



Together with Pride:
LGBT+
Action Plan
2026 – 2028

University College Cork



Language Statement

We recognise that terminology and language are ever evolving and often contested, and one term can never speak to the diverse lived realities of all people within the LGBT+ community, especially given our global campus network.

In this Action Plan, we use the acronym LGBT+ as an umbrella term to encompass identities including, but not limited to, lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, aromantic, queer, transgender, non-binary and intersex.

Foreword from the President of University College Cork

University College Cork has a long and proud tradition of leadership in LGBT+ inclusion. UCC was the first constituent university of the National University of Ireland to officially recognise an LGBT+ student society in 1989, with an LGBT+ staff network launched in 2008, reflecting our deep and enduring commitment to supporting our LGBT+ community¹.

This commitment has continued to evolve and strengthen over the decades.

In 2019, UCC launched the Proud Ally Network, affirming the essential role of allyship in fostering an inclusive university environment. I am proud to count myself among its members. Each year, our community comes together through UCC Together with Pride, and for the past three years, it has been my privilege to host the President's Pride Event—an important celebration of visibility, solidarity, and equality on our campus.

This Action Plan aligns strongly with the **National LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Strategy II 2024–2028**, which emphasises the responsibility of public bodies to create environments that are safe, welcoming, and equitable for LGBTIQ+ people. It also builds on UCC's ongoing commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, as outlined through our institutional strategies and frameworks.



Today, we are proud to launch the first **LGBT+ Action Plan in an Irish university**. This is both an historic milestone and a clear signal of UCC's ambition: to ensure that every LGBT+ student and staff member feels valued, supported, and empowered to succeed.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to all those who contributed to the development of this plan. Your courage, expertise, and commitment have shaped an ambitious roadmap for change.

Together, we continue to build a university where everyone belongs.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which reads "John O'Halloran". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Professor John O'Halloran
President,
University College Cork

Foreword from the Co-Chairs of the UCC LGBT+ Action Plan Working Group

The **UCC LGBT+ Action Plan 2026–2028** is the result of an extensive and inclusive development process, shaped by the insights, experiences, and aspirations of our university community and our external partners.

The development of this Action Plan was 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.

We wish to extend our sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed their time, energy, and expertise. Your voices directly inform the priorities, actions, and commitments set out in this plan. Our approach to this plan purposely avoids a deficit-oriented lens on LGBT+ lives. While many LGBT+ people require supports and this Action Plan contains actions that aim to provide these supports, this Action Plan seeks also to proactively ensure that LGBT+ lives are meaningfully reflected in and protected by the everyday fabric of university life.

It is our hope that this Action Plan will act as a catalyst for systemic and sustainable change, supporting a culture where LGBT+ staff and students feel safe, respected, and celebrated.

The Action Plan is structured around a five-pillar strategic framework, encompassing Foundation, Culture, Success, Growth, and Engagement, in line with Belonging at UCC 2025 - 2028. Across these pillars, the Action Plan commits UCC to strengthening leadership, governance and accountability; creating a safe, respectful and visible culture of LGBT+ inclusion; supporting the wellbeing, progression and achievement of LGBT+ staff and students; embedding LGBT+ inclusive practice across education, training and research; and deepening engagement with LGBT+ internal networks and external community partners.

The actions outlined for 2026–2028 are designed to deliver measurable and sustainable change. They include policy review and development, enhanced visibility and awareness-raising, expanded pastoral and professional supports, inclusive education and training initiatives, strengthened research and mentoring networks, and structured engagement with LGBT+ communities beyond the university. Clear responsibilities, timelines and measures of progress have been identified to support accountability and continuous improvement.

By working collectively and holding ourselves accountable, we aim to embed LGBT+ inclusion as a long-term institutional priority and to cultivate a university community where LGBT+ people are not only safe and respected but valued and celebrated as an integral part of UCC's culture, scholarship and civic mission.

Dr Diarmuid Scully, *Co-Chair, LGBT+ Staff Network 2022-25*

Ciara Murphy, *Co-Chair, LGBT+ Staff Network 2023-25*

Dr Avril Hutch, *Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*

Dr Aoife Neary, *Co-Chair LGBT+ Staff Network 2025-26*

Anne-Marie Curtin, *EDI Officer*

Christopher Walsh, *Co-Chair, LGBT+ Staff Network 2025-26*



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LGBTQ+ Action Plan



Image courtesy of Cork LGBT Archive
corklgbtarchive.com/items/show/1270



Introduction

UCC is committed to advancing LGBT+ staff and student experience as a core component of its institutional mission. This commitment is embedded in *Securing Our Future: UCC Strategic Plan (2023)*, which places inclusive excellence, equity, and belonging at the centre of the university's strategic direction.

The **UCC LGBT+ Action Plan 2026–2028** builds on significant national and institutional developments aimed at addressing LGBT+ inequality and discrimination across the higher education sector. It aligns strongly with the **National LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Strategy II 2024–2028**, which provides a national framework for driving positive change within public bodies, including higher education institutions.

This Action Plan forms part of UCC's broader commitment to creating a safe, inclusive, and equitable environment for all staff and students. It represents the next step in a long tradition of LGBT+ leadership at UCC, building on decades of activism, community support, and institutional commitment.

Our Approach

As a public sector body, UCC has statutory obligations under the IHREC Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, which requires proactive steps to eliminate discrimination, promote equality, and protect human rights across all operations. This Action Plan was developed having regard to the protections set out in the Universities Act, 1997.

The Action Plan is also aligned with:

- National LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Strategy II 2024–2028
- UCC Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Framework 2025–2028
- Athena Swan Silver Action Plan 2025–2030

This is the first LGBT+ Action Plan developed in an Irish university, drawing from national and international best practice models, including LGBT+ action plans and equality strategies from universities across Europe, the UK, and beyond. See Appendix 5: Frameworks.

Working Group Membership

The LGBT+ Working Group was convened to lead the development of this Action Plan, comprising members from academic units, professional services, the Students' Union, and external LGBT+ experts. Student participation was coordinated through UCC Students' Union.

Working Group Co-Chairs:

- Dr Diarmuid Scully
- Ciara Murphy
- Dr Avril Hutch
- Dr Aoife Neary
- Anne-Marie Curtin
- Christopher Walsh

Members include:

- EDI Office representatives
- Academic and professional services staff
- UCC Students' Union representatives

See [Appendix 6](#) for full membership of this group.

Pillar Chairs for Consultation:

- Dr Diarmuid Scully
- Ciara Murphy
- Dr Avril Hutch
- Dr Aoife Neary
- Gordon Grehan, Education Manager, ShoutOut Ireland

External advisors: University College London and University of Sussex, UK; Monash University, Australia.

Consultation Process

The development of the UCC LGBT+ Action Plan 2026–2028 was informed by a multi-layered, evidence-based consultation process, including:

- **Values and Culture/EDI Staff Survey (March 2024)**– capturing experiences of inclusion, discrimination, and belonging.
- Desk Review (April – August 2025) – reviewing national frameworks and LGBT+ action plans from other universities internationally.
- Expert-led Workshops (May 2025) – facilitated by ShoutOut and UCC specialists.
- External Stakeholder Consultations (May 2025) – with sectoral and community organisations.
- Online Submissions Platform: Enabled anonymous contributions, broadening participation and capturing underrepresented voices.
- Student Union Engagement (April-July 2025) – ensuring student voices and lived experience directly informed the Plan.
- Iterative Working Group Co-Chair Meetings – throughout Q4 2025 and Q1 2026
- Consultation with wider Working Group – throughout Q3 and Q4 2025

This process ensured the Action Plan is grounded in lived experience, rooted in evidence, and reflective of UCC's institutional context.

Review Process

The review process ensured rigour, clarity, and accountability:

- Iterative drafting and stakeholder feedback
- Internal review by EDI committees and the LGBT+ Staff Network
- Student Union evaluation
- External review
- Governance review through the EDI ULT Sub-committee
- Final approval from UCC University Leadership Team and relevant Committees of Governing Authority

Strategic Framework: Five-Pillar Model

The UCC LGBT+ Action Plan 2026–2028 is structured around a **Five-Pillar Model**, supported by a robust framework for **implementation, monitoring, and evaluation**. The pillars are interrelated and mutually reinforcing, ensuring a whole-institution approach to LGBT+ inclusion.

1

Pillar 1: Foundation

Leadership, governance, and accountability

This pillar focuses on embedding LGBT+ inclusion within institutional structures through strong leadership, clear governance arrangements, policy alignment, and accountability mechanisms.

2

Pillar 2: Culture

Creating a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment

Actions under this pillar aim to strengthen visibility, promote allyship, address discrimination, and ensure that all members of the university community feel safe, respected, and affirmed.

3

Pillar 3: Success

Supporting staff and student wellbeing, progression, and achievement

This pillar prioritises pastoral support, professional development, mentoring, and addressing structural barriers that impact LGBT+ staff and students' experiences and outcomes.

4

Pillar 4: Growth

Inclusive education, training, and research

This pillar supports the development of inclusive curricula, professional learning, management capability, and research capacity, ensuring LGBT+ inclusion is embedded across teaching, learning, and scholarship.

5

Pillar 5: Engagement

Strengthening community and external partnerships

Actions focus on meaningful engagement with internal networks and external stakeholders, including civil society organisations, to foster collaboration, shared learning, and community impact.



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Implementation, Monitoring & Evaluation

UCC will adopt a structured approach to implementation, led by the LGBT+ Working Group.

Implementation includes:

- Action planning across colleges and units
- Training, mentoring, and curriculum development
- Resource allocation and support tools

Monitoring includes:

- Data collection and analysis
- KPI reporting
- Feedback channels for staff and students
- Annual updates via the Institutional EDI Annual Report

Evaluation includes:

- Mid-term review (2027)
- Final evaluation (2028)
- Assessment of cultural and institutional change
- Recommendations for future planning cycles

UCC is committed to embedding LGBT+ inclusion as a long-term institutional priority.

Appendix 1:

LGBT+ Framework Action Plan 2026 – 28

Pillar 1: Foundation				
	Action	Measure of Success	Timeframe	Action Owner
1.1	Establish LGBT+ Working Group to implement LGBT+ Action Plan.	ToR drafted; roles appointed; meetings scheduled, report to EDI ULT SC quarterly.	From March 2026 (ongoing)	LGBT+ Network; EDI ULT SC
1.2	Review and amend identified University policies, procedures and schedules for opportunities to strengthen LGBT+ inclusion. Provide recommendations.	Relevant policies identified through EDI Staff Survey and reviewed; recommendations drafted; amendments submitted.	June–Sept 2026; from Sept 2026	Policy Support Manager, OCLA, P&C Forum, EDI ULT SC
1.3	Undertake review of UCC Gender Identity and Expression Policy for UCC Staff and Students (2018).	Review and update GIEP Policy. Undertake national benchmarking and consultation with recent policy users. Develop toolkits for managers and policy users. Roll out training on the new, updated policy.	June 2026–March 2027	EDI Office/LGBT+ WG, The Trans Research Alliance Network of Staff and Students UCC (TRANSS UCC), EDI Policy Working Group
1.4	Develop LGBT+ Hub on SharePoint/ website to create a single location for LGBT+ resources and supports.	Research completed; Hub created; webpage published.	Q4 2026/Q1 2027	Webmaster, EDI Office, LGBT+ WG

Pillar 2: Culture				
	Action	Measure of Success	Timeframe	Action Owner
2.1	Develop and disseminate LGBT+ safety guidance for staff/students on placements and travel.	Advisories reviewed; guidance created; circulated.	Semester 1 2026/27	OCLA, P&C, EDI
2.2	Increase LGBT+ visibility on campus through materials, symbols, and annual Pride actions.	Materials created; flags flown; visibility maintained.	Semester 1 2026/27	Estates, Communications, EDI
2.3	Establish dedicated LGBT+ awareness raising campaign.	Initiatives promoted; stories published; visibility increased.	Semester 1 2026/27	EDI, LGBT+ Staff Network
2.4	Develop anti-homophobic/transphobic bullying guidelines for staff and students.	Guidelines drafted; mechanisms updated, including Speak Out. Handbooks for managers developed/ launched and training provided on same annually.	Semester 1 2026/27	EDI, P&C, Student Experience

Pillar 3: Success				
	Action	Measure of Success	Timeframe	Action Owner
3.1	Advance LGBT+ pastoral and allies support.	Supports expanded; campaign relaunched; Safe Adults list created; award introduced; promote pronoun use on email signatures, guidance promoted; relaunch <i>Proud Allies</i> initiative; launch LGBT+ Staff Award; build partnerships.	Semester 1 2026/27	EDI, P&C, LGBT+ Staff Network
3.2	Develop initiatives to support LGBT+ researchers including mentoring & networks.	Needs assessed; programmes developed. Align with Athena Swan Action 2.2.13)	From Sept 2026	Research Office, EDI, UCC Library
3.3	Address job precarity; involve LGBT+ staff in planning decisions.	Consultations held; proposals submitted. Align with Athena Swan Action 2.2.2, 2.2.3)	From Sept 2026 (ongoing)	ULT, EDI, P&C



Pillar 4: Growth

	Action	Measure of Success	Timeframe	Action Owner
4.1	Develop LGBT+ student inclusivity guide & orientation materials.	Guides created; uploaded; orientation delivered.	Sept 2026	LGBT+ Network, EDI Office
4.2	Develop LGBT+ inclusive practice guide for staff & orientation slide.	Guide produced; published; slide included.	Sept 2026	LGBT+ Network, EDI Office, Staff Wellbeing and Development
4.3	Create LGBT+ manager toolkit/ checklist & deliver training.	Toolkit created; training delivered.	Sept 2026	LGBT+ Network, EDI Office, Staff Wellbeing and Development
4.4	Launch Workwise LGBT+ training & source/develop in-person training.	Course launched; two annual in-person training sessions delivered.	Sept 2026; Mar/ Nov annually	EDI Office, P&C
4.5	Establish database of all UCC researchers working on LGBT+ research and education to facilitate cross-disciplinary, cross-sectoral engagement.	Profiles reviewed; database created; published.	Mar 2025–Mar 2027; Reviewed annually.	Research Office, EDI, Library
4.6	Produce a series of LGBT+ inclusive materials and resources which will be accessible within the LGBT+ repository for potential use across healthcare and teacher education professions.	Materials produced and available in LGBT+ repository.	Q2 2026	Trans Research Alliance Network of Staff and Students (TRANSS) UCC Research Working Group; School of Education EDI Committee, EDI ULT SC

Pillar 5: Engagement

	Action	Measure of Success	Timeframe	Action Owner
5.1	Appoint dedicated LGBT+ Officer	Develop business case/job specification for role to support identification of funding stream. Role approved and filled.	Aug 2026	EDI, P&C, Access; Events; LGBT+ Network
5.2	Establish annual UCC and external stakeholder LGBT+ community roundtable	Create task and finish working group to develop MoU for UCC engagement with LGBTQI+ community groups	Sept 2026	Cork Interagency Group, LGBT+ Civil Society Organisations, EDI, Community Engagement UCC
5.3	Audit LGBT+ events; create repository; develop communications plan.	Audit completed; repository created; communications plan implemented.	Nov 2026	EDI, LGBT+ Working Group



Artist: Orlagh O'Brien



Appendix 3: LGBT+ Acronym Guide

(courtesy of Shout Out)

Terminology regarding sexual orientation, variations in sex characteristics, and gender identity and expression is constantly changing and the terms and definitions provided in this short guide are current as of the publication of this Action Plan. Additionally, this guide is not intended to be an exhaustive list. Ultimately, it is best practice to use the terminology that the individual or specific group prefer and when in doubt, ask.

- **Lesbian**
Women who are primarily sexually and/or romantically attracted to other women. Inclusive of trans women and non-binary, gender-fluid, or genderqueer people who identify with the term.
- **Gay**
Men who are sexually and/or romantically attracted to men, and women who are attracted to women. Some people across the LGBT+ spectrum also use “gay” as an umbrella descriptor.
- **Bisexual**
Attraction to more than one gender. This includes, but is not limited to, male and female, and explicitly includes non-binary, gender-fluid, and agender people.
- **Queer**
A reclaimed term used as an umbrella descriptor for LGBTQIA+ identities. Also used in academic and cultural contexts such as Queer Studies or Queer Literature.
- **Asexual (Ace)**
People who experience little or no sexual attraction. Asexual people may still experience romantic attraction and form relationships. The spectrum includes identities such as demisexual and grey-asexual.
- **Aromantic***
Having little or no romantic feeling toward others: experiencing little or no romantic desire or attraction.
- **Pansexual**
Attraction to all genders, or attraction regardless of gender.
- **Transgender (Trans)**
People whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. Example: a person assigned male at birth who identifies as female.
- **Intersex**
People born with sex characteristics (chromosomes, hormones, and/or anatomy) that do not fit typical definitions of male or female. Intersex variations can be identified at birth, puberty, adulthood, or posthumously.
- **+**
Represents all other identities under the broader Queer umbrella that are not explicitly named.

*Definition from Merriam-Webster



Appendix 4:

History of LGBT+ Community at UCC

Dr Diarmuid Scully

For most of UCC's history, LGBT+ staff and students were silent and invisible. If detected, they were liable to shaming, exclusion, and legal penalties. Their sexuality - 'the love that dare not speak its name' - was defined by church, state and many medical authorities as sinful, criminal, and pathological. When Queen's College Cork (renamed UCC in 1908) was founded in 1845, the death penalty still theoretically existed for some forms of consensual, adult, same-sex sexual activity. The last two men executed in Britain and Ireland under this legislation were hanged in 1835 in England. The death penalty was abolished in 1861, but legislative repression continued. John A. Murphy's *The College* (Cork University Press, 1995) p. 236 provides a rare glimpse into its impact on UCC, citing the expulsion of a student in the 1930s. The same homophobic laws that imprisoned Oscar Wilde in England in 1895 applied in the Republic of Ireland until 1993.

Since then, the status and public perception of LGBT+ people in Ireland have been transformed, and UCC's campus testifies to this transformation. On the thirtieth anniversary of decriminalisation (2023), UCC and Gay Project, Cork, held a commemorative tree-planting ceremony outside the O'Rahilly Building, close to the Rainbow Walkway. The Walkway itself was installed in 2021; it reflects the design and colours of the Progress Pride flag (2018), which in turn respond to the original Rainbow Pride flag (1978).

The Progress Pride flag most recently appears in the Rainbow Stars painted in the Boole Library's main stairwell (2026). The idea of Pride protests and celebrations emerged from the international movements for LGBT+ rights that followed New York's Stonewall Riots in 1969. The Sexual Liberation Movement (1973) and Irish Gay Rights Movement (1974) initiated the Republic of Ireland's LGBT rights struggle. They were followed by Liberation for Lesbians (1978), the Friends of Eon, Ireland's first Trans group (1978), the National Gay Federation (1979), and regional groups including Cork Gay Collective (1980), which organised Ireland's first National Gay Conference (1981).

UCC's open LGBT+ history began in this period too, with student debates in 1979 and 1980 leading to the foundation of the student Gay Soc (1980). A combination of LGBT+ student activism and Students' Union and staff allyship prevailed upon UCC's governing body to recognise the Gay Soc in 1989, making UCC the first constituent University of the National University of Ireland (NUI) to recognise an LGBT+ student society.

A meeting of LGBT+ staff in 2007 led to the foundation of UCC's LGBT+ Staff Network; it was officially launched in 2008. On the tenth anniversary of the Network's foundation, the University flew the Rainbow Pride flag from an official flagpole for the first time (2017), and a year later it became the first NUI university to fly the Trans Pride flag from an official flagpole (2018). Since then, the University, in collaboration with the LGBT+ Staff Network, has flown those flags on key dates in the LGBT+ calendar. The development of the Gender Identity and Expression Policy (2018), establishment of the Rainbow Alliance for staff (2019), creation of the Rainbow Walkway (2021), the Proud Ally campaign for students (2023) and the President's Pride Event (2023) further enhanced LGBT+ inclusion and visibility in UCC.

Given the long history of shame and hatred imposed on LGBT+ people, the flying of flags and other visible demonstrations of support and allyship for the LGBT+ community by official bodies, institutions, and individuals are not performative: they are genuinely meaningful and a pledge to include, honour and protect LGBT+ staff and students.



Appendix 5:

Frameworks

UCC EDI Frameworks

- [UCC Strategic Plan: Securing Our Future \(2023- 2028\)](#)
- [Belonging at UCC: A strategic Framework for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion \(2025-2028\)](#)

European and National LGBT+ Strategy & Guidance Documents

- [European Commission Guidelines for Strategies and Action Plans to Enhance LGBTIQ Equality \(2022\)](#)
- [National LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Strategy 2024-2028](#)
- [National LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Strategy Action Plan 2024-2028](#)
- [LGBT Ireland Strategic Plan Making Ireland the Best Place in Europe to be LGBTQI+ 2023-2027](#)
- [Belong To 'You Belong Here' Strategic Plan 2025-2027](#)
- [ShoutOut Strategic Plan 2025-2027](#)
- [TENI Supporting Transgender Inclusion in the Workplace: Guidelines for Employers and Employees](#)
- [Employer's Toolkit for LGBTQ+ Inclusion](#)

International University LGBT+ Action Plans

- [University of Sussex LGBTQ+ Inclusion Action Plan](#)
- [University of Sheffield LGBT+ Equality Strategy & Action Plan](#)
- [University of Exeter LGBTQ+ Action Plan](#)
- [University College London LGBTQ+ Action Plan](#)
- [University of Melbourne LGBTIQA+ Inclusion Action Plan](#)
- [Monash University Rainbow Communities and LGBTIQA+ Action Plan 2025-2030](#)

Appendix 6:

Full LGBT+ Action Plan Working Group Membership

Ryan Biskupović-Goulding,

LGBT+ Staff Network

Dr Silvia Brandi,

LGBT+ Staff Network

Fergal Crowley,

Welfare Officer UCCSU 2025-2026

Anne-Marie Curtin,

EDI Officer

Barbara Diener,

Chair EDI Committee, UCC Library

Dr Avril Hutch,

EDI Director

Gordon Grehan,

Shout-out (external facilitator)

Ciara Murphy,

Co-chair LGBT+ Staff network 2023-2025

Dr Aoife Neary,

Current Co-chair, LGBT+ Staff Network

Mary O'Rourke,

Past Co-chair LGBT+ Staff Network

Maurice Ryder,

LGBT+ Staff Network, Head of Web Content

Dr Diarmuid Scully,

Co-chair LGBT+ Staff Network, 2022-2025

Lucrecia Luna Smeed,

PG Student Assistant, EDI Office

Christopher Walsh,

Current Co-chair LGBT+ Staff Network

Dr Darius Whelan,

LGBT+ Staff Network





EDI Office
South Lodge,
University College Cork
Cork, Ireland
edioffice@ucc.ie

ucc.ie/en/edi

