

Context

This Strategic Plan takes as its foundation the unique heritage and historic achievements of UCD, the societal and political context in which we operate and the opportunities and challenges that face us in the coming years.

The plan has been formed through a detailed planning process within Faculties, specific task forces, focus groups and dialogues involving a cross-section of the university community. There has been significant input from a variety of external reviews, including two institutional reviews conducted by the European Universities Association (formerly Conference of Rectors of Europe), a review of quality procedures also conducted under the auspices of the European Universities Association and most recently, advice offered in the report of the Washington Advisory Group. The OECD *Review of Higher Education in Ireland* and the reports of the Enterprise Strategy Group and the British Academy provide an important public policy context for this Strategic Plan.

3.1

THE TRADITION OF NEWMAN

This plan is published in the context of UCD's celebration of its 150th anniversary, John Henry Cardinal Newman having opened the doors of UCD's antecedent institution, the Catholic University of Ireland, on 3 November 1854.

In 1852, Newman delivered the nine discourses which make up the first half of his great work *The Idea of a University*. Newman entitled his fifth discourse: "Knowledge is its own end". Today, while the work of UCD brings and has brought multiple and diverse benefits to the individual, the economy and society, it is always knowledge that is our end: the creation of new knowledge through research and the transmission of existing knowledge through teaching. Newman's holistic educational ethos lives on in the UCD of 2005. UCD is and will continue to be a university of ideas. Newman defined for the modern world the value of a university and UCD has never ceased to take up his challenge to be "the alma mater of the rising generation".



UCD is unique amongst Irish universities; having started life as the Catholic University of Ireland without a state endowment or act of Parliament, it came to play a central role in the development of Ireland. It was founded with the ideal of helping Ireland grow to become a flourishing European country. For 150 years UCD has enriched Ireland and Irish communities across the globe. The challenge today is to position itself to facilitate a new wave of Ireland's development in the highly competitive and globalised 21st Century.

3.2 THE COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT

UCD has a strong and proud record but is conscious that it cannot rest on its laurels. We operate in an increasingly competitive global higher education environment and others are continually evolving to acquire a competitive advantage. Ireland's best secondary school students are being courted as never before by leading universities abroad. Furthermore, a large number of PhD students are now opting to pursue their studies in the UK and internationally. Our leading scholars are being targeted by top international institutions. If these students and scholars leave, they will flourish

academically on other campuses and contribute to the social, cultural and economic development of other societies.

In addition to retaining the best Irish talent, UCD must establish itself as a magnet for top international talent and develop the environment, structures, systems and incentives to facilitate this. In short, UCD's Strategic Plan must be bolder and more imaginative than ever before if UCD and Ireland are to compete and succeed in this uncompromisingly competitive context.

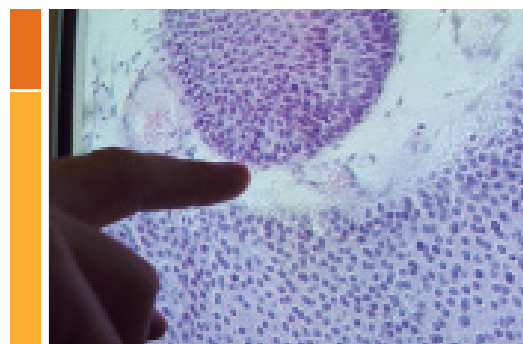
3.3 PUBLIC POLICY CONTEXT

In advance of the OECD *Review of Higher Education in Ireland* (September 2004), the Department of Education and Science prepared a *Background Country Report* that set out the main objectives of higher education policy in Ireland. These included:

- Achieving recognised standards of excellence in teaching and learning;
- Expansion of research activity of international quality;
- Promotion of the responsiveness of higher education to the needs of society and the economy.

Subsequently, OECD's own recommendations highlighted the need for universities to adopt a more strategic outlook and to be more fluid and dynamic in their approach to their business. Specifically, the OECD Report includes the following recommendations:

- That Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) give higher priority to staff development issues and allocate resources accordingly;
- That steps be taken to expand the numbers of doctoral students in universities, with the intention to more than double them by 2010;
- That Irish HEIs aim to double their international student population in five years;
- That, in order to incentivise HEIs to seek external sources of funding, the government make a clear statement that income generated from sources outside those provided by the State will not be subject to off-setting against State funding;
- That universities review their resource allocation processes with a view to ensuring that resources are allocated in line with stated strategic priorities.



In the context of the humanities, the British Academy report of March 2004, *That full complement of riches*, sets out the contribution of the arts, humanities and social sciences to national development and progress. It states that the arts, humanities and social sciences:

- Lead the way in promoting understanding of a nation's history and cultures, religions and societies, thereby helping to sustain national identity, multicultural tolerance and interaction;
- Foster public debate and enhance public engagement with the complexities of modern life, especially those which involve conflicting moralities, traditions and beliefs;
- Provide, through their commitment to analytical rigour and humane values, crucial support for civic virtues and open, accessible government, on which any civilised society depends;
- Contribute to understanding and developing the performance, productivity and innovative development of business;

- Contribute critically to rapidly expanding and strategically significant sectors of the economy including heritage and tourism;
- Address major issues such as the impact of scientific and medical advances, the management of international relations, development and security, and the effects of globalisation;
- Offer a very favourable social rate of return on public investment.

The Enterprise Strategy Group (ESG) Report (July 2004) addressed the key actions required to deliver sustainable enterprise and continuing growth in Ireland in the decade ahead. The report specifically recommended that "an adaptive and responsive higher education sector is necessary to create and exploit knowledge and to produce the number and quality of graduates necessary to support the knowledge economy."

In pursuit of this goal, the ESG report asserted that the future of the higher education sector would require all institutions to:

- Respond to changes in the global market, demands for skills and advances in knowledge;
- Be flexible and adaptive to the needs of students and enterprise;
- Be creative and innovative in delivery methods;
- Support high levels of participation in lifelong learning;
- Be innovative in exploiting the commercialisation of research;
- Facilitate the mobility of staff in both directions between academia and enterprise.

3.4 EXTERNAL REVIEW

In 1998 and again in 2003 UCD was reviewed by the Conference of European Rectors (CRE), now the European Universities Association (EUA). The findings of these reviews, which were not widely disseminated at the time, leave little room for doubt about the scale of the challenge facing UCD. Specific EUA recommendations include:

- Implementation of a consistent university-wide modularised and credit-based curriculum;
- Setting of targets for increased recruitment of non-traditional students;
- Enhanced use of e-learning for traditional and non-traditional students;
- Development of a clear and ambitious university-wide research strategy;
- Overhaul of university management and governance to include simplification of academic and decision-making structures and external chairmanship of the Governing Authority;
- Transformation of Vice-Presidents' role to one of full-time executive function with appropriate administrative support;
- Implementation of a thoroughgoing strategic planning process at university and Faculty level;
- Design and implementation of comprehensive staff training and development programmes;
- Formulation of clear strategy for internationalisation;

- Diversification of income portfolio;
- Strengthening of the UCD brand.

In 2004, The Washington Advisory Group carried out a review of UCD's operations and objectives. Its recommendations included the following:

- The need to define clear institutional priorities;
- Focusing attention on recruitment processes to ensure that UCD competes internationally for high-calibre, high-potential recruits;
- Reducing the number of Faculties, Departments and Centres to ensure critical mass in research and teaching and learning and to provide administrative efficiency, thereby reducing the administrative burden on academics;
- Developing workload models to be deployed on a university-wide basis and assessing teaching on a more systematic basis;
- The urgency of enhancing the learning, research and social infrastructure of the UCD campus.

A recent review of quality and quality assurance in Irish universities was conducted by the EUA and commissioned by the Higher Education Authority and the Irish Universities Quality Board. This review highlighted:

- The potential for curricular reform, student recruitment, internationalisation and social inclusion offered by the introduction of full modularisation;

- The impediments to academic and administrative effectiveness posed by UCD's excessively complex structures;
- The quality of and commitment to student support and welfare services;
- The need to use quality assurance procedures and institutional research to support academic strategy and planning.

3.5 THE RESEARCH INTENSIVE UNIVERSITY

In using the term "research-intensive university", the following criteria are envisaged:

- An institution dedicated to the search for knowledge and marked by a spirit of critical inquiry;
- An institution where intensity of research and dedication to scholarship drives and stimulates teaching and learning and inspires students.

Research includes the creation, preservation, interpretation and re-interpretation of knowledge. Scholarship, creativity, discovery and innovation are all facets of university research. UCD will be a research-intensive university which celebrates equally a diversity of world-class research outputs: books, journal papers, patents, policy papers, literature and art. The reputation and impact of a research-intensive university depend

upon the quality of the work done, the mark of quality being its academic, social, cultural or technical impact.

As a research-intensive university, UCD will offer undergraduate and postgraduate learning of unmatched quality. Such universities are magnets for the best students and researchers in the world. Concomitantly, a society without internationally competitive higher education is unable to compete with the world's most innovative, skilled and enterprising societies.

Furthermore, a research-intensive university is student centred and combines quality research with the best teaching and learning programmes. It informs undergraduate and postgraduate teaching with content derived from the discovery process.

3.6 DEVELOPING OUR CAPABILITY

As UCD aims to position itself as a leading international, student-centred, research-intensive university, historic constraints and infrastructural limitations to our development must be addressed. As identified above, external reviews have pointed to the enormous potential that UCD has to offer, based on the quality of its staff, students and facilities. These same reviews, however, particularly when taken together with internal quality assurance assessments, indicate significant unrealised potential when measured against relevant international comparative institutions.

Furthermore, there is a significant commonality in the reasons advanced for this situation:

- Chronic under-investment by the State in Irish higher education;
- Excess number of Faculties, Departments and other academic units limiting interdisciplinary collaboration and the emergence of new disciplines;
- Disconnect between academic and administrative systems, leading to excess administrative burden carried by academic staff and frustration amongst administrative and support staff over lack of clarity of roles;
- A resource allocation model which fails to encourage the exploitation of opportunities;
- Archaic recruitment and promotion procedures;
- Confusion between governance and management in the conduct of university business;
- Lack of target setting and performance metrics;
- Lack of integration between strategic planning, academic planning and support services;
- The reality that our competitors, already ahead in a variety of international rankings, are not standing still.