University College Cork

2022

**Annual Quality Report
University College Cork
Reporting Period 2020-2021**

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PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM
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Introduction and Overview of Institution

This is the AQR for **University College Cork** for the reporting period **1 September 2020 - 31 August 2021.**

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

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

Proud to be ranked in the top 2% of universities in the world, a degree from UCC ensures that graduates are 'World Ready and Work Ready'. UCC is unrivalled in the quality of its academic programmes and research, its collaborations with industry, the beauty of its campus and its vibrant student life, enjoyed by over 21,000 students from over 104 countries. With over 3,400 students and one third of our staff from oversees, UCC is a true place of international learning.

The AQR was developed with input with senior officers of the University and was reviewed by Academic Board. The AQR was approved for submission by the University Management team (UMT) on the recommendation of the Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC).

PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

1.0 Internal QA Framework

1.1 Governance and Management of Quality

Quality at UCC
Vision, Mission and Values
Our **Vision** is to be a leading university of independent thinkers.
Our **Mission** is to create, understand and share knowledge and apply it for the good of all.
Our core **Values** guide and underpin our actions and our processes:
- creativity
- responsiveness
- transparency
- scholarship
- freedom of expression
- integrity
- equality
- diversity
- respect

Our key strategic aim is to deliver an innovative academic mission. The following goals will inform that mission:
Goal One: Implement an academic strategy to deliver an outstanding, student-centred teaching and learning experience with a renewed, responsive and research-led curriculum at its core.

Goal Two: Be a leading university for research, discovery, innovation, entrepreneurship, commercialisation and societal impact.

Goal Three: Create value for our community through an international outlook and informed and creative engagement on local and global issues.

Goal Four: Attract, develop, support and retain staff of the highest quality, thereby ensuring a diverse staff who are enabled to reach their full potential.

Goal Five: Strengthen our infrastructure and resource base.

The University Strategy and goals are underpinned by an institutional commitment to a quality culture based on enhancement:
"By embedding a strong quality-enhancement ethos, we will use our quality processes to ensure a culture and experience of best practice in the delivery of our academic mission, demonstrating our commitment to continuous evolution and improvement." Strategic Plan 2017 – 2022, p. 23.

UCC 2022: Delivering a Connected University
UCC 2022 replaces the final two years of the *Strategic Plan 2017-2022 Independent Thinking – Shared Ambition* https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/strategicplanning/UCCStrategicPlan2017-2022.pdf. It sets out a thematic prioritisation of our strategy, as well as the transformative changes to our core operations in response to geopolitical challenges, the escalating climate crisis and accelerating societal and economic pressures

associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.   This strategic pivot identifies our key strategic priorities for the period 2021-2022, clustered within five interconnected thematic pillars: Learning and Teaching; Research and Innovation; Student Success; People and Organisational Culture; and Infrastructure and Resources. Deeply rooted in extensive collaboration both within and outside UCC, this two-year plan builds on our strengths in student focus, sustainability, and community and global engagement, to identify actions to respond to the current crisis and position UCC for long-term success

Quality Enhancement Policy

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

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

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

The practical realization of the goals outlined in our vision, mission and values statement is made apparent in the University's Priority Actions which set out activities and projects over the period of the strategic plan. Progress and development against Priority Actions are managed by, and reported on, through the University Management Team. UMT adopts an Annual Plan approach to monitor progress internally whereby strategic goals are embedded and operationalised in the quality procedures and processes University-wide, both horizontally and vertically, for education, research and services.

University-wide there are a range of quality policies and procedures which link to, and support, progression of the strategic goals. These approaches are based on the principles of expert external peer review, external

stakeholder engagement, internal stakeholder engagement and robust internal approval, review and monitoring approaches. Such approaches are exemplified by:

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

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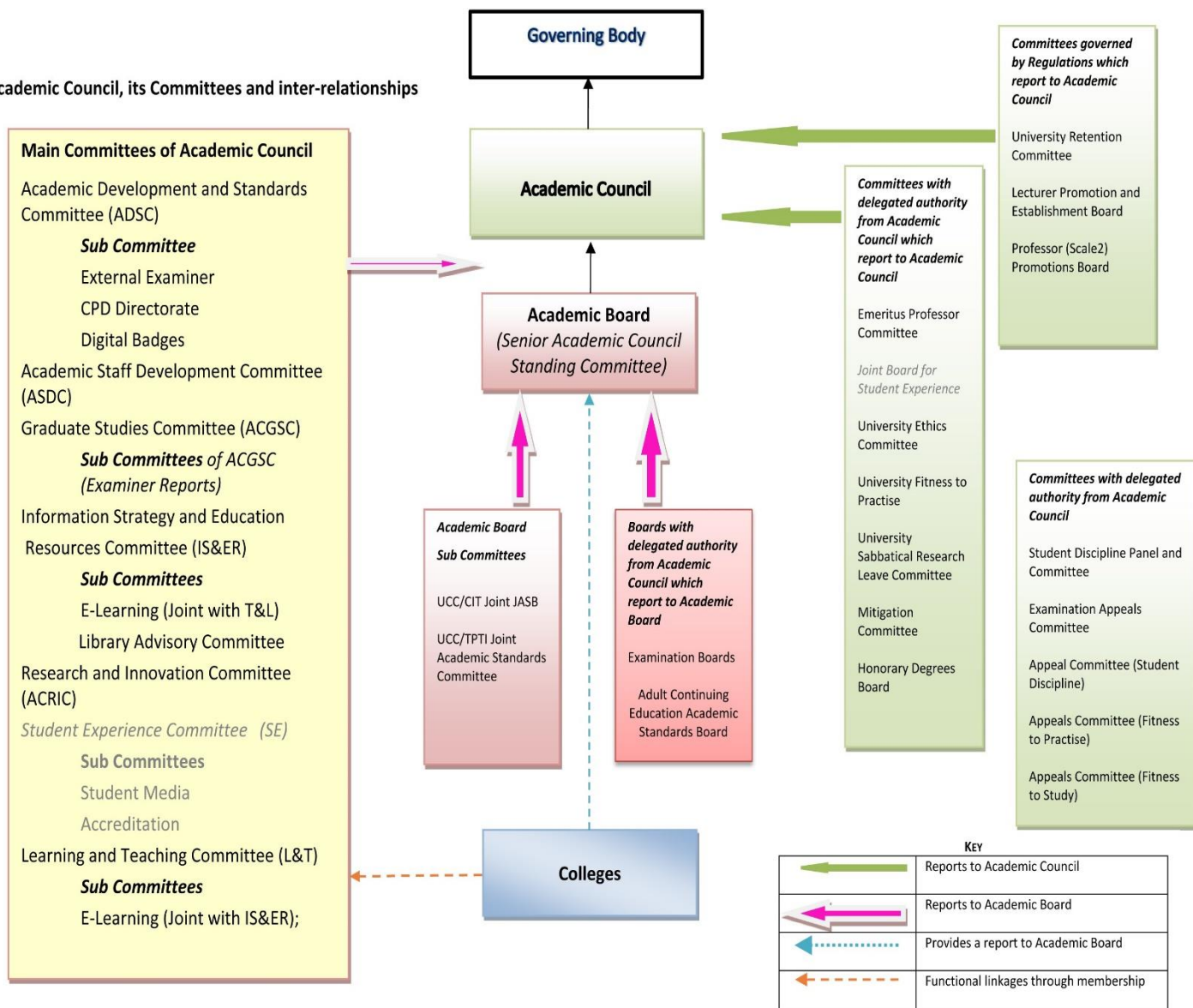

Academic Council and Academic Board

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

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

The main strands of institution-level decision-making fora for quality are the Quality Enhancement Committee and Academic Council both of which are under oversight of Governing Body. UCC Organisational Structure | University College Cork

Academic Council, its Committees and inter-relationships

Governing Body

Academic Council

Main Committees of Academic Council

Academic Development and Standards Committee (ADSC)

    Sub Committee

    External Examiner

    CPD Directorate

    Digital Badges

Academic Staff Development Committee (ASDC)

Graduate Studies Committee (ACGSC)

    Sub Committees of ACGSC (Examiner Reports)

Information Strategy and Education Resources Committee (IS&ER)

    Sub Committees

    E-Learning (Joint with T&L)

    Library Advisory Committee

Research and Innovation Committee (ACRIC)

Student Experience Committee (SE)

    Sub Committees

    Student Media

    Accreditation

Learning and Teaching Committee (L&T)

    Sub Committees

    E-Learning (Joint with IS&ER);

Academic Board
(Senior Academic Council Standing Committee)

Academic Board Sub Committees

UCC/CIT Joint JASB

UCC/TPTI Joint Academic Standards Committee

Boards with delegated authority from Academic Council which report to Academic Board

Examination Boards

    Adult Continuing Education Academic Standards Board

Colleges

Committees with delegated authority from Academic Council which report to Academic Council

Emeritus Professor Committee

Joint Board for Student Experience

University Ethics Committee

University Fitness to Practise

University Sabbatical Research Leave Committee

Mitigation Committee

Honorary Degrees Board

Committees governed by Regulations which report to Academic Council

University Retention Committee

Lecturer Promotion and Establishment Board

Professor (Scale2) Promotions Board

Committees with delegated authority from Academic Council

Student Discipline Panel and Committee

Examination Appeals Committee

Appeal Committee (Student Discipline)

Appeals Committee (Fitness to Practise)

Appeals Committee (Fitness to Study)

KEY

→	Reports to Academic Council
→	Reports to Academic Board
←	Provides a report to Academic Board
←	Functional linkages through membership

Quality Enhancement Committee

The Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC), chaired by the President, reports annually to Governing Body. The QEC's role is to support the University's mission and strategy for excellence in learning, research and related services through developing and embedding a culture of quality enhancement based on the outcomes of robust expert peer review and informed by ongoing analysis of key quality indicators. In fulfilling its remit, the Quality Enhancement Committee advises UMT and Academic Council on key quality issues arising with implications for strategy or policy development. It provides an Annual Report to Governing Body to meet the requirements of the Universities Act 1997 and the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act 2012). Governing Body refers the report to Academic Council for consideration and review of relevant issues.

Management of Quality

The Director of Quality Enhancement reports to the President and is responsible for planning and implementing the University's quality assurance and enhancement procedures University-wide on a periodic basis. The Director is supported by a small core team of professional staff who work with oversight from the Quality

Enhancement Committee to ensure that quality processes support the University's strategic mission and are fit for purpose. Overall, this helps to ensure that the University's quality processes are informed by and developed in light of international good practice for quality in higher education policies for the European Higher Education Area including Bologna and the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) and national policies and procedures as outlined in Quality and Qualifications Ireland's (QQI) Guidelines.

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

1.2 Linked Providers, Collaborative and Transnational Provision

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

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

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

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

There is a systematic process for the approval of new academic programmes developed and delivered by UCC and a partner degree-awarding body. Due diligence of the proposed curriculum to be delivered by the partner institution must be performed as outlined in the UCC handbook governing curricular approval.

A Linked Providers procedure was previously approved by the Quality Enhancement Committee. This procedure will form part of Framework for Collaborative Provision which is being currently developed.

Collaborative Programmes
Collaborative programmes offered in partnership by UCC and Cork Institute of Technology are governed by a CIT-UCC Joint Board. This is a joint Board of the Academic Council of the Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) and the Academic Board of University College Cork (UCC). Its primary purpose is to ensure that the academic standards and procedures applying to collaborative and joint programmes delivered in partnership between CIT and UCC satisfy the requirements of both institutions. The Board reports by way of minutes to the Academic Council of CIT and the Academic Board of UCC in the case of programmes issues. The Board reports issues relating to resources by way of submission of relevant document(s) and Joint Board minute(s) to the CIT Executive Board, UCC Academic Council and/or UCC University Management Team (Operations). The Board is kept informed by the appropriate Officers and management bodies of the institutions of strategic and policy issues relevant to collaborative and joint programmes. CIT and IT Tralee will become the MTU on 01 January 2021 and arrangements were made to transfer the Consortium Agreement to the successor body. UCC is liaising

with the NUI to make the necessary arrangements for updating parchments to reflect the change to MTU for UCC/MTU joint awards.

The Cork Institute of Technology Joint University College Cork Board CIT-UCC JB formally changed its name to the MTU-UCC Joint Board at their meeting of 15 November 2021. This was subsequently ratified by the MTU Academic Council and UCC Academic Board.

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

Transnational Education

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

Irish Management Institute (IMI)

University College Cork acquired the Irish Management Institute (IMI) in 2016, following several years of strategic alliance during which time IMI credit bearing programmes were validated by UCC. Following acquisition, UCC began a process of integration and alignment, as appropriate, was undertaken with strands on finance, corporate governance, IT and academic matters. Academic integration was overseen and approved by Academic Board and Academic Council, which approved new arrangements for the academic governance of IMI programmes in 2019. This includes the IMI Curriculum Standards and Quality Committee, which reports into Academic Board via the College of Business and Law. The alignment of academic policies and regulations, as well as IT systems integration, was completed in 2019/20 and reported to Academic Board. With very limited (and documented) exceptions, UCC academic standards and policies apply to IMI. The IMI fits into the overall system of academic standards and quality of the University by acting as the equivalent of a school in the College of Business and Law. IMI works very closely with Cork University Business School (one of the other two Schools in the College) and this alignment is key to the University's application for AACSB accreditation.

An *Academic Governance Framework for IMI* was developed and approved by Academic Board in June 2020. This takes account of the work undertaken to date in presenting the new arrangements for academic governance in IMI. The Framework confirmed IMI alignment with UCC academic policies and outlines any local interpretation or adaptation in line with IMI's academic, business and commercial model. It replaced the previous UCC IMI Programme Quality Assurance Handbook. This framework was updated in June 2021 to include updates to academic governance arrangements including enhanced oversight of subjects delivered by IMI and the introduction of a new IMI subject of *Executive Education.*

Professional Registration & Statutory Bodies / Recognition Bodies

The University engages with a range of professional, statutory, and other bodies in the provision of the educational portfolio and in the maintenance of high professional standards. The outcomes of professional accreditation inform on-going programme development, monitoring and review processes through curriculum

committees at School and College level. Enhanced monitoring of <u>accredited programmes</u> has been introduced with information being held centrally in the Office of Academic Affairs & Governance and quarterly reports are provided to the Heads of Colleges. During the pandemic, the University worked closely with PRSBs to ensure that they were kept informed of curriculum and assessment changes. UCC also worked with QQI and IUA on national initiatives in this area.

2.0 Programme Development and Delivery

2.1 Programme Development and Approval

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

New Academic Programmes

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

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

Changes to existing programmes

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

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

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

- University Undergraduate Calendar*
- University Postgraduate Calendar
- Book of Modules
- Marks and Standards

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

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

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

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

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

2.2 Admission, Progression, Recognition & Certification

Student Journey

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

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

A successful application to support our Graduate Attributes Programme was made to the HEA Innovation and Transformation Programme 2018**,** and a successful financial commitment from the Tomar Trust in 2020 will widely develop this programme.

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

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

Downloadable publications have been produced to accompany the Nurturing Bright Futures programme:
Guide for Parents and Guardians
Guide for Guidance Counsellors and Teachers
Compendium of print-friendly worksheets and infographic posters
Year Planner booklet

The funding provided through the HEA Fund and Tomar Trust is supporting the development of a pilot Graduate Attributes Programme. Delivery of a suite of initiatives within the programme is focussing on the different stages of students' Transition In, Through and Out of the university. The overarching objective of our programme is to enable a successful student journey, which will prepare students for their future through three main projects.

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

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

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

Admissions Policies

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

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

Recognition of Prior Learning

UCC is engaged in a national sectoral project on RPL. The UCC RPL policy is available at:
https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/ovptl/documents/RecognitionofPriorLearningPolicy.pdf
There is a separate RPL policy for research students:
https://reg.ucc.ie/curriculum/calendar/live/postgraduate/Doctor/Recognition%20of%20Prior%20Learning%20Policy%20for%20Admission%20to%20Research%20Degrees.pdf

The Office of Recruitment and Admissions

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

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

Graduate Studies Office manages the admission of EU postgraduate taught and research students. It supports applicants through the full recruitment cycle from initial enquiry stage, through to application, registration and orientation. Furthermore, it manages the examination and record keeping for all research students.
Graduate Studies Office webpage: https://www.ucc.ie/en/study/postgrad/

Student Recruitment Office has responsibility to develop and implement the strategy for student recruitment of all undergraduate and postgraduate students. The office supports and coordinates the cross-functional

operational service delivery of all student recruitment activities in close collaboration with the four Colleges, Marketing and Communications and other Central Professional Services.
Student Recruitment Office

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

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

Centre for Professional Development manages the admission of students onto CPD modules, both credit and non-credit bearing. It supports applicants from initial enquiry stage, through to application and registration.
Centre for Professional Development webpage: https://www.ucc.ie/en/cpd/

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

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

Pre-Entry Information Provision for UG EU
Prior to entry, the Admissions Office supports prospective students through the provision of information regarding all undergraduate programmes, entry requirements and application procedures and policies. This information provision is done through close collaboration with the Student Recruitment team who oversee the production of relevant literature in print and online, through events such as Open Days and Parent Information Evenings, and through school visits carried out. Following are links to the online resources used to disseminate information on the programmes offered:
- www.ucc.ie/prospectus
- www.ucc.ie/study/undergrad/courses
- www.ucc.ie/study/undergrad/entryreqs
- www.ucc.ie/cao
- www.ucc.ie/openday

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

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

- www.ucc.ie/en/academicgov/policies/admissions-policies/
- www.ucc.ie/en/study/undergrad/admissionspolicies/

First Year Support

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

- https://www.ucc.ie/en/study/undergrad/firstyear/

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

- www.ucc.ie/en/dss/dare/
- www.ucc.ie/en/uccplus/
- www.ucc.ie/en/uccplus/hear/
- www.ucc.ie/en/study/undergrad/entryreqs/matureapplicants/
- www.ucc.ie/en/mature/matureprospective/
- www.ucc.ie/en/study/undergrad/fetac/
- www.ucc.ie/en/cpd/

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

Advanced Entry

First year students who have completed undergraduate modules prior to commencing their studies in UCC may be eligible for an exemption from the corresponding UCC module or for Advanced Entry to a year beyond first year. Exemptions are approved at School/Department level after the student has registered. Module exemption most often comes into consideration for students who have come into UCC through the Advanced Entry process (to a year beyond first year). Information regarding such transfers is available at www.ucc.ie/en/study/undergrad/entryreqs/transferadvancedentry/.

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

Access

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

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

University College Cork is recognised as a leader in the area of Access to Higher Education in 2019/20 over 23% of undergraduate admissions were through Access Admissions routes
The key services delivered by Access & Participation include:

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

- **UCC PLUS+ Programme:** The UCC PLUS Programme, aims to increase the number of young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds accessing and succeeding in University. There are three central strands to the work of the UCC PLUS+ Programme:
    - an outreach programme
    - a special admissions route - HEAR, and
    - a post entry support programme in UCC

- **Mature Student Office:** The Mature Student Office (MSO) works with full-time undergraduate students who are over the age of 23 on 1 January on the year of entry to third level, in addition to supporting first year students entering via QQI/Further Education route. The role of the MSO is twofold:
    - **Recruitment** - to promote and encourage mature student entry to UCC and
    - **Retention & Progression** - to support registered mature students to stay on their course of study.

- **Student Financial Support and Advice:** Providing financial support to students is key to enabling participation and success for students from low-income background. A range of funds are administered by the Student Assistance Fund office. The Student Budgetary Advisor is on hand to provide advice, guidance and support to students experiencing financial challenges.

- **The SOAR Project** is an inter-institutional collaboration on Access, which is led by Access & Participation in UCC. It brings together the South Cluster – Cork Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology Carlow, Institute of Technology Tralee, University College Cork and Waterford Institute of Technology together with community partners to collaborate on devising and delivering strategies to increase access

to higher education for under-represented groups. The Project is funded by the Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) Strand 3.

Sanctuary Scholarships Scheme

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

2.3 Procedures for Making Awards

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

The criteria required to pass a particular module and progress to the next stage of a programme are detailed in the Marks and Standards for each programme http://www.ucc.ie/admin/registrar/marksandstandards/ and in the Book of Modules for each module (https://www.ucc.ie/admin/registrar/modules/). The Marks and Standards describe the timing of assessment, the total credits and marks required at each year of a programme, the pass standard and the criteria that must be met for students to progress to the next stage of a programme. The Marks and Standards also describe the conditions where Supplemental Examination and/or Repeat Year Examination is appropriate, and additional conditions such as the awarding of honours by year and/or for the programme, requirements for exit awards, exemptions and rate of progression limits.

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

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

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

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

2.4 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Policies, Procedures and Governance

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

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

The following link provides an A-Z list of all UCC policies and regulations in respect of academic governance, including teaching and learning related policy and guidelines such as UCC's *Guidelines for External Examiners:* https://www.ucc.ie/en/academicgov/policies/standards/#d.en.983584. Further policy continues to be generated by relevant standing committees of UCC's Academic Council such as its Learning & Teaching Committee (AC-LTC), its Academic Development and Standards Committee and various sub-committees such as the Digital Education Advisory Group (DEAG). The Students' Union is very well-represented on committees such as the AC-LTC, and the Vice-President for Learning & Teaching and the Students' Union Education Officer meet monthly by arranged scheduling, and more frequently if required. The purpose and Terms of Reference for the above-mentioned committees are set out in the Academic Council Committee Handbook https://www.ucc.ie/en/academicgov/secretary/council/academic-council-handbook/. The VP for Learning & Teaching and several Office of the Vice President for Learning & Teaching (OVPLT) staff are committee members and/or secretariat for many of the Academic Council standing committees. (See below for explanation of OVPLT structures.)

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

Operations and Staff Professional Development:

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

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

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

OVPLT supports a wide range of CPD activities for staff through the Centre for the Integration of Research,

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

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

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

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

The student-facing Skills Centre (also housed within OVPLT) is an additional resource available to all students offering group and 1:1 assistance in such areas as "Transitioning into College Life" "Developing your academic writing" etc. During the pandemic, the Skills Centre continued to deliver a full service, all online, Mondays

through to and including Saturdays. A number of its resources are available to students 24/7. More on the Skills Centre here https://www.ucc.ie/en/skillscentre/about/

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

Process and Procedures for External Examining

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

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

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

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

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

Duties of External Examiners at UCC

The role of External Examiners at UCC is:

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

External Examiner Report

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

The Academic Unit Response

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

Optional Confidential Report to Registrar

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

EESC'S Annual Report to Academic Board

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

All External Examiner Reports and Academic Unit Responses for the College/Units are divided between the EESC's members for review, ensuring that members are not assigned to review their own College or Unit. These members are then tasked with writing a College-level Review Report. These College-level Review Reports are reviewed by the EESC Chair and form the basis of the Chair's own University-wide Annual Report which is submitted to Academic Board (usually near the end of Semester 2). The College-level Review Reports are also provided to the individual College Heads and Managers (or their equivalent in the other Units) to close the feedback loop and ensure that action is taken on the ground as appropriate.

Reporting to the NUI

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

3.0 Learner Resources and Support

UCC Library

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

The Library has three locations, the Boole Library located on the Quadrangle on main campus, the Boston Scientific Health Sciences Library located in the Brookfield complex, and an offsite repository at Pouladuff Road, Togher, Cork. In addition, UCC Library partners with the Mercy University Hospital Library in assisting with professional Librarian support.

The Library Strategic Plan is user focused and central to this is a clear commitment to enhancing the student experience by creating supportive spaces, acquiring top-quality information resources, supporting digital and information literacy, and providing an inclusive environment to inspire learning. UCC Library prides itself on having an excellent service that is proactive, innovative, timely and responsive to user needs. Librarians collaborate with users and guide them in the use of high-quality information resources which contributes to creativity and innovation and provides evidence in leading-edge research.

The Library provides learning supports and training resources to students through webinars, online modules, and one-to-one research support. In 2019 the Library developed a Digital & Information Literacy Framework that guides the development of a comprehensive and coherent approach to digital and information literacy within UCC Library, and determines the appropriate infrastructure required to develop consistently high-quality, equitable programmes and resources. It will enable future collaborations with university colleagues so that learning opportunities on offer are enriched by a diverse set of skills and expertise that will reach more students, teaching staff and researchers.

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

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

In July 2021, the role of Academic Success Librarian was created. This offers a second level of student support and allows for more in-depth support at point of need. Individual research consultations are available online or face-to-face and are bookable online.

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

The Library provides a variety of student social and study facilities and has a stock of over 900,000 volumes. Currently, it has the longest opening hours of any academic library in Ireland. Hours increase even more around exam time.

The Boole Library has a total of 2,233 study spaces and Boston Scientific Health Sciences Library has 200. These spaces are configured to optimise user experience.

The Creative Zone offers a flexible technology-rich space for all students and staff in UCC. The space can be re-configured easily to suit presentations, group work or study. A wide range of events organised in association with the schools, societies, and student services, take place there and the facility is available to all the student body.

There is some evidence that relaxing or napping for short periods of time can increase alertness and productivity. With this in mind, the Library purchased an Energy Pod which can be used by all students for 20minute sessions. In support of UCC's commitment to creating an inclusive environment, the Library, in collaboration with the Disability Support Service (DSS) provides a Study Pod. This is a bookable sound-proofed booth that offers a stress-free study environment for students.

Supporting students in their digital experience is a key component of the Library strategy.
The Library provides Laptop Loans. 72 Chromebook laptops are available for students to borrow in the Boole Library and 24 in Brookfield Library.
The Library Studio is available to all students and staff and offers a bookable state-of-the-art video and audio recording facility.
3D printing supports a wide variety of projects and is available in the Boole Library.
A Virtual Reality Lounge has been developed in the Boole Library where students can immerse themselves in a virtual world. This resource provides support for students of all disciplines as students can "visit" the International Space Station, Titanic, White House etc.

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

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

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

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

Cooperation between libraries offers dividends for UCC students as it provides physical access to primary materials in other institutions. UCC Library is an active participant in all available schemes namely SCONUL Access, ALCID, Cork PAL and Music PAL. Inter Library Loans supports students who don't need physical access but need materials from elsewhere.

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

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

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

IT Services provide services and support for 20,000 students and 5,000 staff. Our campus spans over 100 acres at the centre of Cork City. This service portfolio includes the UCC corporate systems (Finance, HR, Student), the largest private network in Cork (Wi-Fi, VOIP), 2 data centres, over 7000 desktops and we support 300+ websites and social media presence, 190 large classrooms, including the teaching technology and also research infrastructure. The clip in the attached link explains our services and ambitions, https://www.ucc.ie/en/it/about/

IT Services are focused on building and developing our digital services to support our students' journey from application to graduation. A full list of services is available IT Services in UCC is listed in the URL, https://www.ucc.ie/en/it/services/

The University is embarking on a Digital Strategy and a Data Strategy, which is University lead and Technology enabled. These strategic initiatives will transform the UCC over the next 4 years and will support the development of a more Digital University. Enhancing and modernising the services to our students is central to these proposals. We partner with key administration, academic and research units to develop agile, intuitive IT solutions. Using concepts such as DevOps, Agile Product Development, Infrastructure as a Service as key enablers to achieving this suite of IT Systems. A full list of IT policies in UCC can be found at https://www.ucc.ie/en/it-policies/

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

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

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

Student Supports

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

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

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

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

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

The full range of student supports available across UCC is displayed in the Student Support Tree.

Student Central

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

- Self-Service Attendance Letters
- Web enquiry forms for current and prospective students with in-built routing to back-office subject matter experts

- The ask.ucc.ie knowledge bases articles
- Online Deferred Entry forms
- Online Garda Vetting Process.
- Online First Year Change of Course
- Online Payment Plans
- Online Mitigation and Deferral Application forms
- Online Examination Appeals Request
- Online ID verification
- Upload of Student Photo ID for ID Cards

Student Health

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

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

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

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

Student Counselling & Development

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

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

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

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

Peer Support programme

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

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

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

UCC Niteline

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

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

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

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

Department of Sport & Physical Activity
UCC Sport is run by full-time Department of Sport and Physical Activity staff with the support of students in the form of Clubs Executive committee which represents **55 clubs** within University College Cork.
The Department of Sport and Physical Activity in UCC aims "to provide high quality facilities and services to students, graduates, staff and the wider community".

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

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

Accommodation and Community Life
The Office of Accommodation and Community Life was established in August 2017. This office has responsibility for:
Student Accommodation
- o Accommodation advice and advocacy service for UCC students
- o Support all current and incoming students with their search for safe and affordable accommodation
- o International Student Accommodation Placement Service – Full year and single semester EU and non-EU students
- o First Year Student Accommodation Placement Service
Campus Watch
- o First and second stages of student discipline

- o Promoting respect and responsibility in the local community

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

Health and Safety for Student Activity

The appointment of a health and safety officer for student activity in Oct 2018 played an important role in developing H&S policies and procedures for safe student activities on an ongoing basis.

UCC Student Media

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

Students' Union

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

Student Societies

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

Career Services

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

The UCC Career Services helps UCC students to achieve their career objectives by:
- Working in partnership with university colleagues to deliver customised employability workshops and events to meet the bespoke needs of students.
- Offering a personal, bespoke service to create employer-student connections that form exciting futures for learning, living and working in a global society.
- Working collaboratively with students, academic departments, and industry representatives as partners.
- Managing work placement accredited modules in collaboration with almost 40 academic programmes.
- Organising Career and Graduate Recruitment events such as recruitment fairs, jobs roadshows etc. which facilitate graduate employer and student interactions.
- Providing UCC students with access to high quality employment opportunities in Ireland and internationally.

- Making UCC students aware of a wide range of postgraduate study opportunities.
- Providing one to one advice and coaching to students.

To deliver these services to students, the Service is organised around the following team structure
- Employability and Employer Engagement Team
- Work Integrated Learning Team
- Careers Consultancy Team
- Cross-Collaborative Working Groups

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

Work Integrated Learning Team
This team supports the delivery of accredited work placement modules in Academic Programmes in the Colleges of Business and Law, SEFS and CACSSS. Responsibilities include
- Support each individual student through the work placement selection process until they successfully get an offer of a role with a partner employer.
- Deliver class contact hours to prepare students for work placement, interviews, workplace skills, etc.
- Contact employers to identify and acquire suitable work placement opportunities for students

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

Careers Consultancy Team
Careers advice is a key element of our service where we aim to provide accurate, impartial careers advice and coaching based on the student's needs, qualifications and circumstances. A number of options are available to students:
- Small group workshops on topics such as CVs and job applications, interview technique,
- Sector specific talks such as careers in teaching, Study in EU/US etc. as well as employability related workshops and lectures.
- One to One Careers advisory consultations by appointment with a careers consultant where students can discuss a wide variety of topics from CV's to interviews to general advice on career paths. Where a visit to the Career Service is not practicable (e.g. student is abroad) we endeavour to facilitate students by the use of phone or video calls.
- Profiling for Success: administer a range of psychometric tools designed to improve self-awareness in students, thereby supporting their transition to professional life.

- Career Set: Artificial Intelligence algorithms have been configured to generate personalised CV feedback and the tool has been designed using recognised best practices, applicable across industries and academic disciplines. All current students and recent graduates of UCC can access the tool to score the impact, style and brevity of their CV. The tool can also help applicants target their CV to a specific job description.
- Big Interview: An AI-based Practice Interview Tool is also supporting students. Once registered on the platform, students and recent graduates can use the 'Learn' option to undertake short courses to help them understand the interview process and STAR technique. Users will also get hands-on practice with interactive mock interviews tailored to specific industries, jobs, and experience level.

Careers Education

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

Additional Policies for Career Services
- Student Placement Policy
- Placement Risk Assessment
- Preparation of Students Going on Placement (Procedure)
- Monitoring and Communication During Student Placement (Procedure)
- Management of Critical Incident (Procedure)

Access

UCC is committed to ensuring that all students entering via Access pathways (HEAR, DARE, Mature and QQI/FET admissions routes) are afforded every opportunity to succeed. A wide range of post-admission supports have been developed by a dedicated team of Access practitioners in collaboration with students and staff.
- A range of financial supports are available for students from low-income households. A dedicated student budgetary advisor is also on hand to provide support, guidance and advice to students experiencing hardship.
- Extensive reasonable accommodations and supports are available for students who are registered with a disability. Students are invited to meet with a disability advisor for a needs assessment at the start of semester 1 where reasonable accommodations and any other supports required will be agreed.
- Additional academic support in the form of small group or one-to-one tutorials and academic skills sessions are delivered in collaboration with the UCC Skills Centre.
- Coffee mornings, breakfast clubs, group meetings are run on a regular basis to provide social support for students.
- Access students have dedicated student advisors who are available to meet with students for a face to face or virtual consultation at any stage during the academic year to discuss any issues they may have and seek advice and assistance.
- Laptop Loan service is available to students from low-income households who do not have the resources to purchase their own device. Students are given a laptop for the duration of the academic year.
- UCC has committed to being an Autism Friendly University by making the physical, social and academic environments of the campus more 'autism-friendly' by undertaking a multi-year project to achieve these aims. There is an Autism & Uni Student Toolkit along with a new dedicate space of calm and respite for students – the Calm Zone.

- An employability programme for students with Disabilities has been expanded. The programme aims to increase the number of students with disabilities securing post-graduation employment.

International Students

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

Before Arrival
1. Nurture Emails
   - Welcome Email/ Preparation Email/ Final Countdown Email

2. Dedicated web support https://www.ucc.ie/en/international/studentinfohub/beforeyouarrive/
   - Visa and Immigration
   - Fees and Cost of Living
   - Accommodation
   - Key Dates
   - Getting to Cork
   - Health Insurance

3. In Person Advisory Sessions

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

Ongoing Support
- Nurture Email every 2nd week
- Facebook Community - https://www.facebook.com/groups/449676442673958
- In Person Appointments with Staff
- Booking System for online Appointments with Staff
- Immigration & Visa Advice and Advocacy
- Dedicated Website - https://www.ucc.ie/en/international/studentinfohub/living/
  - Practical life
  - Student Services

- Irish Culture
- Student Support Tree
  https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/studyatucc/international/boximages/SupportTree-Infographic.pdf
- Keep Well Website - https://www.ucc.ie/en/keep-well/
- Silvercloud – wellbeing support https://www.ucc.ie/en/keep-well/silvercloud/
- After Hours on Call Emergency Contact Service for students
- Dedicated COVID-19 webpage
- Skills Centre for academic mentorship

Online/Blended Learning

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

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

4.0 QA of Research Activities and Programmes

Research Activity

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

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

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

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

The UCC Policy on the Governance of Research Centres and Institutes provides clarity on how research institutes centres and units interface with academic Schools and Colleges. In 2020, a new approach to the annual reporting process was successfully piloted in the College of Business & Law and, as a reporting mechanism, has proven highly effective. The EUA Institutional Evaluation Report (IEP) highlighted the importance of ensuring effective engagement between RICUs and academic schools, as enabled by this policy, to foster research excellence and maximise synergies and impact. To ensure that the policy continues to remain 'fit for purpose' in the context of

a rapidly evolving external research environment, the document is currently under review, with an updated policy scheduled to be launched in Q1 2022.

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

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

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

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

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

Building on the experience garnered from the first two institutional-wide initiatives, and cognisant of very significant changes as to what constitutes best practice in relation to research/researcher assessment in the open research era, planning the methodology for the next RQR in 2023/24 is underway, while maintaining the overall objective of continued enhancement of research quality across the University.

Research Programmes
The Graduate Studies Office supports our postgraduate student body throughout their time in UCC. Research students, doctoral and Masters, are a key component of the research community in UCC. As an autonomous university, UCC has developed its own internal policies, having regard to the Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Research Degree Programmes (2017), the National Framework for Doctoral Education, Ireland's

Framework of Good Practice for Research Programmes, and the HEA's Principles of Good Practice for Research within Irish HEIs (2020). UCC's Academic Council Graduate Studies Committee are actively reviewing and updating UCC's Graduate Studies' policies.

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

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

5.0 Staff Recruitment, Development and Support

University Recruitment and Post Approval

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

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

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

Probation and Establishment Process

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

Staff Training and Development

UCC is committed to the support and promotion of staff development and training. There is also an employee assistance programme in place.
Performance Management: Performance enhancement support for all staff and teams via dedicated resources and workshops complementary to the PDRS process is available. UCC has a Performance Management Policy and Capability Policy as a means of local and individual discussion on the role of performance and staff development: http://www.ucc.ie/en/hr/performance/pdrs/forms/

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

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

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

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

Staff Wellbeing supports are offered to staff through training, activities, talks and events to assist them meet their personal and professional goals and to provide additional assistance during life's planned and unplanned challenges. Work in the area is ongoing in particular to create a localised culture of employee engagement in development and wellbeing and to promote and develop further initiatives facilitated by staff members for UCC staff. UCC is proud of our achievements in being the first Irish university to attain the national IBEC Keepwell Accreditation standard, of being shortlisted for awards in three areas in the first national IBEC Keepwell awards in 2019 and of winning the award for Physical Activity.

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

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
UCC has been a signatory to the Athena SWAN Charter since its launch in Ireland in 2015. The Charter is a framework to advance gender equality in higher education. Charter signatories can apply for institutional and departmental Athena Swan awards recognising their gender equality efforts. UCC has held institutional Athena SWAN accreditation at Bronze award level since 2016 (renewed successfully in 2019) and aims to achieve Silver level accreditation in the next renewal round (due 2023).   A diverse and representative steering group chaired by the Interim Registrar leads UCC's Athena SWAN work, supported by dedicated staff in UCC"s Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Unit.   Ten UCC Schools now hold bronze School-level Athena SWAN awards and two Silver-level award applications are pending. The University is working towards full Athena SWAN accreditation across all Schools and functional units.

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

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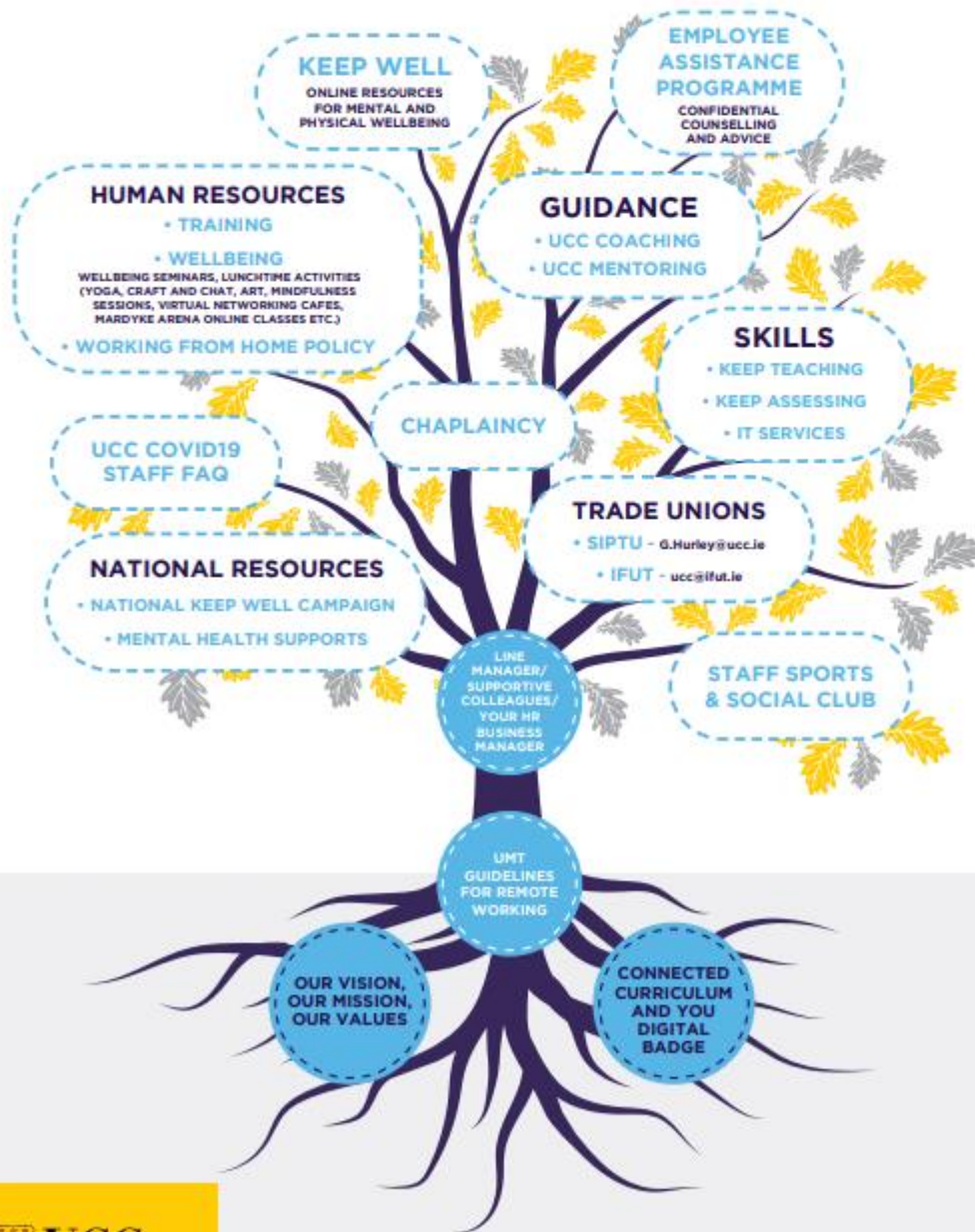
Resource Tree Showing Staff Supports

SUPPORTING UCC STAFF IN 2020/21
RESOURCE TREE SHOWING STAFF RESOURCES

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

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

KEEP WELL
ONLINE RESOURCES FOR MENTAL AND PHYSICAL WELLBEING

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME
CONFIDENTIAL COUNSELLING AND ADVICE

HUMAN RESOURCES
• TRAINING
• WELLBEING
WELLBEING SEMINARS, LUNCHTIME ACTIVITIES (YOGA, CRAFT AND CHAT, ART, MINDFULNESS SESSIONS, VIRTUAL NETWORKING CAFES, MARDYKE ARENA ONLINE CLASSES ETC.)
• WORKING FROM HOME POLICY

GUIDANCE
• UCC COACHING
• UCC MENTORING

SKILLS
• KEEP TEACHING
• KEEP ASSESSING
• IT SERVICES

CHAPLAINCY

UCC COVID19 STAFF FAQ

TRADE UNIONS
• SIPTU – G.Hurley@ucc.ie
• IFUT – ucc@ifut.ie

NATIONAL RESOURCES
• NATIONAL KEEP WELL CAMPAIGN
• MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS

LINE MANAGER/ SUPPORTIVE COLLEAGUES/ YOUR HR BUSINESS MANAGER

STAFF SPORTS & SOCIAL CLUB

UMT GUIDELINES FOR REMOTE WORKING

OUR VISION, OUR MISSION, OUR VALUES

CONNECTED CURRICULUM AND YOU DIGITAL BADGE

UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

6.0 Information and Data Management

Records and Data Management

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Like all public bodies, access to records held by the University is available under the Freedom of Information Act, 2014, (the procedure for this is available at: https://www.ucc.ie/en/ocla/comp/freedom/howfoi/. In addition, individuals can seek access to their own personal data under data protection legislation: https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/ocla/compliance/DataSubjectRightsProcedurev5.0.pdf

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

Data Classification Procedure:
https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/itpolicies/procedures/DataClassification_V1_2.pdf
Research Data Management Policy:
https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/research/researchatucc/policiesdocuments/ResearchDataManagementPolicy.docx
Acceptable Usage Policy:
https://www.ucc.ie/en/it-policies/policies/au-pol/
Externally Hosted Personal Data Policy:
https://www.ucc.ie/en/it-policies/policies/

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

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

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

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

The University Tracks and measure the availability and integration of its information records using agreed Key Performance Metric's. Each February, information technology KPI's are considered and discussed by the management team, table below provides a summary of the past years KPI's.

Metric Goals	2020	2019	2018	2017
System/Infrastructure Uptime: Critical IT Services and networks must be available 24x7 – Downtime not an option	99.93%	98.50%	99.86%	99.85%

Staff Satisfaction Rating, Delivering quality service and solutions to all staff. Simple and effective services		70%	92%	91%
Student IT Services reflect a modern and dynamic student population that are satisfied with these services		75%	90%	81%
Wi-Fi Coverage in UCC, Over the relevant usable space	95%	95%	83%	81%
User Engagement Score. This is a number created from all customer interactions with the website and the % of users that get what they need from the site or move on to other sites.	23%	23%	20%	20%
% of UCC Turnover spent on IT	2.03%	1.91%	1.96%	1.49%
Amount of **UCC IT operating budget spent per student FTE**	€343	€322	€319	€252

As part of the quality review of IT Services we benchmark our performance of these metrics against other institutions (Oxford Brooks, UCD, TCD) to ensure appropriate levels of service and satisfaction are being met.

7.0 Public Information and Communication

Website and Social Media Communications

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

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

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

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

UCC website

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

The UCC domain has received over 5 million visits over the last year with over 9 million individual page views.

Education and Training Programmes

Our prospective student portion of the website covers:

- Courses
- Undergraduate
- Postgraduate
- International Office
- Adult Continuing Education

- UCC Online
- Continuing Professional Development
- Scholarships and Prizes
- Transition-In Programme
- Graduate Attributes
- Ask
- Incoming First Year Students
- Apply to UCC
- Collaborative Programmes

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

Social Media

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

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- LinkedIn
- YouTube

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

Outreach and General Public

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

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

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

Other channels for and public dissemination activities include:

- regular news and press releases on research stories, student success, rankings, partnerships and key announcements from UCC which are published on the home page of our website, through social media channels and media outreach.

- Independent Thinking digital magazine which contains a round-up of high impact stories from across teaching and learning, student experience, research and alumni.

Quality Processes

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

8.0 Monitoring and Periodic Review

Periodic Review

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

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

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

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

Thematic Review

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

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

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

External peer review

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

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

The role of the External Assessor in new programme approval is found here: https://www.ucc.ie/en/apar/curriculumapproval/handbook/

The Extern Examination procedures for taught programmes is found here: https://www.ucc.ie/en/academicgov/externs/ and the policy is found here: https://www.ucc.ie/en/academicgov/policies/standards/#external-examiners

Supporting Self-Evaluation

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

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

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

9.0   Details of Arrangements with Third Parties

9.1   Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies

Type of arrangement	Total Number
PRSBs	42 different bodies
Awarding bodies	0
QA bodies	0

1. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA
Programme titles and links to publications	BSc Finance CK204
Date of accreditation or last review	2020
Date of next review	Date is dependent on UCC notifying it of programme changes

2. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Certified Public Accountants (CPA)
Programme titles and links to publications	BCL Law and Business CK307
Date of accreditation or last review	2020
Date of next review	At discretion of prof body - Only reviewed when professional body changed their criteria for accreditation.

3. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Certified Public Accountants (CPA)
Programme titles and links to publications	BSc Accounting CK202
Date of accreditation or last review	2021
Date of next review	At discretion of prof body - only reviewed when professional body changed their criteria for accreditation.

4. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Chartered Accountants of Ireland (ACA)
Programme titles and links to publications	Masters of Accounting CKL26
Date of accreditation or last review	2020
Date of next review	At discretion of prof body - only reviewed when professional body changed their criteria for accreditation.

5. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Chartered Accountants of Ireland (ACA)
Programme titles and links to publications	MBS Management Information and Managerial Accounting CKL05
Date of accreditation or last review	2021
Date of next review	At discretion of prof body - only reviewed when professional body changed their criteria for accreditation.

6. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA)
Programme titles and links to publications	MSc Corporate Finance CKL21
Date of accreditation or last review	2021
Date of next review	At discretion of prof body - only reviewed when professional body changed their criteria for accreditation.

7. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA)
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Commerce CK201; BSc Accounting CK202; BSc Business Information Systems CK203; BSc Finance CK204; MBS Management Information and Managerial Accounting CKL05
Date of accreditation or last review	2020
Date of next review	At discretion of prof body - only reviewed when professional body changed their criteria for accreditation.

8. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	CORU
Programme titles and links to publications	MSc Radiation Therapy CKX29
Date of accreditation or last review	2021
Date of next review	At discretion of prof body - only reviewed when professional body changed their criteria for accreditation.

9. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	CORU
Programme titles and links to publications	MSc Human Nutrition and Dietetics
Date of accreditation or last review	2021
Date of next review	Tbc

10. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Irish Planning Institute
Programme titles and links to publications	MPlan Masters in Planning and Sustainable Development
Date of accreditation or last review	2020
Date of next review	2025

11. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	Certificate Nurse Midwife Prescribing CKU07
Date of accreditation or last review	2020
Date of next review	2023

12. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	BPharm/MPharm (2 degrees BPharm after 4 years; MPharm after 5th year) ck703
Date of accreditation or last review	2020
Date of next review	2025

13. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Psychological Society of Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	BA Psychology and Computing CK121
Date of accreditation or last review	2020
Date of next review	2024

14. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Royal Town Planning Institute
Programme titles and links to publications	MPlan Masters in Planning and Sustainable Development cke69
Date of accreditation or last review	2021
Date of next review	2022

15. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Teaching Council of Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	BSc Chemistry of Pharmaceutical Compounds
Date of accreditation or last review	Ongoing
Date of next review	

16. Type of arrangement PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	Teaching Council of Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	BEd (Gaeilge) CK124
Date of accreditation or last review	2020
Date of next review	2022

9.2 Collaborative Provision

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

1. Collaborative provision	
(Type of collaborative provision)	Collaborative Programme
Name of body (/bodies):	Munster Technological University
Programme titles and links to publications	BEng (Hons) in Biomedical Engineering Certificate in Biomedical Device Manufacture
Date of last review	18 May 2021
Date of next review	18 May 2023

2. Collaborative provision	
(Type of collaborative provision)	Collaborative Programme
Name of body (/bodies):	Efrei Paris, Engineering School of Digital Technologies, Villejuif, France
Programme titles and links to publications	MEngSC Engineering - Electrical and Electronic Engineering (MENEE)
Date of last review	17 June 2021
Date of next review	17 June 2026

3. Collaborative provision	
(Type of collaborative provision)	Collaborative Programme
Name of body (/bodies):	Health Service Executive in partner with associated health care providers (UCD, TCD, NUIG and UL)
Programme titles and links to publications	Masters in Advanced Practice (Advanced Nursing Practice and Advanced Midwifery Practice)
Date of last review	22 September 2020
Date of next review	22 September 2024

9.3   Articulation Agreements

Articulation agreements - Total number	15

1. Articulation agreement:	
Name of body (/bodies):	King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi (KMUTT)
Programme titles and links to publications	(UCC) BSc (Hons) in Computer Science (KMUTT) Bachelor of Science (Computer Science) An articulated (2+2) Bachelor Degree
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	01/01/2021
Date of next review	01/01/2026 (5 years)
Detail of the agreement	

2. Articulation agreement:	
Name of body (/bodies):	Beijing Technology and Business University (BTBU)
Programme titles and links to publications	BTBU existing programmes are: • BSc (Ord) Computer Studies • BSc (Ord) Food Science and Technology • BSc (Ord) Food Science and Technology • BSc (Hons) Food Science and Technology • BSc (Hons) Food Science and Technology • BSc (Hons) Risk and Actuarial Studies • BSc (Hons) Risk and Actuarial Studies • Diploma in Computer Studies
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	18/05/2021
Date of next review	18/05/2029 (8 years)
Detail of the agreement	

3. Articulation agreement:	
Name of body (/bodies):	Efrei Paris, Engineering School of Digital Technologies, Villejuif, France
Programme titles and links to publications	UCC Taught masters programme which form part of this agreement • MSc Computing Science • MSc Data Science and Analytics • MSc in information systems for business performance • MSc interactive media • MEngSc Sustainable Entergy • MSc Mathematical Modelling and Self-learning Systems
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	17/06/2021
Date of next review	07/06/2026 (5 years)
Detail of the agreement	

University College Cork
2021

**Annual Quality Report
University College Cork
PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE
ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT
Reporting Period 2019-2020**

PART B: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments

1.1   Strategic QA Updates

UCC 2022 – Delivering a Connected University

UCC's strategic plan *Independent Thinking - Shared Ambition*, launched in 2017, reached its midterm review as the COVID-19 pandemic swept across the world. In light of the fundamental changes to the landscape in which higher education operates, the University reviewed its strategic priorities during 2019/20 in order to ensure agility and sustainability.

The University Management Team and Governing Body worked together on a thematic prioritisation exercise to reframe UCC's strategic priorities for the remainder of the lifetime of the existing Strategic Plan. A new plan - UCC 2022 – Delivering a Connected University – was developed between July and December 2020 to enable UCC to deliver its priorities within the period 2021-22 clustered within five interconnected thematic pillars: Learning and Teaching, Research and Innovation, Student Success, People and Organisational Culture, Infrastructure and Resources. Four of these pillars are clearly aligned with four of the University's existing Strategic Goals. The remaining pillar – Student Success – highlights current and emerging challenges for our students. The existing Strategic Goal 3 – Create value for our community through an international outlook and informed and creative engagement on local and global issues – is now woven into and across each of the five pillars of UCC 2022, affirming the University's commitment to local, regional, and national communities, and to human societies across the globe. As well as challenges for the student body, many graduates face the challenge of a constrained labour market which has been aggravated by the pandemic. With these factors in mind, UCC 2022 represents a strategic pivot, reprioritising activities to best position UCC for a secure and sustainable future, underpinned by values of creativity, respect, transparency, responsiveness, integrity, equality, diversity, and scholarship.

Through the actions identified in UCC 2022 the University will align with and adopt the recommendations of the EUA-IEP report of 2020, as well as strategic issues emanating from the quality review process. UCC's ambition, at all times, is to streamline systems and processes, thereby reducing duplication and fragmentation, while enhancing efficiency and effectiveness, ultimately releasing time and effort towards the delivery of the core academic mission of the University. Each pillar was operationalised in Q1 2021, via the establishment of a dedicated subcommittee of the University Management Team (UMT), and individual implementation plans developed. Over the next year, UCC will develop and implement an overarching organisational development plan for the University as a whole.

COVID-19 Adaptations

Academic Response: Academic Governance and the Academic Readiness Plan 2020/21

Academic Governance

Academic Council (AC) controls the academic affairs of the University including the curriculum of instruction and the education provided by the University. Its powers, procedures and functions are laid out in Chapter C of the Principal Statute. Its delegates some of its functions to Academic Board (AB), which is the senior standing committee) and to other AC executive committees. These structures are laid out in the AC Handbook. AC may establish committees to which it may delegate such of its functions as it sees fit. Membership of such committees is at the discretion of AC.

Due to the closure of the University campus and the extraordinary circumstances around the global pandemic, it has been necessary to change the ordinary academic operations of the University and to take certain urgent decisions between the scheduled meetings of AC and AB. A special meeting of Academic Council was held on 09 April 2020 and approved a proposal to formally establish ALF and EBCG as executive committees of Academic Council and empower them to take urgent but limited decisions necessary for the academic functioning of the University.

Decisions in relation to academic affairs are being taken as follows:

- The Examinations Business Continuity Group (EBCG) – for operational issues relating to the organisation of examinations and assessment; related curriculum changes; accreditation; extern examining; mitigation; breaches and discipline; progression; graduation and conferring.

- The Academic Leadership Forum (ALF) – for all other urgent academic matters

The decisions taken are being reported to Academic Board and Academic Council and are subject to subsequent review by them. The Heads of Colleges, Vice Presidents, Librarian, Academic Secretary, DPR Finance Manager and the Deputy President & Registrar are members of the ALF and are present or represented at EBCG.

The EBCG was formed to give real-time feedback and solutions across the university in relation to the coordination of exams, working through assessment bottlenecks in close collaboration between SREO, APAR and the respective College reps. This close collaboration and solution focussed approach support agile response and strong communication in response to the challenge of changing exams approaches, facilitating approval processes in line with the principles identified in the academic recovery plan. This group was subsequently reformed as a Teaching and Assessment Continuity Group and continued to meet fortnightly from May – October 2021.

Academic Readiness Plan

ALF established an Academic Readiness Group to develop a plan to transition from emergency management to the planning and implementation of readiness for the coming academic year. The Academic Readiness Group developed an Academic Readiness Plan to bring together, in one place, decisions on the key issues for the academic mission of the University along with their underpinning narratives. It outlines the principles and approaches which are already in use and which will continue to guide the University through uncertain times ahead. Open for Learning also highlights new initiatives and modifications to services which are proposed to support students and staff. Similar planning activities are underway across the University (e.g., Research, Library) in order to prepare and provide as much certainty as possible against the background of evolving public health advice.

Principles of the Academic Readiness Plan

1. Maintain and promote high academic standards across the university
2. The welfare of students and staff is central to decision-making (including awareness of the need for rest and recovery periods for both students and staff during the year).

The principle of subsidiarity was also introduced allowing local units make decisions on many elements of delivery and examination with oversight being retained by ALF and EBCG.

Teaching and Learning

In March 2020 like all HEIs, UCC 'pivoted' to online delivery of teaching and assessment. A number of dedicated websites were designed and delivered for staff including 'Keep Teaching'; 'Keep Assessing' where policy and guidance was issued along with links to available in-house training (including live Q&As), succinct weekly emails directing staff to supports and resources available. Weekly live training was provided by the Centre for Digital Education (CDE) with periodic CPD sessions provided by CIRTL and recordings of same made available to all staff. CIRTL also produced weekly 'Learning Enhancement Guides' and ran Learning Design workshops focussed on curriculum redesign for blended learning. See the following websites for further details: www.ucc.ie/en/digital-ed/ · www.ucc.ie/en/keep-teaching/ · www.ucc.ie/en/keep-teaching/assessmenthub/ · www.ucc.ie/en/cirtl/ · www.ucc.ie/en/cirtl/resourcesforstaff/shortguides/
 · www.ucc.ie/en/cirtl/resourcesforstaff/learningdesign/

Common to many HEIs, responsibility for various technologies and tools is dispersed over a number of different areas. The pivot online precipitated greater collaboration between these areas resulting and the formation of Teaching with Technology support service on MS Teams in September 2020. Staffed by UCC students, this service provides a backchannel to staff members drawn from IT Services, the Learning Technologies Unit, Audio Visual

Media Services, the Centre for Digital Education and the Centre for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning who provide just-in-time responses to queries regarding the use of educational technology.

UCC's Digital Education team confirmed the platforms and software supported by UCC focussing on MS Teams, Panopto, Canvas and the G suite for education, thereby narrowing the range of technologies for staff to become adept in using,

Funding

From the announcement of HCI (Human Capital Initiative) in late 2019, UCC proactively engaged with all three pillars. In June 2020, UCC was awarded funding of €5.6million for six new postgraduate programmes under pillar two (727 student places over three years) which were co-developed with enterprise partners responding to skill needs in the region. €300,000 was awarded to increase the intake in undergraduate engineering programmes under Pillar two. During 2020, UCC worked closely with enterprise partners on the development of Pillar 3 projects resulting in UCC participation in ten proposals and the award of €14.4million across five collaborative projects.

In July 2020, as part of the Government's announcement on the July stimulus package an additional funding allocation was provided for Higher Education skills-related programmes.   UCC was awarded funding for places on existing programmes and modules in identified skills areas. 363 additional students were recruited to existing taught postgraduate programmes and 285 on skills-based modules with a total value of €3million.

UCC were in receipt of Learning Enhancement funding from the National Forum in 2020 and 2021 with a total budget of close to €1 million. Many of these projects were supportive of and responsive to the challenges being faced in learning and teaching. For example, one project was focussed on the use of VR and XR in teaching and learnings from this initiative were drawn upon to inform the organisation of virtual labs for students. www.teachingandlearning.ie/project/enhanced-active-learning-in-virology-cell-culture-and-molecular-biotechnology-elevate/ Another project provided a snapshot of UCC's response to the emergency move to online teaching. www.teachingandlearning.ie/project/measuring-the-immeasurable-the-impacts-of-academic-development-programs-on-student-learning/

1.2 Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR

Guide:

An update should be provided on objectives/planned actions for the year as outlined in the last AQR. If these have not been completed or are no longer applicable this should be indicated.

The table is designed to assist in this process and should include headline information only.

Please delete guide text before submission.

No.	Planned objectives (Previous AQR) Note: Include reference to the relevant section of the preceding AQR, where applicable	Update on Status Provide brief update on status, whether completed or in progress. If an action was planned in the previous AQR, but not completed, provide reasons/short reflections for the delay/non-completion.
1.	EUA Institutional Review - University Response	A progress report, outlining how EUA-IEP report recommendations are being addressed by the University, was sent to the EUA IEP secretariat on 08 December 2021.
2	Evaluation of virtual periodic review	An evaluation was undertaken of the adapted model of virtual periodic review at the end of the academic year 2020/21. It found that the review methodology ran as per normal, though over a longer timeframe. The longer timeframe was ultimately found to be beneficial for the review process and for the reviewers in formulating their recommendations. Feedback from reviewers indicated that they were in favour of online meetings but did miss the opportunity to meet reviewers and the unit staff in person as well as viewing the facilities. The configuration of the site visit as a hybrid model of both remote meetings and face to face will be used for future reviews.
3	Thematic Review - Teaching and Assessing with Technology	This review took place as planned in 2020/21. The international review panel looked at options for maximising the organisational, governance and decision-making structures required for strategic steering and overall coordination for teaching and assessing with technology. A Quality Enhancement Plan will be developed in 2021/22 and will outline the implementation of recommendations and planned actions. This review links to wider strategic developments being led by the VP for Learning & Teaching to develop UCC's digital education strategy.
4	Programme Review	Following from an earlier enhancement project (2018/19) on the effectiveness of programme

		approval, review and monitoring a series of pilot "Programme Dialogues" had been identified to commence in semester 2 of AY 2019/20. These plans have been delayed due to the impact of COVID-19 and will be taken forward in semester 2 of AY 2021/22. This initiative connects the priority theme of Academic Governance from the Academic Strategy, the UCC 2022 Strategic reprioritisation process and the evaluation of periodic review.
5	Thematic Review - Work Placement	This Review was established in early 2020 and had to be re-cast in format and timescales as a result of COVID-19 to a remote review and virtual site visit in 2020/21 with the final Review Report in November 2020.
		The implementation of the recommendations and planned actions of this thematic review will be taken forward by the Director of Student Services and the Registrar. A Quality Enhancement Plan will be developed in 2021/22 which will lead to a Strategic Enhancement Project. The work placement review as it relates to employability is linked to the Academic Strategy.

1.3 Governance and Management
1.3.1 QA Governance Meetings Schedule

Body	Meeting dates
Quality Enhancement Committee	8 July 2020 9 December 2020 18 February 2021 28 April 2021 17 September 2021
Governing Body	15 September 2020 20 October 2020 1 December 2020 2 February 2021 30 March 2021 15 June 2021
Academic Board	9 September 2020 21 October 2020 2 December 2020 3 February 2021 14 April 2021 19 May 2021 (Special) 16 June 2021
Academic Council	2 October 2020 6 November 2020 25 November 2020 (Special) 15 January 2021 24 February 2021 (Special) 5 March 2021 19 March 2021 (Special) 7 May 2021 25 June 2021

1.3.2 QA Leadership and Management Structural Developments

The following new senior positions were filled during the academic year 2020/21.

Department Description	Start Date	Job Title Description
Department of Economics	19-Oct-20	Professor (Scale 2)
School of Applied Psychology	02-Nov-20	Professor (Scale 2)
School of Engineering and Architecture	16-Nov-20	Professor
School of Law	01-Dec-20	Professor
Office of Vice President for Research & Innovation	04-Dec-20	VP For Research and Innovation
Department of Economics	04-Jan-21	Professor
School of History	25-Jan-21	Professor
Buildings and Estates	25-Jan-21	General Services Officer
College of SEFS Office	02-Feb-21	Head of College
School of Public Health	01-Apr-21	Professor (Scale 2)
Cork University Dental School & Hospital	01-Apr-21	Professor (Scale 2)
School of Biological, Earth & Environmental Sciences	01-Apr-21	Professor (Scale 2)
School of Engineering & Architecture	01-Apr-21	Professor (Scale 2)
School of Biological, Earth & Environmental Sciences	01-Apr-21	Professor (Scale 2)
School of Applied Social Studies	01-Apr-21	Professor (Scale 2)
School of Law	01-Apr-21	Professor (Scale 2)
Department of Government & Politics	01-Apr-21	Professor (Scale 2)
Department of Anatomy & Neuroscience	01-Apr-21	Professor (Scale 2)
School of Biochemistry & Cell Biology	01-Apr-21	Professor (Scale 2)
School of Law	01-Apr-21	Professor (Scale 2)
School of Nursing & Midwifery	01-Apr-21	Professor (Scale 2)
School of Business	01-Apr-21	Professor (Scale 2)
Department of Anatomy & Neuroscience	01-Apr-21	Professor (Scale 2)
School of Pharmacy	01-Apr-21	Professor (Scale 2)
School of Society, Politics and Ethics	01-Apr-21	Professor (Scale 2)
School of Microbiology	01-Apr-21	Professor (Scale 2)
School of Microbiology	01-Apr-21	Professor (Scale 2)
Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology	01-Apr-21	Professor (Scale 2)
Centre for Gerontology & Rehabilitation	01-Apr-21	Professor (Scale 2)
Department of Medicine	01-Apr-21	Professor (Scale 2)
School of Pharmacy	01-Apr-21	Professor (Scale 2)
School of Law	01-Apr-21	Professor (Scale 2)
College of Medicine & Health Office	12-May-21	Professor (Scale 2)
School of Microbiology	01-Jun-21	Professor

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Unit	28-Jun-21	Director of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
The President's Office	03-Aug-21	Director
Office of Vice President for Research & Innovation	16-Aug-21	Director of Research Support & Policy
School of Law	01-Sep-21	Professor
School of Biological, Earth & Environmental Sciences	01-Sep-21	Professor (Scale 2)
Office of Vice President for Research & Innovation	27-Sep-21	Director of Research Strategy & Projects

1.4 Internal Monitoring and Review
1.4.1 Overview of Periodic Reviews

Schedule for reviews included in previous AQR

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Date of last review
Department of Physics	2020/21 *(rescheduled from 19/20 due to Covid-19)*	2010/11
Cork Centre for Architectural Education	2020/21 *(rescheduled from 19/20 due to Covid-19)*	2011/12
School of Languages, Literatures & Cultures	2020/21 *(rescheduled from 19/20 due to Covid-19)*	2012/13
School of Mathematical Sciences	2020/21 *(rescheduled from 19/20 due to Covid-19)*	2011/12
ASSERT Centre	2020/21 *(rescheduled from 19/20 due to Covid-19)*	N/A (opened 2015)
Thematic Review of Placements	2020/21 *(rescheduled from 19/20 due to Covid-19)*	N/A
Thematic Review of Teaching and Assessing with Technology	2020/21	N/A

Reviews completed during reporting period

Unit of review for which report has been published during reporting period	Date of completion/reason for conducting review (if not planned) or non-completion (if planned but not conducted)	Links to relevant publications
Thematic Review of Placements	October 2020	https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/qualityenhancementunit/reports/thematicreports/ThematicReviewofWorkPlacmentsinUCC.pdf

School of Mathematical Sciences	November 2020	https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/qualityenhancementunit/reports/sefs/SchoolofMathematicalSciences-PeerReviewGroupReport2020-21.pdf
Department of Physics	November 2020	https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/qualityenhancementunit/reports/sefs/DepartmentofPhysics-PeerReviewGroupReport2020-21.pdf
School of Languages, Literatures & Cultures	December 2020	https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/qualityenhancementunit/reports/cacsss/SchoolofLanguages,LiteraturesCultures%C3%82%C2%A0-PeerReviewGroupReport2020-21.pdf
ASSERT Centre	January 2021	https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/qualityenhancementunit/reports/comh/ASSERTCentre-PeerReviewGroupReport2020-21.pdf
Cork Centre for Architectural Education	March 2021	https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/qualityenhancementunit/reports/sefs/CorkCentreforArchitecturalEducation-PeerReviewGroupReport2020-21.pdf
Thematic Review of Teaching and Assessing with Technology	April 2021	https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/qualityenhancementunit/reports/thematicreports/TeachingandAsessingwithTechnology-ThematicReview2020-2021.pdf

1.4.2 Expert Review Teams/Panels[1] involved in IQA

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

	Total	Academic Schools/ Department	Professional Services/Support Unit	Approval/Review of Linked Provider	Programme Approval	Programme Review	Other
Number of review/ evaluation processes	7	5					2
of those:							
On-site processes							
Desk reviews							
Virtual processes	7	5					2
Average panel size for each process type*	5						

* excluding secretary if not a full panel member

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

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

Type of Expert/ Role on Panel	Total	Gender			Internal	National	International			Institution Type	
		Male	Female	Other, or unspecified			UK, incl. NI	Other European	Outside of Europe	Similar	Different
Chair	7	6	1		5		1		1	7	
Secretary* (*internal QEU staff member)	7		7							7	
Academic/Discipline Specific	25	14	11		10	3	9	1	2	25	
Student Representative	6	5	1		6						
QA											
Teaching & Learning											
External Industry /Third Mission	3	1	2				2	1			3

2.0 IQA System – Enhancement and Impacts

Governance and Management of Quality

EUA Institutional IEP Review

During academic year 2019/20 a President's initiative on institutional reflection and analysis saw the University engage in the European Universities Association, Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP). The focus of IEP was decision-making processes and institutional structures and effectiveness of strategic management; the relevance of internal quality processes and the degree to which their outcomes are used in decision-making and strategic management as well as perceived gaps in these internal mechanisms.

The commencement of the Review process was delayed by a period of 2 months as a result of COVID-19, and in light of the ongoing public health provisions, the IEP visit took the form of a virtual review over a period of 6 weeks. The conduct of the Review proved to be strategically valuable, as it encompassed new strategic considerations for the institution arising from COVID-19, and corresponded with a decision by UCC's Governing Body to commence a strategic pivot of the existing UCC Strategic Plan 2017-2022. The IEP Review Team met with members of the Governing Body in the course of the Review site visit and presented its Review findings to the Governing Body in June 2020. The outcomes of the IEP Review have been embedded in the programme of work to deliver the strategic prioritisation entitled 'UCC 2022 – Delivering a Connected University'.

A progress report, outlining how the EUA-IEP report recommendations are being addressed by the University, was sent to the EUA IEP secretariat on 08 December 2021.

Academic Governance

Priority 6 of UCC's Academic Strategy is to "Reform academic governance such that innovation is enabled, coherence is restored, and risk is reduced". A key part of reviewing ad reforming academic decision-making is Programme Governance. Academic Programme Governance at UCC has developed over a number of years to reflect the needs of local academic units and the characteristics of the various disciplines, departments and schools in the University.

The Programme Governance project proposed a model structure for programme governance in the University. The purpose of this proposal was to enhance the ability of Programme Coordinators to successfully carry out their duties by clarifying their roles, providing the necessary information to make evidence-based decisions, to ensure University policy is central to planning and decision making and to enable Programme Coordinators and the Programme Boards of Studies (PBS) to meet quality assurance and quality enhancement processes.

The PBS was modelled on the existing Interdisciplinary Programme Governance Policy. The rationale for introducing the PBS is to simplify the process of programme governance, to provide clear guidance on the expectations around programme governance, to ensure academic decisions are made locally, to avoid duplication of decision making at various levels of the institution, to simplify flows of information between the colleges and the schools, and to enable the development of technical solutions to assist in the administration of academic programmes in an comprehensive way (e.g. locally managed minor changes etc) including the Curriculum Management System which is under development.

A pilot took place with 5 programmes and all new programmes are encouraged to operate PBS from the outset. Workflows for module-level decision making proposed for all colleges, ACE and CIRTL. Significant review of the

curriculum linked items in-order to facilitate the set-up of workflow design for the Curriculum Management Project were undertaken (Roles, definitions, ownership of subject areas etc).

A review has been completed of semesterisation which introduced in UCC in 2014/15. This has been completed with the four Colleges, central services and ACE. The report, which includes suggestions for the future development of the semesterised teaching periods, was submitted to Academic Board in September 2020.

Benchmarking and Rankings

UCC actively benchmarks activities and has distinct strengths as evidenced by world rankings. Some highlights are as follows:

- Embedding UN Sustainable Development Goals - UCC is 9th in the world for promotion of sustainability as per UI Green Metric World Ranking.
- Third Mission of Universities - UCC is 8th in the world on the THE World Impact Ranking, 25% of the score is attributed to civic and community engagement.
- Academic Integrity: UCC is the top Irish university for Research Impact as measured by the THE World Impact Ranking.
- Academic Integrity: UCC maintained its position as the top Irish university for highly cited researchers in the Academic Ranking of World Universities (Shanghai ranking).
- UCC leads the sector in Ireland on Graduate Employability (along with UL and NUIG) and on Progression Rate (along with TCD) from 1st to 2nd year, within the Sunday Times ranking of Irish HEIs.
- UCC has 6 Subjects in the top 200 in the QS World University Rankings by subject:
    o No. 49 for Nursing
    o No. 57 for Agriculture and Forestry
    o No. 100 for Law
    o In the top 101-150 for English Language and Literature, and Pharmacy and Pharmacology
    o In the top 151-200 for Medicine.
- UCC features cross 16 of Shanghai's subject categories in the most recent cycle of the Shanghai ranking of subjects. The following disciplines are all at the top end of these global rankings:
    o Food Science & Engineering (49)
    o Nursing (Top 75)
    o Dentistry (Top 75)
    o Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences (Top 150)
    o Clinical Medicine (Top 150)
    o Biotechnology (Top 150)
    o Public Health (Top 150)
  In the Irish context, UCC is first in Ireland for: Biotechnology, Clinical Medicine, Public Health, Nursing, Dentistry (joint first with TCD).
- UCC has moved from 601-700 in 2017 to 301-400 in 2021 on the Academic Ranking of World Universities ARWU, more commonly referred to as the Shanghai Ranking.
- UCC improved its rank to the 251-300 band in the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Ranking published in 2021. In the period 2017 to 2021 UCC has moved up 100 places from the 351-400 band.

Programmes of Education and Training

Graduate Attributes

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

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

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

The following core values are being prioritised for the lifecycle of this Academic Strategy: Respect, Ambition, Compassion, Resilience and Integrity.

A successful application to support our Graduate Attributes Programme was made to the **HEA Innovation and Transformation Programme 2018**, and a successful financial commitment from the **Tomar Trust** in 2020 has allowed us to widely develop this programme.

The Graduate Attributes Programme (GAP) is approaching the end of its third year and the end of its non-exchequer income. Action 3.1.4 in Pillar 3 (Student Success) of UCC 2022 is concerned with resourcing and embedding the Graduate Attributes Programme across all four colleges. This has been a hugely positive development in terms of acknowledging the benefits of the Graduate Attributes Programme and recognising the value of sustaining it. The programme has already delivered a suite of initiatives focussing on the different stages of students' Transition In, Through and Out of the university. The overarching objective of the programme is to enable a successful student journey, which will prepare students for their future. We deliver on this objective through three main projects.

4. **Transition In** initiatives are guiding students into the right programme of study for them, whilst simultaneously widening access of under-represented cohorts and improving first year retention rates.
5. **Transition Through** initiatives are providing targeted supports, delivering skills training and developing graduate attributes that go beyond disciplinary content knowledge and can be applied in life-wide contexts.
6. **Transition Out** initiatives are preparing final year students to transition into professional environments, delivering on the ambitions of our Institutional Employability and Employment Guide.

This initiative is advancing the development of students' academic, specialist and technical competencies, equipping them with transferrable skills that can be applied in different environments. With a focus on developing core values and graduate attributes, these initiatives are integrating with the academic curriculum, taking a holistic educational approach to develop character, professionalism and the capacity for critical and creative thought.

Having experienced the outputs of the Graduate Attributes Programme, UCC graduates will be recognised as well-rounded, curious, self-aware, individuals who continually learn new skills, are open to new ideas, and make things happen.

Curriculum Management

A Curriculum Management Group with representation from curriculum committees in each College/ACE, the Office of Academic Programmes and Regulations and the Director of Academic Services was initiated in October 2019. The purpose of this group is to support the process for reviewing, updating and approving the 2020/21 curriculum and to promote cross-functional learning and sharing of experience. Since March 2020 this group has met regularly to tease out the implication of responding to COVID-19 on the approved curriculum for 2020/21 and to define processes in-line with the principle of subsidiarity for its review and update outside the normal curriculum approval deadlines. Recommendations and queries from this group are considered by Academic Leadership Forum/Academic Board. The college representation on this group fulfils a critical role in the communication to Colleges/Schools/Depts of advice and considerations (particularly the impact of public health guidance on elements of the curriculum) when reviewing the curriculum for the next academic year. Whilst changes to the modes of teaching and assessment have been required due to COVID-19, such changes ensure the same competencies and Learning Outcomes are met.

Staff Management and Development

COVID-19 Response

In response to COVID-19 a new group was established by Interim President Professor John O'Halloran in 2020/21 to consider the impact on staff of online working. The group progressed several actions to support colleagues. Colleagues across UCC have faced a variety of different issues and for many colleagues, managing this situation has not been an easy one hence the importance of the university taking a lead in putting in place some new supports and in highlighting existing supports for staff. This group chaired by Paul Moriarty, Director of Student Experience brought together colleagues from across HR, the health and wellbeing domain and senior university managers to work to develop visible and accessible supports for colleagues. The work undertaken by this group was focused in three core area:

1. *Guidance for carrying out UCC business* covering meetings; their timing and duration and also email protocols.
2. *UCC supports* – these cover the array of policies, tips, guidelines and FAQs put together by the UCC Business Continuity group, HR, IT Services and Learning & Teaching that have been put in place in the past number of months – bringing them together in one place for colleagues together with full detail on HR supports, workshops, networks and lunchtime activities together with the vast array of health and wellbeing resources which are on the UCC Keepwell website.
3. *Personal Supports* - these personal supports encompass the ongoing support that is available from line management, colleagues, the HR team – both centrally and HR Business and also encompasses coaching, mentoring and peer networks.

A number of measures were approved by the University Management Team for dissemination within the university - these cover the following:

1. Meeting timings - reiterating core hours under Athena Swan for meetings between 10-4 while appreciating that this may create challenges currently for colleagues working from home – hence the need for local discussions to support these colleagues.
2. Making arrangements locally for an identified "meeting free afternoons/mornings" to give the opportunity for planning and preparation work.
3. Meeting duration – more focused meetings that are less than an hour to incorporate the opportunity for breaks between meetings.
4. The incorporation of a discussion in team meetings on "staff wellbeing" – what is working well locally and what tweaks or improvements can we make to supporting wellbeing.

5. Email protocol – for colleagues who wish to catch up on email out of hours – it is recommended that they leave the emails in draft to send the following day or that they employ the "work offline" function.

A resource tree was also developed to sign post colleagues readily and easily to the significant range and breadth of resources both internal and external that are available to support health and wellbeing at the present time. This tree is built on the strong foundations which encompass our UCC values together with highlighting the strong social based supports that are available from line managers, colleagues and HR.   Clicking into the sections on the branches of the resource tree will bring colleagues to the pertinent information on the support that is available https://www.ucc.ie/en/hr/wellbeingdevelopment/wellbeing/supportinguccstaffin202021/

In addition, the group have in conjunction with Marketing and Communications launched a series called "Learnings from Lockdown" on Work Vivo for staff.   This series which commenced in December has encouraged colleagues to outline their challenges during COVID-19 and to identify what one thing they have done or tried to do to support themselves and their team.   It is intended that this work will continue to support staff who are working on-line and also in transitioning to the new normal in 2021/22.

Staff Development
President's Awards for Excellence in Teaching
University College Cork is committed to excellence in education and the Teaching Excellence Awards scheme at UCC is the longest-established scheme of its kind in Ireland. These awards recognise staff who have made an outstanding contribution in the pursuit of teaching excellence through innovative and creative forms of teaching, learning and assessment. In particular, the purpose of the awards is to encourage work that is designed and carried out to improve student learning and student outcomes, which can include course design and implementation and/or research and enquiry into teaching, learning and assessment.

Excellence in teaching can be demonstrated in many ways, and there are very many examples of excellent teaching in University College Cork. A variety of criteria are used to assess excellence in teaching including ability to engage students and improve student learning, the use of innovative pedagogies and technologies, research of teaching and assessment approaches and dissemination of good practice in teaching. The award scheme is open to all UCC staff who teach or support teaching including academic staff, support staff, administrative staff, research staff, technical staff, postgraduate tutors and demonstrators. Staff may be nominated for an award through self-nomination or nomination by students, colleagues/peers or alumni.

Staff Wellbeing & Development
Development
The HR Department in UCC has a Staff Wellbeing & Development Unit committed to providing all UCC colleagues with development opportunities and wellbeing supports to enable individuals and teams to contribute fully to the achievement of goals and objectives in the context of the UCC strategic plan - UCC2022.

The Staff Wellbeing & Development unit enhanced its contribution to UCC staff through a variety of means: coaching panels, early career support, leadership development, peer support networks and wellbeing developments.

The UCC Internal Coaching Panel experienced growing engagement with the UCC community through coaching stories on Work Vivo and the significant level of attendance at the panel's first presentation to UCC colleagues, with over 60 dialling in over lunchtime to hear more about coaching and to meet members

of the panel. In the past year, over 126 coaching conversations have been facilitated in UCC by members of our internal coaching panel, with coaching provided to UCC colleagues and Quercus students.

Having identified a gap in training for junior early career staff members, a new Digital Badge 'Success Through Teamwork' commenced at the beginning of March 2021. 14 staff members participated, with the facilitators all internal to UCC.

Leadership programmes were very popular in 2020/21 and the UCC/IMI senior leadership programme doubled the number of programmes undertaken due to demand. A digital badge was provided for those staff interested in moving into management roles, this course also doubled the number of cohorts to accommodate demand.

Following two information briefings and the call for expressions of interest over 70 staff expressed their interest in joining peer support networks. Fifteen such networks have now been established covering numerous themes including 'Early Career Researchers', 'Student Facing Professional Services Staff' and 'Early Career Academics'.

CIRTL developed a new Postgraduate Certificate programme in Professional Practice and Leadership in Higher Education in 2020/21; the course will commence in 2022/23. The purpose of this unique programme is to address the professional development and education of professional staff in a dynamic higher education context. The Postgraduate Certificate aims to provide all higher education staff with the knowledge, skills, and understanding necessary to produce effective professional practitioners and leaders who foster ingenuity, practice integrity, and promote a culture of collaboration and teamwork that furthers institutional goals in higher education.

Wellbeing

UCC colleagues now have access free of charge to a new Digital Gym and Digital Wellbeing Studio, available through the Spectrum.Life portal. The Digital Gym gives staff members access to live and on demand fitness classes. The Digital Wellbeing Studio delivers a monthly, 4-part wellbeing series based on a seasonal and relevant topic, such as Managing your Finances, Cancer Awareness, Parenting Top Tips and The Power of Sleep. Each monthly wellbeing series is presented by a health and wellbeing presenter and features a range of experts to help empower UCC employees.

The 7th National Workplace Wellbeing Day took place on Friday 30 April 2021. This year the focus was on *social, mental and physical wellbeing*. Its significance is particularly important during the COVID-19 pandemic, as staff have undergone a shift to working-from-home and social distancing. Many units/teams/groups of colleagues came up with varied and in many cases very creative and new local wellbeing initiatives to stay connected, look out for each other and lessen the impact of loneliness and isolation. A number of teams across UCC shared what they have done to support the social, mental and physical wellbeing of their team. Each of these initiatives were collated and are profiled in [this newsletter](#).

In early July 2021, a questionnaire was sent to new staff (as of March 2020), to ascertain any anxieties and concerns they might have about being on campus. A report was compiled and sent to all HR Business Managers to be shared and discussed with Heads and managers.

As a result, a number of University level initiatives are being introduced. These include:

- Two full Orientation sessions with presentations from all the relevant areas will take place for all staff who joined since March 2020 in addition to the HR Orientation sessions which took place regularly throughout lockdown.

- Peer Support Networks for new staff have been established. These are small groups of approximately 5 new staff who contract to meet regularly to foster learning in the workplace.

- In conjunction with the UCC Visitors Centre, a number of dedicated 'New Staff' campus tours are being organised to take place in early September 2021. In addition to the content of a normal tour, relevant buildings will be highlighted to new staff. Saturday tours are also being scheduled to accommodate new staff who would like to bring their family along.

A workshop outlining the key elements of the new Code of Practice on the Right to Disconnect has been developed. The workshop highlights the new obligations for employers and employees and outline the desired behaviours in helping staff to disconnect from work. This training highlighted senior management's commitment to staff wellbeing at work as demonstrated by the guidelines put in place to support staff working remotely.
https://www.ucc.ie/en/hr/wellbeingdevelopment/wellbeing/umtsguidelinesforremoteworking/

Teaching, Learning and Assessment
Connected Curriculum 2018-2022
Learning and teaching are the defining characteristics of every university. What is taught, how it is taught, and the overall ethos of the university's teaching mission are the characteristics that define any institution's offering to its students. To optimise UCC's relevance to potential and existing students and to ensure our students are enabled to study and learn in the most efficient and effective ways, it is vital that UCC regularly reflects on what and how it teaches. That reflection is all the more critical in the current environment as university staff and students continue to grapple with the impact of the global pandemic on learning and teaching.

UCC is committed to the personalised education of every member of its student community. We prioritise the provision of quality of education to equip students with the skills, discipline and intellectual rigour that can be adapted to their requirements and challenges throughout their lifetime. UCC is committed to delivering future-ready education programmes, adopting a systems approach underpinned by the philosophy of life-long and life-wide learning.

UCC's Academic Strategy 2018-2022 was launched in December 2018 and has enjoyed great support across the University. https://www.ucc.ie/en/registrar/theconnecteduniversity/academicstrategy/. The strategy is being delivered through 6 key priorities:
1. Develop a Connected Curriculum, building on existing strengths and best practice globally.
2. Align the Academic Portfolio with demand and with teaching and research priorities.
3. Constructively align effective Assessment practices with learning outcomes.
4. Facilitate students' development of core values and Graduate Attributes.
5. Establish a student Enrolment Plan that aligns with student recruitment targets.
6. Reform Academic Governance such that innovation is enabled, coherence is restored and risk is reduced.

The implementation of this strategy is being achieved by breaking each goal down into a number of discrete actions each led by a dedicated team of staff and student representatives. Delivering these actions involves working with all Schools and Colleges, and with individuals; the development of metrics; and regular reviews.

The implementation of the strategy is on track with all 35 actions now underway, and 52% already completed. This strategy has supported UCC to deliver its academic mission and safeguard student success in the face of the ongoing challenges posed by the COVID-19 crisis. Some of the adjustments, modifications and innovations developed in response to the restrictions will endure post-crisis. These have been incorporated into the implementation of the Academic Strategy and will support innovations in learning, teaching and the student experience, particularly in the areas of student recruitment, assessment and mitigation, and academic governance.

UCC's Connected Curriculum aims to ensure that six key elements are embedded across the curriculum: Research-Based Teaching; Employability; Sustainability; Inter- and Transdisciplinarity; Global Reach; and Civic and Community Engagement. Digital toolkits for staff to support the embedding of sustainability and community engagement in the curriculum have been developed and rolled out at UCC and form part of a Digital Badge for staff on the Connected Curriculum. More than 500 staff have engaged in the online Digital Badge course on *The Connected Curriculum and You*, and this course is one of the lasting success stories of the pivot to online activities at UCC in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The course content was also repurposed for incoming international students as part of the online Transitions-In programme that was launched in response to the COVID-19 restrictions. The Graduate Attributes Programme (GAP) is approaching the end of its third year of advancing the development of students' academic, specialist and technical competencies, to prepare our students to co-create a shared future and take an active role in shaping our society and local and global economies. A digital self-assessment tool *Your UCC Graduate Attributes and Values Compass* has been launched which enables students to generate a bespoke profile illustrating their starting point for values and attributes.

An additional professional development offering, Connected Curriculum Design Sprint, was run in April 2021 which supported staff to redesign their modules in collaboration with some of their students utilising the self-evaluation tool. Evaluative feedback from participants in the Design Sprint and led to the development of the self-evaluation tool and the development of a guidance for staff on how to use the tool make explicit how their teaching is aligned with the Connected Curriculum.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated several elements of assessment practice at UCC and key learnings have been incorporated in a new Assessment Framework (assessment principles and plan for assessment) that underpins the University's approach to supporting student success through assessment, regardless of the discipline or type of assessment. UCC has recently launched a project on the development of policy on Recognition of Prior Learning as part of a national project. Review and reform of academic decision making is a key objective and, following extensive consultation, a process has been developed to inform this work. This governance model will have implications for how we make decisions at the level of the local academic unit, but also will inform the need for multiple layers of decision-making structures at the College and University level.

Retention Rates
UCC has a strong commitment to maintaining high levels of student retention and works systematically to support early student engagement and support, through the activities of the First Year Coordinator. Student success is a key strategic priority for UCC, as Pillar Three of UCC 2022. Maintaining high levels of first year retention/first year progression/first year success reaps benefits for the university and students alike, including higher levels of engagement throughout the student journey, which in turn leads to successful completion and future careers. UCC has shown consistently high rates of first year student retention and student progression rates. HEA findings suggests that up to 15% of university students do not progress beyond first year (October 2020, p.37-38). UCC has arguably the best first year retention rate nationally, if not internationally. Goal one of the University's Strategic Plan 2017-2022 is to implement an academic strategy to deliver an outstanding, student-centred teaching and learning experience with a renewed, responsive and research-led curriculum at its core. One of the targets of this goal is to achieve student retention rates of 92% after first year. UCC continues to be a leader with a first-year retention rate of 92% in 2020/21.

In response to COVID-19 and consequent difficulty with on-campus orientation, the University transitioned its orientation programme to a virtual environment. This also gave the University an opportunity to review the content, structure, and delivery of the programme.

The Orientation Team transformed time-tested successful events of years past into a digital offering and seized the opportunity for innovation. Given that online learning escalated exponentially since March 2020, academic staff had little opportunity to develop content for online orientation. However, with the support of the Orientation Team, Digital Services and the Centre for Digital Education all content was delivered on time and was accessible, without exception, to all first-year students. The virtual orientation was very successful and the Orientation Team recommended that students engage both online and in person for future orientation sessions outside COVID-19.

No Academic Disadvantage
UCC introduced the No Academic Disadvantage measures for all exams undertaken during the COVID-19 period in recognition of the exceptional circumstances. Students whose personal circumstances may have been compromised by COVID-19 may have applied to defer their examinations and attempt the examination in the deferred examinations scheduled in August/September with no academic disadvantage. There were no examination repeat fees should a student sit a repeat examination; if a student was unhappy with their online examination/ assessment they may have chosen to re-sit the examination/assessment; should a student have failed an examination they may have taken the supplemental exam without any academic penalty.

Innovative ways of teaching during COVID-19
Example: College of Science Engineering & Food Science
Labster: To allow for the COVID-10 restrictions on class size and social distancing, the College of Science, Engineering and Food Science (SEFS) secured a lab-based software that simulates a laboratory. Labster gives students access to a realistic lab experience that allows them perform experiments and practice laboratory skills in a fun and risk-free learning environment. The student feedback to date on the software has been very positive.

Microsoft Windows Virtual Desktop: Several schools in the College of SEFS (Computer Science & Information Technology; Engineering; and Mathematical Sciences in particular) deployed Windows Virtual Desktop software so that students working remotely can have full access to proprietary programs normally available only within laboratory settings. This means that they will not have to be present on campus but can instead access specialised software remotely.

Home labs in Electrical & Electronic Engineering: Electrical Engineering students availed of ADALM2000 kits which can be used in their homes in place of having to attend campus. These allow the student's computer/laptop at home to be used as an electronics workbench for circuit development and analysis. 40 of these kits were donated by Analog Devices and a further 60 purchased by the School of Engineering.

Dedicated online support: The School of Computer Science & Information Technology offered (via CANVAS) an online support hub for all first-year students registered across its four undergraduate programmes. CSIT SOLAS @ UCC is a proactive and innovative mechanism to offer dedicated online tutorial-style support to improve student success.

Supports and Resources for Learners
Skills Centre: Enhancing the student's learning experience through COVID-19
Now in its fifth academic year, the UCC Skills Centre provides a space for all UCC students to build the confidence and skills they need to thrive as a 21st century student. In the dedicated, active learning space students improve their academic communication, so they can independently discover their own needs and improve their scholastic work and assessment outcomes with confidence. The Skills Centre utilises an interactive, student-centred approach that engages collaborative learning and skills development, which is confidential and non-judgmental,

so students can work towards improvement in a comfortable environment. The Skills Centre uses the language of positive psychology to engender in all students the conviction of their ability to become critical, confident communicators.

Unlocking potential, providing training and guidance to students that facilitates the development of transferable skills designed to improve engagement in their chosen academic field with more confidence are the core functions of the Centre. Underpinned by coaching philosophy and utilising a writing centre directive the Skills Centre remained online for the 2020/21 academic year. Providing face to face engagement, albeit virtually, became the norm. Digital tools such as the Success Zone, online web resources and the specially built Assignment Calculator all helped students navigate the uncertain COVID-19 world. Working with students as partners, the Centre listened to what they needed and created resources to help them thrive. The video series Being a student in the 21st century, additional resources preparing for online and take home exams, the Calculation Centre and our Asynchronous Assignment Feedback all helped students to embrace the challenges they faced.

Working with students as partners, and harnessing social media as learning resource, the Centre developed new and exciting series for students including If I knew then what I know now blog series and A day in the life of.. vlog series.

Taking place in October 2021, Academic Integrity Week organised by the Skills Centre encouraged students to learn the fundamental values of academic integrity. Promoted to students using the hashtag #MyOwnWork, students were provided with a range of videos, and other resources to support them in striving towards academic integrity.

UCC Student Central Service
UCC's innovative Student Central Service offers a 'one stop shop' for students and works in close collaboration with colleagues in admissions, fees, student records and exams.
https://www.ucc.ie/en/students/studentcentral/

Preparations for new Academic year: Student Supports

- Success Zone
- Online Orientations on Canvas
- Class Rep Elections on Canvas
- 24/7 support
- Better security
  - MFA
  - Azure AD in place of Edugate

Preparations for new Academic year: Technical

Canvas
- Continual Software Enhancements
- Canvas Catalog

Panopto
- New integration with Teams being piloted which automatically ingests meeting recordings.

Teams
- New Integration with Canvas to automate teams creation and membership sync
- Many new enhancements to make it a more effective teaching tool.

Classroom Technologies
- Many New Document Cameras/Webcams/Microphones
- Exception from MFA in place, but will monitor, and reimplement if necessary.

UCC

Supports for Access Students

The Access UCC team were acutely aware of the challenges being faced by Access students in the immediate aftermath of the University closures caused by COVID-19. Within days technology was being distributed to students without devices and one to one support was available via phone and virtual meetings.

One to One support:

The Access Team utilised Microsoft Teams to connect with students during the campus closure. An online appointment booking system was available to enable students to pick a date and time that was convenient to meet with an Access Advisor. Students were encouraged to reach out to advisors for a wide range of supports, financial, academic, technology, reasonable accommodations, etc. The feedback from Access students has been very positive. Many students commented that the virtual appointments were less stressful than on campus face to face meetings. Despite returning to campus for the 21/22 academic year, the Access team will continue to offer virtual one to one meetings for students.

Laptop Loan Scheme:

Access UCC administered a Laptop Loan scheme for students across the university who could not purchase their own devices due to financial challenges. Dell laptops were procured from the COVID-19 Devices grant for distribution to students. A streamlined, accessible application process was put in place for students to apply for a device. Over 520 devices were distributed to students during the 2020/21 academic year. Students who were experiencing challenges with connectivity were also able to access a pre-paid sim or dongle to ensure access to online learning. Every effort was made to ensure that students received their devices quickly, a number of collection days were organised and managed according to public health advice. If students couldn't come on campus devices were delivered by courier.

Hardship Fund:

University College Cork supplemented its existing financial support schemes by putting in place a COVID-19 Hardship fund for students who were impacted by the pandemic closures. The COVID-19 Hardship Fund was quickly established to provide support to students who were negatively financially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. University funds along with philanthropy were utilised. A new online application system was developed and further enhanced for the following academic year to ease the application process for students. The fund was aimed at supporting students experiencing significant financial hardship. This included hardship

as a result of loss of earnings due to business closures, self-isolation or illness. The fund was widely publicised by the Students Union and Access UCC.

Additional Academic Support:
Additional academic support and academic skills sessions were delivered to Access students to compensate for the lack of informal peer support crucial for so many non-traditional students. Recognising that many students were studying remotely with little peer or family support, every effort was made to engage with students virtually. One to one sessions, small peer group study sessions and tutorials were organised by subject and discipline, to facilitate peer engagement.

Information and Data Management
Data Governance
A Data Governance Group was established in June 2020. The key objective of this group is to help put in place an overarching framework for data management in UCC. Its aims are to promote good data management practice across the University underpinning data quality, usage, access and compliance, and to ensure that all staff have clarity around roles and responsibilities when working with UCC data. It will also promote data fluency and the development and delivery of data services to support evidence-based decision making at all levels.

As its first deliverable the Data Governance Group (DGG) drafted a UCC Data Charter in 2021 which is to go live in early 2022. Other governance deliverables that the group hope to make progress on are standardised data definitions, data sharing and data accessibility. The UCC data hub will be the primary data product through which data services will be made available to users.

The Enterprise Data Strategy was also reviewed in 2020/21 having been paused in 2019. The Enterprise Data Strategy is essentially the road map for the improvement of data services at UCC. There is a technical stream and business/governance stream to this multi-year project. It has been re-approved by UMT & IT Steering and it is now set to officially commence in January 2022.

Student Survey
At UCC the views of students are central to improving teaching, research and student services and to the quality review process. Student surveys are an important tool for students to provide feedback on university experiences, educational quality, institutional effectiveness and student satisfaction, and play an important role in the involvement of students in university management and governance. The Irish Survey of Student Engagement (StudentSurvey.ie) invites responses from first year undergraduate, final year undergraduate, and taught postgraduate students in 25 higher education institutions in Ireland. There is a second survey, which is designed for postgraduate research (PGR) students (including Masters by research and doctoral degree students). This year, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic an additional seven questions were asked in StudentSurvey.ie and PGR StudentSurvey.ie respectively which specifically addressed the impact of COVID-19 on student's experience of higher education.

The surveys provided valuable feedback essential for internal Quality Enhancement processes. They highlighted both key areas of strength such as overall satisfaction with the online experience in 2020/21 and student's appreciation of the supports put in place in the transition to online and areas for improvement such as engagement and interaction within and outside the 'virtual' classroom. Due to the satisfactory number of respondents – a statistically valid sample size of 20.2% of all eligible students – the surveys are a reliable and relevant source of information.

Analysis Cycle

Responses are analysed at a national level and national results are published annually to inform national policy making. Every year, the data sets of responses of our students are made available shortly after fieldwork concludes. In order to facilitate discussions, a preliminary analysis of indicator scores is carried out at an institutional level in early summer, in consultation with the University Student Surveys Board. In autumn, the results are compiled into an annual university level report and circulated more widely internally.   The results report serves as a guide for continued enhancement of teaching and learning and also student engagement. It is hoped that the findings will help units across the university to better understand the student experience in the 2021/2022 Academic term. These results highlighted the experiences of current UCC students and act as signposts to inform how we serve and support students in the coming year.

Feedback Cycle

Feeding back to students the responses to their feedback and the outcome of any meetings is a vital part of successfully closing the feedback loop. Additionally, as part of the work of the Surveys Board:

- The results are presented at Academic Council and Governing Body Student Experience Committee and summary reports utilising the disaggregated college data are circulated to each college to open discussion and explore uses of the data within the local context.

- UCC continues to work in partnership with student representatives to close the feedback loop through visible reporting on the findings of the previous years' surveys, coupled with ensuring strategies for optimizing uses of the data is included on agendas of appropriate meetings.
  Instagram (https://www.instagram.com/uccstudentsurveys/),
  Twitter (https://twitter.com/SurveysUCC) and
  YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCPkSTdppGKWOlfs2zHaGzqQ)

- Continuing the wide communication of results, feedback is shared with colleagues across all support areas i.e., IT Services, UCC's Societies, UCC Library, UCC Skills Centre etc.

- The results can be accessed by Programme Directors and Co-ordinators to support timely and impactful programme level trend analysis, inform decision making in programmes at School committees and for use to meet annual reporting requirements.

- Case study submissions showcasing the impact of StudentSurvey.ie were sought locally. We asked colleagues to reflect upon 9 years of StudentSurvey.ie and how the results have been used to enhance the student experience. The StudentSurvey.ie showcase will form part of a Time Series Research segment at the National Practitioners Forum 2022.

- A series of Impact sessions were facilitated for use by Programme Directors and Programme Coordinators to enhance the ability to access, analyse, report, and explore the trends, impacts and value of StudentSurvey.ie for enhancement.

- Continued collaboration with UCC StudentSurvey.ie communications group who facilitate a dialogue and provide opportunities for co-creation, ideas shared and improved together.

Achieving Impact

The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030[2], seeks to ensure that each institution establish a robust student feedback ecosystem. The strategy also makes some other valuable recommendations such as ensuring

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[2] https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/06/National-Strategy-for-Higher-Education-2030.pdf

the best quality outcomes of graduates of HEI's in Ireland. A key consideration in that regard is whether the supports currently being provided and taken up by our students are maximising this capacity to meet this demand.

Unlocking the value of the student survey data will complement our strategic direction and enable us to gain a better understanding of our students, analyse progress and enact change. How we go about achieving impact on foot of the results of the Student Survey will depend on many factors such as:

- What messages emerged from the results?
- Did student feedback point to major changes needed?
- Are there some enhancements that need to be looked at in the short, medium and longer term?
- If so, how can the leaders within the Institution make this change happen?

In response, UCC has initiated, implemented and/or reinforced a range of initiatives over the last 12 months including approaches that accommodate and support greater engagement, digital literacy and well-being supports. These include:

- *Engagement with module material:* More rooms are equipped with lecture capture capabilities ensuring lectures can be recorded and made available on Canvas.

- *Enhancing the learning experience:* The Boole Library remained open during lockdown. We work together with staff and our Student Union to provide services and supports necessary for students to study in a safe warm environment with a stale online connection.

- *Additional supports around digital literacy:* UCC's newly launched Digital Master Plan aims to develop world class digital education services, to support staff and student needs for flexibility and accessibility, including further developments on Microsoft Teams, our VLE Canvas, Panopto, and classroom technology. Additionally, our weekly Student IT Services Tips and Tricks is a new initiative to help students navigate common IT issues and keep up to date with new technologies.

- *Health and well-being:* We know that COVID-19 has changed life as we know it and has had a big impact on the wellbeing of our students. As we move forward, the UCC Keep Well website was developed as a resource to enable them to look after their health and wellbeing.

- *A place for relaxation and calm:* The Calm Zone or An Ceantar Ciúin is located in the Old College Bar building and is a space designed to be a place of respite and calm for students, and in particular students on the autism spectrum. The areas include a Reception & Open Plan Area, Workshop Space, Sensory Rooms and Respite Rooms & Eating Spaces.

Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review
Thematic Review of Work Placement
The Thematic Review of Work Placement was commissioned by the Deputy President & Registrar and the Director of the Student Experience to provide a University-level view of current good practice in the overall structure and co-ordination of placements, and to identify opportunities to enhance these practices into the future. It is intended that the findings of the Review will also help to shape the implementation of the InPlace placement management software system which is currently being rolled out across the institution.

Following the thematic review and the 14 recommendations provided by the International Review Panel, an opportunity has been provided for the future of work placement and work integrated learning to be more closely

aligned with the strategic ambitions of the university. After consultation with the Director of Student Experience, Head of Career Services and Director of Quality Enhancement Unit, a Strategic Quality Enhancement Project was proposed and approved under the sponsorship of the Interim Registrar. Branding in this way will speak to the transformative change, the strategic importance of Work Integrated Learning, Placement and employ-agility but more importantly it will be a useful way to raise awareness and engagement with a comprehensive set of actions planned to start in 2021/22.

Self-Evaluation of Examinations Business Continuity Group
The Examinations Business Continuity Group (EBCG) was established as a high-level expert group in March 2020, to develop required policy and direct implementation activities for modified examinations arrangements arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. At national level several agencies provided sectoral level guidance on key principles to frame institutions' activities as they developed responses and modified arrangements. These included including Quality & Qualifications Ireland as well as the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning. The group met a total of 55 times. The group's membership of over 50 university staff members was drawn from the Academic Community, Professional Services and the Students' Union.

Ordinarily, UCC uses a variety of continuous assessments methods including student placement and field work. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic the university also provided over *c*70k formal invigilated written exam sittings annually. Public Health measures necessitated by the COVID-19 crisis including Level 5 lockdowns, social distancing and other infection control measures meant that in many cases the method of assessment for a module needed to be modified or changed. These changes had far reaching consequences and impacted students, professional accrediting bodies, professional services, external examiners and the academic community within UCC.

Issues arising from these changes and any other impediment or logistical challenges associated with the delivery and management of assessments during the COVID-19 crisis were formally logged on an issues log which was reviewed and updated at each EBCG meeting. The primary focus of each EBCG meetings was to discuss and resolve all open issues.
Embedded from the outset in the EBCG decision making process were some key principles\themes:
- No Academic Disadvantage. The sudden onset of the COVID-19 crisis caused huge disruption for students. COVID-19 related illnesses, placement cancellations, travel restrictions, caring responsibilities, and lack of access to reliable technology posed new challenges and created uncertainty. A key principle of providing *No Academic Disadvantage* to all students guided resolution of all issues as well as policy and procedural changes formulated and proposed by the group.

- Academic Standards. The EBCG determined that any necessary changes to a module's assessment methods needed to be appropriate for module learning outcomes and were acceptable to relevant external accrediting bodies.

  The group were also particularly cognisant of the inherent academic integrity challenges associated with remote assessment and throughout the crisis advocated practical measures to help mitigate this risk.

- Partnership. In response to a fluid and uncertain environment requiring responsive and effective decision making, the EBCG took a partnership approach engaging on a regular basis with both internal and external stakeholders.

  Internally, it was recognised that a pivot to remote assessment required a whole of campus approach relying on students, the academic community and all professional services and student supports. The group also consulted with external stakeholders including external accrediting bodies, external

examiners and other IUA members. The regular meetings of the group were used as an effective forum for identifying and resolving issues.

- Subsidiarity. The EBCG provided the overarching general guidance and policy adjustments to support the Academic Community in pivoting to alternative forms of assessment. In addition, the principle of Academic Subsidiarity was encouraged to empower schools and departments make local decisions that best suited the assessment needs of their programmes and ultimately the interests of their students.

- Responsiveness. The Government instruction to close the University Campus on March 13th, 2020, delays to Leaving Certificate results, travel restrictions, student petitions for a no-detriment policy, the re-introduction of a Level 5 lockdown in October 2020 were some of the unprecedent challenges facing the university. Particularly in 2020, when levels of uncertainty were at their highest, timely decision making was actively encouraged and made possible through a hight frequency of meetings and strong representation, engagement and decisive action from all stakeholder groups including the university's senior management team.

All assessment and examination issues arising from the COVID-19 crisis and the necessary pivot to online teaching and assessment were tracked and managed by the group. All issues were formally documented and recorded on an issues log. In total, over one hundred were reported and resolved. The latest version of the issue was submitted to all meetings of the Academic Board. Where appropriate, some issues were escalated to Academic Leadership Forum for guidance and resolution.

Delivery and management of student assessment in UCC is a whole of campus endeavour. The pivot to online assessment required close co-operation and collaboration between all stakeholders.
Ahead of each Examination period, the EBCG issued an operational readiness self-assessment template to the Students' Union, Professional Services and Academic colleagues. This template was provided as an *aide memoire* to ensure staff and students were appropriately prepared.

The pivot to online\remote assessment required regular a significant amount communication with the student body, academic staff and external stakeholders. The EBCP assisted in the drafting and approval of formal communications. Detailed and summary guides were prepared and issued to staff to ensure a positive and even student experience. In consultation, with the Students' Union the EBCP provided FAQ and guidance for students. An [Assessment Hub](#) was created and published to promote consistency of approach across all aspects of assessment including design, policies, delivery and grading.

To assure the effectiveness of the EBCG it was agreed that a Self-Evaluation and Review (SER) process should be undertaken to a achieve a focused evaluation of the effectiveness of the decision-making and operational processes of the EBCG. The SER methodology was developed by the Quality Enhancement Unit and following consultation the intended outcomes of the exercise were agreed as: to learn and understand what worked well; to identify what could be improved and detail any issues remaining to be resolved. The initial self-evaluation took place in 2020/21 and the EBCG made a number of recommendations which will be reviewed by the University in 2021/22.

Quality Assurance of Research Activities and Programmes
Research Quality Review

QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016) state that each institution 'is responsible for organizing an integrated system of quality assurance in relation to its research activities. These should build upon the peer review mechanisms widely employed in research funding and publication and incorporate relevant metrics.' UCC's approach to this has been to conduct institution-wide Research Quality Review (RQR) exercises. The RQR Technical Group was established by the Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC), chaired by the President, in order to design the outline principles and approach for the next RQR. QEC agreed that the focus of the Technical Group's work would align with both the UCC Research and Innovation Strategy with an emphasis on research quality enhancement, and with the UCC Academic Strategy with an emphasis on research-based education.

The remit of the RQR Technical Group is to develop recommendations for a model of internal research quality review which is framed in light prevailing approaches in higher education for the review of research quality in a national and international context, and practices/expectations of funding agencies for the quality of research; UCC's strategic context as a research-intensive university with a research-based curriculum at its core; the University's commitment to enhancement as articulated in the University Strategy, the Research & Innovation Strategy and the Academic Strategy.

The RQR Technical Group defined research as a process of investigation leading to the creation of new knowledge and / or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way so as to generate new concepts, insights, inventions, methodologies, solutions and understandings. This can include synthesis and analysis of previous research to the extent that it leads to new and creative outcomes. In some disciplinary areas it may involve the creation of artefacts, or may be embodied in artistic work, design or performance.

The RQR Technical Group successfully completed stage one of the RQR project plan with the publication of the RQR Technical Group Report to the QEC in January 2020, encompassing the proposed method of review. The communication phase of the plan commenced in February 2020 and was abruptly halted due to COVID-19.

COVID-19 has obvious implications for the scheduling of the RQR. COVID-19 has had a profound impact on the workload of academic staff not least of which is an impact in regard to lost research time. There has been a tremendous effort by the University to contain and manage the effects of COVID-19 on core academic business and this has had a consequent impact on the prioritisation of IT services, a crucial component of the successful implementation of the RQR.

The Thematic Prioritisation of the University Strategic Plan was approved by Governing Body in December 2020. The RQR methodology is consistent with the Thematic Prioritisation process as it relates to research and the outcomes arising from it, however, for the RQR to be meaningful and strategically relevant the timing of its implementation is very important. Taken together, all of the foregoing, the very earliest initiation of the assessment phase of RQR is likely to be January 2024. Depending on the further evolution of COVID-19 and also conclusion and direction setting from the Thematic Prioritisation exercise this may need to be extended out to September 2024.

Integration of UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)
In 2016, UCC launched its Sustainability Strategy, which was framed around the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The sustainability strategy focuses on themes of Citizenship (SDG 10, SDG 16, SDG 17), Teaching & Learning (SDG 4), Research, Food, Health & Wellbeing (SDG 2, SDG 3), Landscape, Heritage & Natural Resources (SDG 11, SDG 14, SDG 15), Waste Management (SDG 12), Energy, Water & Climate (SDG 6, SDG 7, SDG 9, SDG

11, SDG 13), Procurement & Contracts (SDG 8, SDG 9, SDG 12), Commuting & Business Travel (SDG 11, SDG 13). UCC publishes an Annual Sustainability Report each year outlining progress against each of the 9 key areas.

Sustainability is also embedded into the University's Strategic Plan 2017-2022, and our Academic Strategy 2018-2022. We are a member of the EAUC, Alliance for Sustainability Leadership in Higher Education and are signatories of the SDG Accord, higher education's collective response to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. UCC is also a member of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, an organisation set up under the auspices of the UN to mobilise knowledge institutions around the SDGs. We are currently in the advanced stages of developing an all-Ireland SDSN Network, which will be jointly hosted at UCC and QUB.

UCC consistently performs well in international sustainability rankings and was the first university outside of North America to be awarded a Gold STARS rating from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education. STARS (The Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System) is the most comprehensive, transparent, self-reporting framework for HEIs to measure their sustainability performance across all their activities. All data submitted to STARS is publicly available. In 2020-2021 UCC ranked 8th globally in the UI Green Metric. The UI Green Metric ranks over 900 HEIs according to their performance in environmental sustainability, incorporating metrics relating to twelve of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals. The Times Higher Education Impact Rankings assess universities against the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal, using carefully calibrated indicators to provide comprehensive and balanced comparisons across three broad areas: research, outreach and stewardship. In 2021-2022 UCC was ranked 8th globally.

Through our Connected Curriculum and Graduate Attributes Programme (Priorities One and Four respectively of our Academic Strategy 2018-2022) we are championing the development of values, skills and aptitudes that promote civic participation, social inclusion, sustainability, and impactful, global citizenship in all academic courses. All 17 SDGs are covered within the formal curriculum at UCC, with 6% of the university's modules including direct sustainable development teachings. These modules are spread across 60% of the university's academic departments meaning that 17% of our students graduate having taken one of these modules in the course of their degree. In 2021, thanks to funding from the National Forum for Teaching and Learning, UCC launched an SDG Toolkit designed to enable educators to integrate the SDGs further into the curriculum, enhancing teaching and learning both within (SDGs of relevance to the discipline) and across (cross-cutting competencies and skills) disciplines. The toolkit is an open source resource available for use by any HEI and its launch was the most attended event held in UCC's calendar of events for VIT&L week.

Each year, our University Wide Module in Sustainability (UW0005) is offered annually as a Digital Badge to all staff or as additional University Credit to all students. It is designed to nurture sustainability citizenship amongst staff and students and takes a co-created interdisciplinary approach to the SDGs with contributions from 20 different staff from across all colleges. In 2020-21, the module was held online and attended by over 100 staff, students, and members of the public. The module was awarded UCC's "Excellence in Teaching" award for 2021. In addition three other university wide modules that speak directly to the Sustainable Development Goals ran; Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Social Justice, Equality, Diversity and Health (UW0011), Development and Global Citizenship Education (UW0012) and Global Sustainable Development: Interdisciplinary Perspectives (UW1201). In AY20-21 the first cohort of students completed UCC's new Higher Diploma in Sustainability and Enterprise, part of the flagship "Sustainable Futures" programme funded through the HCI Pillar 1. In 21/22 the first cohort of students will complete the Sustainable Futures PGCert/Masters programme which is jointly run by UCC, NUI Maynooth and IT Sligo, and funded through HCI Pillar 2.

UCC 2022 prioritises impactful research and innovation that are curiosity driven, seeking breakthroughs that will address global societal grand challenges including the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The most recent estimate found that 15% of all researchers in UCC are engaged in research that is directly related to the SDGs. UCC's sustainability researchers are found across a variety of disciplines throughout the University. The Environmental Research Institute (ERI) brings together over 400 researchers from 20 different scientific disciplines with expertise in the five broad research platforms of Environment, Sustainable Energy, Marine, Sustainable Agri-Food, and Sustainable Materials. Similarly the Centre for Global Development aims to support, enhance and promote UCC's commitment to addressing the challenges of the Sustainable Development Goals. Other examples of research institutes conducting research on the SDGs include Institute for Social Sciences in the 21st century (ISS21), Tyndall National Institute, MaREI, APC Microbiome, the Food Institute and more. In excess of €20m is secured annually for environmental and sustainability research. As part Action 2.1.2 under UCC 2022, an RSO has been employed to undertake detailed mapping of UCC research in relation to the SDGs.

UCC is particularly active with regard to SDG 13 and in November 2021, UCC was the only Irish University to have Observer Status at the UNFCCC COP 26 meeting in Glasgow. A delegation of 8 researchers and students attended the event in Glasgow, while on campus a Model COP event was hosted for students and a Climate Change mural was unveiled on main campus. Following the COP 26 meeting in Glasgow, the British Ambassador visited UCC and was presented with a President's Declaration, from Professor John O'Halloran, on how the two countries could better work together to address this challenging issue.

Examples of UCC's External Partnerships and Community Engagement
Human Capital Initiative
In September 2020, to meet the skills demand and the economic pressures brought on by COVID-19, UCC offered over 500 free and subsidised postgraduate and higher diploma places for those seeking to upskill. This was made possible via funding secured by UCC from the Irish Government under the Human Capital Initiative (HCI Pillar 1) and the Springboard+ initiative. These courses were designed with industry in mind to equip workers with the tools necessary to succeed in the current, rapidly changing, employment landscape.

Industry Mentoring Scheme
The PepsiCo mentoring scheme with UCC College of Science Engineering & Food Science is underway since late 2020/21. Female second year students throughout the College have been assigned industry mentors for the academic year and undertake strengths-based leadership profile training as part of the programme.

New Employment-Based Masters Degree with Kerry Group
The School of Food and Nutritional Sciences launched a new Masters Degree in Dairy Process Technology commencing in autumn 2021. Kerry Group is partnering with UCC on this unique initiative by offering two employment-based studentships on the programme. The two-year, part-time, employment-based postgraduate degree will draw primarily from Food Science graduates, offering them the opportunity to complete a Masters in Dairy Process Technology through UCC, while working across Kerry Group's dairy processing sites in Listowel, Charleville and Newmarket. This new programme will create greater access to life-long, and life-wide, learning opportunities for recent graduates and company employees in the dairy sector.

KPMG
KPMG announced a five-year partnership with University College Cork to fund further initiatives in support of its business education programme. The €600,000 bursary will see KPMG provide funds to the University's Business School for a range of student engagement activities, including scholarships, work experience, and events.

As part of the sponsorship, KPMG will also create a dedicated Cork University Business School (CUBS) Research, Learning, and Teaching Development Fund to support the continued growth of its Accounting and Finance department. This will include supporting a faculty position for the department, which reinforces KPMG's commitment to business education in Ireland

KPMG, which has over 3,500 people in offices in Dublin, Cork, Galway and Belfast, sources a significant number of graduates from UCC each year.

AIB

AIB has pledged €1.25 million over five years to support the objectives of The AIB Chair of Sustainable Business, which will be based in the Cork University Business School (CUBS), Ireland's largest business school.

The funding will also support The AIB Sustainable Business Scholars programme which will be established for early career researchers who excel in their field. The establishment of the Chair comes at a time of expected increased demand from employers for graduates with a broad knowledge and understanding of sustainable business practices.

Ronan Daly Jermyn (RDJ)

Leading Irish law firm Ronan Daly Jermyn (RDJ) has donated €40,000 to support students from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Backgrounds studying Law at University College Cork (UCC).

The company will sponsor the Ronan Daly Jermyn Diversity Scholarship, with successful students receiving a scholarship of €5,000 as well as a work placement or internship with RDJ. The donation will be made over four years, commencing in 2021/22 academic year, and will benefit two UCC undergraduate Law students each year.

iEd Hub Launch

The HCI-funded iEd Hub launched on 4 March 2021 in a well-attended online ceremony. €8.7 million of funding has been awarded to UCC, MTU and nine industry partners to develop the next generation of graduates for the Health & Life Sciences industry sector. UCC, MTU and industry partners came together to develop the iEd Hub which will produce a new generation of graduates, in line with the European Commission's Skills for Industry Strategy 2030. The iED Hub project is being led by the College of Medicine and Health. Industry Partners include: CIT Boston Scientific, Sanmina, Jannsen Ireland, Stryker, Pfizer, SOSV, DPS Group Global, Laya Healthcare, Vodafone.

Inclusive Education

UCC secured a significant award from the Higher Education Authority for UCC's innovative work in the field of inclusive education, and our efforts to open higher education to students with intellectual disabilities. The funding will scaffold the development of new initiatives to provide high value education and employment pathways for people with intellectual disabilities that recognise their unique capacities.

UCC has committed to being an Autism Friendly University by making the physical, social and academic environments of the campus more 'autism-friendly' and will undertake a multi-year project to achieve these aims. A new Autism & Uni Student Toolkit was launched this year, along with a new dedicated space of calm and respite for students – the Calm Zone. A digital badge in Autism Awareness was developed and delivered to staff. This programme is offered as part of the ongoing staff training and development opportunities.

An employability programme for students with Disabilities was expanded during 2020/21. The programme aims to increase the number of students with disabilities securing post-graduation employment.

A free online course Technology to Make Learning Easier was launched this year as part of the Assistive Technology Outreach Programme. This programme gives students and educators greater choice in how, where

and when they learn. This free resource is aimed at Transition Year students and educators. It explores various free technologies that enhance accessibility.

2.1 Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity

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

https://www.ucc.ie/en/academicgov/policies/student-policies/#plagiarism-policy
https://libguides.ucc.ie/academicintegrity/referencing

Priority 3 of the University's Academic Strategy is to "Constructively align effective assessment practices with learning outcomes". The objective of this priority is to ensure that assessment is aligned in an effective and visible way with module and programme learning outcomes and with graduate values and attributes. In this way assessment and feedback will be used to empower students to become self-regulated lifelong and life-wide learners. During the cycle of this plan a number of actions are proposed that will encourage appropriate formative and summative assessment practices that are balanced across the semesters. A draft of the proposed *Assessment and Feedback Strategy* was provided to Colleges and Academic Units for comments in November 2020.

https://www.ucc.ie/en/registrar/theconnecteduniversity/academicstrategy/assessment/
Updated Guidelines on Group Work were adopted in March 2021.
https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/academicsecretariat/policies/learningandteachingpolicies/GroupWork-Guidelines-AB190521.pdf

QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland) established the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) in November 2019. UCC played an active part in the membership of the network with Dr Siobhán Cusack (Head of Student Records & Examinations Office) as the University representative and Paul O'Donovan (Academic Secretary & Assistant Registrar) as her deputy. UCC continues to be an active member of the network and took part in the first National Academic Integrity Week in October 2020.

https://twitter.com/IUA_Academic/status/1318951544780443648?s=20

UCC secured Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement (SATLE) Funding 2020 from the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education for an 11-month Academic Integrity project with the objective of fostering a culture of academic integrity across the University through the development of educational opportunities and resources, and increased engagement with both staff and students on the topic. This project, run jointly between the UCC Skills Centre and the Centre for the Integration of Research, Teaching, and Learning (CIRTL), commenced in August 2021 with the appointment of a Research Support Officer. Initial benchmarking was carried out in August 2021, and the following initiatives were planned for academic year 2021/2022:

- Create dedicated webpages on the UCC Skills Centre Website for academic integrity and academic misconduct information and resources for students, and use these to pool resources from across the University
- Create short educational videos on academic integrity and related skills (i.e., time management)
- Create a one-hour workshop for students to introduce them to concepts of academic integrity and the six fundamental values of it as well as various forms of academic misconduct and how to avoid them; then develop additional, more advanced workshops that build on this one

- Add academic integrity content to the University-wide online Canvas resources, and embed across other University initiatives where appropriate
- Host a week of workshops, discussions, webinars, and pop-up stands for National Academic Integrity Week 2021, and promote the week with a strong social media campaign
- Recruit student and staff Academic Integrity Champions
- Host fun events and discussions to raise awareness (i.e., Academic Integrity Bingo) and engage with students across campus with pop-up activities
- Develop an Academic Integrity Digital Badge for staff
- Trial the use of lockdown browsers in an invigilated exam setting

3.0 QA Improvement and Enhancement Plans for Upcoming Reporting Period

3.1 QA and QE supporting the Achievement of Strategic Objectives

No.	Relevant objectives Note: Include reference to the relevant section of the preceding AQR, where applicable	Planned actions and indicators *Note: Include details of unit responsible, and how planned action will address the relevant strategic priority and/or reengagement advice/CINNTE recommendation.* *If the institution is preparing for cyclical review, include how the planned actions will address the relevant review objective(s).*
	CINNTE – Institutional Review	Preparations will be underway in 2021/22 for the Institutional Review of UCC in 2022/23. Preparations will focus on the engagement of the University community in the Self-Evaluation process and lead to the development of an inclusive institutional ISER.
	Enhancement of the Student Feedback Ecosystem	Enhancement of the Student Feedback Ecosystem (joint QEU/CIRTL project, funded by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning).
	Thematic Reviews	Thematic Reviews on specific enhancement topics, provisionally: Research Degree Student Experience; Quality in Online & Blended Learning.
	Quality Review	- Mid-cycle consolidation of outcomes, implementation and enhancement activities for academic and professional units - Evaluation of quality review methodology post-COVID-19 in light of national and international developments - Aligning periodic quality review processes with professional accreditation: the application of the QQI principles for accreditation (2020)
	Programme Review	Pilot process for the cyclical integration of programme management and monitoring with periodic academic quality review

3.2   Reviews planned for Upcoming Reporting Periods

3.2.1   Reviews planned for Next Reporting Period

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Date of last review
Department of Human Resources	May 2022	May 2013
Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation	June 2022	April 2013

3.2.2   Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period

The reviews planned beyond the next reporting period can be found on our published schedule at the following weblink: Quality Review Schedule | University College Cork (ucc.ie)

4.0   Additional Case Study

COVID-19 and Quality Review - Analysis of COVID-19 Addenda

Adaptations to Review

A number of Quality Reviews were rescheduled from 2019/20 to 2020/21 due to COVID-19. To enable completion of Quality Reviews under the prevailing public health restrictions, a model for conducting site visits virtually was developed. This model ensured continuity in the operation and delivery of quality review and enhancement activities. Development of the revised model was informed by emerging practices for quality review nationally and internationally under COVID-19 arrangements. Core principles which guided the redesign were the need to:

- Achieve completion of the review process whilst recognising the significant impact of COVID-19 adaptations for teaching, learning and assessment for academic units.
- Uphold the overall integrity of the review process and maintain comparability by ensuring that the objectives for review could be achieved under adapted circumstances.
- Coordinate the sequence of the site visit to ensure coherence and retain all the relevant meetings with staff, students and stakeholders.
- Manage the process of Review Team establishment and working ethos.

In place of the usual physical site visit at the University over a 2.5-day period, the virtual visit was configured to take place over a 5-day period spread over two weeks. Microsoft Teams was used as the virtual platform for all meetings. The longer timeframe of the site visit provided for increased flexibility, whilst retaining all the relevant meetings with staff, students and stakeholders and so ensuring that the objectives of quality review would be fulfilled.

The Panels brought together national and international peer reviewers. Internal reviewers provided knowledge of institutional and organisational structures with the external Panel members contributing their peer expertise. The student Panel members brought valuable insights and perspectives on student issues.

To support the Peer Review Panel and facilitate effective engagement throughout the site visits, additional guidance and support was provided by staff of the Quality Enhancement Unit (QEU). This included technical support, as well as briefing and advisory support prior to and throughout the site visits. Review coordination was provided throughout by a Review Co-ordinator from QEU to facilitate the review process and to support the Peer Review Panels in formulating and agreeing the final Panel Reports.

The objectives of quality review were maintained throughout the COVID-19 period. The overarching objectives of academic quality review at UCC are to enable Schools, through evidence-based self-evaluation, to:

1. Reflect on and promote the strategic enhancement of their academic activities to ensure an outstanding learning experience for all students (enhancement dimension);

2. Evaluate the effectiveness of their processes for assuring academic standards and provision, in line with the University's academic mission and strategy (assurance dimension).

Thus, peer review goes beyond quality assurance to also embrace continuous quality enhancement. The Peer Review Panel Report reflects these objectives in the recommendations and commendations outlined to support CCAE in further refining its priorities and optimising its activities in the pursuit of its ambitious drive for excellence within the international and national arena of higher education.

Analysis of COVID-19 Addenda

Rationale for COVID-19 Addenda in Quality Review

Due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, academic units in UCC were required to transition their Teaching, Learning and Assessment activities online within a very short timeframe. Simultaneously, five units had their site visit postponed from Semester 2 of the academic year 2019/20 (Semester 2) to the following academic year.

> School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures
> Department of Physics
> School of Mathematical Sciences
> ASSERT Centre
> Cork Centre for Architectural Education (CCAE)

At that time, all units apart from CCAE had submitted their Self-Evaluation Report to QEU either in late 2019 or in early 2020. The elapsed time between SER submission and virtual site visit as well as the significant adaptations required to academic delivery was captured through a short COVID 19 Addendum. The emphasis of this exercise was to consider what worked well and what was learned as part of the response to COVID-19, including positive experiences and learnings as well as longer-term developments or adaptations that might be needed. The template provided by QEU for the Addendum contained the following guiding questions:

- What challenges did you face in adapting your teaching, learning and assessment to deal with COVID-19 over the past few months? Were there particular challenges specific to your discipline?
- What have you learnt?
- Have any unforeseen opportunities arisen?
- Are there any successes that you would like to highlight?
- Do you have any other reflections on the impact of COVID-19 which are noteworthy for the School, its staff and students?

Findings from the comparative analysis of Addenda

The submitted COVID-19 addenda, as well as the sections of the CCAE's SER dealing with the impact of COVID-19 on the Centre's Learning, Teaching and Assessment practices, show significant similarities, despite the different nature of the reviewed units.

Challenges

Digital skillset and resources' shortages

UCC being a campus-based university, all units concurred in highlighting the incredible challenge that the abrupt move to remote learning, teaching and assessment initially posed to their continuation of routine academic operations since March 2020. Specifically, all units identified digital skillset and resources' shortages among staff and students as particularly overwhelming, in the first instance. This represented a steep learning curve for most units. There was a race against time to conclude Semester 2's teaching and readapt final examinations to an online format, while upholding the integrity of the examination processes at a very short notice. Issues included the lack of digital skills, lack of access to specialist software and hardware, lack of familiarity with online-specific L, T and A pedagogies and delivering methods.

Uncoordinated staff-students communication and L, T & A approaches within units

All units recognised the impact on students' engagement, learning and wellbeing of the sudden transition to virtual learning and teaching spaces. This represented a great challenge, also due to uncoordinated staff-students communication and disparity of adopted platforms, tools and lecturing approaches for online delivery. Furthermore, there was a high degree of apprehension among students regarding having the camera on during

online lectures. Hence, student participation in the virtual environment presented some difficulty with decreased student engagement and active contribution to the lectures.

Unit-specific challenges

Teaching, learning and assessment challenges were also unit specific. For instance, Mathematical Sciences and Physics heavily relied on traditional board-based computational teaching and, thus, struggled to source web cameras for the remote delivery of lessons. Web cameras were unavailable on the market due to their sharp rise in demand. Similarly, the adaptation of written examinations for accredited programmes revealed to be an energy- and time-consuming task as the adoption of alternative approaches had to be agreed upon with accreditation bodies. Finally, the initial loss of access to the IT lab was a major issue for progressing student research, particularly at PG level.

The School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures was faced with supporting students abroad to return to Ireland, as well as repatriating international students. The School had to resort to alternative curricular options in UCC for third year students in the Year Abroad programme (academic year 2020/21). Furthermore, the temporary loss of access to library resources for staff and students at first represented a significant drawback, with the library being regarded as the School's learning, teaching and research labs.

CCAE and the ASSERT Centre (and, to a lesser extent, the Department of Physics), given the experiential, hands-on, studio/lab-based nature of their Learning, Teaching and Assessment practices, experienced very specific challenges. While ASSERT had to cancel all its trainings/courses/workshops from March 2020 to the end of that academic year, CCAE resorted to the temporary provision of powerful virtual machines to students, although this could be financially sustained only in the short-term.

Learnings, opportunities and successes

All the addenda point to the incredible efforts made by most units since March 2020 in order to effectively adapt their Learning, Teaching and Assessment to the unprecedented and unexpectedly prolonged remote arrangements of their academic practices and, thus, guarantee quality learning experiences for their students. These documents provide evidence of a range of learnings, opportunities and successes on behalf of the units, which were achieved in a relatively short period of time. Often the accounts under these three categories overlap and reoccur, since opportunities swiftly turn into successes and sources of reflective learning and long-lasting adoption of creative novel L, T and A practices. Therefore, they are discussed together in this report.

Staff and student digitalisation and adoption of new pedagogical methodologies and tools

Within a relatively short time span, units recorded an unprecedented digitalisation of both staff and student cohorts, with adoption of a range of online platforms and tools for their learning, teaching and assessment practices. Lecturers soon found new ways of reaching out to students and ensuring they could support their learning. For instance, online surveys were introduced to gauge students' difficulties and address them during the lectures (Department of Physics); the chat function was discovered as an effective source of communication for more reserved students. Examples of successful alternative solutions include: considerable investment in e-books and close cooperation with library management, purchase of a complete suite of mathematical software and storage for all students; development of ad hoc student feedback surveys to support successful learning; outdoor research projects, buildings surveys and tutorials for CCAE students.

Assessment represents an area that witnessed major transformation with a move away from traditional formal examination modes and towards Continuous Assessment practices, including, for instance, collaborative trans- and inter-disciplinary project-execution-based assessment for CCAE students, as well as submission of digital portfolios.

Increased School-level coordination of and dialogue on L, T and A

A very positive outcome of the sudden adaptation to the pandemic appears to be the establishment of increased school-level coordination, cooperation and dialogue on Learning, Teaching and Assessment, complemented by a parallel strengthening of such efforts at University level. This has resulted in an unprecedented proliferation of pedagogical engagement, research and dialogue within units and across the University, with participation in seminar series, establishment of ad hoc committees and consideration of the mainstreaming of successful novel blended and online L, T and A methodologies going forward.

Familiarisation with novel forms of student learning support and increased pastoral care provision

In the face of the unprecedented challenges, UCC staff, after an initial disorientation, report responding with creativity, adaptability and problem-solving skills, identifying alternative methodologies and methods to support students. Particular attention appears to have been paid to issues of student wellbeing, anxiety and depression. The recognition of the importance of increased pastoral care for students emerges as a constant across the addenda, as both a dimension of lectures and ad hoc remote sessions.

Practical sessions and tutorials secured for scientific and practice-based units

All units with strong experiential, practice-based dimensions, report their success in establishing protocols and procedures for a safe return to the teaching and learning space for Semester 1 of the current academic year (and the final part of semester 2), with a specific attention for the needs of first year students (e.g. provision of intense digital training in preparation for further COVID-19 related restrictions). In this way, the Department of Physics, the CCAE and the ASSERT Centre managed to guarantee the provision of great part of the necessary in person learning and teaching opportunities – lab and design studio/outdoor tutorials and classes.

Unprecedented uptake of trainings, conference and workshops opportunities

The move to the virtual landscape for higher education institutions locally, nationally and internationally, opened up several opportunities for both staff and students to participate in greater range of events than ever before. Indeed, units listed, as both, successes and opportunities, their uptick in participation to specialist inter/national conferences, trainings, workshops, as well as hosting online specialist conferences and AGMs and other events and seminar series.

Innovation, research and community engagement success

Units also indicated positive research developments concerning their staff and, to some extent students, since the outset of the pandemic. These include: successful research funding applications and research collaborations (both COVID-19-related and unrelated); article publications (e.g. School of Mathematical Sciences; ASSERT Centre); online Summer research projects for students (Department of Physics). Interestingly, CCAE engaged in inter- and transdisciplinary real practice collaboration, with local authorities and private architectural and engineering firms involving its students and staff in executing all the phases of work realisation. Other units gained confidence in delivering some new programmes fully online (e.g., School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures).

Additional reflections and insights

Overall, the units' reflections concur in affirming their willingness to building upon the lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic. There is an evident commitment to maintaining some of the novel approaches, tools and resources that were initially utilised in order to cope with extra-ordinary circumstances. This points towards an increase in blended L, T and A delivery, a sharp rethinking of assessment through the privileging of Continuous Assessment over end-of-semester formal examinations, in line with its understanding 'as a form of learning in itself' and 'for learning' (rather than 'of learning'). The possibility of online programme and module offerings is also considered as a parallel avenue to the in-campus experience, going forward.

Glossary of Terms

UCC	University College Cork
AB	Academic Board
AC	Academic Council
ACSSS	Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences
ALF	Academic Leadership Forum
APAR	Academic Programmes and Regulations
CCAE	Cork Centre for Architectural Education
CDE	Centre for Digital Education
CIRTL	Centre for the Integration of Research, Teaching, and Learning
DGG	Data Governance Group
EBCG	Exams Business Continuity Group
ERI	Environmental Research Institute
GAP	Graduate Attributes Programme
HCI	Human Capital Initiative
IEP	Institutional Evaluation Programme
NAIN	National Academic Integrity Network
PBS	Programme Boards of Studies
PGR	Postgraduate research
SEFS	Science, Engineering & Food Science
SATLE	Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SREO	Student Records & Examinations Office
STARS	The Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System
UMT	University Management Team