



UCC

Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh
University College Cork, Ireland

Good Practice Symposium 2026

Dr Dora Allman Room, The Hub
19th May 2026

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Overview

Every day across UCC, individuals and teams develop ideas, processes, and initiatives that make a meaningful difference. The Good Practice Symposium provides an opportunity to recognise this work, share insights and support a culture of enhancement across the institution.

Good Practice helps us understand not only what we do well, but how we achieve it. By capturing these examples through Case Studies, we build a shared knowledge base that strengthens quality, effectiveness and collaboration across UCC.

This Symposium is thematic, focusing on a key strategic enabler that underpins UCC's 2023–28 Strategic Plan, EDI Framework and Graduate Attributes: Belonging. A sense of belonging ensures everyone across UCC's diverse community "can achieve their potential and succeed." It sits at the heart of who we are and what we do.

This theme also aligns closely with the shared values of the UNIC European University alliance and its commitment to inclusive, people-centred and socially engaged universities. Case studies from UNIC peers are also being showcased in recognition of this and to enable international sharing of good practice.

The Symposium provides a platform for colleagues to share ideas, innovations, and outcomes that nurture and strengthen our sense of belonging at UCC, now and into the future.

We would like to thank everyone who submitted a case study and look forward to welcoming you all at the event.

Ms Elizabeth Noonan
Director, Quality Enhancement Unit



Programme

09:30 Welcome from Director of Quality Enhancement, Ms Elizabeth Noonan

09:35 Welcome from the President, Professor John O'Halloran

10:00 Belonging Kaleidoscope Talks:

Prof. Ursula Kilkelly, Vice-President of Global Engagement

Dr Avril Hutch, Director of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Mr Gary Mulcahy, Head of Student Life

10:25 Belonging Kaleidoscope Panel

10:40 Poster session

11:20 Oral presentations

11:40 Award for best Poster and Talk

11:50 Close

Barr na gCnoc Irish language and culture as agents of social and educational inclusion.

1

Adel Coleman, Tomás Dowling, Lauren Grace, Laoise Keevers.
Barr na gCnoc, Ionad na Gaeilge Labhartha



Case Study Synopsis

Barr na gCnoc is a community partnership that marries UCC's commitment to community engagement with our research and teaching missions, to bring academic, human, and material resources in the Irish language into action for the benefit of the community. In 2017, a community partnership was formed between UCC and Terence MacSwiney Community College, Knocknaheeny, Cork, to support the establishment of an Aonad Lán-Ghaeilge. The proposal to establish the Aonad came from the local community's demand for educational choice in an area of high socio-economic exclusion. An invitation to UCC to become involved resulted in the collaboration titled Barr na gCnoc. Barr na gCnoc was among the five winners under the Higher Education Authority (HEA) Performance Funding 2023 awards. Barr na gCnoc aims to enhance social and educational inclusion by delivering Irish language initiatives across four pillars of support: advocacy, student support, teacher support, and parent support. Supports include upskilling classes, Gaeltacht Residency Programmes, the Gaeilge Stretch programme for primary school students, parents' classes, and community-based Gael rap workshops.

As a result of the project's interventions, some 300 young people and adults engage with Barr na gCnoc programmes and workshops each week. As a result, students' academic performance and social capital have increased, educational aspirations have risen, and the project stakeholders have received national and international recognition.

Key Words: Inclusion, education, language, social

mobility, social capital.



Enabling Belonging

Improved educational aspirations are an outstanding impact of Barr na gCnoc, as the beneficiaries of the project now see higher education as a realistic future possibility. A study found that parents and pupils of this new Irish-medium school, without exception, expressed the view that third-level education, and specifically UCC, had now become an aspiration of parents/guardians and an ambition of all pupils. Students also express a greater sense of belonging as Irish speakers. Further education progression rates within the community have traditionally been low, but amongst the Aonad Lán-Ghaeilge cohort, aspirations have risen dramatically.



Video Links | Graphics



5th class participants of Gaelige Stretch



Scholarship Ceremony, UCC



Participants of Barr na gCnoc Gael-rap workshops performing live for TG4 at Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2025



Area/s of Alignment

Global Engagement

Our Place, Our Footprint



Additional Information

This initiative is firmly based on community demand and community engagement and responds to national DEIS school baseline data on educational disadvantage. Barr na gCnoc created a mutually beneficial partnership that is improving the quality of life and learning in the school and the community, and empowering the community while advancing UCC's community engagement.



Key Impacts

- Educational inclusion: the project provides educational choice in an area where Irish-medium education was not readily accessible. Barr na gCnoc educational programmes ensure children have fun with the Irish language and enhance their levels of engagement.
- Social inclusion: through project initiatives, participants engage in activities that would have previously been inaccessible due to financial barriers. For example, each year Barr na gCnoc supports some 50-100 young people to visit the Gaeltacht areas for a week-long immersive trip.
- Social capital: through school and community-based initiatives, participants have an increased social capital. They have engaged in international collaborations, won national awards and most recently won two awards at the Stripe Young Scientist Exhibition.

2 James Bilson,
Eileen O Callaghan,
Wider Access Team.

Access, UCC.



Case Study Synopsis

Background:

Access students are UCC students who enter UCC via Access routes (HEAR, DARE or Mature / QQI) and or register with Disability Support during their academic journey. For 25/26 Academic year, 24% of incoming Undergraduate students were Access students, with over 4,500 Access students across all years. In the 2025 Access end-of-year survey, **4 in 10 Access students reported difficulty making and keeping friends and feeling isolated or alone as a major challenge.** Before Covid, UCC offered extended Access orientation events; with these no longer in place, **Access Welcome was designed to create a sense of welcome, connection, inclusivity, and belonging.**

Aim:

The objectives for the day, which were shared with students were:

- 1. Meet new friends** through structured games, icebreakers, and informal activities.
- 2. Increase understanding of campus life** and meet Access staff and Ambassadors through campus orientation, walk-and-talk tours, and facilitated interactions.
- 3. Learn next steps for the coming weeks**, supported by clear signposting to Access Connection events (DS, PLUS, Mature/QQI) and general orientation.

Method:

Prospective students were reached through radio, print, and social media campaigns, with direct emails sent following CAO, Mature, and QQI offers. 237 students registered, and 144 attended the event.

Results:

39% of attendees found every aspect of the day a success, overall rating it **4.58/5**, with staff ratings 4.33 / 5, and Access Ambassador help as 4.5 / 5.

Key Words: Loneliness, Connection, Welcome & Sense of Belonging.



Area/s of Alignment

- Research & Innovation
- Student Success
- Global Engagement
- Our Staff, Our Culture
- Our Place, Our Footprint



Additional Information

The day was supported by

- 28 current Access students, acting as Access Ambassadors and paid for their contribution.
- 26 Access staff, who had an opportunity to personally welcome and connect with incoming students.



Enabling Belonging

- Fostered a sense of welcome and an inclusive environment for Access students, for whom this sense of belonging may take longer to establish.
- Clear signposting of next steps, support services and other resources to support navigation of campus life.
- Created open dialogue and organic conversations with Access staff and students.
- Orientation around campus to reduce anxiety and fear regarding same.
- All students who attended were surveyed for feedback.



Welcome to UCC and Access UCC

To help you transition into this exciting chapter of your life and becoming a University Student, there are many events and activities to help you settle in. The guide below details what is an offer for you in the first few weeks of your student life and will help you get to know fellow students, the University, and the support services available to you.

01 Access Welcome- Landing in UCC
Saturday 30th August

Landing in UCC takes place on Saturday 30 August from 10am-3pm in UCC. It is an opportunity for you to get to know fellow Access students, get familiar with the campus, meet the Access staff and student Ambassadors, and have a fun and enjoyable introduction to UCC. Attendance is optional but you are encouraged to come along if you can. Register for Landing in UCC at this link or using the QR code above.

02 Academic Orientation
2nd-11th September

Academic Orientation takes place on campus between 2nd - 11th September. Attendance at this event is mandatory. You will find information on the specific attendance date for your course on the orientation website (see QR code above). This event includes an introduction to your course, campus tours, your timetable, and an introduction to the library and IT services.

03 Connection Days
12th-19th Sept

The Connection Day events are organised by your specific service in Access. The focus of the day is to meet staff and current students and get to know others in your area. It is an informal and friendly event that includes activities and workshops. Dates for each service are as follows:

- **PLUS (HEAR entries):** 12 September from 10am to 4.30pm on campus. Attendance is mandatory at this event. It will include information sessions and activities.
- **Mature, QQI and FEET:** 12 September from 9.30am to 2pm on campus. Attendance is highly recommended to get familiar with the supports available to you.
- **Disability Support (DARE entries):** Running on 17 September from 4-7pm and the 18 September 11am-2pm. This is a highly recommended event, which will include short workshops to introduce you to the supports offered by the DS.

Timetable of Events*

10.00 - 10.45: Registration
10.45 - 11.30/45: College sessions
11.30 - 12.45: Student Panel sessions
12.15 - 12.30/45: Teamwork Making Connections
12.45 - 13.40: Lunch
13.45 - 14.45: Walk and Talk Tour and Challenge
14.45 - 15.00: O&A and Summary
15.00: Ice Cream

* Staff available in the Hub to take follow up Q's



Key Impacts

- "It was very useful, very welcoming. I'm so happy with today!!!"*
"..it will be nice to go to orientation and know some faces already. Also, we went into the buildings, so I know where I need to go which is nice".
- ✓ 82% said the **key objectives were met**, (meet a friend, Increase knowledge of campus life and learn next steps).
 - ✓ Many said they **met friends** and feel more confident for orientation.
 - ✓ Multiple said their **anxiety around starting in UCC was reduced** after the day.
 - ✓ **Access staff** were consistently praised.
 - ✓ Students appreciated **understanding next steps** and exploring buildings.
 - Given the success of the event, Access plan to run the **welcome event again in 2026** and implement changes highlighted in the student feedback.



Case Study Synopsis

Background:

Access students may face additional barriers to engaging in physical activity, including fear of judgement, lack of knowledge, low confidence, health considerations and sensory overload leading to lower engagement with the Mardyke.

Reduced engagement with the Mardyke impacts Access students' sense of belonging in UCC, physical health and mental health.

Aim:

To codesign a supportive, sensory aware, 6-week orientation program that:

- Fosters a strong sense of belonging within campus life
- Builds familiarity with the Mardyke space, equipment and staff
- Supports self-regulation and stress management through meaningful physical activity
- Strengthens collaboration between Access UCC and Mardyke teams

Method:

Collaborative planning between Access staff, occupational therapists and Mardyke staff to ensure that students were accompanied at every stage from entering the building, navigating spaces, and learning equipment, to receiving ongoing check-ins and encouragement to build confidence and routine.

Access ambassador facilitator model developed to provide peer support, social safety and further contribute to belonging

Student intake survey was used to identify barriers, needs, confidence levels and personal goals.

Six-week pilot program, beginning with a peer led guided introduction session followed by weekly supported engagement.

Key Words: [Belonging, Inclusion, Universal Design for Participation, Student Wellbeing, Collaboration]

Results:



Area/s of Alignment

- Research & Innovation
- Student Success
- Global Engagement
- Our Staff, Our Culture
- Our Place, Our Footprint



Additional Information

Student quotes from initial surveys showing why the initiative matters:

- 'knowing a familiar face' – belonging through connection
- 'Noise, lighting and sensory overload' – belonging through sensory accessibility.
- 'I cant take a bit to respond... please try to be patient with me' – belonging through understanding

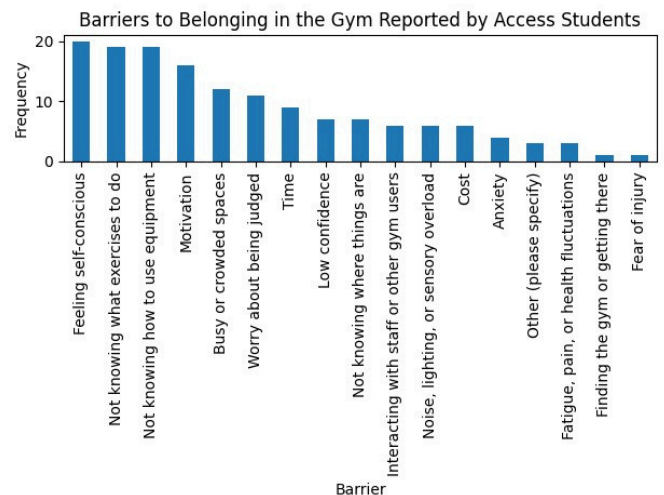


Enabling Belonging

Belonging is fostered when students feel **recognised, supported and able to participate fully**. This initiative actively creates those conditions by transforming a potentially **overwhelming, inaccessible environment** into one that is **predictable, inclusive and safe**. Through **peer accompaniment, sensory-informed practices** and **strong collaboration** between units, Access students can belong in another aspect of college life - feeling **welcome, capable and supported to succeed**. This program demonstrates that **belonging** is built **through action, not assumption**.



Video Links | Graphics



Key Impacts

Enhanced student belonging – the aim of the program is to ensure students feel welcomed, understood and supported in an environment that previously felt intimidating or inaccessible.

Increased confidence and participation – by offering supported entry pathways, the program hopes to build students' confidence, foster autonomy and encourage sustained engagement with the Mardyke

Improved wellbeing – Access to structured and purposeful movement is expected to support stress-regulation, mental health and resilience – contributing to student success.

Cross campus collaboration – intended to strengthen communication, shared problem solving and the development of a more inclusive campus.

Co design in action – ongoing student feedback will guide the evolution of the program, ensuring it remains responsive to and aligned with students needs

James Bilson
 Olive Byrne
 Dan Murphy

 Access UCC
 Access UCC
 Access UCC


Case Study Synopsis

Access UCC Student Ambassador Programme

Background:

In 2022, Access UCC initiated the Access Ambassador Programme (AAP) initiative, in response to the heightened challenges to engaging with the student body, caused by Covid 19 combined with complex intersectional needs of students. Responding to concerns around connection to the service and the wider University community the AAP sought to build communication with students through better understanding of their unique lived experiences.

It was intended that this initiative would amplify student voice, provide a direct feedback loop from students with regards to their respective learning and service experiences and ultimately enable Access Services to be more adaptive and flexible to students' needs and wants, therefore giving staff the opportunity to provide targeted support and guidance.

Aim:

1. To allow Access students to have the opportunity to shape policy and influence decisions within Access services.
2. To provide a forum for initiatives to be broadcast to Access students and for feedback to be generated for staff.

Method:

Thirty-two students are selected each year through a competitive process, with eight representatives from each of the four Access pathways: Mature, QQI, HEAR (PLUS Programme), and DARE (Disability Support). All students are paid for their work with the AAP.

Ambassadors participate in structured Advisory Groups, running student-led meetings where they set their own agenda while also responding to Access priorities. Student engagement events are designed and delivered by the Ambassadors themselves or in collaboration with Access staff.

Results: an open, honest and frank forum for engagement with the Access student voice and reciprocal interaction with staff. It has fostered safe and trusted relationships, leading to collaboration and co-created programmes, and the remodelling of existing services. University wide the student voice has fed into Policy (Reasonable Accommodations and Inclusive Assessment), staff forums such as CIRTL Summer School, Digital Accessibility Ally, and ENGAGE Reverse Mentoring.

Key Words: [Student Voice, engagement, inclusion, collaboration, co-creation, visibility, belonging, connection]



Enabling Belonging

Students from non-traditional backgrounds tend to be those whose voices are most marginalised in university life and university structures. Ensuring that diverse student voices are supported and elevated is not only empowering for those students but also **drives transformative change toward a more inclusive university** — one where everyone can experience a genuine sense of belonging.

The **Ambassador Programme** has strengthened visibility and created a meaningful platform for Access students to share their experiences, challenge structural barriers, and **influence positive change**. Through collaboration and co-creation with the Access Service, as well as through student-led social engagement initiatives, Access Ambassadors are **actively building stronger connections and enhancing the sense of belonging for all their peers**.



Video Links | Graphics



Enabling
Diverse
Student Voice
in the
University

A Case Study of the Access UCC Ambassador Programme

Authors: Cathiona N. Leane, James Wilson, Olive Byrne, Claire Doherty, Claire Edwards, Cathiona Hennessy, Tara Mac Eoin and Stephen O'Brien



Area/s of Alignment

- Research & Innovation
- Student Success
- Global Engagement
- Our Staff, Our Culture
- Our Place, Our Footprint



Additional Information

UCC Strategic Plan 2023-28

Goal 2.4, Support student success, health and wellbeing, informed by the student voice

National Access Plan 2022-2028

Goal 1.4, To incorporate the voice of priority group students in decision-making on access, participation and student success policies, programmes and initiatives



Key Impacts

Operational Impact – shaping of service delivery, redesign of the Onboarding and Welcome programme for incoming students; Ambassador led social engagement programme, co-delivery and student input at events and staff training

University wide Impact – a structured programme of engagement with Student Voice leads to **benefits for staff**:

- Agile response to 'live' student concerns
- Improved communication and service delivery
- Policy informed by the student voice

And students:

- Provision of a meaningful platform where student voice is heard and acted upon
- Skills such as leadership, communication, creativity, advocacy



Case Study Synopsis

Wednesday Nights at UCC Library

Background: Through research and conversations with students and campus services, we identified a gap in social opportunities for individuals who were not involved in societies and who preferred alternatives to pub-based entertainment.

Aim: To create inclusive, low-pressure opportunities for students to meet new people, form friendships, and enjoy engaging activities in a relaxed environment.

Method: We established a weekly, same-time, same-place event each Wednesday night in UCC Library. Students were offered free tea, coffee, and hot chocolate, creating a warm and welcoming atmosphere. Events included both internal and external programming, and members of the public were also welcomed. This approach increased attendance, encouraged diverse interactions, and gave the wider community an opportunity to engage with UCC Library.

Results: A consistent group of attendees formed over the weeks, allowing participants to get to know one another and build connections. Students regularly checked the library the events calendar to see what was planned each Wednesday. Opening the events to the public also provided valuable exposure to UCC Library and promoted positive community engagement.

Key Words: Alternative Entertainment – Student Inclusion & Community Engagement



Area/s of Alignment

- Research & Innovation
- Student Success
- Global Engagement
- Our Staff, Our Culture
- Our Place, Our Footprint



Additional Information

Students became aware of library services, spaces, and supports as a result of attending.



Enabling Belonging

The events supported the theme of belonging by creating a welcoming, inclusive space where both students and members of the public could feel at home in UCC Library. By intentionally opening the events to all and collaborating with the International Office to design activities that helped international students feel connected and comfortable, the initiative created a strong sense of community and ensured that everyone felt they had a place within the library and at UCC.



Video Links | Graphics



Wednesday Nights @ UCC Library

OCTOBER	NOVEMBER
Wednesday 1st Movie Night	Wednesday 5th Small Things Like These Screening for Global Justice Society
Wednesday 8th Conversation Café English speaking practice evening	Wednesday 12th Witness The Quizness Quiz night with Ronan Leonard
Wednesday 15th Witness The Quizness Quiz night with Ronan Leonard	Wednesday 19th Conversation Café English speaking practice evening
Wednesday 22nd Let Me Tell You Something Literary night with Nell Korben	Wednesday 26th Let Me Tell You Something Literary night with Nell Korben
Wednesday 29th Movie Night Halloween themed & fancy dress	

All events are free and take place in between 6:30pm and 9pm in The Creative Zone. Free tea, coffee, and hot chocolate provided. Please bring your own cup! Stay up to date on our socials for times and details of each individual event.
@ucclibrary @ucclibrary



Key Impacts

Over the nine-week programme, meaningful relationships, house-shares, and many new friendships naturally developed among attendees. The initiative also strengthened collaboration between the Library, student societies, and campus support services. In addition, we welcomed alumni back to participate in events, and their overwhelmingly positive feedback highlighted the value and impact of the programme on both current and former UCC students.



Case Study Synopsis

Background:

•The UCC Library Internship Programme, as part of our Students as Partners framework, was established to create meaningful opportunities for students to contribute to library projects while gaining professional workplace experience. It supports the Library's strategic commitment to partnership with students and to ensuring services are informed by the student voice.

Aim:

• To embed student partnership within library development work while building students' skills, confidence, and employability through participation in real projects that influence services and spaces.

Method:

• Students are recruited through a competitive process and undertake paid internships working alongside library staff on defined projects. Interns contribute to research, service development, analysis, and user engagement activities across multiple areas of library work.

Results:

• The programme has supported over 20 interns across multiple project phases and attracted 389 applications in the most recent cycle. Interns have contributed to initiatives including LibQual survey analysis, service design, the Reading List Service, and Quality Review activities, strengthening the evidence base for decision-making.

Key Words: Student Success . Employability
Co-creation



Enabling Belonging

Students as Collaborators: Enables students to engage with Library as partners rather than solely as service users.
Real Project Contributions: Interns work alongside library staff contributing ideas, research, and lived student experience to projects that shape library services & spaces.
Skills & Confidence: Participation builds professional skills, confidence and project experience.
Belonging & Ownership: Students develop stronger sense of ownership in shaping their learning environment.



Video Links | Graphics

UCC Library Interns present on their internship work to all library staff at the end of their Internship experience. James Murray, Photographic Collections Intern, Cohort 2, presents on his internship work which focused on decolonising the Library's photographic collections.



Areas of Alignment

- Research & Innovation
- Student Success
- Global Engagement
- Our Staff, Our Culture
- Our Place, Our Footprint



Additional Information

Students complete 120 hours as part of their paid internship.
Library offers internships in during Semester 2 & over the summer.
Internships are advertised through Careers Connect.



Key Impacts

- High student demand:389 applications received for the most recent internship cycle.
- Student partnership embedded:Over 20 interns have contributed across four cohorts of the programme.
- Evidence-based service development:Intern work has supported major initiatives including stakeholder feedback analysis, service design, website redesign and quality review processes.
- Enhanced student skills and employability:Interns gain practical experience in research, analysis, and project work.
- Stronger student-library relationships:Interns act as ambassadors, strengthening dialogue between students and the Library.

Dr Avril Hutch
Annette Feeney
EDI Unit Team

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Unit
Deputy President and Registrar



Case Study Synopsis

Background: UCC students, staff and visitors frequently remarked in consultations, events and feedback to the university that the all-male portraiture in the Aula Maxima was not reflective of the diversity of the UCC community. Accenture's Women on Walls is a campaign that seeks to make women leaders visible through a series of portraits, creating a lasting cultural legacy for Ireland. In 2025, UCC became the fourth chapter of the Women on Walls campaign.

Aim: To diversify painted portraiture in the Aula Maxima, UCC to better reflect the UCC community.

Method: An open call for inspiring women subjects issued to the public in June 2024. Over 600 nominations were received. A selection panel reviewed and selected 11 subjects in October 2024. An open call to artists followed and four artists were selected in February 2025. The portraits were researched and painted from April-September 2025. The portraits were installed in UCC's Aula Maxima in November 2025 and unveiled to the public with a high-profile launch event.

Results: Four new portraits featuring 11 subjects were unveiled in the Aula in November 2025. This includes three individual new portraits and one group portrait with eight subjects.

Key words: Representation, equality, diversity, portrait, #womenonwalls



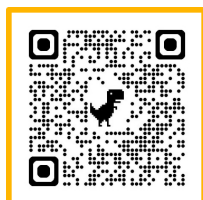
Area/s of Alignment

- Research & Innovation
- Student Success
- Global Engagement
- Our Staff, Our Culture
- Our Place, Our Footprint



Additional Information

Website:
[Accenture's Women on Walls | University College Cork](#)



Enabling Belonging

The portrait subjects and artists selected for this historic commission were representative of a diverse UCC community and wider Irish society. They include:

- ★ **Julianne Guinee** - group portrait of:
 - **Brigid Carmody**, Coordinator of Cork Traveller Women's Network, a grass-roots community organisation that works for Traveller rights, leadership, culture and heritage.
 - **Mary Crilly**, feminist activist and founding member and CEO of the Sexual Violence Centre Cork
 - **Dr. Myra Cullinane**, medical doctor, barrister and Senior Dublin District coroner who held the Stardust inquests.
 - **Dr. Evelyn Grant**, musician, broadcaster, educator, arts advocate, social entrepreneur and co-founder of the Cork Pops Orchestra.
 - **Dr. Naomi Masheti**, psychologist, three-time UCC graduate and Programme Director of the Cork Migrant Centre.
 - **Dr. Patricia Sheahan**, consultant palliative care physician and head of palliative care at University Hospital Kerry.
 - **Caitríona Twomey**, volunteer co-ordinator of Cork Penny Dinners, a charity that offers food and support to anyone in need.
 - **Dola Twomey**, therapist/activist at the Sexual Violence Centre Cork.
- ★ **Gerry Davis** - individual portrait of **Edna O'Brien** (1930–2024), novelist, memoirist, playwright and poet.
- ★ **Vanessa Jones** - individual portrait of **Honora "Nano" Nagle** (1718–1784), pioneering educator and founder of the Presentation Sisters.
- ★ **Vera Klute** - individual portrait of **Joanne O'Riordan**, sports journalist, disability activist and motivational speaker.



Video Links | Graphics

[Women on Walls at UCC Video:](https://youtu.be/NeV-6_dl7Uert)
https://youtu.be/NeV-6_dl7Uert



Photo: Women on Walls Portrait Subjects and Artists pictured in the Aula Maxima at the Women on Walls unveiling in November 2025.
Image Credit: Shane O'Neill.



Key Impacts

- ★ Enhanced visibility of women trailblazers to inspire current and future generations of students, staff and visitors.
- ★ Positive reputational impact for UCC.
- ★ Enhanced built environment with curatorship of portrait wall.
- ★ Three additional portraits of women have subsequently been unveiled in the Atrium, North Wing and in the Hub – domino effect.
- ★ Positive engagement for portrait subjects and artists.
- ★ External coverage by media/ documentary coverage.
- ★ Enhanced UCC visitor experience and tours.



Case Study Synopsis

Background:

UCC's approach to race equality is informed by key national and sectoral developments:

- National Action Plan Against Racism (2023).
- HEA Anti-Racism Principles: Signed by the UCC President in 2023.
- UCC Race Equality Network (established 2023).

Aim:

The Race Equality Action Plan (REAP) 2026–2028 builds on national and institutional developments aimed at addressing race inequality within higher education institutions (HEIs) and is part of a broader commitment to fostering an inclusive and equitable environments for all staff and students, particularly those from minority ethnic backgrounds, including Irish Travellers.

Method:

Led by a Race Equality Working Group, which included representation from across academic, professional services, and student communities, the development of REAP, 2026–2028, was informed by a robust, inclusive, and multi-layered consultation and review process, designed to capture the perspectives of staff, students, and external stakeholders.

Results:

UCC's REAP, 2026–2028, sets out a vision for a university where every student and staff member feels seen, respected, and supported — a community where diversity is not only recognised but celebrated as a source of strength.

Key Words: Race Equality Inclusion Equity Traveller Ethnicity Anti-Racism Action Plan Unity Respect Support Celebrate

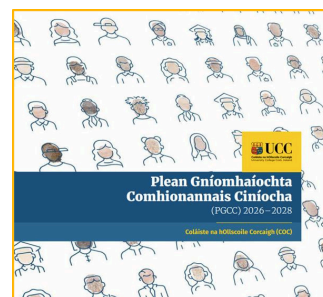


Enabling Belonging

Guided by the “Belonging at UCC: EDI Framework”, the Plan focuses on fostering inclusion through five interrelated pillars: Foundation, Culture, Success, Growth, and Engagement. This document is both an action plan and an invitation. It asks every member of the UCC community to contribute to a collective transformation, to ensure that race equality is embedded not only in our policies and systems and a zero-tolerance approach to racism, but in our daily practices, our classrooms and our culture.



Video Links | Graphics



Area/s of Alignment

- Research & Innovation
- Student Success
- Global Engagement
- Our Staff, Our Culture
- Our Place, Our Footprint



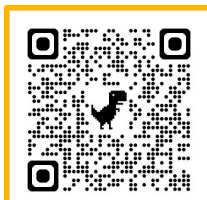
Additional Information

Report website:

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/edi/reap/>

Race Equality Network:

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/edi/raceequality/>



Key Impacts

- Embed race equality and anti-racism into UCC's strategic plan and senior leadership responsibilities.
- Create a culture of belonging to ensure that every member of our community is accepted, respected, and empowered to participate fully in university life.
- Address barriers to progression and creating tailored supports for staff and students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.
- Strengthen UCC's capacity to understand, research, and address the complex ways race and ethnicity shape experience within higher education.
- Strengthen partnerships — within UCC and with external communities — to advance race equality locally, nationally, and globally through collaboration.



Case Study Synopsis

Background: Our School updated its Lone-Working Policy in April 2025, introducing a formal online approval system, updating training and onboarding materials. However, uptake of the new system remained low, and reports of lone working without permission highlighted the need to review the new system.

Aim: To support lone workers by improving policy clarity, visibility, and accessibility; incorporating user feedback; increasing engagement with the approval system; and embedding a culture of continuous improvement.

Method: Consult users through the Safety Committee, EMC and Assembly. Gather feedback on barriers & encourage open dialogue. Enhance guidance documents, processes and integrate into staff and student induction. Create a series of fun posters for awareness campaign across corridors and noticeboards. Enhance accessibility using QR codes in all rooms and entrances. Develop an FAQ sheet. Send periodic reminder emails. Ask for and review feedback and process on ongoing basis via Safety Committee.

Results: Lone-working applications increased 4-fold following the redesign and communication campaign. Users had greater clarity, confidence and understanding of the policy and process. Line managers reported easier oversight and fewer informal follow-ups. QR code monitoring indicated regular use.

User feedback highlighted the need for a more connected lone-worker monitoring system, the School will champion this proposal at University level

Key Words: Change management; Health & Safety Management; User Experience; Belonging



Enabling Belonging

By making the lone-working safety procedures more visible, fun, easily accessible, and inclusive of all lab workers through posters, QR codes, a transparent permission system, with a commitment to continuous improvement, we foster a culture where everyone feels safe, supported, and connected – reinforcing a strong sense of ownership, belonging and connection



Video Links | Graphics



Home Alone in the lab again?

Register HERE

Call security at ext 3111 if you need assistance or just a regular checkup 021 4903111

School of Microbiology Working Alone and related Policy documents

For an overview of the Lone Worker feature of a mobile app such as SafeZone please Scan this QR code. This App is in use in Trinity, DCU, University of Galway and many other universities internationally.



Area/s of Alignment

- Research & Innovation
- Student Success
- Global Engagement
- Our Staff, Our Culture
- Our Place, Our Footprint



Additional Information

Next steps: We're advocating for the adoption of a University-wide system for lone worker safety such as the SafeZone App or similar. This aligns with UCC's commitment to wellbeing & belonging through a more connected campus.



Key Impacts

- Increased understanding of user perception and engagement in change management
- Strengthened sense of belonging through accessible communication and approachable visual design
- Reduced fear, uncertainty and isolation associated with lone working
- Enhanced collaboration between staff, students and management, reinforcing UCC's inclusive and engaged university ethos
- Continuous improvement supported through engagement with user feedback, and a shared responsibility to find new and better ways of doing things, while aligning with school and institutional safety priorities.



Case Study Synopsis

Background: The Library's group study rooms are in consistently high demand, supporting collaborative learning and project-based work. Students regularly utilise the in-room display screens to share digital content by connecting personal devices. Sustained and intensive use of this infrastructure resulted in increasing wear and tear, leading to a growing volume of Library IT support requests related to connectivity issues. This disruption negatively affected the student experience while placing additional operational strain on Library IT resources. In the most critical scenario, failure of the single high-definition multimedia interface [HDMI] cable - installed behind walls and beneath flooring - presented significant risk. Replacement would require invasive works, incurring considerable cost, downtime, and potential service interruption.

Aim: Upgrade the rooms by implementing a more robust, reliable, easy to use, and easy to fix set-up for students wishing to connect their laptops to the TVs.

Method: Two HDMI cables now run behind the wall with one acting as a back-up. Further, a two-sided HDMI connector plate is used to protect the HDMI cable from damage as only a separate, easily replaceable HDMI cable connected via the topside is exposed to wear and tear.

Results: Reports of issues relating to the TVs have reduced by approximately 75% to date. There have been no instances of damage to the HDMI cable running behind the walls and under the floors. Where issues have arisen, the problem is easier to identify and the solution is faster to implement.

Key Words: redundancy; reliability; security; cost-effectiveness; simplicity; durability

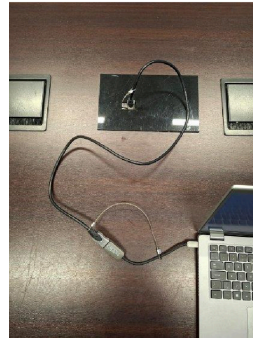
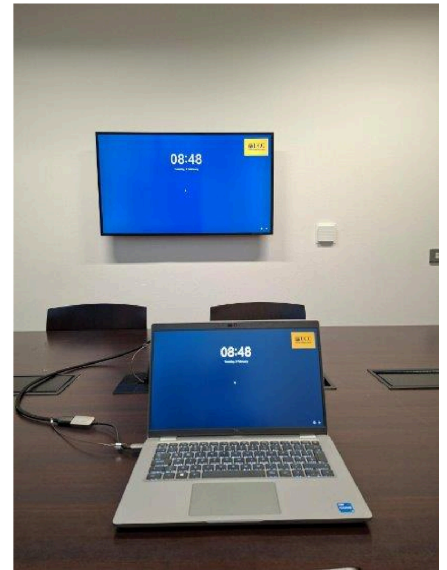


Enabling Belonging

Providing reliable display technology ensures that students can collaborate without sacrificing the screen-sharing functionality typically associated with online platforms. This enables them to select in-person engagement as a first choice, rather than defaulting to remote meetings due to technological constraints. By upgrading the group study rooms, the Library strengthens student confidence in the physical learning environment, removing technical friction and reinforcing the value of shared academic space. The result is more sustained, meaningful peer interaction, fostering connection, community, and a richer experience of university life, while mitigating the potentially isolating effects of remote collaboration.



Video Links | Graphics



Area/s of Alignment

- Research & Innovation
- Student Success
- Global Engagement
- Our Staff, Our Culture
- Our Place, Our Footprint



Key Impacts

First and foremost, TVs in the study rooms are much more reliable, giving students peace of mind that they can choose to meet face-to-face without the risk of technical issues disrupting their work.

Time has been freed up for Library IT staff to work on other tasks and projects.

The new group study room set-up is less expensive to implement as well as being more durable, flexible, and efficient to use.

Technical issues arise far less often and are easier and faster to fix than in the past. In addition, replacement parts are easier to source and less expensive than was the previously the case.



Additional Information

Another improvement is the provision of HDMI-to-Universal Serial Bus [USB] adapter to give students more connector options and thus more flexibility. In addition, the use of the TV's auto-on feature to automatically turn it on when a laptop is connected to it makes the set-up more streamlined and easier to use.



Case Study Synopsis

Background: There are currently 25 School Managers in UCC (representing almost all the Schools and disciplines across the four Colleges) with responsibility for academic, research, operational, financial and resource management within our Schools.

Aim: The 2023 Institutional Review of UCC identified School Managers as a staff group that would benefit from enhanced opportunities to connect and engage in peer learning for their career development. The Community of Practice model enables the sharing of good practice among colleagues with similar functional expertise who work in different units.

Method: Since coming together in December 2023, the CoP has established various channels for communication and cooperation, including regular meetings, information sessions and a themed Teams channel to communicate, support and seek advice. We meet once a month online during term time, where we exchange information, catch up, welcome new managers and get to know each other.

Results: We have invited speakers to give talks on useful topics and process changes at UCC with Q&A at the end: useful sessions have involved CIM Module and Programmes experts, and members of the IT Steering Group.

We are currently synergising with UCC's Focus Team continuous improvement group and the IT Steering Group on improving processes for undergraduate student change requests e.g. module changes, leaves of absence, exemption requests, and other similar changes.

Key Words: Community, Continuous Improvement, Communication



Enabling Belonging

One of the greatest benefits of the Community of Practice is that friendships have formed among School Managers and networks have been built, leading to informal connections. The CoP promotes a sense of inclusion and belonging despite its members being based in different units across the university, combatting isolation and enhancing peer support.



Video Links | Graphics



Area/s of Alignment

- Research & Innovation
- Student Success
- Global Engagement
- Our Staff, Our Culture
- Our Place, Our Footprint



Key Impacts

Identifying and sharing Good Practice is a cornerstone of UCC's enhancement culture. The CoP enables us to be more efficient and effective, and to actively contribute to UCC's continuous improvement journey.



Additional Information

The School Managers' Community of Practice has become a model for other CoPs in other professional services areas at UCC such as Work Integrated Learning

Future developments: increasing the role of the CoP in consultation regarding UCC policy; creating a higher profile for School Managers to have inputs into processes and procedures and change improvement across UCC.



Case Study Synopsis

Background: Sexual Violence in third level has been directly addressed since 2016 with the introduction of consent classes in HEIs. Consent education has been a part of UCC orientation since 2021, and UCC adheres to the National Consent Framework which aims to make our campuses safer places by targeting sexual violence and harassment. Safe and Sound was a year long campaign highlighting healthy relationships, support services, and reporting pathways.

Aim: To target students and staff beyond orientation to ensure that everyone knows where to report and receive support. By ensuring that consent and ending sexual violence are seen not just as an individual's concern, but a societal issue for all of us to address, we can work towards ending this abuse so that all members of the UCC are safe to complete their studies and be part of the UCC community in all aspects.

Method: The Safe and Sound project produced posters, leaflets, social media content, digital screens, and booklets such as Life After Sexual Violence, to support survivors in their healing journey. Themed weeks, such as Healing Week, were also held to support survivors after the initial incident stage.

Results: High levels of engagement with information stalls, social media content, printed material on sexual and domestic violence, and increased visibility of UCC's zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence, as well as increased visibility for internal and external reporting pathways and supports. Over 150 Rapid HIV tests were also conducted.

Key words: safety, equality, intersectionality, consent



Enabling Belonging

Sexual violence rarely happens without other forms of abuse present. Some forms of abuse such as religious abuse, post separation abuse, or Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) are often missing from consent education, leaving those who experience it without support. Since the introduction of the Criminal Justice Act 2023, which addresses stalking, understanding stalking as a form of sexual violence needs to form part of awareness campaigns in order to reach survivors and perpetrators.

To address these gaps, Safe and Sound produced this flyer, which has been well-received across campus by staff and students. The flyer was produced in consultation with faith-based student societies, the Chaplaincy, UCC Student Union, Campus Watch, and the Cork Sexual Violence Centre, and through interactions at stalls where visitors shared their experiences and observations of patterns of abuse. Understanding the full spectrum of abuse through an intersectional societal and cultural lens means creating safety, support, and belonging for all survivors.



Graphics



Types of Domestic Violence

There are many types of abuse but one thing is true - it doesn't matter if the abuse happens online or in person - **it is never the victims' fault.** There is help and support available to you day or night. We will listen to you, and we will support you, no matter who you are.

Healthy relationships feel safe, sound, supportive, and respectful, where each person is free to be authentically themselves. Making another person live in fear is not healthy behaviour. If you are concerned that your behaviour is harmful, there are supports for you too.

Domestic violence is illegal in Ireland, and victims can apply for safety, protection, or barring orders if they go to court. Court accompaniment is free and available through OSS Cork, Women's Aid, and Men's Aid. Victims can also apply for free legal aid.

Victims of stalking can also receive civil protection orders.

Helpful websites:

- safeireland.ie
- womensaid.ie
- mensaid.ie
- ossia.ie
- moveireland.ie
- taoitoyou.ie
- hotline.ie
- sexualviolence.ie

The National Sexual Violence Helpline can talk you through your options: 1800 77 88 88.

If you need immediate assistance, call 999.

UCC ESVM Hub

UCC SAFE AND SOUND
ENDING SEXUAL VIOLENCE
CREATING A CULTURE OF RESPECT

Picture: SafeandSoundTypesofDomesticViolence flyer.



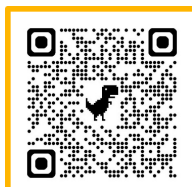
Area/s of Alignment

- Research & Innovation
- Student Success
- Global Engagement
- Our Staff, Our Culture
- Our Place, Our Footprint



Additional Information

Website:
<https://www.ucc.ie/en/edi/esvh-hub/>
Instagram:
https://www.instagram.com/ucc_safeandsound/



Key Impacts

- ★ Enhanced visibility of the different forms of relationship and sexual violence, empowering current and future generations of students, staff and visitors.
- ★ Positive reputational impact for UCC.
- ★ Increased campus activities and information points.
- ★ Increased engagement with internal and external stakeholders.
- ★ Inclusion of 'hidden' abuse to expand understanding
- ★ Inclusion of marginalised populations.
- ★ Enhanced transparency of UCC's approach to ending sexual violence.

Researchers at the (Pure) Heart of System Implementation

13

Julie O'Donoghue
Ciara Russell
MarthaPhelan

Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation



Case Study Synopsis

Background: UCC recently completed Phase 1 implementation of a new research information system, **Pure**, fulfilling a strategic commitment to *Deliver a Digital Enablement programme* to leverage better data and infrastructure across the research lifecycle. Researchers gained access to their profiles in November 2025, followed by the public launch of the portal on December 1st. The rollout marked the culmination of over 2 years of work, including comprehensive vendor evaluation and extensive consultation with the research community.

Aim: To implement a new Research Information System in UCC that showcases the research activity and achievements of our researchers to collaborators, prospective students, and external audiences. As primary users of the platform, the involvement of researchers from inception to rollout was crucial, ensuring that they were aware of changes and understood the many benefits of active engagement. Collaboration with colleagues from OVPRI, IT Services, OVPLT, OVPGE, HR, OCLA & Finance, helped to ensure successful system implementation and adoption.

Method: A comprehensive change management strategy based on PROSCI methodology was implemented to support researchers in adapting to new ways of working. For go-live, this included:

- Online all-staff training sessions.
- Weekly online drop-in support clinics.
- In-person info desks located in prominent campus locations.
- 1:1 sessions with the project team for personalised support.
- Support Portal with detailed user guides.
- Emails with tips and support information.
- Key stakeholder engagement, including ULT RISI Committee, PI Forum, ACRIC, College Research & Innovation Committees.
- A network of Pure Champions to advocate for the system.

Results:

Engagement with the system has been positive across all areas and full adoption of Pure is anticipated within the first year.

- ❖ 1785 researchers provided with a Pure profile.
- ❖ 60% users logged into their profile within first 3 months.
- ❖ Positive feedback on system design, usability & functionality.



Area/s of Alignment

- Research & Innovation
- Our Place, Our Footprint



Additional Information

Explore UCC's research achievements on the public Researcher Portal (QR code). An iterative approach will be adopted to improving the system based on feedback from researchers while Phase 2 will focus on digitising the research applications and awards lifecycle process.



Enabling Belonging

The new system strengthens researchers' sense of belonging by making their work, collaborations and achievements visible to the wider academic community, and other valuable stakeholders and partners, both in UCC and beyond. This is particularly important for new joiners and Early Career Researchers as they see their research achievements presented on the same platform as more senior researchers. In line with UCC's Global Engagement Strategy, researchers can track their international collaborations using the profile network map, which also serves as a tool encouraging more meaningful global partnership.

Researchers' sense of belonging was valued from project inception, including at the design phase, with:

- Researcher Consultation Sessions (open to all).
- Researcher User Group (reps from all four College & Tyndall).
- Co-created design of research output categories.

Researcher feedback continues to be a catalyst for future system changes and improvements.



Graphics

research.ucc.ie

John O'Halloran
UCC President's Office
Chair in Ecology, School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences

External positions
Co-Chair, All-Ireland Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)
Board Member, Fota Wildlife Park
Board Member, Gluckman Gallery
Chair, Irish Academy of Environmental Strategic Advisory Board
Board Member, Lifford Park
Board Member, MIT Tender
Judging Panel Chair, Strive Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition
UCC Futures (primar)



Key Impacts

Researchers will feel empowered to utilise the system's wide array of features for their own benefit and to include & showcase their diverse research achievements and impacts in one place. In turn, their research profile will be an important asset for inclusion in grant applications, when applying to promotions schemes and helping to attract collaborative partners and students.

UCC's research and researchers will become more visible and widely publicised, enhancing UCC's global reputation as a leading research-intensive university.

Key Words: Research and Innovation, research management, impact, reputation, change management, visibility, accessibility, data

Mná@UCC: Building Belonging One Connection at a Time



The Mná@UCC Committee
Clíodhna O'Callaghan & Emma Connolly (Co-Chairs), Dr. Lee-Ann Burke (Treasurer),
Dr. Nóirín Uí Bhreithiúnaigh (Secretary), Dr. Susan Rafferty-McArdle, Dr. Maeve O'Riordan, Dr. Tara Singleton,
Sinéad Hackett, Dr. Caroline West, Dr. Marie Ryan, Dr. Fiona McDonald, Dr. Rhian Fitzgerald & Alison O'Mahony.



Mná@UCC – UCC's Women's Network

Our Mission: UCC's Women's Network will promote and support the visibility and professional development of all women in University College Cork as well as meaningfully contribute to a culture of balance, inclusion and equality into the future.

Launch: The network was launched in November 2020, by our UCC President, Professor John O'Halloran, & Emeritus Professor Áine Hyland, to support academic, research and professional services staff in the university. Mná@UCC is led by a voluntary committee of 13, many of whom are founding members, with great support from the team in EDI here in UCC. We now have 505+ members across all roles & disciplines in UCC.

Aim: We aim to support, build, inspire and engage networks and communities of women in UCC. We champion women's visibility & professional growth, and contribute to building a culture of balance, inclusion and equality for all.



Enabling Belonging

- 1. Community Building:
 - Safe, informal spaces to connect across roles & disciplines.
 - Monthly 'Caffeine & Conversation' gatherings break down institutional silo and foster strong sense of belonging through networking opportunities.
- 2. Supporting Transitions:
 - Maternity Leave Returners Lunches at a critical juncture.
 - Helping women re-integrate & feel welcomed back.
- 3. Visibility & Voice:
 - IWD events, St. Brigid events, Policy Engagement, Professional Development workshops, FemTech & Women's Health (e.g. Pelvic Floor Health), Leadership, Alumni work, Seasonal Social Events, Storytelling (Scoraíochtna Nollag).
- 4. Cross-Campus Connection: Examples being: EDI, Race Equality Staff Network UCC Book Club, FemSoc, WIBL (Students) & Staff Wellbeing & Development.



Areas of Alignment

- ✓ Research & Innovation
- ✓ Student Success
- ✓ Global Engagement
- ✓ Our Staff, Our Culture
- ✓ Our Place, Our Footprint

Key Words: Belonging, Women's Network, Inclusion, Visibility, Professional Development, Staff Wellbeing, EDI, Community Building, Networking, Supporting, Inspire & Success.

Additional Information:
Fáilte roimh chách/ All Welcome -Contact: Mná@UCC.ie



Impacts

- 505+ members** – organic growth since 2020.
- Award-winning** – Winners of **The Frank McGrath Perpetual Award for Wellbeing & Welfare (2025)**.
- Transition support** – Maternity Leave Returners Lunches filling a critical gap.
- Cultural shift** – cross-departmental networking & collaboration normalised with key visibility mission.
- Policy influence** – Pregnancy Loss Research Group (PLRG) collaboration & engagement shaping institutional policy & practice.
- National Forum** – Founding member of National **Women's Forum** – Shaping Equality Together.

Clíona O'Carroll
Tomás Mac Conmara

Cork Folklore Project / Béaloideas
Cork Folklore Project / Béaloideas



Case Study Synopsis

Background and Aim:

What does responsible, engaged cultural heritage stewardship look like? What can tradition and oral history archives contribute to humanities, health and STEM research and the 'real world'? Whose histories do we record, and for whom? And how do celebration, creativity and slow, critical engagement come together in a cultural heritage context? As a community-based centre for oral testimony, the Cork Folklore Project addresses these questions and more.

The CFP was initiated by the Department of Folklore and Ethnology, UCC, in 1996. It was developed with community partners on the city Northside as a sustainable model of cultural research in and of the locality. CFP investigates and documents the everyday of Cork in the past and present, through the work of largely non-academic researchers, generating audio interview archives for the use of all.

Method:

We listen, we archive, we record, we mentor, we collaborate, we provide access, we disseminate.

Our work is a model of slow engagement with the richness of vernacular life, through qualitative enquiry, documentation, reciprocity and social inclusion.

Results:

- A cultural heritage centre and oral interview archive, in and of the community.
- Mapping: the Cork Memory Map, the Thrift Map, the Headway Resilience Map, Cumann na nDaoine Women's Group Map
- Years of collaboration with the Cork Traveller Women's Network, Health Services Executive, Cork City Council (Healthy Cities, Play Paradigm)



- Support and mentoring of community initiatives
- Over 100 community listening events
- Exhibition: 'Catching Stories' of Infectious Disease in Ireland



Key Words:

community-based research; oral history; health; social inclusion; tradition archives; place-based research; memory mapping



Enabling Belonging

Documenting your experiences, and being listened to, is an important part of the experience of belonging. CFP has documented the lives of the people of Cork and shared experiences of migrancy, localness, lives of LGBTQ+ individuals, Travellers, people with acquired brain injury, people whose lives were affected by infectious disease, and a broad range of communities. Our community archives are open to all, from schoolchildren to pensioners, and our online Cork Memory Maps celebrate city life, urban thrift and sustainability, Traveller skills, and the contribution of a wide spectrum of people to life in Cork City and beyond.



Testimonials

It's valid, it's got amazing dedicated people pulling the culture pumps, it's cerebral, uplifting, and it's the anecdotal voice of Cork. It can be subversive.

'Irish Jack' Lyons, CFP interviewee, 2020



It's from Cork and by Cork, it's part of our recovery but it's also something that we give Cork. The fact that it's by people missing some of their faculties is not the main part of it. Everyone has stories, the injury part isn't to the fore. It's for the broader community.

Headway Acquired Brain Injury Services and Support mapping participant



Area/s of Alignment

- Research & Innovation
- Student Success
- Global Engagement
- Our Staff, Our Culture
- Our Place, Our Footprint



Additional Information

Our work has pioneered the use of Cultural Heritage methods and materials in encouraging meaningful STEM-public dialogue on infectious diseases and vaccination and on circular economy, and in promoting wellbeing.



Key Impacts

- **30 years' community presence for UCC as a trusted community partner and off-campus resource**
- 156 researchers on Community Employment and related schemes, and 30 volunteers, trained in oral history interviewing, transcription, archiving, and community engagement
- 54 UCC students co-trained with CFP researchers
- Mentoring and support of over 3,000 individuals and groups: artists, HSE, schoolchildren, community groups
- 915 ethnographic interviews on life in Cork, occupational lore, place and belonging, women's lives, migration, LGBTQ+ life, infectious disease, Traveller experiences, urban thrift and sustainability and more.
- 30 years of support for UCC staff and students in ethical documentation
- Books, radio programmes, listening events, exhibitions, digital online memory maps

Clodagh Kerr
Aileen Waterman
Ruth Mc Carthy

Career Services
School of Pharmacy




Case Study Synopsis

Work-Integrated Learning: Introduced to UCC in 2020 following on from the Thematic review of placements by the Quality Enhancement Unit.

Background: Communities of practice (CoP) refers to groups of people who share a concern or a passion for a topic, a craft, and/or a profession (Wenger 1998, 2006). A community of practice acts as a “living curriculum” that engages participants in a process of “collective learning” (Wenger 2006).

Aim: To nurture and cultivate an institution-wide approach to work-integrated learning (WIL) in UCC by empowering a Community of Practice. Currently in developmental stage, driven by across-institutional steering committee.

Method: Design a framework for WIL CoP to communicate with all staff involved in WIL university-wide. Inform staff involved in WIL activities on updates to WIL developments locally, nationally and international. Provision of digital staff resources via bespoke WIL SharePoint. Inaugural WIL CoP showcase May 2026.

- Results:**
- University-wide WIL Discovery Survey & Results (Jan 2026)
 - Guest Speaker on National WIL PhD programme.
 - Digital Resource HUB for staff.

Key Words: Work-Integrated Learning, Communities of Practice, Belonging, institutional-wide sharing of good practice



Enabling Belonging

Communities of practice in universities inspire belonging amongst staff through collaboration allowing staff, share experiences, reflect on practice, share challenges and solve problems. The WIL CoP in UCC provides a safe environment for staff to expose themselves to diverse pedagogical practices in WIL across the university and an opportunity for colleagues to recognise and develop their work.

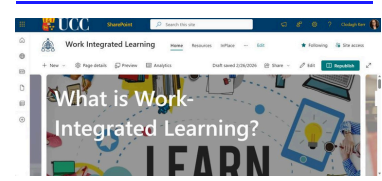


Video Links | Graphics

Join our WIL Community of Practice



[Work Integrated Learning - Home](#)




Areas of Alignment

- ✗ Research & Innovation
- ✗ Student Success
- ☐ Global Engagement
- ✗ Our Staff, Our Culture
- ☐ Our Place, Our Footprint



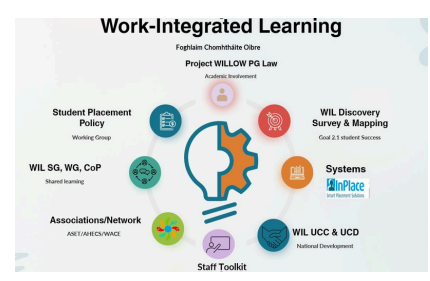
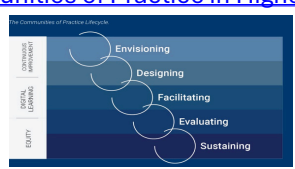
Key Impacts

- Dedicated University-wide WIL led enables connection across good practices in the university.
- Discovery of breadth and depth of WIL in UCC.
- International WIL expert presented masterclasses and clinics to UCC staff.



Additional Information

[Communities of Practice in Higher Education](#)





Case Study Synopsis

Approximately 400 Irish children and young people with complex and chronic healthcare needs are offered a week of respite in the South of France annually by a volunteer organization called Rise and Shine. Second year integrated students' nurses (n=9) went on clinical practice in April 2025 to pilot this respite week as a new placement site.

Background: Advances in medicine, nursing, pharmacology and technology has seen children with complex and chronic healthcare needs are living longer, and there is an emphasis on care closer to home or ideally at home. To meet new nursing standards for integrated and community care, more community clinical placements are needed to give students hands-on experience with this cohort of children.

Aim: To explore an immersive learning opportunity with children and young people with complex and chronic healthcare needs during a week of respite.

Method: A pilot was undertaken with nine students travelling to the South of France in April 2025.

Results: Student feedback was overwhelmingly positive with 100% strongly agreeing they had unique learning opportunities, achieved learning outcomes, felt included in their groups, and were well prepared for clinical practice.

Key Words: Clinical Practice, belonging, inclusion health, children, student nurse



Enabling Belonging

Students have an immersive experience in a group with approximately 10 children and young people, 15 carers, a group leader and a nurse. Rise and Shine fosters inclusion and belonging for every person partaking in respite week.

Despite only 9 students being afforded the opportunity, fellow student nurses and UCC students in the wider community supported fundraising efforts in the months prior to going which fostered community engagement also.



Video Links | Graphics



Area/s of Alignment

Student Success



Key Impacts

Students appreciated the uniquely immersive learning experience and the inclusivity of the placement. Despite the placement only being a week, the sense of belonging within the groups and the importance of community engagement was distinctive. This placement offered students a chance to work with a wide variety of volunteer personal across Ireland, as only 10 doctors and 1 nurse per group travels, thereby affording students a rare opportunity to learn from non-healthcare professions.

Due to the positive experience from the students in the pilot, 23 current second years have applied for this placement and eight have been offered clinical practice placement.



Additional Information

Quotes from students

'If you get the chance, take it and go'

'I went on five holidays last year and this was by far my favourite'

'I loved every second I was there, the children, the carers, it's been the best experience I've ever had'



Case Study Synopsis

Background:

UCC Players is a drama group developed for staff, retired staff and alumni at University College Cork. The group provides an inclusive, open, welcoming space where staff can explore creativity, build confidence and form meaningful social connections. Weekly table reads, rehearsals and informal gatherings encourage participation from members of all experience levels, reflecting the group's ethos that "drama is for everyone". The group also has outings to theatre productions in the county promoting social interactions. The group has members across numerous departments within the University, and includes age ranges of newly qualified graduate's in their 20's to retired colleagues.

Aim:

To foster a strong sense of belonging across UCC by establishing a collaborative, supportive and welcoming community for staff through theatre-making and shared creative activity.

Method:

UCC Players group meet weekly during term for table reads, to participate in productions and social connection. Members can become involved in acting, directing, stagecraft, costumes, props and technical theatre. The group issues open audition calls and attends staff engagement events to welcome new members. Productions are staged in campus venues such as the Aula Maxima, Devere Hall, the Staff Common Room, and in city venues including Cork Arts Theatre.

Key Words: Belonging; Creative Community; Staff Culture; Wellbeing; Theatre; Collaboration; Inclusion



Enabling Belonging

This case study aligns primarily with UCC's strategic pillar 'Our Staff, Our Culture,' with additional alignment to 'Our Place, Our Footprint' through contributions to UCC's cultural life and engagement with the wider Cork arts community.



Video Links | Graphics



The Professor on the Road to Death



Learn more:



Area/s of Alignment

- Research & Innovation
- Student Success
- Global Engagement
- Our Staff, Our Culture
- Our Place, Our Footprint



Additional Information



Key Impacts

Recent productions reflect strong collaboration, creativity and community engagement. These include the recent original immersive production 'The Professor on the Road to Death' (2026), 'Aristocrats' (2024), 'The Wisdom of Eve' (2023), 'Let's Go to the Movies' (2023) and 'Educating Rita' (2022). These productions have strengthened cross-unit relationships, increased visibility for staff-led cultural initiatives and enhanced staff wellbeing through social connection and creative expression.

19 Fostering *belonging* to advance measurement in early childhood research

Dimity Dutch, Moira Duffy, Eibhlín Looney, and Karen Matvienko-Sikar
School of Public Health, College of Medicine and Health, University College Cork



Case Study Synopsis

Background: Caregivers are central to conducting early childhood research, providing health behaviour information about themselves and their child(ren). However, current approaches for measuring infant diet and weight-related outcomes don't reflect caregivers lived experience.

Aim: To explore caregivers' perspectives and understanding of supporting and measuring healthy infant feeding and growth through a Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) panel.

Method: The PPI panel is comprised of 8 mothers of infants <1 year old. Twelve meetings were held online and in-person at a local community venue in 2025. Caregivers provided valuable perspectives on whether current measurement tools are relevant and fit-for-purpose. Caregivers verbalised their thought process as they completed example questionnaires, recalls, and diaries. Additionally, caregivers offered guidance on trial recruitment and data collection processes for an intervention to support infant feeding and growth.

Results:






- Caregivers highlighted difficulties interpreting and completing tools, expressing the need for tools to better reflect varied caregiving contexts.
- Caregivers emphasised the importance of accessible, engaging, and inclusive intervention materials to support participation.
- Participants reported feeling valued and respected throughout the process, noting that their diverse perspectives were welcomed.

Key Words:

Public and Patient Involvement (PPI), early childhood research, data collection methods, trial methodology



Enabling Belonging

-  Accessible location: community venue, free parking
-  Baby-friendly venue: infant feeding friendly, toys
-  Flexible meetings: infants welcome, in-person & online
-  Acknowledgement: food/coffee, vouchers
-  Safety and inclusivity: non-judgmental, conversational



Video Links | Graphics

On 16th October 2025, as part of the National PPI Festival, the SCOPE Team hosted a 'Lunch and Learn' event to celebrate their dedicated PPI group of mothers.

The event provided an opportunity to both thank the mothers for their invaluable input to the SCOPE Project and gather their reflections on their experiences as PPI contributors.



Area/s of Alignment

- ✓ Research & Innovation
- Student Success
- Global Engagement
- Our Staff, Our Culture
- Our Place, Our Footprint



Key Impacts

Creating inclusive and supportive research environments

- Fostered a safe, affirming environment that enabled authentic caregiver engagement

Strengthening research measurement and methods

- Caregiver insights to enhance the clarity, contextual relevance and appropriateness of outcome measurement

Enhancing research quality and impact

- Embedded PPI across multiple project phases
- Improve the design and impact of early childhood research by centering caregiver lived experience



Additional Information

- The SCOPE Project is funded by the Health Research Board [HRB EIA-2022-005]
- The 'Lunch and Learn' event was funded by UCC PPI Festival Funding from PPI Ignite

 <https://eiascope.com>

 ddutch@ucc.ie



SCOPE
Standardised measurement for
Childhood Obesity Prevention





Case Study Synopsis

Background:

University student mental ill health, mental distress and low well-being are serious concerns nationally and internationally, with significant costs to students, institutions and society. As the curriculum is the only guaranteed point of contact between a university and its students, curricular approaches to wellbeing are necessary as part of a continuum of supports.

Aim:

Reduce and/or prevent mental distress and promote wellbeing and academic success amongst UCC students by further developing, delivering and evaluating curricular/co-curricular approaches to wellbeing for UCC students, Everyday Matters: Healthy Habits for University Life® and Jumpstart Your Success: Everyday Matters.

Method:

In 2025-2026, first year students on selected UCC programmes had an opportunity to 'learn to be well' so they can 'be well to learn'. Jumpstart Your Success: Everyday Matters, a bespoke self-paced online unit [approximately one lecture period of time] was made available to nominated programmes on students' Canvas dashboard and signposted by academic staff within identified modules.

Results:

The target for 2025-2026 was two first-year UG programmes per College. Twenty-five programmes participated. Seventy-nine percent of students (n=93) agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend Jumpstart Your Success: Everyday Matters to other students.

Key Words: Curriculum, transition, first-year, wellbeing



Enabling Belonging

Student qualitative feedback speaks to the positive impact on their sense of belonging:

“As a mature student, I felt overwhelmed. This was my go-to, to realise I am ok. It made me feel seen in this very daunting time of starting university.”

“Made you realise everyone experiences tough weeks and you're not alone.”

“The emphasis on how it's okay to feel nervous or uneasy when initially settling into college life and how it is a very normal thing.”

“It gave me the chance to really think about my transition to college life and also provided supports for how to achieve success in college.”



Jumpstart Your Success: Everyday Matters



Area/s of Alignment

- Research & Innovation
- Student Success
- Global Engagement
- Our Staff, Our Culture
- Our Place, Our Footprint



Additional Information

This three-year Wellbeing and the Curriculum project (2025 – 2028) is generously supported by UCC's Higher Education Authority Mental Health funding. For further information, please contact Eithne at e.hunt@ucc.ie



Key Impacts

This innovative Wellbeing and the Curriculum project advances UCC's strategic goals on student success and wellbeing and positions UCC at the fore of activity in this field, nationally and internationally.

A multi-stakeholder expert advisory group comprising students and representatives from academic and professional services units, policy advisors from Department of Health and the Higher Education Authority will strengthen the reach and impact of this project internally and externally. By 2027-2028, Jumpstart your Success: Everyday Matters will be embedded in 100% of first year programmes across UCC.

A credit-bearing version of Everyday Matters: Healthy Habits for University Life® will be available to PGR students.



Case Study Synopsis

Background:

- The implementation of Pure, UCC's new Current Research Information System (CRIS), necessitated a robust connection to Cork Open Research Archive (CORA), the university's institutional repository.
- This integration was driven by the core belief that an inclusive academic community thrives when knowledge is shared as a global resource.

Aim:

- To create a **seamless deposit process between CRIS (Pure) and repository (CORA)**, making UCC's research globally discoverable and permanently integrated into the university's research record.

Method:

- The Library and Research Office collaborated on a complex metadata mapping process to **align Pure with CORA**.
- This technical integration established a seamless data flow, simplifying the deposit process.

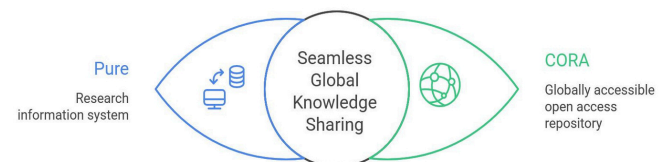
Results:

- A unified Pure-to-CORA gateway was established, simplifying the deposit process and automating research sharing.
- This seamless integration ensures UCC research outputs are **globally discoverable**, citable, and permanently preserved.
- **Keywords:** Collaboration; Knowledge for all; Knowledge sharing; Accessibility; Equity; Open Access; Research community

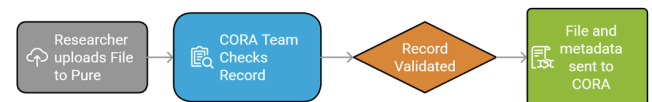


Enabling Belonging

- At the heart of a truly inclusive academic community is the belief that knowledge belongs to everyone. By integrating **Pure** with **CORA**, our Library team has built a seamless gateway that transforms local research into a globally accessible resource.
- The Pure-to-CORA integration simplifies the deposit process.
- Together, Pure and CORA ensure **every researcher's output is discoverable, citable**, and permanently integrated into the **university's institutional memory**.
- UCC's knowledge is accessible globally and belongs to everyone.



Pure to CORA Integration Workflow



Area/s of Alignment

- Research & Innovation
- Student Success
- Global Engagement
- Our Staff, Our Culture
- Our Place, Our Footprint



Technical Information

- We implemented RESTful and SWORD based **API integrations** between Pure and CORA to enable automated harvesting and synchronisation of research outputs.
- A defined **metadata crosswalk** maps Pure's data model to CORA's Dublin Core schema. Field normalisation and authority control ensure semantic consistency, reduce duplication, and support Open Access compliance and reporting.



Key Impacts

- Promotion of **equity** and **accessibility** by upholding the belief that **knowledge belongs to everyone**, thereby strengthening a truly inclusive academic community.
- Demonstrated a successful **cross-departmental collaboration** between the Library and the Research Office, aligning technical infrastructure with the university's core mission of Open Access.
- Using a series of iterative scripts across various data sources (CORA, Scopus, Open Alex etc.) we preloaded highly enriched publication metadata into Pure before launching, resulting in **b** available from day one. This ensures Pure and CORA are key enablers in UCC's Goals.



Case Study Synopsis

Background:

- Inclusive UCC began a 'student interns' project in 2022 which hired students as interns to improve the accessibility Canvas courses
- In 2025, the CDE was asked to adopt the project and on examination, it was restructured in line with our values as the **'Student Partners for Enhancing Accessibility and Digital Education' (SPEADE)** project.

Aim:

- The aim of this project was to enhance as many Canvas courses and digital learning resources as possible to make them as accessible as possible

Method:

- The project has 2 main thrusts;
 - Student Partners; we advertise the role to students, conduct interviews, and begin training our students on how to improve the accessibility and inclusivity of our digital resources
 - Academic Staff; We explain the project, and communicate our invitation to academic staff through a number of formats, including Teaching and Learning officers and councils, Heads of School, Direct E-mails, Blog posts and all-staff e-mails.
- Over June, July, and August, we assign each student partner to work on individual Canvas courses

Key Words: SPEADE, Accessibility, Digital Educaiton

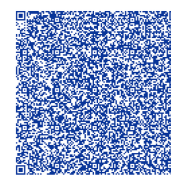
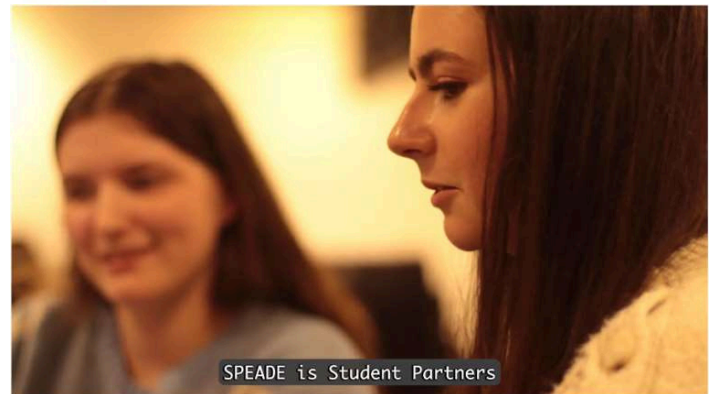


Enabling Belonging

- The essence of Universal Design for Learning is ensuring that how we conduct our teaching and learning does not exclude anybody.
- This project focuses on removing those often-invisible impediments that can function to exclude students from their own learning.
- The goal is to make our 'digital campus' as inclusive as our physical one.



Video Links | Graphics



Area/s of Alignment

- Research & Innovation
- Student Success
- Global Engagement
- Our Staff, Our Culture
- Our Place, Our Footprint



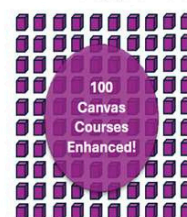
Additional Information

- This project and its success are born of a collaboration between the Access office and the Centre for Digital Education



Key Impacts

- In 2025, we successfully improved the accessibility of
 - 100 Canvas Courses
 - 59 Teaching Spaces
 - Supported more than 50 staff





Case Study Synopsis

Background:

- Increasing equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in psychology is a key strategic goal and priority for the UCC School of Applied Psychology (SOAP), for the professional body Psychological Society of Ireland, PSI (MacDhonnagáin & Stein, 2024), as well as specifically within clinical psychology training programmes in Ireland (Bramham et al, 2023; McCusker et al, 2023; Cahill et al., 2025).
- The UCC DClin Psych programme have led the way nationally on EDI initiatives to widen access in clinical psychology training in Ireland through hosting an EDI conference in UCC for Clinical Psychology Trainers and Trainees (McCusker et al., 2023); implementing recommendations to the selection process, contributing to EDI surveys of clinical psychology trainees (Bramham et al., 2023 and 2025).

Aim:

- In the context of leading EDI initiatives to increase diversity and belonging in clinical psychology training, UCC DClin Psych programme team collaborated with UCC Psychological Society to show the range of diverse pathways to becoming a clinical psychologist, increasing diversity and widening access, inclusion and belonging.

Method:

- The UCC DClin Psych team together with the UCC Psychological Society jointly facilitated an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) event on February 2025 in UCC about a range of routes to Clinical Psychology training and traditionally less represented groups in clinical psychology.
- As part of the EDI event, we invited a panel of current trainees, recently qualified psychologists who identified as having a less typical route to clinical psychology training, for example, psychology as a second career, or different pre-qualification education or experience, who had/have significant family or caring responsibilities or who represent one of the EDI categories that are less typically represented in psychology based on gender, civil or family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, membership of the Traveller community, neurodiversity, social class, health or mental health.

Results:

- A panel of six trainees, recently qualified psychologists and member of the course team who represented often excluded or less represented groups in clinical psychology training, including those who came to psychology later in life or as a second career, men, those who are comfortable talking about mental health or neurodivergence, or less traditional routes to education.
- The EDI event was attended by approximately 30 undergraduates and postgraduates. This EDI event was powerful and engaging. Feedback identified themes of belonging, diversity as seen and heard, everyone can thrive and contribute meaningfully to clinical psychology training; feeling welcomed, valued, respected, included and participate fully in university and clinical psychology life

Key Words: Belonging, EDI, Widening access, Diversity



Area/s of Alignment

- Student Success
- Our Staff, Our Culture



Enabling Belonging

Feedback from a panel members:

"As someone from the LGBTQ+ community who didn't follow the most conventional route into training, there were moments when I wondered whether my differences let me apart in a way that mattered. But ... I wanted others to see that there is no single "right" story that makes someone more suited to this profession".

"Sitting on the panel shifted something. I wasn't asking for permission to belong, I was being invited to shape the conversation. Sharing my story felt vulnerable, but also powerful. It reminded me that our varied routes and lived experiences are not detours from this profession but they are what deepen it."

"If sharing my journey helped even one person feel less alone or more certain that they belong, then the vulnerability was worth it."

Feedback from audience

"As a nontraditional student, the principle of 'to see it, is to be it' is vital, where visible representation shapes what feels possible."

"The panel reflected perspectives from individuals representing identities that are often under represented in the discipline of psychology."

"The honest and authentic reflections regarding their paths highlighted their resilience and persistence, making for a deeply inspiring and motivational evening. The event also provided opportunity for connections, still nurtured today, over a year on."

"Events like these are vital for a growing diverse student body in applied psychology. It allows for us, non-traditional students, to feel seen, heard, understood and above all else, to feel hope."

"It was a really meaningful experience for me. Hearing about the different paths people had taken into psychology created a strong sense that there is space in the field for many kinds of journeys, not just the traditional ones."

I especially valued the diversity of experiences represented and the genuine interest from attendees coming from a range of backgrounds. It made me feel hopeful about the future of psychology in Ireland and the possibility of a profession that better reflects the cultures and communities it serves. It was also really encouraging to see how many people were interested in exploring different routes and looking for that sense of connection within the field."

"a profoundly moving and inspiring EDI event. You truly showed how diversity matters in psychology. I know there will be people in the audience who will tell their own stories in the future of being inspired by attending last night's EDI event and hearing your messages of encouragement and resilience."



Key Impacts

- This EDI event has contributed to and inspired further work on diversity, inclusion and belonging in Clinical Psychology in UCC through the EDI strategy development for the UCC DClin Psych programme and in leading national EDI initiatives.

Ongoing EDI Initiatives locally in UCC and nationally in clinical psychology training programmes:

- Inclusion of EDI perspectives as key agenda item in our UCC Clinical Psychology Training Programme meetings and Programme Board.
- EDI Strategy Development, UCC DClin Psych Programme (2026);
- Commissioned EDI specific research project on neurodiversity in Clinical Psychology Training (Cahill et al., 2025)
- National survey of all current clinical psychology trainees in Ireland by the Irish Group of Clinical Psychology Trainers (2025), with a view to understanding whether interventions to increase diversity are making any difference and to consider what else could be done.
- Further EDI event scheduled for 2026 (1/ 4/ 2026). Awarded funding via CACSSS EDI Committee to further embed PPI input for those contributing their time
- Expert by Experience (EbE) Strategy development 2025-2026 to further support EDI, specifically inclusion and belonging in Clinical Psychology Training. A research project of EbE involvement experiences is currently underway (Odumegwu et al, 2026).



UCC Book Club

The UCC Book Club was created in 2020 during the Covid lockdown with the aim of connecting staff in a time of disconnection and isolation. In 2020 there were 22 members and today the club has nearly 120 members and is growing weekly.

The Club is open to all members of staff and retired staff. Meetings are held the last week of the month, an in-person and an online option are offered.

Our book selections are chosen from suggestions put forward in an annual survey and by using polls to ensure members have input to all decisions.

The Book Club is a regular presence at the President's Orientation Cafes to ensure new staff are aware and we gain many new members by Word of Mouth

We have enjoyed collaborations with the Mna Network and the School of English and Digital Humanities and are currently working on more.

To assess the impact of a social book club on colleagues' sense of belonging and inclusion in a large university where it can be difficult to make connections outside of their own unit/department, we conducted a short survey.

Members told us they felt welcome in the club and had a strong sense of belonging with other members, were comfortable attending meetings and events even if they didn't know people there and felt that being part of the Book Club enhanced their overall sense of community at work.

Key Words: [connection, community, collaboration, inclusion, network, wellbeing]



Area/s of Alignment

- Research & Innovation
- Student Success
- Global Engagement
- Our Staff, Our Culture
- Our Place, Our Footprint



Additional Information

The Book Club co-ordinates a wide variety of activities with input from our members, book related outings, social evenings including games and quiz nights, collaborations with other UCC networks and departments, author events, book swaps and monthly newsletters.

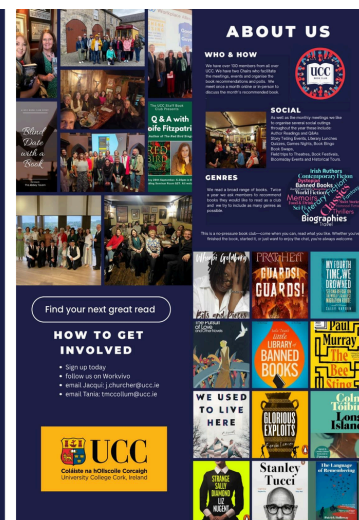


Enabling Belonging

UCC Book Club now has over one hundred members, comprised of colleagues from across the university, academic, professional, technical, research and retired staff. Members are from all grades and levels of seniority in the university, and we are equals when reading and gathering to discuss books and meeting at organised events. The club is very active in recruitment, encouraging new staff to join first and foremost as a way to meet colleagues and to feel a sense of belonging.



Video Links | Graphics



Key Impacts

- New staff finding their way make connections and feel involved.
- Strong sense of community for members
- Inclusive approach to book choice and event planning ensures members feel they have a say
- Provides social connections outside of the work environment
- Fosters connections between colleagues across college, enabling collaborations and strengthening working relationships



Case Study Synopsis

Background:

We recognise that our university comprises a diverse cohort of people with different lived experiences and needs. We want to reflect that richness in how we operate and how people feel when they study, work, and engage with us. A collection of comprehensive diversity data from all UCC staff fills a gap in the university's central data systems and reporting.

Aim:

To develop the existing Employee Self-Service (ESS) platform to enable the collection of staff data across all **nine equality grounds** (i.e., Age, Civil Status, Disability, Family Status, Gender, Membership of the Traveller Community, Religion, Race/Ethnicity, and Sexual Orientation) for the first time.

Method:

A collaborative approach between the UCC's EDI Unit and the People and Culture Department, with contributions from IT services. A wider sectoral consultation with Irish HEIs adopting the same solution, the Central Statistics Office, and EduCampus (our service provider for the Access Group People XD platform).

Results:

The **ESS Diversity Tool** was developed, tested, and approved between 2024 and 2025. It was launched on 14 January 2026, and it has since collected diversity data from more than a quarter (25%) of UCC staff. All UCC staff, regardless of contract types and grade, can use the Tool.

Key Words: EDI Data, Equality Grounds, Staff, IT Systems, People and Culture



Enabling Belonging

Accurate and comprehensive EDI Data enables **belonging** by:

- ★ Staff actively contributing to having their diversity represented by the UCC's central data systems, in data reporting, and consequently, in policy and practice.
- ★ Decision makers being enabled to identify, monitor, and address inequalities and diversity-based opportunities.
- ★ All colleagues play their part in making their workplace a better place to study and work.



Video Links | Graphics

WHO IS UCC?

Help us understand the diversity of UCC Staff

Image Credit:
VITALII VODOLAZSKYI



WHY?

This ensures a more accurate representation of the UCC staff community. It makes University work for You!

HOW?

You can now voluntarily share your diversity data via **ESS Diversity Tool**



Area/s of Alignment

- Research & Innovation
- Student Success
- Global Engagement
- Our Staff, Our Culture
- Our Place, Our Footprint



Additional Information

Read more and provide your diversity data today:

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/edi/edi-data/ess-diversity-tool>



Key Impacts

Fully anonymised staff diversity data will facilitate:

- ★ Gaining an insight into the diversity of UCC staff across as many equality grounds as possible.
- ★ Identifying areas of priority and developing tailored policies and interventions, avoiding the 'one-size-fits-all' solutions. Enabling evidence-based consideration where under-representation is evident and needs addressing.
- ★ Providing a positive working environment where everyone can contribute and thrive.
- ★ Assessing the efficacy and impact of policies and initiatives.
- ★ Meeting legal reporting obligations (e.g., Public Sector Duty, Higher Education Authority, National Disability Authority, etc.).

Linda Doran & Lisa Egan
General Services Duty Officers
Kevin O'Regan / Nicholas Parkinson

Disability Support – Access UCC
Buildings & Estates Office (B&E)
Enterprise Risk Management (ERM)



Case Study Synopsis

Background: University College Cork is committed to ensuring that students, staff and visitors can participate fully in campus life and evacuate safely during an emergency. Standard evacuation procedures may not meet everyone's needs. A structured **Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) Process** helps ensure that individuals who may require assistance are supported safely, with dignity and inclusion.

Aim: To implement a clear and consistent **UCC PEEP Process** that supports safe evacuation during emergencies, enables independent evacuation where possible through **reasonable accommodation**, provides person-centred planning where assistance is required, and promotes dignity, inclusion and belonging across the University community.

Method: The UCC PEEP Process was developed through collaboration between ERM, Disability Support, B&E, General Services Duty Officers and other University services, with consultation involving Staff Safety Representatives, Fire Marshals, staff and students. Clear guidance and training were also developed for designated PEEP Coordinators. The approach aligns with fire safety, equality and accessibility principles and supports Universal Design across the University.

Results: UCC now has a structured PEEP Process that supports voluntary and confidential disclosure, prioritises independent person-centred evacuation where possible, and provides planning where assistance is required, promoting consistent practice across the University and helping people feel safe and included.

Key Words: Belonging · Inclusion · Dignity · Safety · PEEP · Disability Inclusion · Equality · Reasonable · Accommodation · Emergency Planning



Enabling Belonging

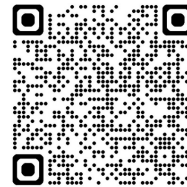
The PEEP Process supports belonging by ensuring that staff, students and visitors can participate fully in campus life, knowing their safety needs are recognised and planned for.

By embedding dignity, consultation and reasonable accommodation into emergency planning, UCC creates safer, more inclusive spaces where everyone can feel supported, confident and that they truly belong.



Video Links | Graphics

Please scan to view the UCC PEEP Guidance Document (GD 05 01) and further information.



Area/s of Alignment

- Research & Innovation
- Student Success
- Global Engagement
- Our Staff, Our Culture
- Our Place, Our Footprint



Additional Information

Our priority is to empower people to evacuate a building independently, with dignity, by reasonable accommodations, wherever possible.



Key Impacts

- Improved safety, confidence and inclusion for staff, students and visitors.
- Clear and consistent approach to emergency evacuation across UCC.
- Reduced reliance on informal or ad hoc arrangements.
- Strengthened collaboration between professional services and academic units.
- Improved alignment with legal and ethical obligations.
- Contribution to a campus culture where belonging is actively supported through practical action.



Case Study Synopsis

Background: As an undergraduate student, I was very shy and nervous to make friends, especially since I knew no one in my course. The first place that I felt secure, loud, and proud was at my uni's game society.

While there is an existing staff games club (and it's amazing), many staff member who would benefit don't join/attend, citing a lack of interest, time, or distance from the main campus. Hosting in-house events theoretically breaks down these 'barriers for entry'.

Aim: We seek to improve informal communications within the School of Mathematical Sciences, across disciplines and staff groups – including academic staff, admin staff, and research students. This should improve the experience of staff and research student experience within the school which in turn will also improve the ability of the disciplines and their members to work more closely together.

Method: We host regular sessions for tabletop games, such as board games (think *Monopoly* or *Catan*) and card games (like *Exploding Kittens* or *Uno*), drawing from a selection of games owned both by myself and brought along by other attendees, advertising and collecting feedback frequently.

Results: While still being in the early stages, having only hosted two week's worth of sessions, we have already received positive feedback and seen new faces with each session!

Key Words: board games, card games, role-playing games, inclusivity, community-building, informal communication



Enabling Belonging

Belonging comes hand-in-hand with a sense of community and having a safe space or safe group of people with which to unmask, relax, and reset your system. Well, nothing takes your mind off problems better than games, which either take all of your brain power or allow it turn off completely! Team games come with a built-in sense of camaraderie, while versus games foster a sense of friendly rivalry and are a breeding ground for inside-jokes. Most tabletop games are also highly accessible, for all ages, races, genders, and disabilities, making them most suitable for the task at hand.



Video Links | Graphics



Area/s of Alignment

- Research & Innovation
- Student Success
- Global Engagement
- Our Staff, Our Culture
- Our Place, Our Footprint



Additional Information

This format was previously used for young-career statisticians in Trinity, hosted by myself, with great success. Students cited feeling less isolated, a feeling brought on after studying during Covid or coming from abroad.



Key Impacts

Providing a space for staff and research students to come together and chat informally has helped, and will continue to help, improve communication and relations within the school. This informal relationship building will contribute to productivity in the formal side of these relationships as the difficulty in starting work-related conversations, such as asking for help or providing honest feedback on work, is broken down via familiarity.

Additionally, having a group meet at a set time consistently can simply help to decrease loneliness or feelings of isolation, providing a healthy routine and time for decompression with others.

This work has also increased visibility of the EDI committee within the school.



Case Study Synopsis

Background: Across higher education, research is increasingly focused on the first-year experience as a pivotal moment for student success. While it offers excitement and independence, research on first-year transition and belonging, identifies anonymity in large cohorts as a key predictor of disengagement and attrition. This case study details the reimagining of assessment in a large first year undergraduate module (MG1000, trialing McGraw Hill's GoReact tool, with an ultimate goal of enhancing the student experience.

Aim: To introduce first year undergraduate students to authentic assessment and groupwork to enhance the socialisation process and reduce isolation. Engagement, inclusion, and feedback were all intersecting challenges that straddled the need to also embed AI in a meaningful way.

Method: The assessment was changed from 100% exam to 100% continuous assessment with 50% allocated to a group task. Students were randomly assigned to groups and asked through to analyse a leader of their choice groups management theory, with a focus on responsible leadership.

Results: Students practiced their presentation skills individually and in groups using the GoReact platform. AI generated feedback was instantly provided to students to help them to improve for their final presentation. AI generated content and markers, it makes assigning and providing personalised feedback easy for educators while improving student outcomes and confidence.

Key Words: engagement, authentic, inclusive



Area/s of Alignment

- Research & Innovation
- Student Success
- Global Engagement
- OurStaff, OurCulture Our
- Place, Our Footprint



Additional Information

GoReact is a tool included in the McGraw Hill platform, integrated into Canvas, that can be utilised for assigning, recording, and providing feedback on student presentations and performances.



Supporting Belonging

By combining inclusive assessment design, scalable feedback, and a safe environment for skills development, GoReact within Connect has supported a shift away from high-stakes, one-shot assessment toward something more developmental, collaborative and future-focused. For this first-year cohort at UCC, the tool didn't merely support the provision of feedback and grading; it functioned as a mechanism for fostering belonging, confidence, and professional skill-building at scale.



Key Impacts

Tracking student engagement: Through Connect and GoReact analytics, student engagement was tracked. This enabled the identification of "at risk" students which allowed the module team to support those at risk of disengagement.

Process of groupwork: One practice presentation was graded which recognised the process of group work, which is often overlooked in the grading process.

Professional behaviour: Beyond grades, the approach fostered professional behaviours. Clearer boundaries around professional communication channels were established reinforce digital professionalism as part of the learning process.

AI Use: Module explicitly modelled responsible and pedagogically aligned AI use, framing it as a tool for formative development rather than performance replacement.



Video Links | Graphics

goreact[®]
 Building Skills for Brighter Futures

Maeve Twomey, Aimee Fenton
John Meade, Conor Lynch,
Xiangyu Meng

Student IT Service Desk
Staff IT Service Desk

Case Study Synopsis

The IT Service Desk cultivates a sense of belonging at UCC as we ensure that the vast community of the university always stays connected. The team of 48 student staff in IT Services cater to the diverse digital needs of the university with accessibility and inclusivity in mind. The Boole Library and Kane helpdesks are central to campus to provide in-person assistance to the UCC community in a welcoming and supportive environment. Our self-service portal, phone and email support, assist the wider UCC network such as retired staff, alumni and those who work remotely. No matter where someone is based, the careful and considerate digital support from the IT Service desk means everyone can feel assured that they belong in UCC.

Student IT has streamlined the process for MFA and password resets. Previously, each account had to be reset individually, which took time and increased pressure on students who were digitally disconnected. Today, a batch script is run twice daily to reset all requested MFA/passwords. Staff IT has introduced Bring Your Own Identity (BYOID) to allow external staff, retired staff, and pensioners to access the Employee Self Service portal. Previously, these staff members could not access the ESS portal after leaving UCC, leaving them feeling cut off and disconnected. The results of these improvements have been outstanding, and the ease of connecting with the UCC community improved dramatically.

Through continuous process improvement, focus on the enduser experience and a strong team culture, we can ensure that UCC staff and student are supported.

Key Words: Inclusive, Diverse, Accessible, Community, Goals, Improvement, Support

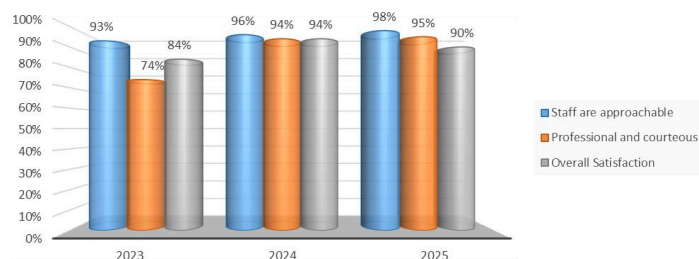
Enabling Belonging

Consideration for the ever-growing digital needs of UCC, such as quick MFA resets and extensive BYOID resources, has been a catalyst in the IT Service desk's efforts to help improve the delivery of services to the UCC community. Our inclusive and accessible resources for students and staff are integral to helping all members of UCC feel supported and connected in a world of constant digital advancement. Care for the diverse population of our community means we can assist individuals with any level of technological literacy in any role in UCC. We aim to continue to develop our services to ensure all students and staff feel that they belong in UCC.

Video Links | Graphics



Staff Experience and Satisfaction Trends (2023–2025)



Area/s of Alignment

- Research & Innovation
- Student Success
- Global Engagement
- Our Staff, Our Culture
- Our Place, Our Footprint

Additional Information

Student IT handles an average of 10,000 requests and incidents each year, along with nearly 5,000 phone calls and 6,500 emails. Notably, 26% of tickets are logged in person at the desk, highlighting the value of students engaging directly with their peers to resolve issues.

Key Impacts

Our new MFA process and BYOID services allow cases to be resolved faster, and this means that digital services are more accessible. This has helped strengthen the UCC community by providing resources that keep people connected. These changes have lessened the common stresses related to urgent IT needs, and have increased accessibility for students and staff, which reassures the people of UCC that they belong.

A sense of belonging is fostered by the IT Service desks not only for the users of our services but for the team here too.

- “I think I feel a sense of inclusion and belonging every time I’m on the helpdesk” – Niamh
- “It has definitely changed the way I view coming onto campus now” - Fuad
- “Working all throughout the summer and not feeling like a student but a staff member, working alongside other full time staff members without feeling out of place.” – Murtaza



Case Study Synopsis

Background:

The Apprenticeship in Social Work was developed in response to a national workforce shortage in social workers and to widen access to the profession. Launched in 2024, the programme currently has 122 apprentices enrolled in a full-time Level 9 programme at UCC, while also employed in social work services across 23 counties in Ireland. The earn-while-you-learn model enables apprentices to remain embedded in practice while completing their academic studies and contributing to social work teams from the outset.

Aim: To expand access to social work education, address national workforce shortages, and strengthen collaboration between UCC and social work employers through an innovative earn-while-you-learn apprenticeship model. UCC Strategic Plan Goal 2.4 Support student success, health and wellbeing, informed by the student voice. ii. Attract and retain a diverse community of students in line with the National Access Plan (2022–2028) targets using a data-informed approach.

Method: The apprenticeship integrates academic study at UCC with structured employment, including 2 CORU-required placement blocks, leading to a Level 9 professional qualification completed over two years. A hybrid delivery model combines online and in-person learning, enabling apprentices to participate while employed in social work services across Ireland. While at work, apprentices have at least one mentor, who supervises practice and supports integration into the team. Entry routes were greatly expanded to include Recognition of Prior Learning, which recognises previous professional, voluntary and lived experience.

Results: Since its launch in 2024, the apprenticeship has enrolled over 120 apprentices (full-time UCC students) employed across 23 counties in Ireland. Revised entry routes have supported more inclusive participation, with 47 apprentices entering through RPL pathways. Of these, 12% accessed the programme with a Level 7 qualification or no previous higher education qualification

Key Words: Apprenticeship, Social Work, Widening Participation, RPL, Partnership



Area/s of Alignment

Research & Innovation

✓ Student Success

Global Engagement

Our Staff, Our Culture

✓ Our Place, Our Footprint



Additional Information

A dedicated Welcome Day in July and a three-day orientation in September support apprentices as they transition into full-time study and a new professional role. Activities enable apprentices to build peer networks, connect with staff, and become familiar with university and workplace supports.

UCC will deliver two further apprenticeship programmes starting in 2026 – watch this space!



Enabling Belonging

The Social Work Apprenticeship enables belonging by creating inclusive pathways into both higher education and the social work profession. RPL entry routes recognise the experience applicants bring when they have not followed traditional academic pathways. Apprentices remain embedded with their workplaces while studying, developing a stronger sense of belonging both within their teams and the UCC community. The dedicated Welcome Day and Orientation further support connection among apprentices, employers and staff, and help to build peer networks and a supportive learning environment from the outset.



Video Links | Graphics



Key Impacts

- 122 apprentices contributing to social work services across 23 counties
- Strengthened partnerships between UCC, Tusla, the HSE and the National Apprenticeship Office
- Development of a diverse, practice-ready social work workforce
- Recognition of professional, voluntary and lived experience through RPL
- Stronger sense of belonging across university and workplace communities
- Learning from the Social Work Apprenticeship has informed the development of two new apprenticeship programmes at UCC, due to commence in September 2026

Presenter 1
Presenter 2

Nóirín Deady, Global Summit Lead
Martha Henchion, Project Manager



Case Study Synopsis

Background:

In June 2025, **UCC hosted the Student Leader Global Summit**, bringing together student leaders from North and South America, North, South, South-Central, East and West Africa, the Philippines, Egypt, India, China, Germany, Italy, Croatia, Ukraine and Ireland. The Summit aimed to foster cross-cultural dialogue, strengthen international partnerships, and empower student leaders to collaborate on global challenges.

Aim:

The key objectives of the Student Leader Global Summit were to:

- Foster a culture of responsibility, through clear, engaging, and actionable strategies to drive positive, long-term change in their communities and institutions
- Encourage collaborative approaches to global challenges
- Empower and equip future leaders with the knowledge, skills, and mindset needed to make meaningful changes
- Develop small service / volunteer projects to be implemented in any community to address the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Reinforce belonging as relational, not conditional.

A core element of the summit was the intentional inclusion of students from the **UCC id+Futures Project**. This inclusion demonstrated that global leadership spaces can and should reflect neurodiversity and intellectual diversity and challenged traditional notions of who occupies international leadership forums.

Method:

Participants were invited to compete for a place. A transparent application process aligned with clearly defined learning outcomes, supported by equitable and inclusive participation. The programme was designed around key global leadership competencies: cross-cultural communications, collaborative network-building to support shared global agendas, leadership for sustainable societies and the development of a community-focused service initiative. These outcomes were developed in partnership with the International Association for Student Affairs & Services (IASAS) to ensure alignment between participant expectations and summit activities. Daily sessions combined expert-led workshops and keynote presentations on leadership, equity and wellbeing with facilitated small group discussions that encouraged participants to explore diverse perspectives and build shared understanding. Peer collaboration activities challenged students to work collectively on global themes using inclusive facilitation approaches. Social and networking opportunities further supported intercultural dialogue. Structured reflection was embedded throughout the programme to promote critical engagement with personal leadership development, intercultural learning, and the application of insights to future practice.

Results:

A key output from the Summit was the opportunity for participants to present their collaborative projects to the UCC Community, The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning and the IASAS General Assembly. This public dissemination component served multiple purposes:

- Reinforced accountability and ownership of projects
- Developed confidence in intercultural communication
- Modelled partnership between students and professional staff.



Area/s of Alignment

- ✓ Research & Innovation
- ✓ Student Success
- ✓ Global Engagement
- ✓ Our Staff, Our Culture
- ✓ Our Place, Our Footprint



Additional Information

<https://www.iasas.global/slgsireland2025>

[Student Leader Global Summit](#)



Enabling Belonging

The Student Leader Global Summit supported the theme of Belonging by intentionally creating an environment where students from diverse cultural backgrounds felt included, valued, and able to contribute meaningfully. Small group discussions, collaborative workshops, and peer led activities gave every participant an opportunity to contribute. Social and networking events created informal spaces for relationship building strengthening participants' sense of connection and shared purpose. A broad spectrum of student experiences and abilities reinforced the principle that leadership spaces should be accessible and representative of all students.



Key Impacts

This Summit cultivated an inclusive and collaborative platform where diverse perspectives were valued, empowering every participant to play a meaningful role in the Global Leadership Community while strengthening collective efforts to advance the UN Sustainable Development Goals



Acknowledgements

The Student Leader Global Summit was designed and delivered in collaboration with The International Association for Student Affairs and Services (IASAS), National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning, StudentVolunteer.ie, The President of the World Federation of Public Health Associations and the UCC Academic Community.

The development was supported by funding from Fáilte Ireland, Erasmus+ Programme and VP Global Engagement, UCC.

Nóirín Deady
Nikita O'Connell
Catherine Burke

Admissions Office



Area/s of Alignment

Student Success



Case Study Synopsis

Background:

Belonging is not something students bring with them to campus – it is shaped early in the first year and is created by intentional effort to foster inclusive learning environments, meaningful peer interactions, and supportive staff student relationships.

Tinto (2005, 2017, 2023) proposes that students' decisions to remain engaged in their institutions are strongly influenced by academic and social integration.

Similarly, Terrell Strayhorn conceptualises **belonging** as students perceived social support and sense of mattering within the campus community, emphasising that **belonging** is particularly critical in the first year.



Drawing on these theoretical frameworks, the First-Year Experience (FYE) Programme is intentionally designed to operationalise **belonging** through structured, proactive, and sustained engagement from the point of offer through completion of the first year.

Aims:

Belonging is a design principle underpinning all FYE interventions and aims to:

- Foster early social and academic integration
- Strengthen students' sense of mattering and connection
- Create visible, accessible, relationship-based support
- Provide proactive outreach at critical transition points
- Reduce isolation following academic setbacks
- Improve first year retention and progression rates

Method:

Designing for Early Belonging (Pre-Arrival)

- The *First Year Guide to Success* and the *Freshers' Fest Brochure* are mailed to students in advance of arrival.

The intention is to communicate *You Matter. You Belong here.* Connecting early reduces uncertainty, sets clear expectations, and fosters excitement about transition.

Belonging is therefore embedded before students arrive on campus.

Relational Belonging: Orientation/Peer Support/ Freshers' Fest

- Structured peer matching takes place during orientation.
- Initiatives such as **PAWS@UCC** provides informal opportunities for students to connect with emotional support dogs and peers in a relaxed setting.
- Active presence of academic staff and student support professionals provides immediate connection points.

Belonging during Orientation and Freshers' Fest is designed through connections, visibility, and approachability.

Designing Academic Belonging (Course Structure, Feedback, Timetables, Curriculum Content and Change of Course)

- Providing students with direct engagement opportunities with academic staff, particularly in relation to course expectations and learning outcomes reinforces their identity as valued members of the academic community.
- Belonging plays a critical role when students find themselves in a degree programme that is not the right fit. When Belonging is intentionally embedded within institutional processes, changing course becomes an act of academic realignment.

The message communicated is *You belong here. You Matter. Let us help you to find the right academic pathway.*

Designing Belonging through Open Access First-Year Experience Meetings

- Students can book scheduled appointments Monday – Friday, signalling reliability and institutional commitment.
- Option of in-person and online appointments
- Availability of walk-in meetings
- Engage in flexible, student-led career guidance and coaching conversations

Offering multiple avenues of engagement is a deliberate strategy to promote accessibility and support. This flexibility fosters inclusion by accommodating diverse needs, preferences, and circumstances.

Belonging is cultivated through responsiveness and adaptability ensuring that every first-year student has access to coaching, career guidance, and support.

Designing Belonging through Proactive Outreach after exam failure

Belonging is critical at moments of academic vulnerability. Proactive outreach following exam failure is designed to protect students' sense of connection and capability during periods of heightened self-doubt. The First-Year Experience Coordinator (FYEC) frames emails to present support, options, and next steps in a constructive and solution focused manner. The emphasis is on opportunity, progression, and partnership.

This approach normalises struggle and reduces stigma.

Belonging is strengthened through intentional, sustained relationships over time. Continuous relationship building ensures students feel consistently supported, visible and valued within the university community. The commitment to belonging includes:

- Follow up emails after meetings reinforce care and continuity
- Encouragement before exam periods that acknowledges pressure while building confidence and reassurance
- Ongoing visibility throughout the year so that students know support is present, reliable and accessible
- Clear signposting to academic and wellbeing services to ensure students can confidently navigate resources.

Each touch point communicates simple but powerful messages: You are not alone. You belong here. By maintaining meaningful connections overtime, the university actively strengthens students' sense of belonging through sustained engagement with the community.



Additional Information

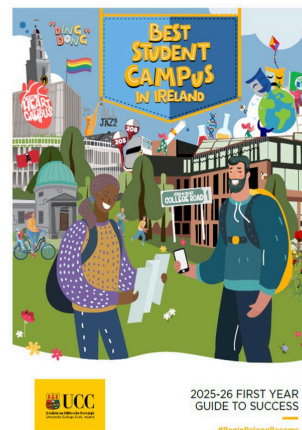
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ucc.ie/en/study/undergrad/firstyear/



Key Impacts

**Belonging is the purpose
Retention is the proof**

The FYE programme is grounded in fostering belonging – ensuring students feel seen, supported and connected within the university community. Strong retention and progression outcomes of 93.4% from 2024-2025 to 2025-2026 serve as an important institutional indicator. Ultimately, student retention and progression are achieved through the cultivation of meaningful relationships, responsive support structures and sustained engagement.

Key Words: Belonging / First Year Experience / Mattering / Proactive Outreach / Support Structures / Sustained Engagement

33 I Found my Tribe: A Story of Community, Belonging and Impact

Jessica Murphy
Katie Sandham
Michelle Nelson

Central Services, People and Culture
Continuous Improvement Action Network
Focus Team, IT Services

Case Study Synopsis

Background: The Continuous Improvement (CI) Action Network was established in early 2024 and is a community of practice open to all staff who share a commitment to improving how we work, learning from one another, and solving challenges collaboratively. The Network currently has 320 members across UCC and is also linked to the CIHE Ireland and the Lean HE Europe Networks.

Aim: This case study demonstrates how finding a professional tribe, engaging in ongoing learning, and actively participating in a cross-functional network can significantly enhance an individual's sense of belonging. Through the story of one of its members, we highlight how membership of the Continuous Improvement Action Network has fostered collaboration and supported personal and the organisational impact and result.

Method: Jessica Murphy, an administrator in People & Culture Central Services, joined UCC's Continuous Improvement (CI) Network attended the inaugural in-person C network event in February 2024. Jessica has remained an active participant since then, and has engaged extensively in professional development in CI, Service Innovation and Digital Transformation, transforming not just her skills, but her sense of belonging within the university community.

UCC Staff Development & Wellbeing Programmes:
Problem on a Page 2024, Creativity at Work 2024

Accredited Learning:
Digital Badge in Service Improvement & Innovation 2025 (initial pilot programme)
Lean White Belt (ATU Sligo with UCC Mentoring)

CI Network Events:
In-person CI Network events attended: approx. 6 (Launch; Piece of String; Creative Problem Solving; Small Steps Big Impact; Design Thinking; Process Mapping 101)
Online events/workshops attended: approx. 15 (Leap Into Change; Problem on a Page + follow-up; Goal Setting sessions (3); Copilot Intro & Promptathon; Digital Cleanup events); Weekly Focus Minds Productivity Sessions

Results:

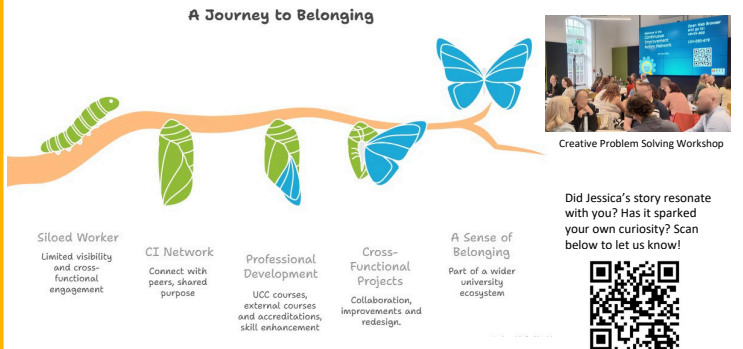
- Enhanced cross-functional collaboration and visibility of university-wide interdependencies
- The ability to view People & Culture processes through the lens of other staff and service
- users Practical improvements in HR processes informed by a clearer understanding of the Voice of the Customer
- Increased confidence, credibility and experience as a Continuous Improvement practitioner

Key Words: Continuous Improvement, Belonging, Network, Connection, Professional Development, Empowerment

Enabling Belonging

This case study demonstrates belonging as something that can be enabled through meaningful participation in a Community of Practice. Through regular interaction, shared language, and collective problem-solving, Jessica has developed relationships with colleagues across campus. Through her ongoing professional development in CI and her participation in cross-functional projects, she has moved from working in a silo to becoming part of a wider university ecosystem and gained visibility across teams, contributing to improvements. Small moments of connection, such as meeting network peers around campus with a shared topic of conversation, illustrate how belonging becomes real in everyday interactions. Jessica's journey shows that when staff are supported to learn, connect, and contribute, they discover their 'professional tribe' and a deeper sense of belonging within UCC.

Video Links | Graphics



Area/s of Alignment

- Research & Innovation
- Student Success
- Global Engagement
- Our Staff, Our Culture
- Our Place, Our Footprint

Additional Information

The Continuous Improvement Action Network is a Community of Practice open to all staff across UCC. Events to share knowledge and learnings as well as CI Initiative in practice (such as Digital Cleanup) take place at least once a month. Members of the Network also have access to weekly 'FocusMinds' productivity sessions. If you are interested, please scan this QR code for details.



Key Impacts

Jessica's journey represents the broader impact of belonging through professional connection: **From siloed to connected:** Participation in the CI Network enabled Jessica to build relationships across the university, supporting engagement and collaboration with units including IT Services, Payroll, Pure Project Team, Tyndall and IT Services and as well as internal P&C teams.

Empathy and shared understanding: By stepping into other teams' realities through learning and project involvement, she developed a better appreciation of their needs

Improved customer experience: Insights from cross-functional engagement directly informed redesign, including process improvements to: Salary Certificate Process Redesign, Inbox Triage Processes, Identifying and resolving PURE/HRIS identity issue (cross-functional: Payroll, HRIS Support, PURE, Tyndall), Design of Central Services Sharepoint pages)

A sense of community and joy: The small moments that matter such casual corridor or bathroom conversations with colleagues from across UCC, grounded in shared experiences from the CI Network, fostering inclusion and mutual support.

Role modelling Belonging: Jessica has become an advocate for Continuous Improvement and lifelong learning, showing how curiosity, connection, and CPD can help staff find their "UCC tribe."

UCC Digital Clean Up: Small Digital Steps, Big Community Impact

34

UCC's Digital Tidy Towns Committee

Sandra Barry, Office of Sustainability and Climate Action, Eithne Hurley, Economics, Cork University Business School, Deirdre Keane, IT Services, Matthew Kelleher, Library, Chris McElligott, Digital Advisory Centre, Sumaya Mohammed, Students' Union, Michelle Nelson, Focus Team, Clóidhna O'Callaghan, Centre for Digital Education, Maurice Ryder, Marketing and Brand Impact, Katie Sandham, Focus Team



Case Study Synopsis

Background:

Digital Clean Up began in Spring 2025, sparked by an idea a member of UCC's Continuous Improvement Action Network. It has evolved into across-functional, volunteer-driven initiative for staff and students, coordinated by the Focus Team.

Aim:

Inspired by the spirit of the SuperValu Tidy Towns competition, Digital Cleanup aims to help staff tackle their digital clutter, adopt healthier digital habits, and support UCC's sustainability goals.

Method:

Community-Led

A Digital Tidy Towns Committee was created by volunteers from across the University who shared an interest in digital sustainability and continuous improvement.

Weeklong Programme of Events

Staff and students took part in practical workshops on Inbox Zero, Digital Decluttering, Sustainable Teaching and Learning practices, and applying Lean principles to digital clean up. Lunchtime meetups on campus, including meditation, yoga and tabletop games, and arboretum walks encouraged people to step away from screens and connect with one another.

Progress Tracking

Cleanup time pledges, before-and-after measurements and digital cleanup resources helped staff to see their progress and start to build long lasting habits.

Using internal and external networks

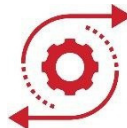
The initiative drew on the expertise already available within UCC by involving staff groups, student partners and existing campus clubs to host workshops and lunchtime activities. Invitations were also extended to UNIC, CIHE Ireland and Lean HE Europe to attend events.

Results:

Staff from across the University volunteered, collaborated and connected beyond their usual teams, and CI Network members brought 5S thinking back to their areas, sparking local declutter efforts Team activities.

Practical benefits were also clear, with engagement of 200 staff participating, reduced storage of 25TB in 2025, and a noticeable rise in awareness of digital sustainability. The initiative spread beyond UCC too. A Digital Clean Up webinar drew participants from thirteen European universities.

Key Words: Digital sustainability, community, connection, continuous improvement



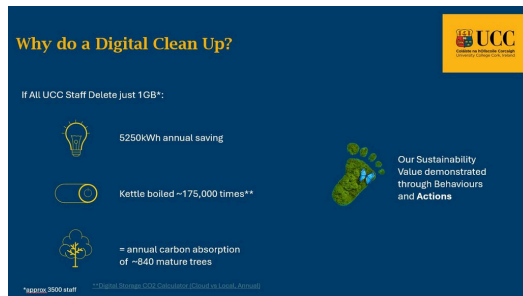
Enabling Belonging

Digital Clean Up brings people together by focussing on a topic that impacts all of us. It creates moments of shared connection through workshops, chats and connections over tabletop games, or simply tackling email at a FocusMinds session. The initiative helps staff wishing to do a digital declutter feel part of something and also demonstrates how individual small steps can create big impact.

The Tidy Towns Committee has strengthened cross-functional relationships, highlighted hidden work, and focussed on building pride in our collective progress. By linking UCC with universities across Europe, it gives staff a sense of belonging not just to UCC, but to a growing international HE community of digital sustainability champions.



Video Links | Graphics



Digital Clean Up
Sharepoint Page
(with Recordings)



Digital Tidy Towns Committee

Tabletop Gaming Session

Tree Walk

Change One Thing This Spring



Area/s of Alignment

- Research & Innovation
- Student Success
- Global Engagement
- Our Staff, Our Culture
- Our Place, Our Footprint



Additional Information

[Digital Tidy Towns at HEANet Conference 2025](#)

[UCC Arboretum and National Tree Week](#)



Key Impacts

- In 2025, 700 staff members pledged over 1200 hours of time for digital cleanup.
- Digital Clean-up Week drove visible reductions in Microsoft 365 cloud storage through end-user clean-up activity (25 TB reduction in the first year)
- Increased visibility and value of the UCC Continuous Improvement Action Network evidenced by event engagement (~50% of attendees were Network members) Tangible behaviour change supporting UCC's core value of sustainability
- Evidence of sector-leading practice, with expressions of interest from 10 HE Institutions (across Ireland and Europe) to run a similar initiative.

Perhaps the greatest impact is the one that is hardest to quantify. Digital Clean Up is made possible by the Digital Tidy Towns Committee which is an example of good practice in action: a positive inclusive, volunteer-led group bringing staff and students together from across the university to share ideas, deliver workshops and collaborate to improve our digital environment.



Case Study Synopsis

Background:

UCC encourages students to participate in international mobility programmes and while these experiences support academic and personal development, students may face challenges adapting to new academic systems, cultures, and social environments. Pre-departure preparation therefore helps students develop global awareness, shared values, and a sense of belonging both as members of the UCC community and as future exchange students within their host institution and wider community.

Aim:

To prepare UCC students for studying abroad by providing guidance, resources, and practical information that support a smooth transition to their host institution while strengthening global engagement, intercultural understanding, and a sense of belonging to both the UCC community and the international communities they will join during their exchange experience.

Method:

Pre-departure sessions and resources are provided to students before travel. These include information on academic expectations, cultural awareness, health and safety, travel preparation, and opportunities to connect with other outgoing students. A dedicated study abroad Canvas page supports students' preparation journey, ensuring they have one accessible space to find key information while reinforcing their connection to UCC. The programme also encourages engagement with classmates and shared experiences through a student panel, while fostering connection with the wider global student community by introducing participants to current incoming Erasmus students studying at UCC.

Results:

Students who attend pre-departure preparation report feeling more confident and prepared for their study abroad experience. The preparation reduces uncertainty, strengthens cultural awareness, and supports adaptation to new academic and social environments, while reinforcing their sense of belonging to UCC and encouraging engagement in host and international communities.

Key Words: International mobility, Intercultural Competence, Student Belonging, Global Engagement



Enabling Belonging

This case study supports the theme of belonging by showing how pre-departure preparation helps students feel supported and connected as they prepare to study abroad. Through guidance, resources, and opportunities to engage with other outgoing students, the preparation process reduces uncertainty and strengthens students' sense of belonging to the UCC community. It also encourages early awareness of their role as exchange students within their host university and wider international communities. This preparation helps students feel valued and confident as they transition into new academic and cultural environments while maintaining their connection to UCC. Ultimately, the process fosters belonging by enabling students to feel part of both their home institution and the global academic communities they join during their study abroad experience.



Video Links | Graphics



Area/s of Alignment

- Research & Innovation
- Student Success
- Global Engagement
- Our Staff, Our Culture
- Our Place, Our Footprint



Additional Information

Pre-departure preparation is provided to over 500 UCC students annually. Digital tools and in person information sessions facilitate access to essential information and peer networking, enhancing student engagement and preparation. These elements reflect UCC's comprehensive approach to fostering meaningful, supportive, and impactful international experiences. Feedback from returned students is regularly collected and used to continuously improve pre-departure preparation and post-return reintegration activities.



Key Impacts

- Enhanced student confidence and preparedness for study abroad through comprehensive pre-departure support
- Reduced uncertainty and strengthened cultural awareness, enabling smoother adaptation to new academic and social environments
- Fostered dual sense of belonging to both UCC and host institutions, as well as international communities
- Promoted sustained engagement and active participation in global learning environments
- Contributed to improved academic success and personal development
- Reinforced UCC's role in nurturing globally aware, culturally competent graduates connected across diverse settings



Case Study Synopsis

Background:

The UCC Library Leaving Certificate Study Scheme provides access to welcoming study spaces for exam students each May, offering many their first experience of UCC. Participation reached 688 students in 2025, creating significant pressure on registration and card-printing processes. Wi-Fi credential issuing was slow, and the absence of structured student feedback made it difficult to enhance the overall student experience.

Aim:

Reduce registration waiting times, enhance the welcome experience, support sustainability, and incorporate student input.

Method:

In 2025, we pre-printed access cards to speed up registration and access to study spaces, automated Wi-Fi issuing for immediate online access, introduced an incentivised card-return system to reduce plastic waste, and launched a student survey to guide future improvements.

Results:

A smoother, more welcoming registration process gave students quicker access to study spaces and Wi-Fi. A 30% card-return rate (207/688) supported reuse, and all 58 survey respondents would recommend the scheme, noting noise reduction for future improvement.

Key Words: Student Experience - Access - Registration Study Spaces - Sustainability



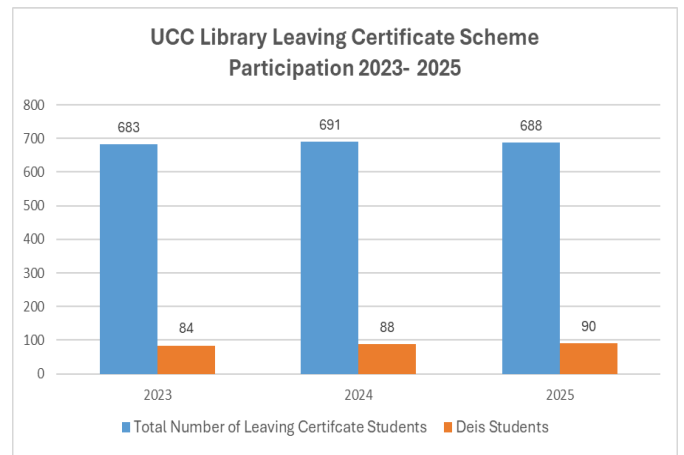
Enabling Belonging

This scheme supports belonging by creating a welcoming, efficient first point of contact with UCC, giving students a positive first experience and enabling them to feel valued, respected, and able to use library study spaces upon arrival.

The survey empowers students to shape future improvements, strengthening mutual respect and a shared sense of ownership.



Video Links | Graphics



Area/s of Alignment

- Research & Innovation
- Student Success
- Global Engagement
- Our Staff, Our Culture
- Our Place, Our Footprint



Additional Information

We liaise directly with Access UCC each year to support participation from DEIS schools, welcoming 90 DEIS-school students into the scheme free of charge in 2025 through this inclusive partnership.



Key Impacts

Belonging and Inclusion: A warm, efficient welcome enables students to participate in independent study upon arrival.

Operational Improvements: Pre-Printing access cards and streamlining WI-FI issuing enhances the student experience with immediate access to study spaces and Wi-Fi.

Sustainability: A 30% ID card return rate in 2025 encourages us to aim for greater card reuse and further reduce plastic waste in future years.

Student Voice: Students now have a direct voice in how the scheme is improved each year.

Beyond the Award: Using the DELTA Award Application to Reflect on and Enhance Teaching Practice

37

Dr Mutahira Lone
Ms Bereniece Riedewald
Dr André Toulouse

Department of Anatomy and Neuroscience



Case Study Synopsis

Background:

The Department of Anatomy and Neuroscience is a dynamic research active teaching department, teaching basic and clinical anatomy and neuroscience to students in the Schools of Medicine, Dentistry, Clinical Therapies, Pharmacy, Nursing and in the College of Science, Engineering and Food Science and College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Science.

Aim: The DELTA Award application process was recognised and embraced as a structured framework to collectively and critically examine teaching, learning, and assessment activities embedded in the 23 programmes to which the department contributes, while also encouraging meaningful self evaluation and enhancement.

Method:

A case study approach was adopted:

- Teaching, learning, and assessment practices were mapped against DELTA criteria.
- Regular structured discussions took place among academic staff, technical staff, and students.
- Reflection on key areas: inclusivity, accessibility, student engagement, assessment design, and learning support.
- Evidence was gathered from module evaluations, student feedback, and teaching innovation.

Results:

- A holistic review of pedagogical approaches, assessment strategies, learning resources, and student support mechanisms was undertaken.
- Existing strengths, good practices and pedagogical innovations were recognised and highlighted.
- Students felt valued as partners in the evaluation and development of teaching and learning practices.
- Constructive alignment of assessment, inclusive teaching, and consistency of the student learning experience across programmes were identified for development.
- The process functioned as a form of professional progression, promoting reflective teaching practice and strengthening collegial collaboration.

Key Words: Anatomy, Neuroscience, DELTA Award, Excellence in Learning and Teaching, Reflective Practice, Student Partnership.



Areas of Alignment

- ✓ Research & Innovation
- ✓ Student Success
- ✓ Our Staff, Our Culture



Additional Information

Under the aegis of the Higher Education Authority (HEA), The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education is the national body responsible for leading and advising on the enhancement of teaching and learning in Irish higher education. Its Disciplinary Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment (DELTA) Award is presented to discipline groups who demonstrate a record of excellence in teaching and learning enhancement and commit to an ongoing, clearly articulated, shared process of continued enhancement. The DELTA Award process aims to facilitate recognition at a discipline level and to bring good practice to a wider audience, as an essential part of valuing teaching and learning within higher education communities.



Enabling Belonging

Working together on the DELTA award application fostered a strong sense of collective engagement and shared purpose among academic staff, technical staff, and postgraduate and undergraduate students in the Department of Anatomy and Neuroscience, as they collaboratively reflected on teaching and learning practices employed in the department.

By involving multiple stakeholders in evaluating and shaping educational approaches, the process encouraged shared ownership and mutual respect across roles.

This collaborative reflection strengthened collegial relationships, promoted inclusivity, a strong sense of belonging and contributed to a shared commitment to improving the student learning experience. The DELTA Award application process helped crystallise good practices, encouraged discussion and highlighted expertise and recognition of staff and student achievements.



Video Links | Graphics

News items: [John Kelly Award, School Outreach, World Anatomy Day, Anatomy celebrates TOP 100 World University Rankings, VR in Anatomy teaching, Director of MSc Human Anatomy, Anatomy Fundraising](#)



Key Impacts



The Department of Anatomy and Neuroscience's excellence in learning, teaching and assessment activities received the DELTA Award in 2026

The DELTA Award application functioned as a valuable accreditation exercise and a powerful catalyst for departmental reflection, collaboration, and enhancement of learning and teaching practices.

The reflective application process allowed the department to generate a clear roadmap to guide the enhancement of learning, teaching and assessment practices over the next three years.

This case study demonstrates how institutional award frameworks can be effectively leveraged as tools for meaningful, educational development, staff-student partnership, and sustainable improvement in learning and teaching culture.

Presenters :

- Noelette Hurley, Digital Advisory Centre
- Marian Twomey, Digital Advisory Centre
- Christopher McElligott, Digital Advisory Centre



Case Study Synopsis

Background:

To support the strategic plan, goal four, point 2:
“4.2 Embed a culture of equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging in UCC, embracing our differences as a key institutional strength.”

The Digital Advisory Centre aims to contribute to this goal by promoting the use of the **Accessibility Checker** and **PowerPoint Live** as the most accessible and inclusive way to present content during Teams meetings. We also highlight many of the other Windows 11 new accessibility features.

Aim:

To demonstrate best practice in creating accessible presentations (and accessible digital content generally) and to showcase how they can be delivered in the most inclusive and user-friendly way possible.

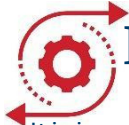
Method:

1. Include the Accessibility Reminder slide in each DAC Learn Live Slide Deck
2. Introduce the PowerPoint Live feature at the beginning of each Learn Live
3. Provide a downloadable version of the slide for staff
4. Remind staff that the presentation being shared was checked using PowerPoint’s inbuilt Accessibility Checker.
5. Recommend staff use these features when appropriate

Results:

Increased awareness of the Accessibility Features in Windows 11, Teams, and PowerPoint

Key Words: Inclusivity, Accessibility, Technology, Cultural Change



Enabling Belonging

It is important that all our staff can fully engage and participate in online meetings. Checking our presentations for accessibility and using PowerPoint Live ensures that staff can select features best suited to their needs.

These features include:

- Automatic captioning
- High colour contrast
- Zoom
- Clickable links
- Self paced slide navigation



Video Links | Graphics

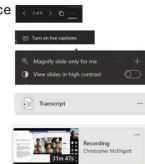
Accessibility Reminder



This content has been checked using the Accessibility Checker in PowerPoint

Where possible we will present in PowerPoint Live

- This allows you to consume these slides at your own pace
- Captions are available
- Magnifier is available
- High Contrast is available
- Recording and transcript will be available after this call
- Links are clickable
- Slide headings have been added
- Descriptions have been added to each image



Area/s of Alignment

- Research & Innovation
- Student Success
- Global Engagement
- Our Staff, Our Culture
- Our Place, Our Footprint



Key Impacts

Key impacts include but are not limited to:

- Increased awareness of the Accessibility Features in Windows 11, Teams, and PowerPoint
- Increased use of the Accessibility Checker
- Increased use of PowerPoint Live
- Increased awareness of the responsibility we all have to create accessible content



Additional Information

Scan QR code to visit our Accessibility Advice page to learn more.



Dr Richard Sciven
Dr Ruth Hally
Claire Crowley
Clodagh O'Sullivan

Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation
Head of Sanctuary, Office of Global Engagement
Information Technology Services
Advancement Office



Case Study Synopsis

Background:

Fáilte Cork: A Higher Education CSG a community sponsorship group established in 2024 to support education pathways for students from refugee backgrounds. It is part of EU and government policy to provide safe routes for refugees to relocate from a country of asylum and is coordinated by the Cork-based NGO, Nasc. The programme is led by the Office of Global Engagement as part of UCC's Sanctuary objectives. Membership of our group includes UCC students and staff, alumni, and members of the Cork community.

Aim:

To provide a holistic supportive structure to assist postgraduate students from refugee contexts in pursuing a degree, integrating into life in Ireland, and transitioning to employment and independent living.

Work Methods:

Fáilte Cork is a collaborative community group that supplements UCC support mechanisms by responding to the specific needs of refugee students. We provide material, social, and practical support to students to navigate bureaucratic and cultural contexts. For example, through a stipend, helping them open bank accounts, social meet-ups, and introducing them to Cork city. Additionally, the group engages in extensive fundraising and promotional activities to highlight the importance of safe routes for refugees.

Results: Successful support of two students, proven viability of educational pathways for refugees, and greater solidarity for people fleeing war, persecution, or disaster.

Key Words: Refugee, Student, Community, University of Sanctuary



Area/s of Alignment

- Student Success
- Global Engagement



Additional Information

Fáilte Cork welcomes new members from across the UCC Community and beyond who are interested in supporting refugee students.



Enabling Belonging

Fáilte Cork helps foster belonging by helping students from refugee backgrounds integrate into UCC and Cork in a collaborative and person-centred manner. This intersectional approach facilitates student success and social inclusion into university life. Building on UCC's commitments as a University of Sanctuary, our approach helps both individual students in their professional and personal journeys but also strengthens solidarities in UCC and beyond.



Video Links | Graphics



Images from group events and promotional posts that highlight our work and raise funds to support the students.



Key Impacts

- Support of two postgraduate students – one recently graduated and the other currently completing their degree
- Increased collaborative capacities in UCC as a University of Sanctuary, strengthened by partnerships with external organisations
- Greater awareness of refugee issues and the importance of safe structured pathways to education



Case Study Synopsis

Background:

UCC is home to a diverse community of over 4500 international students. Each semester, new students arrive to begin their studies while others complete their programmes and depart, often leaving behind usable household items. The International Student Swap Shop was developed as a practical response to this cycle, creating a circular reuse initiative where departing students donate items for incoming students. By redistributing these goods during the welcome period, the Swap Shop reduces waste while also creating a welcoming space where newly arrived students can interact with peers and volunteers, helping them feel supported and develop a sense of belonging within the UCC community from their first days on campus.

Aim:

The Swap Shop aims to support international students during their transition to life at UCC by providing practical support while fostering a sense of belonging. It also promotes sustainability by encouraging the reuse of household goods and reducing waste generated during student move-in and move-out periods.

Method:

The Swap Shop operates during Global Welcome Week at the start of the academic year and at the start of the second semester. Departing students donate household items including bedding, duvets, kitchen utensils and small appliances. These items are organised and distributed to newly arrived international students during their first week on campus. The initiative is supported by staff and by students who have previously studied abroad and can share their experiences with new arrivals. As students collect items, they often meet other new students, creating informal opportunities for conversation, advice and peer connection during the early days of arrival.

Results:

The Swap Shop supports hundreds of new international students during their first week at UCC. By providing essential household items, the initiative helped ease the financial and logistical pressures associated with settling into a new country. The space also becomes an informal meeting point where students interact while waiting, collecting items and sharing experiences. This creates early opportunities for peer connection and helps students feel welcomed and supported on arrival to Cork.

Key Words: Sustainability, Circular Economy, Community Building, Green Campus

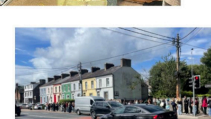
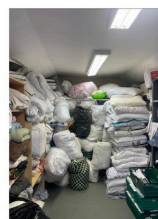


Enabling Belonging

The Swap Shop supports belonging by creating a welcoming and accessible space where new international students can interact with peers and feel supported during their first days at UCC. The sharing of donated items from departing students fosters a sense of community and continuity between different cohorts of international students. By combining sustainability with peer support, the initiative encouraged students to engage with one another in an informal and inclusive environment. This helped new arrivals feel welcomed, valued and connected to the wider university community from the outset of their student journey.



Video Links | Graphics



Area/s of Alignment

Research & Innovation

X StudentSuccess

X Global Engagement

X Our Staff, Our Culture

X Our Place, Our Footprint



Additional Information

The Swap Shop aligns with the priorities of UCC's Strategic Plan 2023–2028, particularly in supporting Student Success, Global Engagement, and Our Place, Our Footprint through sustainable campus initiatives. It demonstrates how practical, low-cost initiatives can simultaneously advance sustainability, student wellbeing and community building.



Key Impacts

- Reduces financial and practical barriers for newly arrived international students
- Encourages peer-to-peer support between departing and incoming students
- Creates informal opportunities for early social interaction and connection
- Strengthens students' sense of belonging during their first days at UCC
- Supports sustainability through the reuse of household goods
- Contributes to UCC's Green Campus and sustainability commitments

Damian Butler
Alfie Davis
Ruth O Mahony
Gráinne Thompson

Peer Support
Library Services
International Office
Arás na Mac Léinn



Case Study Synopsis

Background

Global Cultures Week took place from 9–12 February 2026 at UCC. The festival was developed in response to student feedback highlighting the need for greater cultural visibility, cross-cultural community-building and inclusive spaces where students could celebrate and share their cultures. It marked the first step toward establishing an annual student-led Cultural Festival that promotes cultural exchange and strengthens community across the university.

Aim

The festival aimed to strengthen students’ sense of belonging while increasing cultural visibility on campus. It sought to provide creative, social and educational opportunities for students to connect, while empowering student volunteers and societies to take an active role in shaping the programme. A further goal was to establish the foundations for an annual Cultural Festival at UCC.

Method

The four day programme included a range of social, cultural and creative activities. These included crafting sessions (80+ participants), an international short film night, a silent disco (150+ participants), global music bingo (20+ participants), a cultural showcase (~100 visitors) and a society-led cultural party (150+ attendees). The festival also welcomed participation from local residents and primary school children. All events were co-led by students, volunteers and societies.

Results

Global Cultures Week generated over 500 engagements and fostered new collaborations across campus. The festival increased the visibility of diverse cultures, encouraged strong social connections between students and produced high-quality student made crafts. Evening and society led events attracted the highest attendance. The success of the festival demonstrated strong potential to develop into a flagship annual event that continues to celebrate diversity and build community.

Key Words: Belonging; Cultural Diversity; Student Engagement; Global Citizenship; Community



Enabling Belonging

Global Cultures Week supported belonging by creating inclusive, student led spaces where cultural identities could be shared, celebrated and recognised within the university community. Through a diverse programme of social, creative and cultural activities, students were encouraged to connect across cultures, form new friendships and engage with one another in an open and welcoming environment. By increasing the visibility of different cultures on campus, the celebration helped ensure that students from diverse backgrounds felt acknowledged, valued and represented within university life.



Video Links | Graphics



Area/s of Alignment

Research & Innovation

- X Student Success
- X Global Engagement
- X Our Staff, Our Culture
- X Our Place, Our Footprint



Key Impacts

- Increased sense of belonging across diverse student groups
- Greater visibility of cultural identities on campus
- Strong student leadership and ownership through society and volunteer involvement
- Expanded collaboration between university units and student societies
- Established a strong foundation for an annual Cultural Festival



Additional Information

The festival aligns with the strategic priorities of UCC's Strategic Plan 2023–2028, supporting goals related to inclusion, student experience, global citizenship and partnership-based engagement. Future development will focus on earlier promotion, deeper partnerships with student societies and the use of high-visibility campus venues to further expand participation and impact.

Global Cultures Week supported belonging by creating inclusive, student-led spaces where cultural identities could be expressed and celebrated. By activating high-visibility campus locations and encouraging participation across different groups, the festival fostered cross-cultural friendships and meaningful social connections. Engagement with community visitors also helped extend this sense of belonging beyond campus, embedding diversity, respect and cultural exchange into university life.



Case Study Synopsis

Background:

Newly-registered pharmacists face immediate professional responsibilities while losing university and preceptor support. This can negatively impact confidence, stress levels and capability. Mentorship is widely utilised to support early transitions in healthcare professions, however evidence related to pharmacy is lacking. This study aimed to evaluate a three-month mentorship programme for newly registered Irish pharmacists, to support their transition into practice

Aim:

This study aimed to evaluate a three-month mentorship programme for newly registered Irish pharmacists, to support their transition into practice

Method:

MPharm students from University College Cork, School of Pharmacy were invited to participate in a pilot mentorship programme upon joining the professional register in October 2024. Mentees were assigned to an appropriately trained mentor and invited to meet monthly for three months. Online mentee surveys were administered pre-mentorship (T1), at programme conclusion (T2) and three months post-mentorship (T3). Mentors completed a T2 survey. Quantitative Likert-scale questions assessed emotional and practice-related challenges. Free-text responses captured participants' reflections on their experiences. Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis were conducted.

Results:

Both groups (n=10 mentees, n=5 mentors) highlighted personal and professional development benefits post-mentorship. Mentee self-belief in relation to their professional practice increased (50% T1, n=10; 100% T3, n=4). Mentors reported increased mentee confidence and improved mentee decision-making post-mentorship. Mentees reported high programme satisfaction; all T2 respondents would recommend mentorship to peers (n=5). Themes generated related to challenges in practice transition, programme structure and engagement and mentoring relationships and experiences.

Conclusion:

Mentorship represents a strategy to support newly-registered pharmacists by enhancing early emotional and professional development. To optimise future mentorship offerings, clearer role expectations, standardised programme design and sufficient duration of mentorship are recommended.

Key Words:

Newly-registered pharmacists Mentorship programme
Professional transition Professional development
Practice readiness Programme evaluation



Area/s of Alignment

- Research & Innovation
- Student Success
- Global Engagement
- Our Staff, Our Culture
- Our Place, Our Footprint



Additional Information



Enabling Belonging

This research supported our students as they transitioned out of the School of Pharmacy, UCC into the community of practice as a Pharmacist, thus supporting their sense of 'Belonging' as they moved into their autonomous, independent professional practice.



Video Links | Graphics

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/pharmacy/events/news/>



Key Impacts

Key Impacts of the Mentorship Programme

Increased professional confidence and improved decision-making among newly registered pharmacists

Enhanced support during the transition to independent practice, reducing emotional and practical challenges

Strengthened personal and professional development, including communication, reflection and self-management

Positive mentor-mentee relationships that enabled trust, guidance and safe discussion

Presenters:

Róisín Riley, Student Council Chairperson, BA Applied Psychology; **Cíara Collins**, Student Council Member, BA Applied Psychology; **Dr. Marica Cassarino**, Lecturer, School of Applied Psychology; **Dr. Jason Chan**, Lecturer, School of Applied Psychology



Case Study Synopsis

Background:

The 2025/2026 academic year marks the inaugural year of the School of Applied Psychology (SoAP) Student Council, a representative body for Undergraduate (UG) and Postgraduate Taught students in the SoAP. Working closely with staff, our values lie in having ambition, respect and consideration of a diverse range of student experiences and working for students who can thrive each personally, academically and professionally. We demonstrate ourselves to be socially responsible, engaged members of the University, to be independent and creative thinkers and we contribute to the community of impact, innovation and belonging that exists within the SoAP

Aim:

The council exists to empower students in having a meaningful voice and impact in shaping the university experience. Our main aims are in student support and wellbeing and accessibility and inclusion, and in encompassing these we work with students, staff and the wider school community to foster community, diversity and belonging.

Method:

The council has meetings where we engage in respectful and open discussions and we set goals and actions that move us towards our aims, alongside ongoing digital communication.

Results:

Some of our initiatives in this inaugural year of the council have included:

- Strengthening student/staff through presentations, open discussions, surveys and building shared working goals.
- Supporting student transitions in and through University, such as the creation of videos to share student resources and introduce staff, and planning a psychology orientation for incoming students.
- Hosting events for SoAP students to foster belonging and community, such as a master's coffee morning for UG and Master's students to discuss career opportunities.
- Enhancing the accessibility of student information to ensure supportive experiences, such as reformatting communication about the School's late waiver policies and procedures
- Working with staff to ensure our School is recognised for its culture of diversity and inclusion, including contribution to the current Silver Athena Swan application

Key Words:

Community. Empowerment. Engagement.
Accessibility. Impact. Purpose. Innovation. Voice.
Connectedness. Leadership. Collective Action.
Impact. Flourishing. Possibilities. Learning Together.



Area of Alignment

Student Success



Additional Information

The formation of the SoAP Student Council was enabled by School staff who developed the initial terms of reference for the Council and liaised with current SoAP students to launch the Council in 2025/26 academic year. The Student Council reports directly to the SoAP School Council and Executive Management Committee to ensure that student voice is integrated across core School's activities.



Enabling Belonging

As a School of Applied Psychology, we recognize the importance of community, connection and belonging, and we capitalize on this to turn our values in these areas into tangible impacts and outcomes. We **amplify and celebrate diverse student voices** and strive for an accessible and supportive school community for all. We have worked on reducing student-staff power dynamics through creating videos to highlight our School's diversity and to demonstrate how every student and staff member belongs here equally. We engage in **ongoing reflective practice** about the Council is structured to ensure participation and representation of a wide diversity of students and to promote an ongoing sense of community for the council in the future. We understand that belonging can transform every aspect of the University experience, and we foster a respectful, inclusive and engaged community where this sense of belonging is prioritised



Video Links | Graphics



Key Impacts

Student Support and Wellbeing

- Establishing a collaborative space for students and staff to nurture positive change, amplifying students opportunities to be independent and creative thinkers and effective global citizens, aligning with UCC's graduate attributes.
- Collaboratively enhancing orientation to the SoAP for incoming students next September.
- Working with staff to build understanding on teaching and administrative processes through the eyes of students.
- Master's Coffee morning to inform UG students on career opportunities.
- Developed a survey to understand the wider student body's experiences of the School and institutional supports to inform our future work is student-driven.

Accessibility and Inclusion

Increasing accessibility for current and future students through:

- Creating videos introducing staff members.
- Creating video tours and student-accessible information for incoming students
- Amended communication on our late waiver form
- Created a reading list for incoming students to ease the transition into an Applied Psychology seeing
- Contribution to the SoAP's Silver Athena Swan Application



Case Study Synopsis

Background: During Covid our workloads mushroomed, and teaching, learning, assessment and feedback were all transferred online. We had to become more efficient while at the same time negotiating the very steep learning curve of using multiple platforms ourselves for teaching and communication, all while we were very isolated due to multiple lengthy lockdowns.

Aim: To reduce inefficiencies in order to save time in the face of huge extra workload combined with childcare during lockdowns.

Method: Explorations of the Canvas VLE (new to UCC at the time) and trial and error attempts at timesaving efficiencies.

Results: (1) colour-coded feedback and (2) Video feedback for grammar and text-based homework submitted by students of German.

Red	verb (conjugation, vowel change, tense)
Green	cases/endings/genders/plurals
Blue	word order & position of verb
Pink	vocab & spelling
Yellow	punctuation
Brown	capital letters
Dark purple	other, incl. word missing
Orange	what does the Relative Pronoun refer to?
Black	content, coherence, relevance

Key Words:

Inclusion, Inclusive Feedback, Language Feedback, Multimodal Feedback

Area/s of Alignment

- Research & Innovation
- Student Success
- Global Engagement
- Our Staff, Our Culture
- Our Place, Our Footprint

Student Feedback

Students generally liked the pins as a feedback method as they made it easy to locate the error types, but said they were hard to see when accessed on their phones rather than laptop.

Enabling Belonging

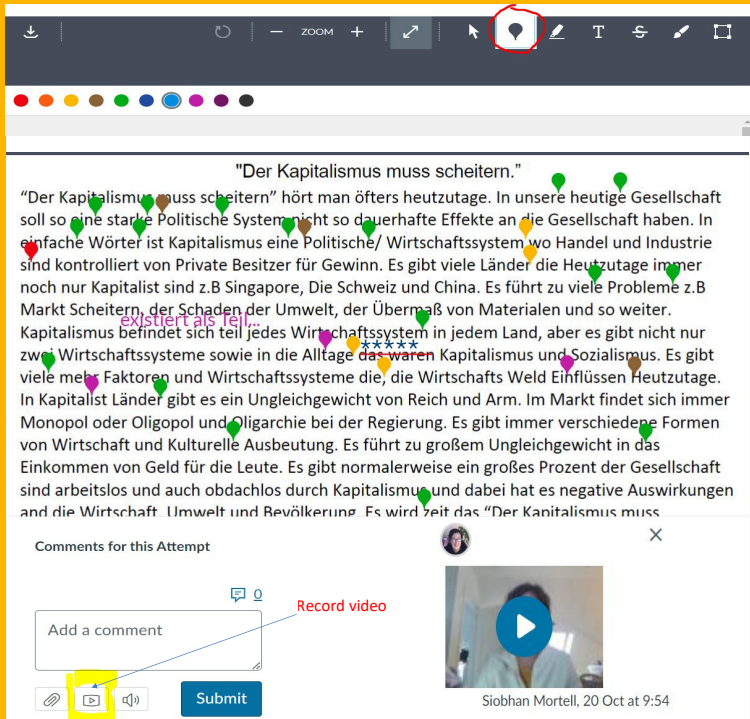
Video

No reading is involved, so students with hidden disabilities don't need to ask for accommodations. All students can benefit from humanized feedback, seeing facial expressions, e.g. a smile, and hearing the nuance in the feedback-giver's voice. This can be helpful for students who learn better through interaction. The relative formality of written feedback can be a barrier that needs 'decoding' to get the 'real' advice. Feedback in spoken form means the tone is more colloquial and the formality barrier is eliminated.

Pins

Key weaknesses are immediately evident – a sea of red (verbs) or green (cases) tells the student where more effort is needed. Such feedback can increase motivation to improve and is helpful for visual learners. The written word is removed/reduced and therefore also a barrier for students with hidden disabilities.

Both these methods are in line with multimodal methods as part of Universal Design for Learning. Both remove an element of struggle and put students on a more level playing field.



"Der Kapitalismus muss scheitern."

"Der Kapitalismus muss scheitern" hört man öfters heutzutage. In unsere heutige Gesellschaft soll so eine starke Politische System nicht so dauerhafte Effekte an die Gesellschaft haben. In einfache Wörter ist Kapitalismus eine Politische/ Wirtschaftssystem wo Handel und Industrie sind kontrolliert von Private Besitzer für Gewinn. Es gibt viele Länder die Heutzutage immer noch nur Kapitalist sind z.B Singapore, Die Schweiz und China. Es führt zu viele Probleme z.B Markt Scheitern, der Schaden der Umwelt, der Übermaß von Materialien und so weiter. Kapitalismus befindet sich teil jedes Wirtschaftssystem in jedem Land, aber es gibt nicht nur zw Wirtschaftssysteme sowie in die Alltags das waren Kapitalismus und Sozialismus. Es gibt viele mehr Faktoren und Wirtschaftssysteme die, die Wirtschafts Welt Einflüssen Heutzutage. In Kapitalist Länder gibt es ein Ungleichgewicht von Reich und Arm. Im Markt findet sich immer Monopol oder Oligopol und Oligarchie bei der Regierung. Es gibt immer verschiedene Formen von Wirtschaft und Kulturelle Ausbeutung. Es führt zu großem Ungleichgewicht in das Einkommen von Geld für die Leute. Es gibt normalerweise ein großes Prozent der Gesellschaft sind arbeitslos und auch obdachlos durch Kapitalismus und dabei hat es negative Auswirkungen and die Wirtschaft Umwelt und Bevölkerung. Es wird Zeit das "Der Kapitalismus muss

Comments for this Attempt

Add a comment

Record video

Submit

Siobhan Mortell, 20 Oct at 9:54

Key Impacts

- Fewer barriers for people with hidden disabilities
- No reading involved
- Multimodal and aligned with UDL principles
- Access vital feedback without barriers

Video

- Personal connection & community
- Humanising touch
- Especially good for students who struggle academically
- More feedback in one spoken minute than 5-10 typing minutes

Pins

- See weaknesses at a glance
- But not easily viewable from smartphone.



My Club of Support

Background: the My Club of Support network visualisation workshop and exercise was developed in response to observing how students can struggle in periods of change and transition, e.g. beginning a new course, starting work placement, receiving a medical diagnoses. It is based on Nancy Schlossberg's Transition Theory and Kahn and Antonucci's Convoy Model of Social Support.

Aim: by attending the workshop and completing the exercise booklet participants will visualise and categorise supports they rely on to navigate challenges and transition. They will leave with a deeper understanding of how their network supports them, knowing where their support network is strong, where there are gaps, and with a plan to grow and develop it.

Method: delivered via an interactive workshop using typical scenarios students encounter. In small groups examples of supports to navigate the change or challenge are identified.

Then in the large group students share and categorise the network supports identified for the scenarios considered.

Results: participants learn how transition and challenges can disrupt support networks; they gain a deeper awareness of supports available in UCC and beyond; they visualise who and what they rely on, thereby seeing the nature and value of their network; they identify gaps in their support network; they share knowledge and experience; they expand their social network.

Key Words: support; network; visualise; categorise



Area/s of Alignment

- Research & Innovation
- Student Success
- Global Engagement
- Our Staff, Our Culture
- Our Place, Our Footprint



Additional Information

The research and design of this resource was funded by the Inclusive UCC project and co-created with UCC students. It has been delivered as part of the EmployAbility preparation programme within Access UCC and to BSc BIS placement students.



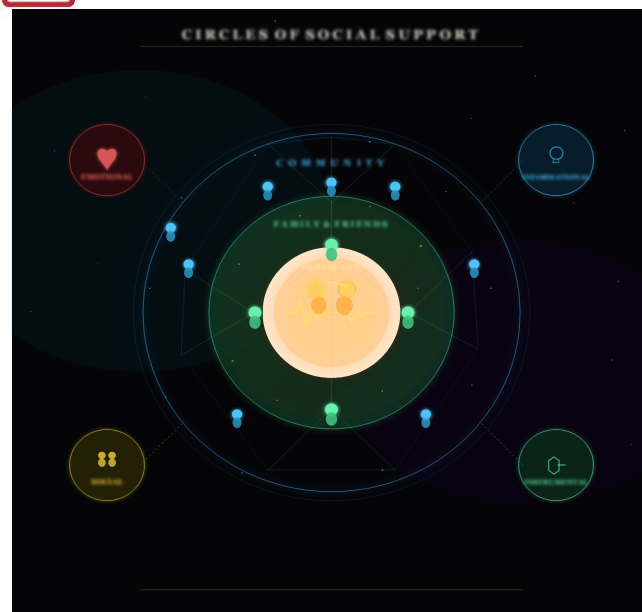
Enabling Belonging

The My Club of Support workshop and exercise enable belonging by:

- providing space for participants to consider and visualise the breadth and depth of their social support network
- anchoring participants to UCC through people, place, and services identified within their support network
- strengthening a sense of UCC as a supportive and caring environment responsive to the changing needs of our students



Visualising belonging



Key Impacts

Participant quotes:

'The tool was helpful. Sort of like a mind map but displays a better layout for sifting through ones thoughts'

'It's actually quite illuminating- you realise the "functions" of your network and the dual purpose nature of people'

'I would recommend this tool to help an individual put into context where they are lacking in their own support system'.

As a professional staff member it has been fulfilling to create a self development exercise supporting the student journey and which emerged from my work practice & experience.

Prof. Ciara Heavin
Dr Tanya Watson
Mary Horgan
Aileen Waterman
Dr Wendy Rowan
Dr Laura Lee

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Unit
Department of Business Information Systems, CUBS
Staff Wellbeing and Development, People and Culture
Career Services, CUBS
Career Services, CUBS
Centre for the Integration of Research, Teaching, and Learning (CIRTL)



Case Study Synopsis

Background:

Launched in September 2024, ENGAGE Reverse Mentoring is an original equality initiative that reimagines traditional mentoring by flipping the usual power dynamics in mentoring relationships. Grounded in principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), the scheme features three programmes:

Programme	Mentors	Mentees	Partners
ENGAGE Pilot 2024-2025	19 Early Career Women	19 Senior Leaders	UCC, UL, UG, MTU, TUS
ENGAGE Access 2025-2026	30 Access Students	30 Professional, Academic and Research Staff	Access UCC
ENGAGE Digital 2025-2027	30 Early Career Women & Other Underrepresented Genders	30 Senior Leaders	UCC, UL, UG, TUS, SETU

Aim:

To empower staff and students to share their lived experiences and fresh insights with more senior career level colleagues, offering a unique mutual benefit.

Method:

This innovative initiative is designed and delivered by an interdisciplinary team from across the university including the EDI Unit, Staff Wellbeing and Development, Access UCC, UCC Internal Coaching Panel, Career Services, Cork University Business School, and the Centre for the Integration of Research, Teaching, and Learning (CIRTL).

Results:

- 3 HEA funded ENGAGE programmes
- Up to 79 reverse mentoring pairs
- 6 mentoring cycles
- 'One idea' success story showcases
- 5 e-learning modules, book chapter and Brainstorm article
- Scalable, sustainable reverse mentoring model

Key Words:

- ✓ Reverse Mentoring
- ✓ Gender Equality & EDI
- ✓ Reciprocity
- ✓ Collaboration



Area/s of Alignment

- Research & Innovation
- Student Success
- Global Engagement
- Our Staff, Our Culture
- Our Place, Our Footprint



Additional Information

Acknowledgements:

- HEA Gender Equality Enhancement Fund
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Enhancement Fund
- HEA Path 4 Inclusive Environment Fund
- Access UCC
- Partner institutions: University of Limerick, University of Galway, Technological University of the Shannon, South East Technological University and Munster Technological University.



Enabling Belonging

- Promoting inclusive and accessible campus cultures by amplifying marginalised voices and experiences.
- Giving students, early-career women and those from underrepresented genders a platform to share their insights with senior leaders.
- Normalising knowledge flow based on lived experience and diverse perspectives, not seniority.
- Inspiring cultural change through a collaborative co-creation of ideas and mutual learning.
- Senior leaders gain direct insight into the experiences of underrepresented staff and students.



Video Links | Graphics

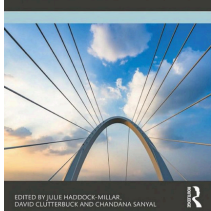


Check out our book chapter in 'Mentoring in Action'

ROUTLEDGE EMCC MASTERS IN COACHING AND MENTORING

Series Editors: David Clutterbuck and Julie Haddock-Millar

Mentoring in Action
A Guide to Success



Learn about
ENGAGE Access
Photo: Provision
Photography.

Read about
reverse
mentoring in our
RTE Brainstorm
article.



Key Impacts

- Fostered co-creation of ideas through meaningful mentor and mentee collaboration.
- Bridged hierarchical divides across staff, and between staff and students.
- Highlighted the wider benefits of reducing barriers to career progression and strengthening communication across roles, cultures, genders, and generations.
- Advanced knowledge and shared good practice for implementing reverse mentoring.
- Supported key EDI strategies.

'Personally, it's my most transformative professional development experience so far.'

(Mentor, ENGAGE Reverse Mentoring Pilot '24)

'The programme offered a fresh perspective and a new way of looking at things, encouraging us to step outside traditional roles and learn from the insights of junior and newer staff members.'

(Senior Staff Mentee, ENGAGE Reverse Mentoring Pilot '24)

Tom O'Mara
Brian Ó Donnchadh
Cassie Ní Chathasaigh

Centre for Digital Education
Ionad na Gaeilge Labharta
An tSeirbhís Aistriúcháin (Ollscoil na Gallimhe)



Case Study Synopsis

- Ní raibh ann do phacáiste Gaeilge Canvas.
- Ní raibh **comhéadan nó socruithe** as Gaeilge.
- **Bhí ar Ghaeilgeoirí comhéadan Béarla** a úsáid.
- Comhoibriú idir **Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh agus Ollscoil na Gallimhe**
- Cuireadh **tús** leis i MF 2022
- **100,000+** téarma
- Chuaigh sé **beo i MF 2025**
- Liostaithe fós mar theanga atá á forbairt
- Fáilte roimh aiseolas trí 'Canvas Help'
- Pléann COC agus OG leis an aiseolas.
- Déantar uasdátú míosúil ar LMS Canvas.

- No existing Irish language pack
- Interface and settings not available in Irish
- Irish speakers had to use English interface elements
- UCC and UG Collaboration
- Started September 2022
- 100,000+ terms
- Went Live September 2025
- Still listed as 'in development'
- Feedback welcome through Canvas Help
- UCC and UG consider feedback
- Canvas LMS being updated every month

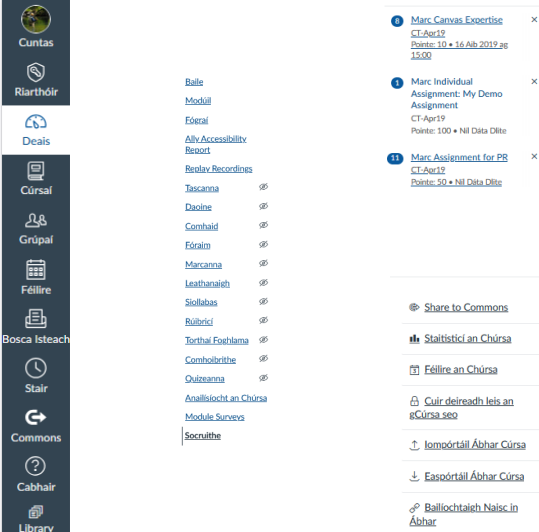
Key Words: Canvas, Gaeilge, Pacáiste Gaeilge, Language Pask



Enabling Belonging

Tuairiscíonn an POS go ndeir 40% de mhuintir na hÉireann gur féidir leo Gaeilge a labhairt. Is cuid lárnach dár bhféiniúlacht agus dár gcultúr í ár dteanga. Léiríonn infheistíocht a dhéanamh i gcinntiú gur féidir le cainteoirí Gaeilge príomhardán foghlama UCC a úsáid inár dteanga dhúchais ár dtiomantas don Gaeilge.

The CSO reports that 40% of people in Ireland say they can speak Irish. Our language is a key part of our identity and culture. Investing in making sure Irish speakers can use UCC's primary learning platform in our native language demonstrates our commitment to Irish.


Areas of Alignment

- Research & Innovation
- Student Success
- Global Engagement
- Our Staff, Our Culture
- Our Place, Our Footprint



Additional Information

Change your Canvas to Irish today.

Just scan the QR code and select Gaeilge



Key Impacts

- Aithnítear an Gaeilge mar theanga oibre laistigh de UCC.
- Gaeilgeoirí in ann foghlaim tríGaeilge.
- An Gaeilge ar fáil ar fud an domhain anois mar theanga chun Canvas a úsáid.
- UCC roimh oibleagáidí faoin Acht um Theangacha Oifigiúla athbheithnithe 2003.
- Irish recognized as a working language within UCC.
- Irish speakers able to learn through Irish.
- Irish now available globally as a language through which to use Canvas.
- UCC ahead of obligations under revised Official Languages Act 2003.

Prof. Aneta Pawłowska
Dr Adam Drozdowski
Dr Alicja Piotrowska

Institute of Art History
Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology
Faculty of Philosophy and History, University of Łódź



Case Study Synopsis

The project is linked to the exhibition "UNICALNOSC," which brought together perspectives from art history, anthropology, and design practice.

The exhibition is the result of an international project carried out within the UNIC alliance, focusing on the analysis of contemporary European cities and their identities.

The project was supervised by Prof. Aneta Pawłowska, Dr. Adam Drozdowski, and Dr. Alicja Piotrowska. The aim of the project was to prepare an interdisciplinary photography exhibition showcasing the culture and contemporary life of the cities where UNIC's partner universities are located.

This is part of the "We are UNIC!" project, a NAWA project with the reference number FERS.01.05-IP.08-0219/23

The aim of the project was to explore how students experience and perceive post-industrial cities, and to capture how urban space – its history, transformation and everyday life – influences their sense of identity and belonging. The project combined research and artistic perspectives, leading to the creation of interdisciplinary reflections on contemporary European cities and their social and cultural transformations as seen through the eyes of young adults



"Unfortunately, just like in Łódź, some of the abandoned factories and warehouses still look eerie with their broken windows. Another place where we sensed an atmosphere similar to that of Łódź was the English Market. It is a covered market space filled with the smells and bustle familiar to us from the Green Market"

"These photographs thus represent an attempt to recapture authenticity in the depiction of domestic spaces, revealing their less-than-perfect but genuinely human side, while also drawing attention to the blurring of cultural differences and the homogenization of aesthetics—phenomena that, thanks to global corporations, make contemporary spaces resemble one another regardless of location."

"Rotterdam's multiculturalism is its foundation, and the fact that it is home to over 170 nationalities is reflected in its neighborhood structure. Its Chinatown is the largest in Europe, yet its proximity to the city center fosters a constant interplay of cultures and ideas"

"Malmö also features street art, including murals and large-scale sculptures, which are often located in areas frequented by tourists, adding to the city's artistic atmosphere."

Methods:

- photography as a research and expressive tool,
- an interdisciplinary approach (art history + anthropology),
- visual analysis and interpretation of narratives created by students

Results:

- the creation of a photography exhibition presenting a variety of perspectives,
- highlighting the multidimensional nature of belonging (local, cultural, European, individual),
- reflection on the influence of urban space on individual identity,
- the development of students' research and creative skills.

Key Words: belonging, identity, photography, city, interdisciplinarity, students, urban space,

Area/s of Alignment

- ✓ Research & Innovation
- ✓ Student Success
- ✓ Global Engagement
- Our Staff, Our Culture
- Our Place, Our Footprint

Additional Information

6
STUDENTS

Julia Kwiatkowska
Gabriela Brodziolek
Filip Aniol
Pauline Zawada
Małgorzata Francuski

3
CITIES

41
PHOTOS AT THE EXHIBITION

STUDENTS FORM A UNIQUE, TRANSNATIONAL GROUP:

- THEY LIVE SIMILAR LIFESTYLES (STUDIES, MOBILITY, UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE FUTURE),
- THEY FACE COMPARABLE CHALLENGES (ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL),
- YET THEIR EXPERIENCE IS STRONGLY SHAPED BY LOCAL FACTORS—THE CITY, ITS HISTORY, AND ITS SOCIAL STRUCTURE.

THE PHOTOGRAPHY PROJECT REVEALS THE TENSION BETWEEN:

- THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE,
- AND THE LOCALITY AND SPECIFICITY OF THE URBAN CONTEXT.

The project „We are UNIC!“ is funded by the European Union under the programme „Support for European University Alliances“. NAWA project FERS.01.05-IP.08-0219/23, EU's funding amount PLN 62,705,297.60



Enabling Belonging

The project demonstrates that belonging is a dynamic and multifaceted concept. It can refer both to a place (a city) and to social, cultural or personal experiences. Photography enabled the students to express their personal interpretations of 'feeling at home' in the urban environment.

From an anthropological perspective, both identity and belonging are ambiguous, dynamic, and relational categories.

- Identity refers to the ways in which individuals define themselves.
- Belonging, on the other hand, is associated with the sense of being "at home"—in social, cultural, and material spaces.

The project posited that:

- "belonging" can refer to a sense of rootedness in a city, particularly in the context of post-industrial cities,
- it can also refer to a sense of belonging to a particular generation,
- and to the specific experience of being a student.

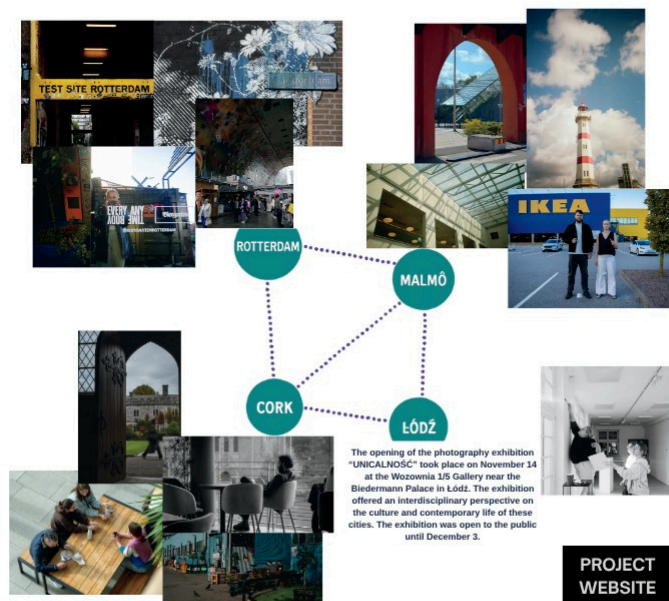
Student photography in the "UniCalmosc" project allowed for the exploration of belonging on multiple levels simultaneously:

- local (city)
- cultural and social
- European (supranational)
- academic
- historical-spatial (urban transformation)
- individual (the photographer's identity)

BELONGING AS A MULTIDIMENSIONAL, NEGOTIATED CATEGORY ROOTED IN THE INDIVIDUAL'S EXPERIENCE.



Video Links | Graphics



ROTTERDAM

MALMÖ

CORK

ŁÓDŹ

The opening of the photography exhibition "UNICALNOSC" took place on November 14 at the Wozownia 1/5 Gallery near the Biedermann Palace in Łódź. The exhibition offered an interdisciplinary perspective on the culture and contemporary life of these cities. The exhibition was open to the public until December 3.

PROJECT WEBSITE

Key Impacts

- developing students' skills in visual research, urban analysis and creative expression,
- raising awareness of the transformations taking place in post-industrial cities and their impact on residents' daily lives,
- strengthening a sense of belonging through reflection on the 'human-city' relationship,
- integrating local and international perspectives through cooperation within the UNIC network,
- fostering dialogue between cultures through shared experiences among students from different countries
- promoting photography as a research tool and a medium for exploring identity and space.

Case Study Synopsis

Background: Currently, there is an increasing focus on the alarmingly high prevalence of mental health difficulties among members of the academic community. These include high levels of stress and depression, feelings of hopelessness, and suicidal ideation. At the same time, the low visibility of available support forms at universities is being highlighted.

Aim: The aim of this study is to evaluate the quality and visibility of support services provided by higher education institutions in Poland.

Method: An online survey was developed and distributed among students of higher education institutions in Lodz. The collected data were subjected to qualitative assessment and quantitative statistical analysis.

Results: The study involved a group of 397 students from higher education institutions in Lodz (Poland). The analysis of the results revealed that approximately 35% of respondents (n=137) were unaware of the mental health support forms offered by their universities for individuals in crisis, and only 8% (n=31) had utilized such assistance. Nearly 92% (n=363) of those surveyed believe that such support should be provided by the university. The respondents identified access to free psychological and psychiatric help, psychoeducational workshops, and systemic support measures for communicating with supervisors as the most useful forms of aid. Participants also pointed to the limited availability of specialists and difficult access to information about support.

Key Words: Mental health, Well-being, Students, University, Psychological counseling

Area/s of Alignment

- Research & Innovation
- Student Success
- Our Staff, Our Culture
- Our Place, Our Footprint

Additional Information

The project also includes plans to develop a set of recommendations for higher education institutions and a mental health prevention program for undergraduate and doctoral students.

Enabling Belonging

Mental health difficulties can significantly hinder daily functioning, including within the academic context. Students experiencing mental disorders may feel isolated and disconnected from the university's social life. Addressing their needs and promoting initiatives that support the mental well-being of the academic community can markedly improve their quality of life and foster a sense of belonging.

Video Links | Graphics

Table

"In your opinion, what forms of support for individuals in emotional crisis should be provided by the university?"

Most frequent responses

Access to free, emergency (and genuinely accessible) psychological support and crisis intervention, as well as helplines (including anonymous ones).

Increasing the visibility of information regarding support services

Simplifying the procedures for obtaining psychological support and increasing its accessibility

Promoting student integration initiatives and strengthening the sense of community

Key Impacts

- There is a need to address the issue of mental health within the academic community.
- Psychotherapy → Crisis Intervention + Strategic Planning
- The academic community perceives safeguarding psychological well-being as one of the fundamental responsibilities of higher education institutions.
- Certain barriers to accessing support can still be observed. There is a clear need for better promotion of support initiatives within universities.
- It is essential for the academic community to be open to active engagement in these initiatives.
- **It is necessary to foster attitudes of openness and mindfulness among students.**



Case Study Synopsis

Background: Poles are the largest non-Irish group of Ireland's residents, Polish being the third most-spoken language after English and Irish. As Polish Erasmus+ exchange students, we have experienced the commonality of Poland's culture, e.g., Polish chain stores or parishes, which made us realize how easy it would be to isolate within the national ingroup. Such behavior would be counterproductive to the primary purpose of Erasmus+ programme- enhancing European citizenship identity and making international connections.

Aim: Our aim is to understand the mechanisms behind Inverse Proximal Processes in order to provide host universities with solutions that prevent isolation of exchange students.

Method: Using the **Process-Person-Context-Time Model (PPCT) by Bronfenbrenner & Morris (2006)**, we examined a phenomenon within the Proximal Process, where instead of integrating with the international community, a student integrates with people from their national ingroup, which results in exclusion and isolation rather than growth, reinforcing the dysfunctional "Golden Cage" phenomenon.

Key Words: *Proximal Processes, self-isolation, exchange Students, integration, academic integrity*



Areas of Alignment

- Research & Innovation
- Student Success
- Global Engagement
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References



Key-Impacts

An in-depth understanding of inverse Proximal Processes will allow researchers to equip institutions hosting exchange students with solutions preventing the exclusion and self-isolation of students from abroad.



Enabling Belonging

Academic units do not have the power and tools to change students' personality (P-Person), the whole context of their exchange (C-Context) or it's length (T-Time). Consequently, the only area for development within their capability is the aspect of the Process (P), which, if interfered with correctly, can shape the sense of belonging to the international students' community.

Proximal Processes: Each individual is an active participant in the world surrounding them. By reciprocal interactions, in this case, students, are able to grow and develop, using their exchange experience to the fullest. The Proximal Processes are however partly dependent on individual's characteristics, which means that people with a tendency to self-isolate will be more prone to the dysfunctional inverse Proximal Processes.

Mechanism of inverse Proximal Processes: Interactions within the national in-group provide students with comfort due to their homeostatic character, including using the native language, familiar cultural values and traditions. It reinforces the fear of leaving their comfort-zone and allows them to stay in a safe "National Bubble". This way, the student develops a high competence within a closed, irrelevant sub-system (the bubble) while simultaneously losing the ability to function in the actual host environment, which leads to an active development of alienation.

Exemplary Solutions:

- Project-Based Learning methods requiring the cooperation of international and host country students (executed by the lecturers);
- Mentor/ "Buddy" programmes requiring weekly meetings during the period of mobility;
- Events for international students requiring active participation through cooperation;
- Micro-credentialing for attending integration events, e.g., digital badges, certificates.



Graphics

