University College Cork

2025

Annual Quality Report (UCC)

Reporting Period 2023-2024

University College Cork

2025

Annual Quality Report (UCC)

PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

Reporting Period 2023-2024

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PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

Table 1

Table 1 Mapping of ESG (2015) to QQI QA Guidelines (QAG)				
AQR Part A Section	QQI QAG Core Sub-section No.	QAG Core Sub-section Title	ESG Standard No.	ESG Standard Title
1.0 - *Internal QA Framework*	**2.1**	Governance and Management of Quality	1.1	Policy for Quality Assurance
	2.2	Documented Approach to Quality Assurance		
2.0 - *Programme Development and Delivery*	**2.3**	Programmes of Education and Training	1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
4.0 - *QA of Research Activities and Programmes*				
8.0 - *Monitoring and Periodic Review*			1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
5.0 - *Staff Recruitment, Development and Support*	**2.4**	Staff Recruitment, Management and Development	1.5	Teaching Staff
2.3 - *Teaching, Learning and Assessment*	**2.5**	Teaching and Learning	1.3	Student-centred Teaching, Learning and Assessment
	2.6	Assessment of Learners		
3.0 - *Learner Resources and Supports*	**2.7**	Supports for learners	1.6	Learning Resources and Student Support
6.0 - *Information and Data Management*	**2.8**	Information and Data Management	1.7	Information Management
7.0 - *Public Information and Communication*	**2.9**	Public Information and Communication	1.8	Public Information
8.0 - *Monitoring and Periodic Review*	**2.10**	Other Parties Involved in Education and Training	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
9.0 - *Details of Arrangements with Third Parties*			1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
2.0 - *Programme Development and Delivery*	**2.11**	Self-evaluation, Monitoring and Review	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - *Monitoring and Periodic Review*			1.10	Cyclical External Quality Assurance
4.0 - *QA of Research Activities and Programmes*	QAG for Providers of Research Degree Programmes			

Introduction and Overview of Institution

This is the AQR for University College Cork for the reporting period **1 September 2023 – 31 August 2024**
It is to be submitted by **Friday, 28 February 2025.**

The AQR has been approved by the **University Leadership 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, Ireland. 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 22,000 students from over 104 countries. With over 3,400 students and one third of our staff from overseas, UCC is a true place of international learning.

1.0 Internal QA Framework

1.1 Governance and Management of Quality

Quality Enhancement Policy

The University has a published Quality Enhancement policy which guides its activities. University College Cork is committed to excellence in serving learners, stakeholders and its wider community through education, research and contribution to society nationally and globally.
Enhancement is a cornerstone of UCC's quality culture promoting the success and reputation of the university through an active commitment to critically assessing and refining institutional activities to better meet the diverse needs of learners, stakeholders and wider society. Strategically aligned with UCC's vision, mission, values and institutional goals, the university's quality enhancement processes form an ongoing cycle of systematic self-evaluation, and engagement with peer review to derive outcomes that help augment and develop the quality of the University's academic and service activities through effective implementation pathways and the sharing of good practice.
The University's quality enhancement approach is 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.

The 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 (Revised 2019) and with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015) as well as the Higher Education Authority Act (2022, Section 76).

Governance of Quality: Quality Enhancement Committee

The Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC), chaired by the President, reports to the University Leadership Team (ULT) and annually to Governing Authority. 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. The Committee has oversight and acts as a reference point for the work of the Quality Enhancement Unit.

In fulfilling its remit, the Quality Enhancement Committee advises ULT and Academic Council on key quality issues arising with implications for strategy or policy development. It provides an Annual Report to Governing Authority to meet the requirements of the Universities Act 1997 and the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act 2012. Governing Authority 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 periodic quality assurance and enhancement procedures and related quality projects University-wide. The Director is supported by a 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, the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) and national policies and procedures as outlined in Quality and Qualifications Ireland's (QQI) Guidelines. The Director of Quality is a member of Academic Council, Academic Board and its sub-committees to ensure that relevant quality considerations arising from internal or external quality processes are taken account of.

Quality Assurance and Enhancement policies and procedures

University-wide, there are a range of quality policies and procedures which link to, and support quality assurance and enhancement of the University's activities. 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:

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

Periodic Quality Review

The University's periodic quality review process is comprehensive of education, research and support areas and follows a periodic seven-year cycle. The overall quality review process operates in accordance with the expectations of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality (ESG). 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). UCC's quality guidelines are comprehensive and include our objectives, principles and process.

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 panel report
- Follow-up and quality enhancement

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 reviews 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.

Strategic Plan

Securing Our Future: UCC Strategic Plan 2023–2028 has been developed to position the University optimally in an environment of rapid change and reflects our commitment to a sustainable future for our people, planet and university.

Academic Governance and Policy Development

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.

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

statue. 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 the 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.

Governing Authority
Academic Council
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 which report to Academic Council
Emeritus Professor Committee
University Ethics Committee
University Fitness to Practise
University Sabbatical Research Leave Committee
Mitigation Committee
Honorary Degrees 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)
Main Committees of Academic Council
Academic Development and Standards Committee (ADSC)
Sub Committees
External Examiner
Curriculum Management Operations Group (CMOG)
Digital Badges
Graduate Studies Committee (ACGSC)
Sub Committee
ACGSC Examiner Reports
Teaching and Learning Committee (T&L)
Advisory Group
3ELT (Existing & Emerging Educational Learning Technologies) Working Group
Research and Innovation Committee (ACRIC)
Academic Board
(Senior Academic Council Standing Committee)
Academic Board Sub Committees
UCC/IMI PDAC
UCC/MTU Joint Board
UCC/TPTI Joint Academic Standards Committee
Honorary Degrees Board
Boards with delegated authority from Academic Council which report to Academic Board
Examination Boards
Adult Continuing Education Academic Standards Board
Colleges
Key
Reports to Academic Council
Reports to Academic Board
Provides a report to Academic Board
Functional linkages through membership

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.

Collaborative Programmes

Collaborative programmes offered in partnership by UCC and MTU (formerly CIT) are governed by the MTU-UCC Joint Board. The Cork Institute of Technology and University College Cork Joint Board 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 MTU-UCC Joint Board is a Joint Board of the Academic Council of Munster Technological University (MTU) 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 MTU and UCC satisfy the requirements of both institutions. It also functions to encourage further cooperation between the two universities including the development of new programmes. The Board reports by way of minutes to the Academic Council of MTU and the Academic Board of UCC in the case of programme issues. The Board reports issues relating to resources by way of submission of relevant document(s) and Joint Board minute(s) to the MTU Executive Board, UCC Academic Council and/or UCC University Leadership Team. 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.
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).

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 accredited programmes 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.

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. Once endorsed by the 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 that 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 (GAP) 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.

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

Delivery of a suite of initiatives within the GAP focuses on the different stages of students' Transition In, Through and Out of the university. The overarching objective of the GAP is to enable a successful student journey, which will prepare students for their future through three main projects.

- **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.
- **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.
- **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 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). The UCC RPL policy is available at: Recognition of Prior Learning | University College Cork

The Office of Recruitment and Admissions

The Office of Recruitment and Admissions comprises of a suite of Professional Services, namely: Admissions Office, International Office, Graduate Studies Office, Student Recruitment Office and the Quercus Talented Students' Programme,

The **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/

The **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/

The **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

The **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/

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 school visits. 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 practice, 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 Leadership 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/

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 students 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 – Munster Technological University, University College Cork and the South East Technological University 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 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 and in the Book of Modules for each module. 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 Boards. 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. 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 includes information on the role of the External 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 (Goal 2 Student Success) for UCC as outlined in the University's recently revised strategic plan, Securing our Future - UCC Strategic Plan 2023-2028.

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 implemented across the University. The development of an assessment policy and operations guidance supplements and incorporates existing UCC regulations such as the *Guide to Examinations and Assessment for Staff and Students* and it provides a coherent anchor for relevant policy development. 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.

This 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. 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. The purpose and Terms of Reference for the above-mentioned committees are set out in the Academic Council Committee 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.

Following a Thematic Quality Review of digital education at UCC initiated by the Vice-President for Learning & Teaching 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 was made 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 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 learning and teaching 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 Practice" 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.

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 learning and teaching 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 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' SharePoint site 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 learning and teaching 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 Learning and Teaching 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 learning and teaching 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. 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 (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 (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. 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. 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.

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. 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 are 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 (OVPLT, 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. 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 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 Vision and 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. The Digital & Information Literacy Framework 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. The Framework enables 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.

The Academic Success Librarian 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.

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

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".

A snapshot of Library facilities:

- 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 20 minute 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.

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. A number of its resources are available to students 24/7.

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 digital services to support the 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-led and Technology enabled. These strategic initiatives will transform UCC and will support the development of a more Digital University. Enhancing and modernising the services to students is central to these proposals. IT Services 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. There has been 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 Leadership Team therefore approved a new Digital Master plan to support the priorities identified in UCC 2022.

Student Supports

The Student Experience Office 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.
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. The 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 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 a 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 has responsibility for:

Student Accommodation

- Accommodation advice and advocacy service for UCC students
- Support all current and incoming students with their search for safe and affordable accommodation
- International Student Accommodation Placement Service – Full year and single semester EU and non-EU students
- First Year Student Accommodation Placement Service

Campus Watch

- First and second stages of student discipline
- Promoting respect and responsibility in the local community

Community Relations

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

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.

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.

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 and 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

- Nurture Emails
- Welcome Email/ Preparation Email/ Final Countdown Email
- Dedicated web support
- Visa and Immigration
- Fees and Cost of Living
- Accommodation
- Key Dates
- Getting to Cork
- Health Insurance
- 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
- 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
- In Person Appointments with Staff
- Booking System for online Appointments with Staff
- Immigration & Visa Advice and Advocacy
- Dedicated Website
- Practical life
- Student Services
- Irish Culture
- Student Support Tree
- Keep Well Website
- 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 is an 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 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*.

UCC Futures is an ambitious new programme of research prioritisation coupled with an innovative academic recruitment strategy across ten indicative areas of strategic importance that will build a foundation for economic, societal and cultural resilience and prosperity. The greatest **global** challenge of our time requires us to find equitable, sustainable and just solutions to the problems of climate change, hunger, poverty and social and health disparities among the world's populations. The complexity of these global challenges requires experts from multiple disciplines and sectors to think radically and collaborate in new and re-imagined ways.

UCC Futures provides the **creative, inclusive and transformative interdisciplinary platform** that mines the frontiers of curious inquiry at the intersection of disciplines. This ambitious programme of research prioritisation coupled with an innovative academic recruitment strategy across ten thematic areas of strategic importance is building a foundation for economic, societal and cultural resilience and prosperity.

UCC Futures values excellence at every level in a truly connected knowledge ecosystem, enhancing the interdisciplinary collaborative environment to inspire, engage, and enable our research community, in partnership within the co-located clinical and enterprise ecosystem. We are creating a consciously better society through embedding the excellence of our research within our curriculum and ensuring our students are taught by world class **research leaders** within this connected knowledge ecosystem.

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 the National Forum on Research Integrity, the UCC Code of Research Conduct 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 2019 and 2021 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 institutes, centres and units 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.

The development and implementation of a comprehensive employment and career management structure for research staff, including a career development programme for the *circa*. 1,000 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* on a number of occasions. 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 is underway, while maintaining the overall objective of continued enhancement of research quality across the University. The next RQR has been approved by QEC to take place in 2027/28.

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.

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 and for research funded positions. E-recruitment has significantly improved our capacity to analyse and report on all recruitment activity including gaining a deeper understanding of patterns of application and a detailed breakdown of proportional representation at shortlisting and interview.

Probation and Establishment Process – Academic Posts

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 provided by Spectrum.Life. 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.

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 has 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) 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. 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 and of winning the award for Physical Activity.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

UCC has been a signatory to the Athena Swan Charter since its launch in Ireland in 2015. UCC has held a Bronze Athena Swan award since 2016 and will apply for Silver accreditation in November 2024. Staff across the University are contributing to an equality self-assessment exercise, underway since 2023, to assess progress under UCC's current gender equality action plan and to identify areas for improvement in the next five-year action plan.

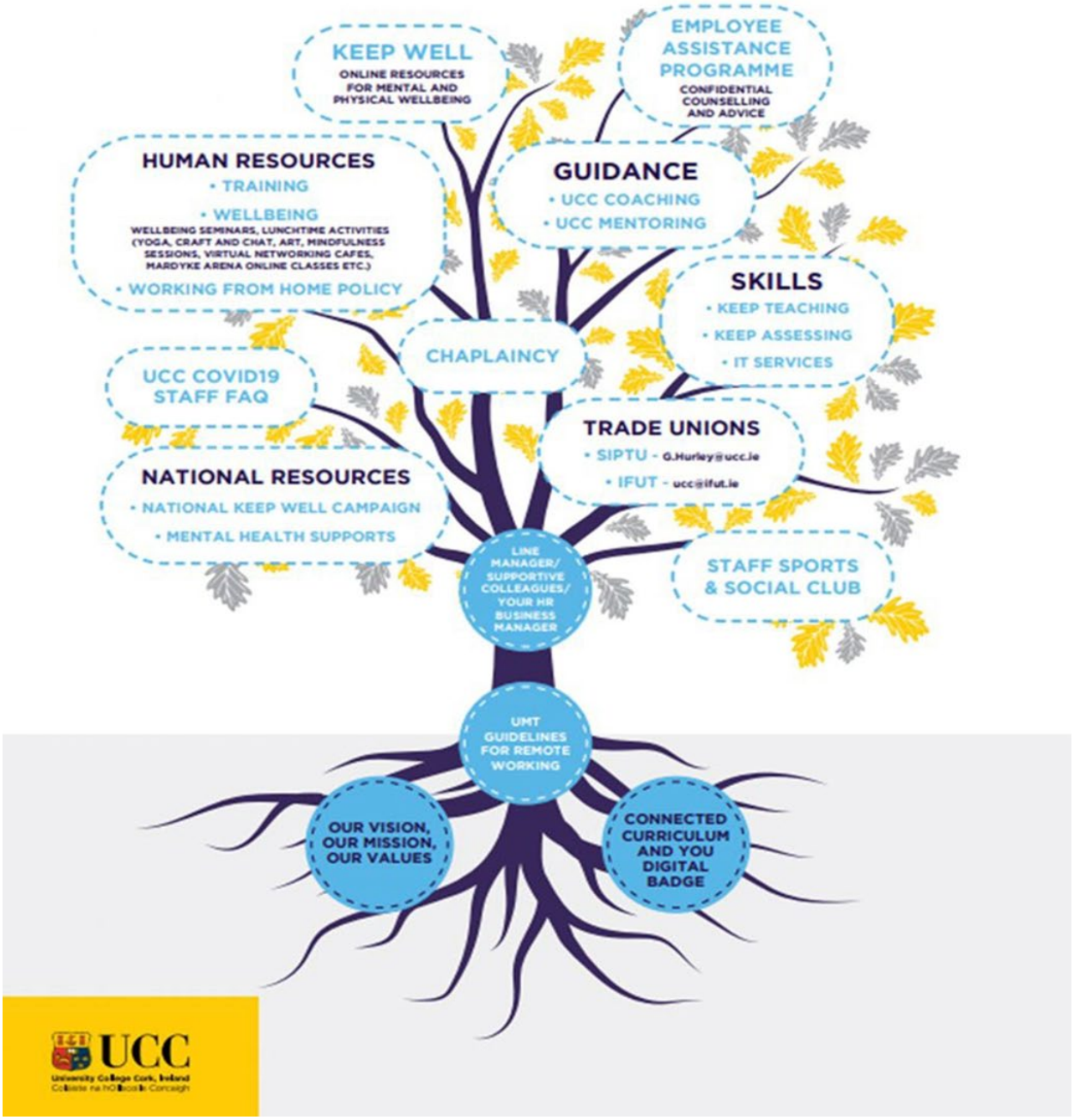
In addition to the Athena SWAN Charter, UCC's Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Unit supports a range of equality initiatives to support both staff and students. UCC's Gender Identity and Expression Policy and Guidelines offers supports to UCC's transgender and non-binary staff and students. The 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.



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 and includes additional internal guidance and training materials on records management.

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). 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.

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.

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

- Data Classification Procedure
- Research Data Management Policy
- Acceptable Usage Policy
- Externally Hosted Personal Data Policy

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 QEU website.

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.

As part of the *Connected University* programme of work, UCC is 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.
- 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 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 measures the availability and integration of its information records using agreed Key Performance Metric's. Each year, information technology KPI's are considered and discussed by the management team.

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, X, 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 Media 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.

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

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
- X
- Instagram
- LinkedIn
- YouTube

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

Outreach and General Public

The Revisit UCC Podcasts are 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. The Visitors' Centre 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 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 UCC 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.

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.

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 ULT (University Leadership Team). ULT 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 Leadership 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 Authority, which then refers the report to Academic Council for consideration and action.

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 reviews 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. Role of the External Assessor in new programme approval: https://www.ucc.ie/en/apar/curriculumapproval/handbook/
Extern Examination procedures for taught programmes: https://www.ucc.ie/en/academicgov/externs/
Extern Examiner policy: 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: As part of the self-evaluation process, all academic units prepare a Case Study of Good Practice 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 Review Coordinator from the QEU. The Review Coordinator works with the unit from the outset to the conclusion of the process; this role provides dedicated support, advice and guidance on all aspects of the periodic review process. The Review Coordinator also works with the Panel for each review, 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 Peer Review Report 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	51

Awarding bodies	0
QA bodies	0

1. Type of arrangement	**PRSB**
Name of body:	Association for Nutrition, UK
Programme titles and links to publications	BSc Nutritional Sciences (CK504)
Date of accreditation or last review	18/09/2023
Date of next review	18/09/2028

2. Type of arrangement	**PRSB**
Name of body:	Association of MBAs
Programme titles and links to publications	Executive MBA
Date of accreditation or last review	27/11/2023
Date of next review	28/11/2028

3. Type of arrangement	**PRSB**
Name of body:	Institute of Food Science and Technology, UK
Programme titles and links to publications	BSc Food Science (CK505)
Date of accreditation or last review	01/06/2024
Date of next review	09/01/2028

4. Type of arrangement	**PRSB**
Name of body:	North South Education and Training Standards Committee for Youth Work
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Youth and Community Work (CK114)
Date of accreditation or last review	18/06/2024
Date of next review	05/01/2029

5. Type of arrangement	**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	15/05/2024
Date of next review	15/05/2025

6. Type of arrangement	**PRSB**
Name of body:	North South Education and Training Standards Committee for Youth Work

Programme titles and links to publications	Postgraduate Diploma in Youth Work
Date of accreditation or last review	18/06/2024
Date of next review	05/01/2029

7. Type of arrangement	**PRSB**
Name of body:	Teaching Council
Programme titles and links to publications	Postgraduate Diploma in Further, Adult and Community Education
Date of accreditation or last review	18/09/2023
Date of next review	18/09/2028

9.2 Collaborative Provision

Definitions:
QQI's Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes, and Joint Awards, 2012 defines collaborative provision as a process that occurs where two or more providers are involved by formal agreement in the provision of a programme of higher education and training.

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (as amended) defines 'joint award' as a single award made jointly by two or more awarding bodies

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (as amended) defines 'linked provider' as a provider that is not a designated awarding body but enters into an arrangement with a designated awarding body under which arrangement the provider provides a programme of education and training that satisfies all or part of the prerequisites for an award of the designated awarding body.

Type of arrangement	Total Number
Joint research degrees	3
Joint/double/multiple awards	17
Collaborative programmes	5
Franchise programmes	0
Linked providers (DABs only)	0

1. Collaborative provision	Joint research degree
Name of body (/bodies):	NATO Special Operations Headquarters - NSHQ
Programme titles and links to publications	PG Cert/Dip in Special Operations Medicine (PDSOM)
Date of last review	01/07/2024
Date of next review	31/12/2024

2. Collaborative provision	Joint research degree
Name of body (/bodies):	MTU
Programme titles and links to publications	Joint PhD Degree
Date of last review	23/04/2024
Date of next review	22/10/2026

3. Collaborative provision	Joint/double/multiple award
Name of body (/bodies):	Ruhr (Erasmus - 8 partners)
Programme titles and links to publications	MSc Redesigning the Post-Industrial City (RePIC) (MSCRPC)
Date of last review	16/11/2023
Date of next review	30/09/2027

4. Collaborative provision	Joint research degree
Name of body (/bodies):	MTU

Programme titles and links to publications	PDip Health and Wellbeing (New programme, added to existing consortium agreement)
Date of last review	21/09/2017
Date of next review	14/09/2027

9.3 Articulation Agreements

Definition:

Per the IHEQN Guidelines for the Approval, Monitoring and Review of Collaborative and Transnational Provision, an articulation agreement may be defined as a process whereby all students who satisfy academic criteria on one programme are automatically entitled (on academic grounds) to be admitted with advance standing to a subsequent stage of a programme of a degree awarding body. These arrangements are subject to a formal agreement between the parties.

Articulation agreements - Total number	**15**

1. Articulation agreement	**Articulation agreement**
Name of body (/bodies):	China University of Mining and Technology, Beijing (CUMTB)
Programme titles and links to publications	BSc Computer Science
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	26/04/2024
Date of next review	26/04/2032
Detail of the agreement	New agreement

2. Articulation agreement	**Articulation agreement**
Name of body (/bodies):	Beijing University of Technology (BJUT)
Programme titles and links to publications	BSc Computer Studies
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	07/03/2024
Date of next review	07/03/2029
Detail of the agreement	New agreement

3. Articulation agreement	**Articulation agreement**
Name of body (/bodies):	Yangzhou University (YXU)
Programme titles and links to publications	Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences - Earth Science (BSCRER)
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	02/09/2024
Date of next review	02/09/2032
Detail of the agreement	New agreement

4. Articulation agreement	**Articulation agreement**
Name of body (/bodies):	Minzu Univeristy of China (MUC)
Programme titles and links to publications	BSc (Hons) Environmental Science with Environmental Mangement (BSCESM)

Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	15/05/2024
Date of next review	15/05/2030
Detail of the agreement	New agreement

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Annual Quality Report (UCC)
PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT
Reporting Period 2023-2024

PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT

1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments

1.1 Strategic QA Updates

UCC's Strategic Plan 2023-28

UCC is a comprehensive research-based globally oriented university with over 24,000 students, 3,200 staff and over 200,000 alumni worldwide. Our student body includes 4,000 international students from 138 countries worldwide. UCC draws its identity from a diverse spread of community, education, health service, industry, arts and heritage relationships. We have developed an extensive range of partnerships worldwide which continue to inform our curriculum and our research.

Securing Our Future: UCC Strategic Plan 2023–2028 has been developed to position the University optimally in an environment of rapid change and reflects our commitment to a sustainable future for our people, planet and university.

UCC's Strategic Plan to 2028 aims for UCC to be:

- globally recognised for its distinctive research in niche areas of excellence
- a university with a digitally enhanced learning environment delivering a research-based curriculum with a student staff ratio of 17:1
- the university of choice for postgraduate study in signature areas of excellence
- an internationally connected university, amplifying global impact, ranked in the top 250 universities globally
- a place of have embedded fairness, equality and inclusivity
- a university that is effectively engaged with all stakeholders.

Progress in 2023/24:

Goal 1 aims to deliver impactful research and innovation resulting in a distinctive research reputation. Notable accomplishments this year include:

- Securing 4 European Research Council grants, with 2 ERC awardees commenced. On track to achieve 20 such grants by 2028
- Reaching 146 Horizon Europe awards valued at €108M, equating to 83% of UCC's target for Horizon Europe (€130 million over the 7 years), ahead of schedule
- Launching 4 spin-out companies (Well Schools Network, CaraBia, Plug Nexus, NeuroBell) exceeding the target of 3

Goal 2 aims to provide a student-centred, inclusive and digitally enhanced learning environment, a Connected Curriculum and an outstanding student experience, with UCC as the university of choice for postgraduate education. Significant progress in 2023/24 includes:

- The reduction in staff-student ratio of one point to 20.5:1, ahead of the 21 target for 2023/24
- Over 93% of primary degree graduates in employment or further study
- The 'go-live' of the Graduate Education Manager platform for research student administration
- The finalisation of two signature postgraduate programmes: the MSc Microbiome Science and the MA in Migration, Mobility and Culture
- The completion of the Curriculum Management Enhancement Project to fully digitise the process of managing modules and programmes. Graduate Attributes, Sustainable Development Goals and the Connected Curriculum are now incorporated at programme level to facilitate strategic curriculum review

- Securing €1.7m under the National Access Programme to expand course offerings for students with intellectual disabilities. UCC has 21.3% of its undergraduate intake from under-represented groups against a target of 23%. In a related initiative, €1m was awarded by the HEA to support Irish language engagement with schools in disadvantaged areas.

Goal 3 aims to grow UCC's international reach to amplify global impact. Progress in 2023/24 saw:

- The advancement and drafting of the Global Engagement Plan for approval in quarter 1 2024/25
- The completion of a comprehensive review of Marketing and Communications operations
- The advancement of the Brand Refresh project with new brand architecture and key messages approved by ULT.
- The increase in the proportion of students who have travelled from overseas to attend UCC to a historical high level of over 21%, up from 17% in 2022.
- The improvement in the QS World University Rankings to 273, against a target of 290, up 11 places on last year.
- The philanthropic income target of €12m exceeded with €12.9m received/committed. The tender process for fundraising consultants for the Campaign Feasibility study has concluded and the successful consultants commenced in quarter 1 of 2024/25.

Goal 4 aims to implement a progressive and inclusive People and Culture Plan to attract, develop and retain talent. Progress in 2023/24 saw:

- The continuing development of a People and Culture plan
- The establishment of a new EDI Sub-Committee of ULT
- Two new Athena Swan Programme departmental awards to Cork University Business School and the School of Medicine, in addition to the Bronze renewal for School of Public Health and work completed to progress the Silver Institutional application
- The completion of the 2024 Values and Culture Staff Survey with a 46% response rate. A Strategic Measure of Success from this survey is the 'Values Lived' score with a target of 74%. A score of 71% was achieved and results were presented to staff on September 2nd.

Goal 5 aims to radically reform practices and use of space and technology to meet our climate action goals. Key accomplishments in 2023/24 include:

- A 32% reduction in total CO2 emissions achieved relative to 2016-2018 levels
- New governance arrangements for sustainability agreed by ULT to further embed sustainability research, practice and teaching
- Sustainability criteria included in the new Travel Policy
- An improved global ranking in sustainability to 6th in the world (out of 1,183 universities) in the UI Green Metric rankings and 67th of 1,963 universities in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings which assesses universities' contribution to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

1.2 Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR

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	Institutional Review	UCC's Institutional Review was undertaken in 22/23. The recommendations are being addressed on an ongoing basis with reference to UCC's Strategic Plan Strategy 2023-28 Securing our Future
2	Programme Review	A pilot programme review was undertaken, the outcomes of which will be considered and form the basis for systematic programme review in the fourth cycle of quality reviews.
3	Recalibration of the Quality Review process	UCC has come to the end of the 3rd cycle of Periodic Quality Review, based on a methodology which was developed at sectoral level prior to the establishment of QQI (2012). Before commencing the 4th cycle there will be a re-calibration process to ensure that the methodology for Quality Review is strategically aligned, referenced to current/emergent good practice internationally and nationally and consolidates incremental and current ongoing enhancements to the model. This re-calibration process took place during 2023/24 and once complete will allow the required period of 12 months preparation for units engaging in review from 2025/26 onwards.
4	Indicators of Quality	Previously a core set of data measures which align with the KPIs of UCC's HEA System Performance Framework and UCC's Strategic plan were identified as part of a pilot to develop Indicators of Quality which would help further inform quality review. During 23/24 as part of this pilot, a data process map and Power BI dashboard have been developed, illustrating these data sets so they are accessible for those engaging in review. This work will be finalised in consultation with UCC's Quality Enhancement Committee and a steering group made up of technical experts before being rolled out as part of UCC's fourth cycle of quality review.
6	Joint Sectoral Protocol	A review of current practices was undertaken in 23/24 to ensure that key personnel are conversant with the Joint Sectoral Protocol and to confirm that that all elements of the Protocol are embedded within UCC policies and procedures. This has been completed and UCC is confident of its compliance with the JSP.

1.3 Governance and Management

1.3.1 QA Governance Meetings Schedule

Body	Meeting dates
Governing Authority	12/09/23 24/10/23 05/12/23 06/02/24 12/03/24 30/04/24 18/06/24
Academic Council	24/11/23 09/02/24 15/03/24 14/06/24
Quality Enhancement Committee	09/10/23 23/11/23 22/01/24 13/03/24 16/05/24 13/06/24

1.3.2 QA Leadership and Management Structural Developments

There were no structural changes during the time period.

1.4 Internal Monitoring and Review
1.4.1 Overview of Periodic Reviews

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
School of Applied Social Studies	October 2023	SchoolofAppliedSocialStudies-PeerReviewGroupReport2023-24.pdf
School of the Human Environment	October 2023	SchooloftheHumanEnvironment-PeerReviewGroupReport2023-24.pdf
School of Nursing and Midwifery	January 2024	SchoolofNursingMidwifery-PeerReviewPanelReport.pdf
School of Medicine	February 2024	SchoolofMedicine-PeerReviewPanelReport202324.pdf
Deputy President & Registrar (all reporting directorates)	March 2024	DeputyPresidentRegistrar(allDirectorates)-PeerReviewPanelReport2023-24.pdf
School of Public Health	April 2024	SchoolofPublicHealth-PeerReviewPanelReport2023-24.pdf
Office of the Vice President for Research	May 2024	OVPRI-PeerReviewPanelReport2023-24.pdf
School of Applied Psychology	October 2024	Not yet available

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	8	6	2	0	0	0	
of those:							
On-site processes	8**						
Desk reviews							
Virtual processes	8**						
Average panel size for each process type*							

* excluding secretary if not a full panel member

**The standard UCC Quality Review is hybrid – both onsite and virtual

[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

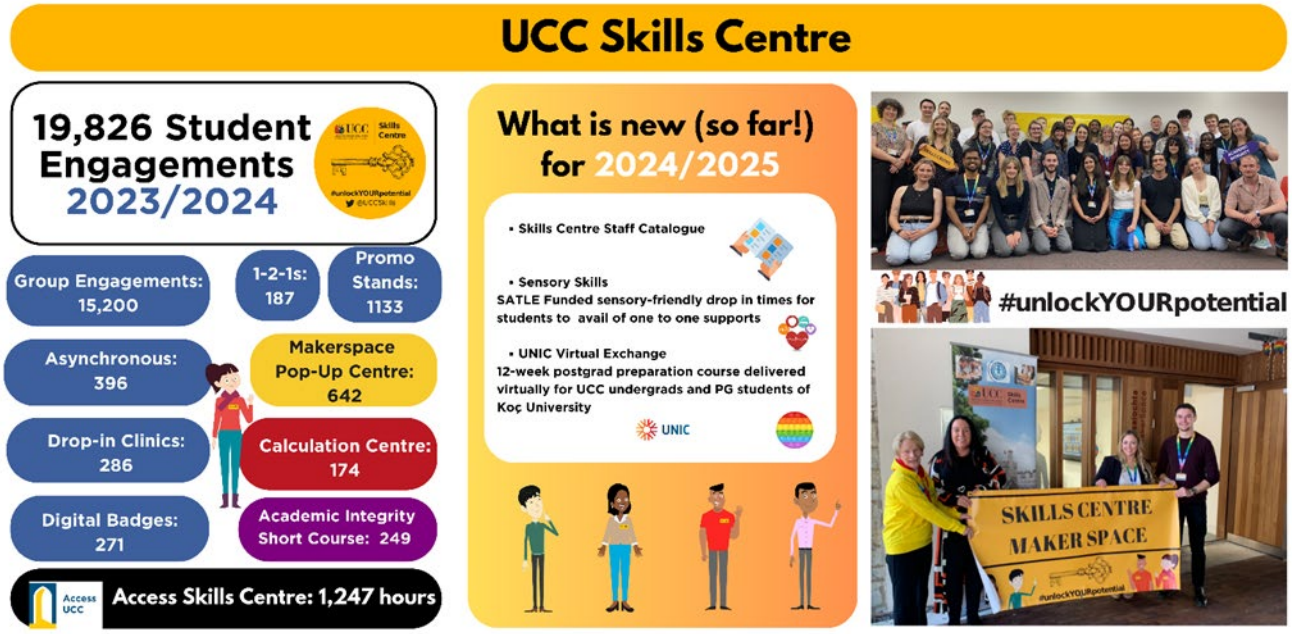
	Total	Gender			Internal	National	International			Institution Type	
Type of Expert/ Role on Panel		*Male*	*Female*	*Other, or unspecified*			*UK, incl. NI*	*Other European*	*Outside of Europe*	*Similar*	*Different*
Chair		4	4		6	1	1			8	
Secretary*			8		8						
Academic/Discipline Specific		17	13		9	3	12	3	3	29	1
Student Representative		3	5		8						
QA											
Teaching & Learning			1			1					1
External Industry /Third Mission											

** The Secretary is an internal QEU staff member and not a member of the Panel*

2.0 IQA System – Enhancement and Impacts

Supports and Resources for Learners

UCC Skills Centre: Meeting students where they are in a post Covid-19 education era



The Skills Centre's pivot to online learning during COVID-19 has continued to help the Centre to evolve and respond to a changing student landscape. While students have long been back to campus, many academic and professional support staff around the university have flagged the continued challenges working with incoming students since the pandemic. The lasting impact on students coming into third-level education cannot be underestimated. The flexibility of hybrid options became part of the fabric of Skills Centre during the pandemic and has continued to allow the Centre to meet students where they are – both metaphorically and literally.
In 2023/2024, the Skills Centre entered its seventh year with a newly enlarged team, going from 25 tutors to 43. The team continued to utilise an interactive, student-centred approach which promoted collaborative learning and skills development, confidential and non-judgmental supports, and aimed to inspire students to unlock their potential. Within this year, the Skills Centre once again broke its record with over **19,826** student engagements. This was a **48.8% increase in student engagements with the service from the previous academic year**, highlighting the legacy that has been created since the Skills Centre first opened its doors. The increase in engagements was also achieved thanks to staff engagement with its services, allowing the Skills Centre to meet students in the lecture halls and deliver sessions to over 15,200 students. Through drop-in clinics, the calculation centre, meeting students on promo stands, providing feedback on essays asynchronously or during live one to one meetings, the Skills Centre had a further 2,176 student engagements. The Access Skills Centre, a joint venture between Access UCC and the Skills Centre, also facilitated 1,247 hours of module specific tutorial support for students registered with Disability Support, Mature Student Office/QQI, or PLUS.

In October 2023, the pop-up Skills Centre in the Makerspace at The Hub was launched which allowed the Skills Centre to be fully accessible to all students for drop-in queries every Tuesday and Wednesday in addition to weekly supports held in the main Skills Centre in the Boole Library. This allowed engagement with an additional

642 students. Later that month, the Academic Integrity Week was held in line with the launch of the short course, Academic Integrity Fundamentals, which was completed by 249 students in its first year. 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 and these resources combined continue to engage over 10,000 site visits weekly. The previously online only 1-2-1 booking service was amended to allow for in-person preference options also. The Asynchronous Assignment Feedback service continues to prove a popular means of support for students who want some feedback in advance of their official submissions. The Skills Centre continued to deliver the SPEAK - Digital Badge, a 7 week presentations skills programme that is designed to enable participants to create and deliver effective presentations; 271 students earned this digital badge in the 2023/2024 academic year. Working with students as partners, and harnessing social media as learning resource, the Centre brought back a covid era favourite in the 'If I knew then what I know now' blog series and Instagram reels for 'Day in the Life' series. These videos were recorded and edited by undergraduate and postgraduate tutors to capture and share the varying day to day experiences of students across UCC. These were posted weekly as part of the new #MidweekMotivation series across social media and the aim was to encourage welfare, mindfulness, and a little and often approach to keeping up with studies.

At the close of the 2023/2024 academic year, the Skills Centre looked ahead to what resources could be implemented for students. Preparation of materials for the UNIC funded Virtual Exchange 12-week postgrad preparation course were completed by Skills Centre tutors and representatives from the partners in this project, Koç University. The Skills Centre received SATLE funding to supply a sensory friendly experience for students based upon their preferences for the set-up, lighting, and pace of drop-in services, allowing the Centre to launch a new service in semester 2 of 2024/2025. In addition, the first ever Skills Centre Staff Catalogue was launched in advance of the 2024/25 academic year to better promote the services possible amongst staff. Finally, the completion of the SATLE funded **The Kit** was launched and went live on the Success Zone and the website just in time for incoming international students arriving in August. In this self-guided resource, incoming and current students can learn about the different student programmes and apps available in UCC, how to get involved in campus activities, wellbeing and financial management tips, and more.

Staff Recruitment, Management and Development

School Managers Community of Practice

In the UCC Institutional Review Report 2023, the Review Panel identified School Managers as a staff group that could benefit from enhanced opportunities to connect and engage in peer learning for their career development. Two School Managers from the School of Applied Psychology and the School of Law engaged with the Director of Quality Enhancement and the HR Manager for Staff Wellbeing and Development to pursue the idea of a *Community of Practice* for School Managers within UCC. Communities of Practice enable the sharing of best practice among colleagues with similar functional expertise who work in different units, as is the case with School Managers in UCC. Following consultation, the Community of Practice was proposed to and endorsed by the University's Quality Enhancement Committee in October 2023.

The inaugural meeting of the Community of Practice took place in December 2023, in person in the Council Room at UCC. Since then, five additional meetings have taken place, in hybrid or online formats. This has enabled colleagues involved in blended working to participate even if they are not on campus on a meeting day.

The Community of Practice has explored many pressing matters for School Managers. It has proven to be a nimble and responsive group. For example, during the implementation of additional financial controls in early

2024, the group was able to secure a presentation from senior members of the Finance Office and President's Office during which concerns were raised and suggestions made.
As a forum for sharing common problems, the Community of Practice has led to the development of common solutions: for example, the group was able to feed into the process of development of a new IT solution championed by the Academic Secretary to allow external examiners to access online assessment materials. Members have now piloted this new system with volunteer externs, and the feedback received has helped the project leads in IT Services and Learning Technologies Unit to troubleshoot access issues. This should lead to an improved external examining experience in 2024-25 academic year. A poster presentation on the Community of Practice was also included in the 2024 UCC Good Practice symposium, as members are keen to see the benefits this model of collaboration disseminated.
As was envisaged in the original proposal, themes for discussion have emerged from the group itself. At the first meeting of the 2024-25 academic year, suggestions were collated for forthcoming themed meetings. These include wellbeing, business continuity, examinations and assessment, staff training and induction, financial controls, quality enhancement, and health and safety reporting.

Information and Data Management

National Student Survey and UCC Voices

The Student Survey National Steering Group initiated a period of strategic reflection in 2022 and commissioned exercises by two external consultancies to engage with stakeholders. The most recent report, in 2023, states that StudentSurvey.ie is a well-established vehicle for capturing the student experience of teaching and learning in the Irish higher education sector. However, the report also acknowledges challenges in relation to the governance, strategic objectives, and the impact of the outcomes of the survey. Informed by these reports, more recent feedback from students' representatives and from key networks of institutional leaders, the Steering Group decided that fieldwork for StudentSurvey.ie will not proceed in 2024. This decision meant a "fallow" year for the survey. As a result, the National working groups now have a 12-month period to redevelop the survey instrument so that it meets its constituent stakeholders' needs for the coming years.

Following the decision of the Student Survey National Steering Group, a working group was established with members drawn from Quality Enhancement, UCC Student's Union, Systems Administration, and those engaged in teaching and learning activities across the University. The purpose of this group was to devise a placeholder survey using those questions from the Irish Survey of Student Engagement that relate to UCC's performance objectives.

The placeholder UCC Voices Student Survey was significantly shorter than the National Student Survey with a balance between qualitative and quantitative survey questions. The Student Survey working group took the decision to replicate the format of the existing StudentSurvey.ie, surveying First Year and Final Year undergraduate students and taught Postgraduate students. The revised survey utilized questions related to our performance objectives under **Pillar 1 Teaching and Learning** [1](1) Student Survey Effective Teaching Practices Score, (2) Student Survey Quality of Interactions Score, and (3) Student Survey Supportive Environment Score. In addition, UCC included survey questions related to the Student Survey Student Faculty Interaction Score as this indicator continues to emerge as an area for development. The University Leadership Team Strategic Planning Implementation Group took the decision that the Student Faculty Interaction Score would form part of the University Key Performance Indicators[2] for the next five years.

2,094 UCC students responded to UCC Voices Student Survey in 2024, representing a response rate of **14%.** Working in partnership with our Students' Union, 15,322 eligible students were invited to participate across a

two-week fieldwork period in April 2024. Emerging areas for development include interactive work placement and digital badges for career progression. Due to the satisfactory number of respondents, the survey provided a reliable source of information and highlight the experiences of current UCC students. Consulting widely across all levels of the organisation, communicating the benefits of continued participation in our Student Surveys and maximising the outcomes on foot of the survey results, is a key focus of our institutional strategy. Our continued progress ensures strategies for (1) closing the feedback loop through visible reporting on findings across popular social media platforms and (2) optimising use of the data is included on agendas of appropriate meetings (*Academic Council, Student Experience Committees and by Learning and Teaching colleagues*). Continuing the wide dissemination of results:

- Aggregated feedback is shared with colleagues across all support areas i.e., IT Services, UCC's Societies, UCC Library, UCC EDI Unit etc. so that the data can be used to improve and enhance facilities, supports, and the learning environment for all students.
- A database design project is currently in development, with tables being built out with necessary views and indexes to support analysis.
- Continued promotion of the ***In-Touch dashboard*** following a complete redesign of the visualization dashboard in 2023.
- Working collaboratively with our Students' Union to identify areas for further exploration and/or improvement

UCC Module Level Student Survey

In the 2022/23 academic year a module level student feedback process was piloted across each of the four Colleges with a total student sample size of 1,138 registered students. The pilot utilised the newly procured Qualtrics software, integrated with Canvas to provide a module level survey consisting of two parts: Core questions focused on the student learning experience and an optional module specific section where participating module coordinators could have unique questions added just for their modules and students. Over 520 submissions were received representing a submission rate of ~35%.

An independent evaluation was subsequently carried out to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the pilot survey. The evaluation found that the objectives as set out for the pilot were met but that it faced several challenges, the majority of which stemmed from the technical limitations of a Qualtrics and Canvas integration. These limitations were around provisioning, branching, dashboard design and the accessibility of survey results.

UCC has identified an approach that factors in these limitations while providing a systematic module-level student survey:

1. A Pulse survey format consisting of core questions on student learning and teaching experience
2. Module specific questions to be shared locally
3. All surveys to be disseminated using Canvas and developed in Qualtrics or other available Canvas API
4. Pulse survey dashboards to be available via Qualtrics to all users
5. A threshold level of support for the coordination and administration of a university-wide feedback system

The above approach will be carried out as a sponsored project across a larger sample size, with the objective of developing a UCC Student Feedback Policy and a core module level feedback survey which will be available for all modules centrally.

[1] https://hea.ie/statistics/data-for-download-and-visualisations/institutes-performance/system-performance-framework-dashboard-23-28/

[2] https://www.ucc.ie/en/president/strategy2028/

Integration of UN sustainable development goals (SDG)

In December 2023, UCC placed 6th globally in the UI Green Metric ranking and in June 2024 the University was placed 67th in the Times Higher Education Impact Ranking. In April, UCC was the first University ever to raise a 5th Green Flag (awarded by the Foundation for Environmental Education).

UCC achieved a 32% reduction in GHG emissions for heat (natural gas – scope 1) and electricity (scope 2) relative to 2016-2018 levels. The Enterprise Centre Deep Retrofit was completed in September 2024, bringing the building to a B1 BER rating and reducing its carbon emissions by over 80%. UCC was the only public sector body to develop and deliver (in November 2023) its own Climate Leadership Training course in response to the national Climate Action Plan. Other operational highlights include a total saving of over 2 million disposable cups recorded since the start of the disposable cup ban across campus.

In October 2024, UCC's first Annual Sustainability Report covering all 17 SDGs across teaching, research, operations and engagement activities was published. This is an important milestone in our mission to embed sustainability and climate action across teaching, research and operations.

In November 2023, the inaugural UCC Sustainable Futures Forum was held on campus, with former President Mary Robinson attending as a special guest. In December, UCC once again sent a delegation to the annual United

Nations COP28 climate change meeting; for the first time UCC redistributed some of its badges to MAPA delegates.

Sustainability research contributed €14 million to UCC's annual income in 2023/2024 as the Environmental Research Institute evolved into UCC Futures Sustainability Institute. Sustainability researchers also secured additional funding, including UCC's Floating Wind Testbed integrated with Energy System Observatory bolstering UCC's leadership in offshore wind energy research. UCC also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with EirGrid in September 2024 to deepen our collaboration on ensuring Ireland's smooth, secure and rapid transition to a zero emissions electricity system powered by wind energy.

UCC's research excellence in sustainability was evidenced this year through the number of citations of UCC researchers, for example securing first place globally in Google Scholar in the three sustainability topics of offshore wind energy, energy modelling and electro-fuels.

UCC's sustainability researchers also delivered significant societal impact including empowering children and young people aged 8-16 on biodiversity, leading on two volumes of Ireland's Climate Change Assessment, presenting to the Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action and participating in the new Climate Neutral Cork Leadership Group established by Cork City Council and informing a just transition in agriculture and land use.

SDSN Ireland (co-hosted by UCC and QUB) grew its membership to 14 institutions north and south of the border. In April, the network hosted its first event in Belfast, the REACH ’24 Sustainability and Arts festival. In addition, SDSN Ireland participated in the UN Summit of the Future in New York in September 2024, including co-organising the ‘Peace not War’ official side event.

UCC Associate Vice President for Sustainability won the inaugural Irish Times *Positive Impacts* award in 2024.

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 a clear Academic Integrity Policy and provides support and advice to students on academic integrity across all aspects of their academic work. The Students' Union also provides advice and update to their members.
https://www.ucc.ie/en/academicgov/policies/student-policies/#academic-integrity-for-examinations-and-assessments-policy

https://www.ucc.ie/en/skillscentre/academic-integrity/

https://libguides.ucc.ie/academicintegrity/referencing

https://www.ucc.ie/en/research/culture/integrity/
UCC is an active member of the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN), established by QQI in November 2019. UCC's Academic Integrity Education Officer represents UCC in the NAIN along with a member of the Academic Council Learning & Teaching Committee, the Head of Student Records & Exams and the Student Union Education Officer. Notes from NAIN masterclasses and NAIN academic integrity updates are regularly shared with the Registrar, Vice President of Learning and Teaching, the staff Academic Integrity Champion Network (two representatives from each of the four colleges, Adult Continuing Education, and Student Engagement) and relevant committees (Teaching & Learning) as well as integrated into resources for both staff and students. The Academic Integrity Education Officer reports contract cheating providers and their targeting of UCC students and staff to QQI and is a member of the NAIN Working Group 5: Capacity Building & Professional Development as well as the European Network of Academic Integrity (ENAI).
During Academic Year 23/24 several initiatives, resources and trainings aimed at fostering academic integrity and providing educational opportunities and support took place at UCC. These aim to develop a shared understanding of academic integrity across the university and to foster an environment that supports it, clearly delineating it from academic misconduct and taking a preventative approach to this. They offer advice and support for both students and staff in this area that is responsive to ongoing and developing risks (i.e., contract cheating and generative AI), and that reflects and incorporates NAIN guidance, including the Academic Integrity Guidelines, National Principles and Lexicon and the GenAI Guidelines. These initiatives include:

Student engagement

The Academic Integrity Education Officer role is based in the Skills Centre, our student-facing academic support centre. Through the Skills Centre, students are provided with resources and training on academic integrity and related topics. The Skills Centre employs undergraduate and postgraduate students as peer tutors who offer group workshops on academic skills as well as one-to-one appointments. All of these tutors have a dual role as student Academic Integrity Champions and receive academic integrity training each year. This enables the tutors to highlight academic integrity across all engagements with their peers at the Skills Centre. Further opportunities for all students to engage with academic integrity are provided by the Skills Centre, including:

- Launch of "Academic Integrity Fundamentals" Short Course in Canvas in October 2023, available to all students and strongly recommended. The course covers academic integrity, academic skills that support it, responsible use of GenAI, academic misconduct, risks of contract cheating and file-sharing, understanding text-matching software (Turnitin) and academic integrity supports in UCC. Students receive a certificate upon completion of the course and some lecturers have chosen to integrate it into their modules as a requirement. In AY 22/23, **over 500** students engaged with this course and **260**

completed it. Completions of this course are set to increase in AY 24/25 as it continues to be integrated in modules.

- "Academic Integrity", "Turnitin" (new) and "Responsible Use of Generative AI" (new) workshops: **363** students participated.
- Academic Integrity training for Class Reps in partnership with the Students' Union: approximately **250** participated.
- Academic Integrity Drop-ins
- **National Academic Integrity Week**: Student champions engaged with **287** students on promo stands, encouraging them to spin the academic integrity wheel to prompt conversations. Students also engaged in several workshops and Academic Integrity Bingo in the Skills Centre across the week. A social media campaign ran throughout the week (61 posts, 11,633 impressions, 680 engagements).
- Collaboration with the School of Film and Screen Media for an Academic Integrity Video Competition with four videos shared on the Skills Centre YouTube Channel.
- Academic integrity awareness campaign on digital signage across UCC during Semester 2.

Staff engagement

The Academic Integrity Education Officer works collaboratively with the Centre for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning (CIRTL) to provide staff with resources and training related to academic integrity. This includes:

- The Fostering Academic Integrity in Learning and Teaching Digital Badge, which has been available for Staff from 20/10/22. This short course, with approx. 25 hours of learning content supports staff to: identify the core principles of academic integrity; describe key points of engagement or intervention across the student journey in relation to academic integrity; analyse reports from plagiarism detection software from different disciplinary perspectives; evaluate responses to potential academic misconduct examples based on their understanding of relevant policies and procedures; reflect on their role in fostering a culture of academic integrity in the university. This Digital Badge was updated with content on GenAI in AY 23/24. All staff completing the course are required to identify an intervention in their practice that will foster academic integrity. 34 staff earned a Digital Badge in AY 23/24 with several more engaging with the content.
- AI and Assessment Workshops were offered from November to April (1 online and 1 in-person each month). These introduced staff to how GenAI works, ethical considerations, an academic integrity framework and assessment design options. In these workshops, staff actively engaged with GenAI to see its capabilities and limitations in their own contexts.
- AI + Assessment Hackathons were held in January 2024 focused on future-proofing assessment for academic integrity in the age of GenAI. Groups of 5-6 participants were provided with resources and together over 3 hours to refine practical solutions to the challenge prompt.
- An Academic Integrity Seminar with experts Sarah Elaine Eaton and Kane Murdoch was held in October 2023.
- Academic Integrity and GenAI panel discussion with staff-student partners from the (AI)^{2}ed project (discussed below) was held in October 2023.
- In total, **477 staff** engaged in the workshops and events.

Generative AI

(AI)^{2}ed: Academic Integrity and Artificial Intelligence Project – As a result of the impact of generative AI (GenAI) on teaching and learning, it was recognised that both staff and students needed guidance on this. (AI)^{2}ed was a

National Forum Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement (SATLE 2022) funded research project that was carried out in the Skills Centre in order to develop guidance on the responsible use of GenAI tools. This project took a students-as-partners approach, pairing students with academic staff across the four UCC Colleges in order to reimagine assessment in the face of ever advancing AI technologies. These staff-student working groups experimented with ChatGPT in relation to assessment, to uncover approaches to mitigate against the risk of GenAI misuse and to consider how best to integrate GenAI into learning activities and assessment design across disciplinary contexts in ways that enhance learning and maintain academic integrity. Case studies from each working group formed part of the Toolkit for the Ethical Use of GenAI in Learning and Teaching, which also includes contextual information on how GenAI works, a lexicon of common terms, ethical concerns/critical AI literacy, and an academic integrity framework. Content from this Toolkit has informed student and staff training regarding responsible use and assessment redesign and has been shared nationally and internationally as an open resource, with 2.6K site visits. It is also referred to in the Academic Integrity for Examinations and Assessments Policy.

Short Guide: Assessment in the Age of AI – CIRTL developed this resource to support academic staff to consider the impact of GenAI and to offer examples of assessment redesign.

Policy

An Academic Board Generative AI Working Group was established to discuss updates to the Academic Integrity Policy relating to GenAI. This WG remains active (renamed Academic Integrity Working Group) to discuss ongoing policy updates, including the updated version of the Academic Integrity Policy (implemented from August 1, 2024) that reflects updates to terminology and structure to align more closely to the NAIN Framework for Academic Misconduct Investigation and Case Management, which it refers to.

Research

UCC research "Two sides of the same coin: a taxonomy of academic integrity and impropriety using intellectual virtues and vices" was published in *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* in May 2024 and has since been viewed over 1,000 times. The taxonomy this article proposes clearly delineates between academic integrity, impropriety, and misconduct, frames these through examples of actions and behaviours, and considers "corrupting cultures" that can lead to impropriety. This framework has been integrated into staff and student academic integrity training at UCC.

3.0 QA Improvement and Enhancement Plans for Upcoming Reporting Period

3.1QA and QE supporting the Achievement of Strategic Objectives

No.	CINNTE recommendations following Institutional Review, March 2023	Planned actions and indicators
1	Recognising the ambition of the new UCC Strategic Plan, the review team recommends that UCC should set sufficient income growth targets which include substantial non- exchequer components. The developing financial model should prioritise 'quick wins' to boost university income, such as the development of high-volume economic-fee- based postgraduate taught programmes informed by market research.	Enrollment planning currently underway. Development of a Recruitment Strategy in association with the VP Global, for approval by AC Recruitment of additional non exchequer income students for the 2024/25 Academic year on Master programme where capacity was available
2	The review team recommends that the university reviews the size of the 'President's Strategic Fund', benchmarks it against other research- intensive universities and adjusts it accordingly.	Budget has been allocated and is allocated by the President for projects/initiatives in line with the university strategic objectives.
3	The review team recommends that, given the weight attached to the role of the newly appointed Vice President for Global Engagement, UCC should develop an appropriately and strategically resourced Global Strategy which includes a student recruitment plan with specific College and University targets based on sound market research and marketing	A Global Engagement Plan has been developed committing to a more strategic approach to internationalization across a number of priority areas. A review of Marketing, Communications has been undertaken, recommending a streamlined and consistent approach. Separately, a review of student recruitment has been completed with a detailed recruitment plan now the subject of consultation. When complete, this process will implement this recommendation in full.

4	The review team recommends that UCC's strategic goal of increasing the number of postgraduate (particularly PhD) students should be more coherently elaborated (including clearly specified targets, timelines and implementation mechanisms) and should avoid over-reliance on exchequer funding.	Research Administration system launched in Semester 1 (2024/25) with full suite of reporting tools on research student progression HEA Performance Compact updated to include targets for PhD student enrolment and progression and these will be monitored through the Strategic Plan annual implementation process The creation of new Cohort PhD progamme for the Technological University sector. Thematic Review of Doctoral Learning Experience scheduled for Semester 2.School level PhD targets introduced across the institution Two new cohort PhD programmes developed to attract larger numbers of PhD students
5	The review team recommends that UCC should undertake careful and robust business planning and granular monitoring guided by clearly- defined KPIs to optimise the implementation of its ambitious industrial engagement strategy.	A review to define specific resources, contact points and progression pathways that optimise industry engagement potential, relationship management and development of research collaboration activity and consultancy will take place in Q1 2025. Resources, KPIs and task owners will be agreed by end of Q2 2025 to provide focus, capacity and direction and to monitor progression towards our ambitious industry engagement targets.
6	The review team recommends that, taking into account proposed changes to governance, the university should update its published governance scheme to clarify accountability and associated decision-making work-flows, and further recommends that UCC should develop a system for ongoing monitoring of the implementation of university policies and procedures across the Colleges	Legal opinion on the requirement for a Principal Statute obtained. Work has commenced to update the Principal Statute and associated Regulations and the underlying Policy Framework. The Disciplinary Section of the Principal Statute has been updated. Detailed work is underway on the Signing Authority Policy and Approvals Framework. There are a number of significant strands to this project and it will take some time to complete.

	to identify potential inconsistencies in their application and where appropriate, to remedy these.	
7	The review team recommends the consistent implementation of Workload Models across the university which include provision for research supervision (particularly that of PhD students).	Work is underway to migrate the old AWD model to Qualtrics system within UCC. It is hoped to run a pilot of the new model on Qualtric in Semester 2 of the 2024/25 Academic year.
8	The review team recommends that UCC should address the slow delivery of a career development infrastructure for administrative and technical staff in order to provide a fit-for- purpose mechanism to ensure equitable and timely recognition and reward for staff.	Following the admin promotion call in 2022/23, feedback led to further review and development of the scheme in line with elements of the revised academic schemes. An 'Interim Administrative Promotion Scheme' is now finalised and a call is due in January 2025 with a streamlined process delivering an enhanced candidate experience and reduced time in administrating interview panels. • External perspective and oversight on process. • Establishment of two 'Administrative Promotions Boards'. This approach can deliver further benefits to the university in case of the need for role/grade review. • Connection with UCC values and behaviours. • Akin to academic promotional processes, the incorporation of Statutory Leave and Personal Circumstances consideration. • Enhanced feedback process. The CoP for School Managers commenced meeting in October 2023 and 6 number of meetings have taken place. Indicative topics addressed through the group have included financial management, staff welfare, and progressing system efficiencies.
9	The review team recommends that UCC should ensure, via the ongoing pilot project and related initiatives, that student satisfaction data is appropriately gathered and	UCC has developed a "Student Voices" Survey for First and Final Year students in place of the Irish Student Survey. Survey will be run in February 2025. The Student Feedback pilot is being upscaled across two Colleges and will run in Semester 2 2025. The survey sample will capture approximately 10,000 students

	factored into the assessment of the quality of modules and programmes across UCC	which represents a significant upscale. Outcomes will inform the development of a sustainable model for student feedback.
10	The review team recommends that UCC should implement mechanisms to promote connection between graduate students in different Schools & Colleges as a means of promoting cross-disciplinary collaboration.	A new group consisting of the Dean and the college Vice Deans was set up in 2023 and meets every two weeks with the specific aim of addressing issues of cross college student experience. A monthly Dean's clinic was established for all PhD students across colleges There is now PGR all-college representation on the SU for the first time (Oct 2024). This involves the creation of a cross-college PGR team, who meet regularly and via the SU Education Officer report back monthly to the Dean. A proposal has been submitted to Academic Council to establish a compulsory training module for all PhD students involving group and team work across colleges bringing all new start PhD students together in semester 1 of their programme. A University wide Three Minute Thesis competition was launched in 2023. The event brings together all PhD students from all colleges for an in-person event.
11	Given the university's strategic aim to increase postgraduate and international student numbers substantially, the review team recommends that UCC should undertake comprehensive resource planning to ensure that Student Services provision is scalable to meet the increase in demand.	The newly appointed Digital Projects Officer for the Student Experience provides the opportunity to review service delivery, to consider greater IT integration and sustainable models to greater enhance and digital efficiencies.
12	The review team recognises the quality of support services provided to students at UCC but recommends, in support of that, the development of an omni-channel	The appointment of a new Student Experience IT Specialist will provide digital support for the 'communication of student services' in their brief. A digital strategy will provide an opportunity to progress our communication to students to maximise awareness and engagement.

	Communication Strategy to optimise student awareness of and engagement with the services available.	
13	The review team recommends that UCC should introduce formal processes for annual Module- and Programme-Monitoring enabled by the new Curriculum Management IT System.	CIM programmes and CIM modules have pre-defined values and drop-down lists to embed QA rules. The Module Policy is being updated with the experience of one year of operation by ADSC.
14	The review team recommends that UCC should prioritize the development and implementation of comprehensive assessment rubrics (including marking schemes) to ensure equivalence of grading – especially at exit degree award level – between disciplines, Schools and Colleges.	Work has commenced on the rationalisation of Marks and Standards to provide an integrated regulatory framework for pass, progression and award. This work will be sequential commencing with rationalization and approval of the marks and standards for First Year programmes for implementation in 2025/26. CIRTL has rolled out a new micro-credential on inclusive assessment that includes a section on rubric design. CIRTL is linking with the four Inclusive Assessment Fellows who will lead out on a 1 year institutional initiative to explore assessment in the four colleges. Rubric development is also part of the digital badge on fostering academic integrity which was developed in partnership with the Skills Centre. Rubrics are shared as a model approach in the PG Cert and PG Dip in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education and this aspect will be development further in support of the CINNTE guidelines.
15	The review team recommends that examination papers submitted to External Examiners for review should be accompanied by the cognate sample answers where feasible / appropriate, which is standard practice across the third level sector in Ireland.	The ExPERA report published October 2024 will be considered by External Examiner Sub-Committee and Academic Board to agree aspects of the institution's practices for external examining to be enhanced.

16	The review team recommends that, given the crucial importance of Library & IT services to the quality of the student experience, UCC should strive to protect existing budgetary allocations for these services against competing internal demands, and to continue to lobby for greater exchequer funding support to permit their adequate resourcing.	This has been a challenge with the financial situation. The information resources budget has been retained but staffing in operations budgets reduced.
17	The review team recommends that UCC should seek to maximise the value of its significant investment in IT systems and data- capture through the appointment of a Chief Information Officer charged with the development of a Data Strategy for the university to support data-driven decision making and quality enhancement at all levels within the university.	This recommendation is addressed in the Strategic Plan Strategic Enablers: Digital Capabilities and Data Quality. The development of integrated high quality data resources is underway as an enabler of strategic plan implementation. This will allow the development of real-time data, that is configured to be easily visualised and interrogated at various levels of activity. The capability to support this development is incorporated through the functions of the Chief Financial and Operations Officer (CFOO) role. This recommendation will be addressed by the CFOO.

3.2 Reviews planned for Upcoming Reporting Periods

3.2.1Reviews planned for Next Reporting Period

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Date of last review
Thematic Review - Research Student Experience	2024/25	N/A
Collaborative Review - Transnational education (TNE); Minzu University of China (collaborative partnership with School of BEES) & Communication University of China	2024/25	N/A

3.2.2 Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period

Quality Reviews planned in UCC beyond the next reporting period can be found at the following link: ScheduleforQualityReview2024-25to2031-32(1).pdf

4.0 Additional Themes and Case Studies

Development of Work-Integrated Learning at University College Cork

Work-integrated learning (WIL) is the umbrella term for all work-based and experiential learning activities that take place within the students learning at higher education as an intentional component of the curriculum. WIL involves three parties, the student, the educational institution and most importantly external stakeholders. Work-based learning is not new however the term is relatively new appearing first in literature in the mid 1990's (see, e.g., Barrett et al., 1998; Coll, 1996) being recognised by WACE in its mission statement in 2000.

Keywords:
Work-integrated learning; WIL; challenges; quality

Introduction

WIL was introduced to UCC in 2020 following a Thematic Review of Placement by the Quality Enhancement Unit. Over the past four years, we have been expanding on our knowledge of WIL, learning from international experts in the field and broadening the messaging from placements to all forms of WIL. With the establishment of a WIL Working Group and Community of Practice we have been mapping existing WIL practices across the university, learning from areas where quality WIL is being provided to students and learning new innovative WIL initiatives.

WIL is a cross institutional quality enhancement initiative with the ambition of shared learning through a community of practice where we can provide students with authentic WIL. Delivering WIL that is an intentional component of the curriculum support's goal two of UCC's strategic plan towards student success.

When students learn in real world settings, they develop graduate attribute values such as respect, ambition, compassion, resilience and integrity transitioning through the university WIL bridges the theory-practice gap. In July 2024 a survey was issued to all staff in UCC as part of research to understand how we are progressing with the development of WIL across the institution. Responses came from academic and professional services staff in all four colleges, they also came from staff in the student experience area, Adult and Continuing Education (ACE) and support offices such as IT, Quality Enhancement, Finance and others. In the findings staff cited that WIL was "the latest term being used by UCC to describe work-based learning or practice placement" and "wishy-washy" managerial speak that has none of the simple resonance of work placement. For 96.6% of staff work placement, co-ops, practicums, internships, industry placement, field placement were the most understood form of WIL followed by work-related projects.

Some of the challenges highlighted in the research included staff resourcing and recognition, pressures on external stakeholders to monitor and supervise students, competition for WIL with external stakeholders, growth in demand, risk management and governance and ability to provide quality WIL experiences. Most of this is seen in the context of staff understanding that the main form of WIL in UCC being work placement, clinical placement and practicums.

Despite the challenges highlighted by staff, they provided several creative suggestions on how we could further develop WIL in the curriculum by having WIL at a foundational level as a university wide module, adding site visits with reflective reviews and assignments based on real-world requirements and incorporating WIL as a stackable option that is built into the curriculum from first year onwards.

The benefits of WIL in the curriculum are transformative for student's development and experience, it helps to shape their future interests and expectations. Students make valuable connections, and it gives participants an insight into their career path - or not. WIL provides adult learners with the opportunity to diversify & display their acquired knowledge.

In introducing the term work-integrated learning to external stakeholders, the concept in Ireland is new and is not understood. For these stakeholders work placement, internships, co-op is currently how many see this form of learning activity. Developing WIL into the future will take significant business development by university staff in reaching out to build and establish new innovative practices and having students critically reflect on their experiences as part of assessment.

A current mapping exercise through the book of modules indicates that WIL is compulsory, for credit in approximately 31% of undergraduate programmes in UCC with the majority taking place in the College of Medicine and Health. Approximately 24% of programmes have WIL as an optional component of the curriculum. There are examples of great practices taking place across the university which gives us an opportunity to learn from each other through our community of practice. There are currently two units within the university using the university approved software system InPlace to house WIL activities, the system provides UCC with an opportunity to have oversight and governance of WIL practices more broadly.

Conclusion

UCC is at the early stage in our development of work-integrated learning and the diverse practices that can take place to embed real world learning into the curriculum. For quality WIL to happen it requires the university to have a clear framework around what constitutes authentic WIL, it also requires engagement with external stakeholders to make connections and develop ongoing relationships with this third party. Developing assessment for students undertaking WIL experiences takes time to make it directly related to the field in which they are learning about. Going forward, increasing the use of InPlace as WIL practices

provides the university to have oversight and governance of what and where WIL is taking place with external stakeholders at any given time.

Coll, R. K. (1996). The BSc(technology) degree: Responding to the challenges of the education marketplace. Journal of Cooperative Education, 32(1), 29–35.

Defining WIL - International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning

Graduate Attributes | University College Cork

WACE = the World Association of Cooperative Education, now formally known as WACE. WACE is the international association for work-integrated learning.