4

Strategic Objectives

UCD will achieve its vision by overcoming current constraints and differentiating itself from other institutions through the successful achievement of a set of strategic objectives. It will exploit its diversity and compete successfully for the best students by offering an attractive and fully modularised suite of degree programmes. A key change will be the expansion of research activity and graduate programmes, including structured doctoral programmes. Our academic staff will be supported by colleagues who will deploy best practice in the management and administration of the institution. The UCD Strategic Plan 2005 to 2008 contains a set of objectives whose aim is to translate the mission and vision of the university into appropriate actions. The plan and its progress against stated objectives will be subject to continuous review.

4.1   TEACHING, LEARNING AND STUDENT LIFE

The university must be the ideal environment in which to learn, discover, create and innovate. This requires a vibrant, dynamic and engaged academic community, and constant attention to the quality of our educational programmes and learning environment. Where the learning community is appropriately diverse, we must be responsive to and accommodate the resulting diversity of backgrounds, needs, goals and objectives. This requires clear and challenging academic standards, combined with flexibility in the curriculum and its delivery, in order that each individual fulfils their potential. Furthermore, our students require and deserve a high-quality, inclusive learning environment, excellent student facilities, responsive student support services and opportunities for intellectual, personal and social development.

The Strategic Plan will reflect these core values, to establish UCD as a leading international university where:

- Excellence in teaching and learning is informed and stimulated by excellence in research and scholarship;
- The quality of teaching and taught programmes is to the highest international standards;

- The educational programmes and learning environment attract the best students from Ireland and elsewhere;
- A diverse body of learners participate in and benefit from higher education, and such social and cultural diversity is demonstrably valued;
- An emphasis is placed on a student-centred and inclusive approach to learning;
- The student experience is widely seen as being of the highest quality, and all students have access to facilities and supports to enrich their holistic development;
- Support for students is quantitatively and qualitatively the best in the Irish university sector, and comparable to best international practice;
- A core objective is to develop the skills and interest necessary for a lifelong commitment to learning, and to support such learning;
- The combination of strong basic and classical disciplines, a liberal educational ethos and robust professional programmes yields graduates who shape as well as serve society;

· Through its activities and its graduates, the university benefits and enriches the social, cultural and economic fabric of our lives.

The implementation of a fully modular, semesterised, credit-based curriculum for all programmes is key to achieving many of the objectives outlined below and is the priority educational development at UCD in the period of this Strategic Plan.

EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AND LEARNING DRIVEN BY EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP

The student in a research-intensive university is taught, learns and lives in an atmosphere of advanced scholarship, in an environment where cutting-edge research is conducted. They cannot but internalise the very process by which new knowledge is generated, and are thus uniquely placed to contribute, to critique and to apply. A general approach and specific measures are required to ensure that this research genuinely informs teaching and inspires students.

Excellence in learning in the era of mass higher education requires a clear strategy to retain the fundamental values of a university: challenging each student with the very highest standards while supporting all to achieve their full potential.

Specific objectives contained within this overarching objective include the commitment to:

· Explicitly link research and scholarship with teaching and learning;

· Encourage active and autonomous learning;

· Drive innovation in teaching, learning and assessment;

· Enhance quality and foster a quality culture;

· Ensure that excellence in teaching is fostered and rewarded by staff development and promotion procedures.

Key actions

■ Implement a modularised and semesterised curriculum, with a rolling implementation beginning September 2005 and complete September 2007;

■ Fully modularise all taught postgraduate programmes by September 2006, to increase effectiveness and flexibility at this level and provide an essential taught element for structured doctoral programmes;

■ Drive curricular reform at programme and module level to focus on defining the core curriculum and learning outcomes, including generic outcomes;

■ Shift the focus from teaching to learning, from coverage to depth, from teacher to student;

■ Introduce research-driven modules and activities at all levels of undergraduate programmes;

■ Involve graduate students in facilitating undergraduate learning in a structured manner;

■ Create a competitive strategic innovation fund for teaching and learning;

■ Develop strong academic, educational and technical support structures for innovation in teaching;

■ Establish a robust teaching quality enhancement process involving student feedback, peer review and external programme assessment;

■ Formalise and enhance the process by which new staff are trained to teach, including mentoring programmes, and provide mechanisms to support ongoing professional development;

■ Ensure that performance in teaching is valued in reward and promotion mechanisms;

■ Form strong Schools with the critical mass to deliver quality modular educational programmes and ensure staff development;

■ Maintain and develop professional and vocational programmes that serve national needs to international standards.

RECRUIT THE BEST STUDENTS AND MAXIMISE THEIR POTENTIAL

The success of higher learning depends greatly upon the abilities and engagement of the students, and the community they form within the institution. A leading university will attract the very best students, who by driving high standards and stimulating their peers enrich the experience for all learners.

This requires a fundamental change in the attitude of UCD to its prospective students: simply put, a move from admissions to recruitment. The academically accomplished are in a position to choose the higher education institution that best meets their needs,

nationally and internationally. UCD must attract students based on the quality and diversity of its programmes, the range of opportunities available in the modular curriculum, the excellence and international reputation of its teaching staff and ongoing investment in the learning environment.

There are also potential students who, while requiring assistance, guidance or preparation to enter higher education will benefit greatly and contribute significantly to the learning community and to society. The recruitment effort must cast its net beyond the traditional student intake, with specific and tailored strategies where required.

Specific objectives contained within this overarching objective include the commitment to ensure programmes are:

- Of the highest quality;
- Tailored to the needs of individual students;
- Appropriately marketed and advertised nationally and internationally.

Key actions

- Implement the modular, semesterised curriculum to maximise choice and facilitate individualisation of educational offerings;

- Develop a focused, inclusive student recruitment strategy (national and international) including strategic use of electronic information systems, campus accommodation and scholarships.

DIVERSIFY THE LEARNING COMMUNITY AND EMPHASISE INCLUSIVE LEARNING

UCD has a strong track record in widening participation with programmes such as New ERA and the Disability Support Service, developing specific strategies and supports to include students who have traditionally experienced impediments to participation in higher education.

UCD will build on this commitment and experience to be positioned and recognised as a socially inclusive institution. This will be achieved firstly by ensuring that teaching programmes and the learning environment are suited to all potential students, but also by identifying and setting specific targets and reinforcing or establishing dedicated recruitment, support and retention strategies.

It is not sufficient for UCD to change; we must work in partnership with other HEIs and with the State to maximise the impact of our initiatives and to help set the national agenda for diversity and inclusiveness.

Specific objectives contained within this overarching objective include the commitment to:

- Open new entry pathways and implement flexible progression mechanisms;

- Widen the range of teaching and assessment methods employed to accommodate different learning needs and styles;

- Achieve a target of 20% of Irish intake from non-traditional backgrounds (socioeconomically disadvantaged, mature and disabled).

Key actions

- Clarify and extend credit accumulation and progression systems in the implementation of the modular curriculum;

- Disseminate best practice in inclusive teaching and assessment methods;

- Develop integrated student administrative and academic advisory services;

- Negotiate more flexible funding arrangements with the HEA;

- Establish progression mechanisms and 'ladders of opportunity' from the further education sector and Institutes of Technology;

- Form educational partnerships with local Institutes of Technology.

INTERNATIONALISE THE UCD EXPERIENCE

Exposure to diverse ideas, cultures, languages and experiences is a critical component of modern life in general and should be a central element of the UCD student experience. UCD needs to proactively engage in a process to diversify the cultural milieu of our university. Our specific objectives will be to:

- Ensure that UCD is a destination of choice for the best international students with the goal that they will form 20% of our student body by 2008;

- Ensure that by 2008, 30% of UCD undergraduate students have the opportunity to spend at least one semester abroad;

- Take a proactive approach to ensure that international students are integrated into the UCD community and thereby enrich the campus experience for all students.

Key actions

- Develop an integrated internationalisation strategy that supports undergraduate, postgraduate and research activity, and addresses the spectrum of issues that impact on this domain;

- Ensure that, through the implementation of modularisation and credit accumulation, educational offerings are compatible with the Bologna Declaration, but also US and other systems;

- Develop and co-ordinate university and College activities in the international student arena, establishing clear lines of responsibility for recruitment, junior-year-abroad and exchange activities;

- Identify and target specific high-quality universities in Europe and beyond to engage in student exchange programmes with UCD;

- Develop and resource marketing programmes using electronic and traditional channels targeted at identified groups of international students;

- Provide excellent infrastructural and academic support specific to the needs of the international student in order to both attract them and enable their success;

- Provide a coherent range of supports to Irish students on exchange programmes abroad.

CREATE A WORLD-CLASS, STUDENT-FOCUSED ENVIRONMENT TO SUPPORT THE HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT OF OUR STUDENTS

UCD will take specific measures to develop a more supportive environment for our students which will match best international practice. The objective is to ensure the broad and holistic development of all students, enriching and maximising the impact of our teaching and learning programme.

Specifically we will:

- Extend and improve access to our learning facilities;

- Exploit new technologies to improve the learning experience and develop the virtual campus;

- Create an inclusive campus environment where facilities are accessible by a wide range of potential users;

- Ensure cultural, leisure and sporting facilities are fully developed and used by our students, staff, alumni and the wider community;

- Develop our on-campus accommodation as a key element in the enrichment of the UCD community.

Key actions

- Develop and extend access to library, computing, laboratory and study facilities, with the specific goal of having 24-hour access to many of our facilities;

- Initiate a programme of strategic investment in classroom technology, virtual learning environments and e-learning infrastructure;

- Put in place a programme to promote and encourage full use of our facilities and in particular develop valuable academic and cultural programmes which run during the summer months;

- Develop and promote programmes to encourage the student and wider community to participate in sporting, cultural and leisure activities. The capacity and quality of some of our facilities will need to be reviewed as part of this process and developed/extended as appropriate;

- Develop, extend and refurbish our residential accommodation.

PROVIDE TIMELY AND RELEVANT SUPPORT SERVICES TO OUR STUDENTS

We fully recognise that life can present difficulties for many of our students. These difficulties will often be expressed in financial, psychological, cultural or physical terms. As we aspire to be a truly leading university, we must provide necessary supports for our students to assist them in overcoming these difficulties. Specifically we will:

- Ensure that extensive formal support services are in place across the university;

- Assist in the provision of financial support to ensure that the potential for students to withdraw from university life for financial reasons is minimised;

- Significantly develop mental and physical healthcare services.

Key actions

- Develop and resource College-based support teams in each of our Colleges;

- Develop and implement training programmes in student support to both our administrative and academic staff;

- Significantly augment the current programme to promote the physical and mental health of our students;

- Put in place a programme to aid low-income students, and students that encounter financial difficulties;

- Recognise and encourage the support provided to students by the UCD Students' Union by working with and aiding the SU to put in place training and advice structures for Union officers engaged in student support.

PROMOTE A CULTURE OF LIFELONG LEARNING

The fundamental value of education, the rate of growth of knowledge and the pace of social and technological change dictate that learning is now a lifelong pursuit. UCD recognises the need and the desire on the part of individuals to expand their knowledge, add to their skills and return to the learning experience at all points in their lives. We are committed to fostering this approach to life and fulfilling these needs.

Specific objectives include:

- Incorporating generic learning skills into the core curriculum in all programmes;

- Leveraging the benefits of modularisation to make elements of our traditional programmes available to lifelong learners;

- Continuing the successful dedicated adult education and continuing professional development programmes.

Key actions

- Consolidate the existing adult education and continuing professional development activities, implementing a modular credit accumulation and transfer model.

- Develop targeted e-learning initiatives to meet the specific learning and lifestyle needs of this constituency.

4.2	RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP

Research is the engine of knowledge creation, whether that knowledge and creativity is cultural or scientific in nature. The goal of research at UCD is creative discovery, from which flows, variously, publications, intellectual property and income. Research grants and income, particularly in the scientific disciplines, depend largely on a track record of quality publications. Analogously in the humanities and social sciences, institutional reputation hinges on the quality of published output. Therefore, high-impact publications are the currency of a university research programme.

UCD must be a university that will attract and retain the best researchers by delivering postgraduate programmes that compete with top institutions worldwide. In the absence of a domestic alternative, our best students will leave Ireland to affiliate with research-intensive institutions elsewhere that are capable of providing state-of-the-art training and programmes delivered by researchers with a strong track record.

With this in mind, UCD aims to build an environment that encourages and attracts world-class researchers from across the disciplinary spectrum, that enhances confidence in UCD as a destination for commercial partnerships and that makes UCD a national leader in research funding. Within this framework, UCD will embody the fundamental values of academic freedom and scholarship, governed by the highest professional and ethical standards.

### EXCELLENCE AND DISTINCTIVENESS IN RESEARCH ACROSS THE UNIVERSITY

The future success of UCD depends upon our research and scholarship making an international impact, building on areas of established success as well as emerging strengths and harnessing the diversity of talent within the institution. This will involve a programme of strategic investment in priority areas.

Specifically we will:

- Identify areas of strength for prioritisation;

- Focus on research of high scientific, social and cultural impact;

- Provide required resources and time for research-active staff;

- Foster interdisciplinary programmes;

- Internationalise our research programmes.

Key actions

- Complete the review process of research strengths;

- Define governance and strategic models for research institutes;

- Develop strategic alliances with leading national and international institutions;

- Establish research as a major driver of the UCD resource allocation model;

- Perform space allocation review and implementation based on research outputs;
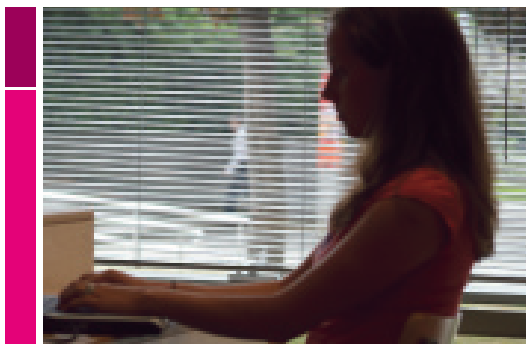
- Strengthen enabling disciplines and technologies;
- Seed-fund emerging areas across all disciplines.

ATTRACT AND RETAIN LEADING RESEARCHERS

The research-intensive university requires that the majority of its academic staff are research-active as measured by internationally recognised criteria. This Strategic Plan builds on the acknowledged excellence of our academic staff. It includes specific measures to encourage, support and reward research activity, and to ensure that UCD attracts and retains leading researchers.

Specifically, we will:

- Increase the number of research-active academics across the institution;
- Professionalise research training and careers;
- Compete nationally and internationally for research leaders.

Key actions

- Internationalise the recruitment drive for research leaders in prioritised areas;
- Formalise the involvement in UCD of researchers, scholars and professionals who, although not directly employed by UCD, contribute to our academic mission;
- Further development of recognition and reward systems for research;
- Develop career paths for researchers:
  - Establish research-based undergraduate training;
  - Establish structured research-based PhD programmes;
  - Establish postdoctoral research training programmes;
  - Develop a structured and visible tenure-track;
  - Mainstream training in research management, leadership and entrepreneurship.
- Continue renewal and development of research infrastructure:
  - Continue the refurbishment programme for laboratories and offices;
  - Continue the investment in enabling technologies, including IT;
  - Strategic planning and pump-priming of new initiatives through competitive grants;
  - Develop the archives and library holdings.
- Develop on- and off-campus accommodation and staff facilities.

ENHANCING TEACHING AND LEARNING THROUGH RESEARCH

The distinctive feature of a university learning experience is that it is informed by current research and is conducted in the same atmosphere of discovery, creativity, criticism and excitement that characterises scholarship. UCD will ensure that excellence in research directly and indirectly enhances teaching and learning throughout the university.

Specifically we will:

- Ensure that teaching programmes are informed by research;
- Retain top undergraduates for postgraduate programmes;
- Increase the value of postgraduate degrees.

Key actions

- Ensure research-active academics have a central role in teaching programmes;
- Develop further the research elements of undergraduate programmes, including specific research-based modules;
- Establish competitive research awards for undergraduates;
- Develop feeder programmes for postgraduate degrees.

A NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN LEADER IN POSTGRADUATE EDUCATION

While UCD has an established international reputation for the quality of its teaching, our future depends upon having doctoral programmes of sufficient quality and international standing to attract the very best students. This is key to the further development of UCD as a research-intensive university, to the vibrancy of our academic community, and to the success of Ireland as a knowledge society.

Specifically we will:

- Create a UCD PhD that is a quality hallmark of the university;
- Advance to structured PhD training programmes in line with funding opportunities;

- Resource a framework to enable quality while increasing enrolment of postgraduate students.

Key actions

- Establish PhD training programmes organised in Graduate Schools that include:
  - Discipline-based structured postgraduate programmes;
  - Competitive entry and assessment procedures;
  - Reward and recognition for performance of student and supervisor;
  - Tailored programmes through modularisation;
  - All degrees configured as Masters/PhD to facilitate early assessment and broaden student options;
  - Clear provisions for mentoring, career advice and development;
  - Active recruitment of overseas students;
  - Central administration of admissions and training.
- Incorporate postgraduate student activity into the resource allocation model;
- Establish cross-campus management, standards and internationalisation through a Director of Postgraduate Studies.

CONTRIBUTE TO THE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL OBJECTIVES OF A KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

The primary goals of the university are the creation, preservation, interpretation and dissemination of knowledge. There is also an obligation to transfer and apply that knowledge for the betterment of society, whether economically, socially or culturally. UCD is committed to knowledge transfer in all areas of research and scholarship. The specific objectives under this Strategic Plan include a commitment to:

- Align UCD's research programmes with Ireland's social, cultural and economic objectives;
- Realise the full value of our research programmes;
- Engender an entrepreneurial culture.

Key actions

- Enhance knowledge transfer through our flagship programme, NovaUCD:
  - Initiate a knowledge management programme;
  - Identify and protect UCD's intellectual property;
  - Train our staff in knowledge transfer and entrepreneurship;
  - Integrate the NITM and NovaUCD programmes;
  - Commercialise UCD's intellectual property through licensing and spin-off companies.
- Establish a Centre for Policy Research in support of knowledge transfer from the humanities, human sciences and allied disciplines;

- Establish the Global Irish Institute as statement of wider interest in and support of the global Irish community;
- Continue to forge strategic partnerships with industry, the public sector and social and cultural organisations;
- Develop research services.

UCD AS A LEADING DESTINATION FOR QUALITY RESEARCH INVESTMENT

UCD's capacity for research and the quality of that research depends upon sustained investment at levels comparable to our international competitors. We must take specific steps to ensure that UCD attracts appropriate levels of research funding from a diversity of sources.

Specifically we will:

- Create opportunities for peer-reviewed and unrestricted grant income for research;
- Persuade government to invest in research;
- Diversify the funding base by strengthening existing relationships and forging new partnerships;
- Realise the value of our research programmes across the university to create new opportunities.

Key actions

- Target institutional research priority programmes towards areas of agency support;
- Reward and recognise prestigious grant support, innovation and commercialisation, patents and industry awards, and policy initiatives;
- Recognise grant income within the resource allocation model;
- Enhance the provision of research overheads to areas of strategic importance;
- Reward and recognise membership of government boards and charitable bodies;
- Contribute to government policy on research through policy statements;
- Develop a public relations framework that communicates our research successes;
- Develop a full cost model for research to include optimisation of research overheads;
- Develop a strong research economy by targeting and capitalising on available resources including:
  - State agencies;
  - European framework programmes;
  - Philanthropic and charitable donations;
  - Commercialisation of research output.