



4 Education

4.1. Context and goals

UCD fully recognises that the research and education we provide must rival the best international universities if Ireland is to maintain its position as one of the world's great small nations.

The UCD approach to education draws upon a tradition dating back to the founding vision of John Henry Newman. It builds on UCD's distinct identity as Ireland's largest and most diverse research university. UCD brings together a wider range of academic disciplines than any other university on the island and complements this diversity with the diversity of the staff and student body. The strengths of UCD as an educational environment are the richness and variety of its offerings and their solid foundation in research and scholarship.

The versatility of intellect espoused by Newman is exemplified in the flagship *UCD Horizons* programme which encourages students to explore new areas distinct from their primary area of study. In addition, we have pioneered a series of double majors bringing together professional disciplines with humanities, for example the new degree programme in law and politics. Furthermore, UCD played a lead role in the development of graduate-entry pathways into medicine and veterinary medicine. Notwithstanding the current difficult economic and financial situation, UCD is determined to maintain and enhance the high-quality educational experience it provides and to build even stronger links between teaching and learning and research and innovation, to provide the human and intellectual capital required for national recovery and prosperity.

UCD has made enormous progress in education under the UCD Strategic Plan, 2005/2008, some highlights of which are set out in Section 3 above, and our objective over the next five years will be to maximise the benefits of changes made in this period and to maintain the momentum for success. The *UCD Horizons* undergraduate curriculum is nationally and internationally recognised as a visionary structural reform with great potential. The challenge now is to make the most of this potential to strengthen and enhance our programmes, to create new educational opportunities for students, to provide a broad and liberal education and to facilitate lifelong learning. The modularisation of taught graduate programmes and the development of the UCD Structured PhD establish UCD as a national leader in graduate education. The priority for the next stage of our development is to grow and to develop the taught postgraduate portfolio, attracting greater numbers of national and international students, and to stimulate the development of thematic doctoral programmes in areas of research strength.

UCD's goals over the lifetime of this plan are to:

- Further develop the *UCD Horizons* undergraduate curriculum, strengthening programmes, fostering student engagement and fully exploiting the flexibility of the modular curriculum
- Create a unique set of opportunities and supports for highly talented students through the establishment of the *UCD Ad Astra Academy*
- Grow and develop graduate education, particularly through the expansion of the taught masters portfolio and the development of doctoral programmes, so that by 2014 one-third of our student body will be graduate students
- Focus on stimulating creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship and active citizenship in all our students
- Build on our success in widening participation, in particular by ensuring our programmes can be pursued part-time, so that by 2014 students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, mature students, students with disabilities and part-time students will together comprise 25 per cent of our student body
- Attract greater numbers of international students, with the ultimate objective of 25 per cent of our students being international students
- Ensure that the UCD environment and its curriculum prepare graduates for life and work across borders, with particular emphasis on Asia, Latin America and the European Union
- Mainstream assessment of teaching quality and feedback on the student experience
- Ensure all newly appointed staff receive appropriate training and professional development in university teaching
- Establish as the norm that all UCD professors contribute to teaching of first-year students
- Establish the *UCD Institute for Learning Innovation and Academic Development (ILIAD)* to support UCD's growing community of teaching innovators and educational researchers and to highlight and disseminate, nationally and internationally, UCD's achievements in learning innovation and academic development.

4.2. The attributes of a UCD graduate

The attributes of the UCD graduate are the starting point and a constant reference for our educational priorities and objectives. The UCD graduate is:

4.2.1. Academically excellent

- With an in-depth knowledge of his or her chosen discipline and an understanding of how knowledge in that discipline is advanced, underpinned with well-developed skills of critical thinking, analysis and reflection
- With an aptitude for continued, self-directed and collaborative learning in academic and professional settings throughout his or her career.

4.2.2. Intellectually flexible and culturally literate

- With a repertoire of analytic and cognitive skills for creative and innovative approaches to new learning contexts and problems
- With strong interpersonal and decision-making skills to bring to his or her individual discipline or profession
- With an understanding of the contributions of different disciplines, approaches and perspectives to the advancement of knowledge, understanding and culture
- With an understanding of the wide-ranging background knowledge necessary to contextualise educational and research programmes.

4.2.3. Globally engaged

- With an appreciation of the richness and diversity of human cultures
- With an awareness of his or her responsibility as a global citizen
- Committed to equity, inclusion and diversity in his or her work and life context.

4.3. The UCD student experience

Building on a tradition that stretches back to its founding rector, John Henry Newman, the student is at the centre of the UCD strategy for education. In his seminal Dublin work, *The Idea of a University*, Newman declared the university to be “a place of teaching universal knowledge”. His successors at UCD today are committed to giving the broadest possible interpretation to the implementation of this ideal. Consequently, UCD is committed to recruiting and nurturing high-achieving students with demonstrated capabilities in learning, sport and the performing arts. The challenge to consolidate and enhance our heritage in relation to the quality of the UCD student experience and the UCD graduate is both an inspiration and a constant reference point for our strategic educational priorities and objectives.

Through the achievements of the past few years, UCD has put in place much of the infrastructural framework necessary to deliver high-quality opportunities for our students. These include the *UCD Horizons* programme, graduate schools and updated student facilities, the next major phase of which will come on stream in autumn 2011.

The UCD student experience aims to be:

- A holistic journey of discovery where each student is given every possible encouragement and support to achieve her or his full potential, in both academic and personal spheres
- Academically excellent, where students are given the foundation for a life of the mind that will persist throughout their adult lives
- International and culturally diverse, preparing students for work and life in many different cultures and environments
- An opportunity for students to develop their social and cultural skills and awareness, particularly through the hundreds of UCD clubs and societies
- One where students form the habits for a healthy lifestyle including encouragement to engage in sport and physical exercise
- One where structured volunteering and community-engagement activities develop a commitment to active citizenship
- One which provides mentorship, guidance and support to prepare students for their career or profession
- A supportive experience which provides the necessary medical and psychological supports for students who are vulnerable or at risk.

4.4. Strategic objectives

UCD has identified a set of key objectives for the period covered by this plan. Collaboration will be essential to achieving these. We will build on two important alliances: the *Dublin Region Higher Education Alliance*, which supports collaboration in enhancement of learning, doctoral education, internationalisation and widening participation, and the *UCD-TCD Innovation Alliance*, which will establish innovation alongside teaching and research as a core activity for the participating universities.

4.4.1. Foster early and lasting student engagement

The challenge of fully engaging a diverse student body within a mass higher-education system is the single most important educational issue facing the modern university. UCD will concentrate on early intervention to ensure student engagement in the first year, establishing from the outset our expectations of students and promoting and fostering learning behaviours that will ensure success at university level.

The priority actions in this area will include:

- The creation of a unique set of opportunities and supports for highly talented students through the establishment of the *UCD Ad Astra Academy*, which will provide a collegial identity for high-achieving students and will encourage further achievement with access to challenging modules, individual academic advice and tailored programmes, and accelerated access to graduate studies
- A review and reform of the structure, outcomes, assessment and remediation strategies for first year, and in particular the first semester, to support the transition from 2nd- to 3rd-level and to adapt to the different needs of different students
- The further development of approaches to engage and support students, especially in their first year, including small-group learning, peer-mentoring, academic advice and mentoring, specific supports for the development of transferable skills and information literacy and general welfare supports
- The enhancement of programme-specific orientation, to include academic advice and orientation.

4.4.2. Grow and develop graduate education

UCD recognises the value of the three-cycle bachelors-masters-doctoral framework which is at the core of the Bologna process. Through enhanced interdisciplinary approaches, UCD will focus on developing its taught graduate programmes, further enhancing doctoral studies and establishing innovation alongside research and taught components as a third strand of activity within graduate programmes.

The priority actions in this area will include:

- A comprehensive enhancement of our masters provision, emphasising the flexibility of the modular structure, responsiveness to the needs of students and society, the development of individually tailored programmes and alignment with research strengths
- The further development of the UCD Structured PhD and thematic programmes with the introduction of innovation and entrepreneurship as a core element of doctoral training
- A significant development of the continuing professional development and executive education portfolio.

4.4.3. Strengthen and enhance academic disciplines and programmes

UCD recognises the centrality of a strong undergraduate base, both as an end in itself and as the bedrock of our graduate education and research activity and accepts as a core principle that sound education within subjects or disciplines is a prerequisite for creativity, innovation and interdisciplinarity. UCD will focus on students achieving specified learning outcomes, developing the strength of

each academic discipline, while also providing the opportunity for broader liberal education. UCD will continue to take concrete and effective steps to link teaching, research and innovation. This approach will form not only the next generation of researchers but also a wider cohort of graduates committed to innovation and entrepreneurship, economic and social, who will leverage the outcomes of research for wider societal benefit. It will also provide a context for introducing students to emergent fields of study that combine knowledge and approaches from multiple disciplines in finding solutions to the complex challenges facing society.

The priority actions in this area will include:

- The development of specific graduate attributes and programme outcomes for each programme area and the alignment of the curriculum with programme outcomes
- The further exploitation of the modular framework to allow a wider range of coherent pathways within programmes and to allow individual students to adapt the curriculum to their prior learning, aptitudes, abilities and goals
- The enhancement of elective opportunities to provide a broader educational experience
- Strengthening the links between the curriculum and learning activities in each programme and the research activities associated with that programme research activity and taught programmes
- Diversifying of the range of research and innovation experiences available to students and embedding these in the curriculum from the earliest stages
- Using new approaches to teaching, learning and assessment to embed research and innovation in the curriculum
- A structured approach to the involvement of doctoral students and post-doctoral fellows in the teaching and mentoring of undergraduate and taught graduate students.

4.4.4. Stimulate creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship and active citizenship

As well as producing students with a high level of expertise in their own disciplines, UCD will focus on fostering wider capacities essential for employability, innovation, entrepreneurship and active citizenship. These wider capacities include creativity, critical thinking and the skills to communicate effectively, solve problems and work in and lead teams.

The priority actions in this area will include:

- Adapting our approach to teaching, learning and assessment to stimulate creativity and innovation
- Developing general and discipline-specific modules on innovation and entrepreneurship

- Developing new programmes combining technical and professional education with business and management science
- Establishing career development and planning modules
- Encouraging, accrediting and rewarding student volunteering, leadership and active citizenship.

4.4.5. Widen participation and support lifelong learning

UCD will broaden the range of opportunities for students with diverse backgrounds to participate in our educational programmes and, in particular, will capitalise on new, flexible modes of course delivery such as e-learning and distance learning to enable more inclusive approaches for learners at different stages of their personal and professional lives. We will consolidate and develop existing access programmes while significantly expanding opportunities and supports for mature and lifelong learners.

Specific actions will include:

- The consolidation and development of existing access initiatives to ensure participation of mature students, those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and students with disabilities in all UCD undergraduate degree programmes
- A significant expansion of the opportunities and supports for part-time study at undergraduate levels
- Enlargement of opportunities for continuing professional development, especially by making the taught graduate portfolio available in part-time, flexible and tailored modes
- Creating better links between university-taught programmes and its adult-education provision to provide new opportunities for lifelong learning
- The monitoring of persistence and progression patterns to graduate study and proactive intervention to understand and mitigate barriers to progression.

4.4.6. Internationalise the student experience

UCD will provide an international context for the educational experience, giving students the tools with which to contribute proactively to the international community as global citizens and preparing them for life and work across borders and cultures. UCD has significantly broadened its international perspective in recent years and will place particular emphasis during the period of this plan on building links with Asia, Latin America and the European Union while deepening links with the USA, UK and Singapore. This will involve increasing and further diversifying the cohort of international students and staff at UCD and extending the range of opportunities available to UCD students to add an international element to their university experience.

Specific actions will include:

- The development of a range of sustainable and long-term international institutional relationships to provide significantly expanded opportunities for students' mobility and exchange
- Increasing and further diversifying the cohort of international students at UCD by focusing on attracting students to specific programmes, with an emphasis on significantly increasing the number of international students at masters level
- Exploiting the advantages of semesterisation and modularisation to create new and flexible opportunities for student exchange and mobility
- The development of a range of innovative approaches to provide students with an international experience.

4.4.7. Excel in teaching, learning innovation and academic development

The success of this strategy will depend on the fundamentals: excellence and innovation in teaching and learning. UCD will take a range of strategic actions to ensure these fundamentals.

Specifically we will:

- Mainstream the assessment and enhancement of teaching quality utilising student evaluation of modules and programmes, student satisfaction and experience surveys and feedback on the student experience
- Establish the *UCD Institute for Learning Innovation and Academic Development* to support UCD's growing community of teaching innovators and educational researchers and to highlight and disseminate, nationally and internationally, UCD's achievements in learning innovation and academic development
- Devise effective approaches to support the academic development of staff and to ensure all newly appointed staff receive appropriate training and professional development in university teaching
- Recognise and support those who successfully enhance the quality of education through their outstanding teaching and educational leadership
- Support effective teaching and learning through the provision of high-quality, reliable and user-friendly academic, administrative and student support services and systems.

4.5. Key metrics and performance indicators

UCD will assess its progress against the objectives set out above using the following metrics.

- Staff-FTE (full time equivalent) to student-FTE ratio (internationally benchmarked)
- Academic staff FTE to non-academic staff FTE (internationally benchmarked)
- CAO first preferences: UCD will continue to attract more first preferences than any other Irish university
- New undergraduate entrants with greater than 500 points or equivalent
- Progression and retention from first year to second year
- Undergraduate degree completion rate and time to complete degree
- PhD completion rate target: greater than 90 per cent. Time to completion: 4.2 years for 80 per cent of PhD students
- Percentage of graduate students: increase from 26 per cent to 33 per cent over the lifetime of this plan
- Percentage of non-traditional students on undergraduate degree programmes: increase from 17 per cent to 25 per cent by 2013/14
- Percentage of international students will increase from 17 per cent towards 25 per cent, with the percentage of non-European Union students increasing from 9 to 15 per cent by 2013/14
- Student satisfaction survey: very good to excellent performance on an internationally benchmarked survey of student satisfaction and engagement.

In addition to these indicators, the following will be used to measure the quality of the student experience at UCD:

- The proportion of students engaged in community engagement: target 30 per cent of our students should partake in some community-based activity while at UCD
- The proportion of students actively engaging in sports: target of 60 per cent over the life of the plan involved in organised sport and 80 per cent involved in regular physical exercise (this will be monitored by survey)
- The proportion of students that regularly contribute to UCD societies: target of 60 per cent over the life of the plan
- The quality and availability of student health and counselling services will be baselined and monitored over the life of the plan.

