informed by real world experience through the id+ futures project, this workshop examined a range of inclusive assessment methods designed to enhance accessibility and engagement for all learners. Participants explored practical approaches to designing and implementing tried and tested assessments that reflect diverse learning styles and foster student success.

Part of the id+ Project, id+ Futures, is a PATH4:Phase 2 funded initiative.

## Sanctuary

### *Refugee Week 24-28/3/2025*

March was truly Sanctuary Month in Cork with UCC's 8th annual [Refugee Week](#), now coordinated by the Office for the Vice-President for Global Engagement, running from 24-28 March, again covering a broad range of engagement. Additionally, SOFEIR-UCC's [Ireland and Transnational Solidarities](#) ran from Mar 21-22.

### *EU Passworld*

The education pathway known as “EU-Passworld” is an EU-funded three-year project aimed at linking community sponsorship to labour and education pathways through a multi-stakeholder consortium in Belgium, Ireland and Italy. This pathway designed, piloted, and implemented innovative complementary pathway for refugees with abilities who would otherwise not have the opportunity for postgraduate study.

University College Cork is delighted to be one of the first universities in Ireland collaborating on this project. UCC established a Community Sponsorship Group to support the student to integrate into Cork, committed to a fee waiver and a €10,000 bursary meaning that a scholarship could be offered to one refugee student currently residing in Uganda. The programmes offered were in the College of Science Engineering and Food Science. 39 candidates applied for the scholarship, 4 were interviewed and one conditional offer was made. The student took up a spot on the MSc in Industrial Biotechnology and Biomanufacturing programme in September 2024.

## Glucksman

The Glucksman is an inclusive organisation that invites diverse communities of interest and place to access and contribute to our programmes. The museum focuses on developing projects that relate to our exhibition programme as well as the three priority strands of our curatorial programme: Health and Wellbeing, Equality and Diversity, and Climate Action and Sustainability. Over the past 12 months, the Glucksman has developed creative projects with community groups including the Rainbow Club Centre for Autism, Cork Migrant Centre, Good Shepherd Cork, UCC Staff Carers Network, UCC Access Traveller Student Engagement Initiative, and Clonakilty Friends of Asylum Seekers. As part of the museum's Art Library programme, artworks from the UCC Art Collection have been brought to rural schools, hospitals, and care and community settings, ensuring that people who may not easily access cultural or creative experiences have opportunities to learn from and respond to contemporary artworks.

## The Library

The Library was active throughout the year. In spring, to mark the anniversary of the invasion of Ukraine, they hosted an evening of Ukrainian art, community engagement, and music, with participants, primarily Ukrainian women, now based in Cork, presenting their stories of coming to Ireland. This event was in conjunction with the [Unissued Diplomas](#) project and exhibition, which was on view in Boole Library's Ground Floor exhibition space. In July, they created a Pride display for Cork Pride 2025, highlighting the LGBT+ texts available to members (see image below).



Pride in the Boole Library, 2025

## Individual EDI-related Events & Initiatives

*Sally Hayden in conversation with Prof UK 12/9/2024*

On Thursday September 12, UCC's Aula Maxima was near capacity with people eager to hear from internationally renowned humanitarian, journalist, and photographer Sally Hayden. The event, organised by Dr Ruth Hally and Dr Cliona O'Gallchoir and supported by UCC's School of English and Digital Humanities, and the UCC Staff Bookclub, attracted people from across the country and demonstrated UCC's values as a University of Sanctuary.

*LGBT Culture Night Walking Tour 20/9/2025*

To celebrate Culture Night, September 20, the LGBT Staff Network co-founder, Cathal Kerrigan, led an [LGBT history walking-tour of UCC campus](#). Cathal is an inspiring guide, with unique knowledge and insight into UCC's LGBT past and present.

### *Inclusive Dance microcred (UCC & Dance Cork Firkin Crane) – accessibility and inclusion award X/9/2025*

A pioneering programme in inclusive dance has been celebrated at the Business to Arts Awards 2024. Inclusive Dance Cork, Ireland's first university-accredited introductory micro-credentials in inclusive dance, won the Community Foundation Ireland Creative Access Award. The micro-credentials were developed by University College Cork and Dance Cork Firkin Crane, with significant support from Suisha Inclusive Arts/Cope Foundation. [For more on this story, click here.](#)

### *CODA festival events in UCC 4-5/9/2025*

The Children of Deaf Adults (CODA) Festival held events in UCC on Friday 4 October, 14:30-18:00 and Saturday 5 October, 10:00-17:30. The conference is being organised in association with CODA UK and Ireland.

### *Cross-Border Feminisms: Reflections 24/2/2025*

On 24 February, researchers from UCC and UU came together to share their insights on North-South research projects. Organised in conjunction with the [Violence, Conflict, Gender](#) research cluster, it focused on the North-South Research projects, [Critical Epistemologies Across Borders](#), WoBla ([Women of the Borderlands: a Walking Biographical Study of Women's Everyday Life on the UK/Irish border](#)) with insights also from [Ultonia](#) and [TOGETHER: Collaborating Across Prison Walls](#).

Professor Maggie O'Neill said, "Feminism is for me about challenging and changing sexual and social inequalities and these two all island feminist projects 'Critical Epistemologies across Borders' (CEAB) and 'Women of the Borderlands' (WoBLa) do this in creative, meaningful and socially engaged ways, working *with* women. CEAB ensures women are included in political and constitutional discussions and WoBla is the first feminist sociological account of women/s border lives. Both projects will have real impact."

### *Unissued Diplomas*

As 24 February marked the 3rd anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Boole Library hosted Ukrainian women, now based in Cork, to present their stories of coming to Ireland, their incredible achievements, and the contributions they have made since their arrival. There was also a performance by the Children's Choir Voices of Peace and the rock band CoolBaby. This event was presented in conjunction with the [Unissued Diplomas](#) project and exhibition, that was on view in Boole Library's Ground Floor exhibition space.

### *Bystander Week 24-28/2/2025*

[Bystander Intervention](#) are having a powerful 2025 Bystander Intervention week (24-28 February) on campus, with over 400 students signing up at their Information hub during the week, committing to engage with the training and recognising the all of community response needed to end sexual harassment and violence. They are ending the week at UCC on Friday with a Staff Insight session where colleagues from across UCC will discuss the importance of Bystander Intervention training and how they have incorporated training into their academic teaching or as part of their staff training and development.

### *International Women's Day 8/3/2025*

Many units and groups across the UCC community marked International Women's Day in a variety of ways. This year's theme was Accelerate Action. This was reflected in the talks and

debates, not least in the inter-university discussion on the theme with UCC's President John O'Halloran and other HEI presidents, hosted by MTU.

Highlights included:

- One Million Stars at the Boole Library, a joint Mná/REN/Domhan Green, a powerful celebration of resilience, empowerment, and solidarity! Through the One Million Stars project, participants wove a future free from violence—where each star represents light, hope, and unity.
- Launch of a MAWS module "Researching Through Gendered & Intersectional Lenses: An Interdisciplinary Introduction" and a keynote with Prof Iris van der Tuin
- The School of Law's Annual *Women in Law* Forum on 12 March
- An exploration of *Woman or Witch? Negotiating Gender Roles and Redefining Witchcraft in Wartime Ukraine*, 12 March with Study of Religions
- Fuaime lecture series *Dancing across the pages': Women and jazz in the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland in the 1920s-30s* on 13 March with Drs Eileen Hogan and Ruth Stanley &
- Boole Library's marking of International Day of Mathematics, 14 March, with a focus on [Alicia Scott Boole](#)

The full listing can be seen here: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/edi/news/accelerate-action-for-ibd-2025.html>

Date	Time	Location	Event	Who
03-Mar	11 a.m. - 1 p.m.	MTU Cork School of Music	Presidents of Irish HEIs panel discussion on #AccelerateAction with Professor John O'Halloran	MTU
03-Mar	5 p.m.	L2 Electrical Engineering Building	Academic Feminism Panel	FemSoc
06-Mar	10-11 a.m.	Dora Allman Room	'Continuity or change in gendered practices in Higher Education?' from 11-12 with Professor Pat O'Connor (coffee from 10)	CUBS EDI Committee
06-Mar	11 a.m. - 1 p.m.	Tyndall National Institute	Wear Purple Day with interactive quiz to highlight the achievements of women in Tyndall National Institute.	Tyndall EDI Committee
06-Mar	2:30-5 p.m.	Dora Allman Room	Exploring Women's Health & Innovation and Accelerating Action!	APC EDW (CoMH)
06-Mar	6:30 p.m.	Kane G01	Sistory: An Informative Talk on the Importance of Women Throughout History	FemSoc (in collaboration with History Society)
06-Mar	7 p.m.	Devere Hall	The Shite Feminist Show with Rachel Galvo	FemSoc
07-Mar	9-10:30 a.m.	Léa's in the Glucksman	Irish Examiner International Women's Day Breakfast 2025	Irish Examiner
07-Mar	1-3 p.m.	Creative Zone, Boole Library	One Million Stars installation	Mná/REN/UCC Language Centre
07-Mar	2-5 p.m.	UCC	<a href="#">"Pick up the Pace" with local trailblazing women leaders</a>	Cork Migrant Centre, UCC Indian Alumni Society, UCC societies and others
08-Mar	2-4:30 p.m.	Cork City	<a href="#">A Feminist Walk of Cork 2</a>	UCC Futures and ISS21

## Student Activity

### UCCSU

In the 2024/25 the Student Union ran many events throughout the year which was designed to cater to all students on campus, these events ranged from club nights and concerts such as the *ABBAesque* concert in September 2024, to the more quiet and relaxing events like postgraduate painting and pizza which was held in Brookfield during the summer of 2024. The UCC students' union always makes sure to have events which cater to as many students as possible. Allowing for everyone to be involved in college life.

## Societies

In 2024/25, UCC's 116 societies delivered over 2000 events across two semesters, encompassing major productions, high-profile conferences, international tours, and impactful campaigns. Bród Society marked Cork Pride with a programme of celebrations, including a Drag Bingo fundraiser with Krystal Queer. Pop Culture Society hosted Jedward for RAG and their Sad Girl Songs Club Night. Dramat presented original productions of *Blue Hair and Pirates* and *Dead Outside*, Musical Theatre Society staged *The Wedding Singer*, and the Music Society ran both their Singer-Songwriter Competition and Battle of the Bands. The Traditional Irish Music Society delivered TradFest and undertook an extensive tour to Tanzania, Senegal, Copenhagen, and Edinburgh. Choral Society performed in Derry, Prague, and Cork, achieving a series of national and international titles.

Academic and advocacy-focused societies maintained a strong presence. Translational Medicine and Psychology Societies each hosted women's health conferences and Global Justice Society coordinated weekly solidarity protests. Feminist Society partnered with UCC Safe and Sound and the Medical Society to provide rapid HIV testing clinics. The Philosophical Society competed in the Irish Times Debating Competition and hosted a panel discussion on Russian aggression, while Sci-Fi, Warps, and NetSoc attracted large audiences to Kaizoku Con and WarpCon.

Societies also engaged internationally, with Economics Society travelling to Frankfurt and Strasbourg, French Society to Brussels and Lille, Science Society to London, and History Society alongside Ancient Civilisations & Mythology Society to Rome. Europa Society participated in the European Youth Event in Strasbourg, and Surgeon Noonan members travelled to Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia to observe projects funded by the almost €300,000 raised during the year.

Publications continued to thrive, with new editions of *Stíl*, *Polity*, *The F Word*, *Verdict*, *Ceartas*, *Breac*, *Etc. Magazine*, and the *UCC Student History Journal*.

Awards success was significant. UCC secured three National Society Awards at the BICS — Best Individual for Amy O'Callaghan, Best Departmental Society for Chemical Society, and Best Society for Pop Culture Society. The Traditional Irish Music Society was named Club/Society of the Year at the AMLÉ Awards. Dramat Society received the Judges' Discretionary Award for Best Accessibility and Best Makeup Artist at ISDA. Pop Culture Society's *Etc. Magazine* won Best Magazine Design and Layout at the Smedia Awards, and Psychology Society was recognised as Best Psychological Society by the Psychological Society of Ireland. Choral Society achieved first place in Sacred Music and the title of Ireland's University Choir of the Year at the All-Ireland Choral Intervarsities, second place at Gold Level in Mixed Voice at the Young Bohemia International Choral and Orchestral Competition in Prague, and both Ireland's Choir of the Year and first place in Church Music at the Cork International Choral Festival.

With regular screenings, workshops, and debates to large-scale festivals, international competitions, and award-winning publications, 2024/25 demonstrated the scale, diversity, and excellence of UCC Societies.

Individual societies have also been active. On 29 January, UCC Film and Photography and UCC Neurodiversity Student Societies hosted a sensory screening of a film, with the assistance of the Department of Film and Screen Media. and the EDI Unit. In the sensory screening, the lights were slightly dimmed, attendees were encouraged to move around if they wished, a quiet space was provided in a nearby room nearby to accommodate students who want a break. Attendees will be encouraged to bring blankets and snacks and in general whatever will make them feel the most comfortable. Fidget toys were available on the night, and subtitles and specific trigger warnings were on for the screening too.



Sample of UCCSU activity through 2025 (extract from @UCCSU Instagram)

## Appendix 1: Framework Objectives RAG-rated

Objective 1: Foundation			
Building EDI Leadership and Organisational Commitment			
No.	Action	Timeframe	Progress
1.1	Establish a new EDI Sub-Committee of the University Leadership Team	Q4 2024	
1.2	Develop EDI Champions Network across key schools/departments and units.	Q2 2025 onwards	
1.3	Appoint Vice-Deans for EDI across the four colleges.	Q1 2025	
1.4	Achieve Athena SWAN Silver award.	Q3 2025	
1.5	Appropriately resource EDI through core internal funding and capitalise on external funding opportunities to deliver EDI programmes.	Ongoing	
1.6	Embed EDI as a core pillar of the UCC quality assurance process.	Q1 2025 2025	
1.7	Embed EDI as a core pillar of the institutional audit process.	Q2 2025 onwards	
1.8	Identify areas for digitisation and automation within EDI.	Q1 2025 onwards	
1.9	Expand capabilities of the EDI Data Hub and develop dedicated EDI dashboard.	Q1 2025 onwards	
1.10	Develop an EDI toolkit to support university leaders and unit level decision makers in intentionally considering EDI as part of their decision-making processes.	Q1 2026	Not due yet
1.11	Develop EDI impact assessment for institutional policy and practice.	Q2 2026	Not due yet

Objective 2: Culture			
Ensuring an Inclusive, Safe and Respectful Culture			
No.	Action	Timeframe	Progress
2.1	Develop dedicated EDI Policy and Statement for Staff and Students.	Q4 2025	
2.2	Develop a new professional behavioural framework for staff, which translates our university values and culture to foster an inclusive working environment.	Q4 2025 - Q1 2026	
2.3	Scope establishment of independent dignity and respect/report and support hub.	Q1 2025-Q2 2027	
2.4	Implement HEA Consent Framework, including UCC Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedure and associated supports for staff and students.	Q1 2025-Q3 2025	
2.5	Implement HEA Race Equality Action Plan for staff and students.	Q1 2025 - Q4 2028	

2.6	Enhance supports and accommodations for disability and neurodiversity.	Q1 2025 - Q4 2028	
2.7	Enhance supports for older staff.	Q1 - Q4 2026	Not due yet
2.8	Develop a framework for staff and students who are carers.	Q1 - Q4 2026	Not due yet
2.9	Establish EDI awards scheme.	Q3 annually	
2.10	Establish annual EDI Gathering.	Q2 annually	
2.11	Undertake bi-annual Values & Culture/EDI Consultation with staff and students.	Q3 2026; Q3 2028	Not due yet

## Objective 3: Success

### Providing Access to Opportunity and Achievement

No.	Action	Timeframe	Progress
3.1	Develop new EDI training programme for all staff and students.	Q1 2026-Q2 2027	Not due yet
3.2	Expand the use of Accessibility auditing software, Anthology Ally, on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) to improve the accessibility of course materials.	Q1 2025 onwards	
3.3	Expand the adoption of the UCC Accessible VLE template to ensure a consistent student experience and a more inclusive accessible course design.	Q3 2025 onwards	
3.4	Ensure EDI is embedded in staff recruitment and induction processes.	Q1-Q2 2026	Not due yet
3.5	Ensure inclusion of EDI criteria in new staff performance review and career development process.	Q4 2025	
3.6	Develop a dedicated work life balance policy to support blended/flexible work for staff.	Q2 2025	
3.7	Develop a dedicated Staff Wellbeing Framework and Action Plan to embed a culture of staff wellbeing across the University in the development of systems, policies and resources to improve overall staff experience.	Q3 2025 onwards	
3.8	Renew accreditation to consolidate and further embed Sanctuary in UCC.	Q1 2025 onwards	
3.9	Undertake dedicated EDI consultation with research and research support staff to generate a baseline profile of understanding and practice of EDI in research and innovation.	Q2 2025 - Q2 2027	

## Objective 4: Growth

### Enhancing Education, Research & Scholarship

No.	Action	Timeframe	Progress
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4.1	Establish EDI Centre of Excellence for Curriculum, Research and Innovation to coordinate and execute EDI training and education.	Q1 2026 onwards	Not due yet
4.2	Develop EDI micro-credential and coordinate university-wide interfaculty initiative to bring courses together that relate to EDI in one offering.	Q1 2025 - Q2 2026	
4.3	Rollout of a Universal Design Badge for professional Services staff.	Q1 2025 onwards	
4.4	Continue to demonstrate good practice and enhance inclusive teaching, learning and assessment.	Q1 2025 onwards	
4.5	Undertake a digital accessibility audit of teaching and learning resources.	Q1-Q4 2027	Not due yet
4.6	Continue to support digital accessibility through provision of staff development offerings.	Q1 2025 onwards	
4.7	Undertake review of First Year Assessment across undergraduate programmes in four Colleges.	Q1 2025 - Q4 2026	
4.8	Audit UCC's research to the EDI/SDG 5 & 10 and support researchers to understand impact of their work in these areas.	Q2-Q4 2026	Not due yet
4.9	Establish an EDI Early Career Grants Scheme for academics, researchers and practitioners.	Q1 2026	Not due yet
4.10	Encourage scholarship on inclusive teaching, learning and assessment.	Q1 2026	Not due yet
4.11	Develop/launch training course on intercultural competence and multiculturalism.	Q2-Q4 2027	Not due yet

## Objective 5: Engagement

### Understanding & Working with Our Community

No.	Action	Timeframe	Progress
5.1	Continue to work in partnership with and resource staff networks.	Q1 2025 onwards	
5.2	Engage with the HEA to develop LGBT+ national action plan for higher education and corresponding reporting.	Q1 2025 onwards	
5.3	Establish new Parents and Age Friendly staff networks.	Q2 2026	Not due yet
5.4	Engage and partner with Students Union Equality Committee in delivery of EDI programme of work.	Q1 2025 onwards	
5.5	Develop and share EDI training and toolkits with UCC Student Clubs, Societies and EDI Staff Networks.	Q3 2025 onwards	
5.6	Develop and deliver an EDI checklist for UCC external suppliers/vendors.	Q3 2027 - Q3 2028	Not due yet
5.7	Organise and host annual National Conference for EDI at UCC.	Q2 2027	Not due yet

5.8	Create and deliver a cohesive communications and marketing framework for UCC, which includes an EDI-proofed internal communications action plan.	Q4 onwards	2025	
5.9	Develop and implement an EDI events calendar, with an annual event around EDI week.	Q3 onwards	2025	