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Achieving Excellence in Teaching and Learning

The vision for UCD is of a leading international university, where an academic community driven by research, scholarship, innovation and creativity provides bold and imaginative education programmes, and where a commitment to excellence in teaching and learning underpins all activity.

Curricular reform has been at the heart of the strategy to achieve this vision and impressive progress has been made. The successful launch of *UCD Horizons* to first year students in September 2005 marked a turning point in UCD's history. It is now clear that *UCD Horizons* has captured the imagination of prospective students. In an increasingly competitive higher education environment, UCD's unique proposition is clear and compelling.

With the continued implementation of *UCD Horizons*, UCD is actively promoting excellence across all of its programmes. The university will continue to attract the best and brightest students and staff by providing a teaching and learning environment of sustained excellence and continued innovation.



Student Numbers

Modularisation, Semesterisation and *UCD Horizons*

Student Recruitment and New Programmes

International Student Activity

Centre for Teaching and Learning

STUDENT NUMBERS

The number of students choosing to study at UCD is growing steadily year on year.

In particular, UCD's share of the total full-time PhD student population has increased. In the academic year 2004/05, 28% of PhD students across the seven Irish universities were studying at UCD, up from 26% in 2003/04.

UCD is a national university drawing students from all 32 counties in Ireland.

The university's international profile continues to rise with significant numbers of students coming to UCD from all parts of the globe.

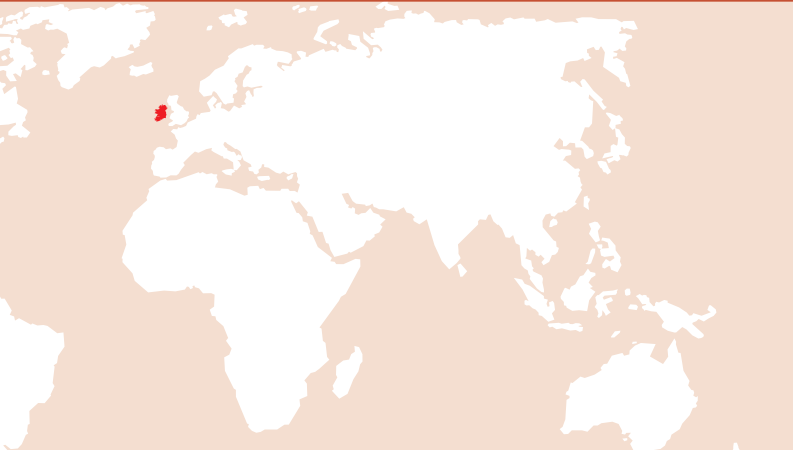
Table 1 shows the breakdown of student numbers by programme. Table 2 shows the origin of undergraduate students in 2005/06.

TABLE 1 - STUDENT NUMBERS BY PROGRAMME

STUDENT NUMBERS	2004/05	2005/06
Undergraduate degree programmes	13,549	13,581
Undergraduate certificate/diploma programmes	1,700	2,354
Undergraduate visiting/exchange students	464	516
Undergraduate students (total)	15,713	16,451
Doctoral programmes	1,351	1,361
Research Masters programmes	388	391
Taught Masters programmes	2,408	2,375
Postgraduate certificate/diploma programmes	1,765	1,744
Postgraduate occasional students	137	206
Postgraduate students (total)	6,049	6,077
TOTAL	21,762	22,528

TABLE 2 - STUDENT ORIGIN

Origin	number
Dublin City and County	7,785
Rest of Ireland	7,309
Northern Ireland	252
Great Britain	67
EU	214
North America	266
Asia	365
Africa	76
Rest of the World	117




MODULARISATION, SEMESTERISATION AND *UCD HORIZONS*

The UCD Strategic Plan 2005-2008 sets out three ambitious objectives with regard to modularisation and semesterisation:

- Implement a modularised and semesterised curriculum with a rolling implementation beginning in September 2005 and completed by 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.

Modularisation has produced some impressive statistics:

- 3,300 modules were articulated in detail by over 800 Module Co-ordinators;
- The 2005 intake of first year modular students took advantage of the new online enrolment facility and enrolled much earlier than in previous years. 97% of students had signed up before the start of term, compared with 62% by the start of term in 2004;
- In the week leading up to the CAO change of mind deadline in June 2006, over 10,000 prospective students visited a specially created UCD website, which provided them with details of all of the programmes and modules on offer as well as information on life at UCD;
- In the first set of assessments under modularisation in December 2005, 170 modules were assessed by 133 Module Co-ordinators. Over 62,000 grades were

compiled for 4,358 students. A wide range of both academic and administrative staff collaborated to make this first round of modular assessments an operational and logistical success.

PROGRESS TO DATE

The September 2005 intake of UCD first year students was the first to enter into a fully modularised and semesterised environment, branded as *UCD Horizons*.

UCD Horizons was well received by these students, who quickly grasped the concept of a choice to either deepen their knowledge in a particular subject area or widen their expertise by choosing elective modules from outside of their core degree programme.

UCD Horizons provides a structure that allows students to make informed decisions about their own pathway through their chosen programme and these students showed great maturity and creativity in their choices. Many identified electives which complemented their core degree. Architecture students, for example, chose elective modules in archaeology and Greek and Roman civilisation.

With these students successfully enrolled to their modularised studies, the focus of the modularisation initiative centred on the extension of *UCD Horizons* to include the majority of stages within undergraduate programmes and the majority of postgraduate programmes.

The cornerstone of this effort was the development of 3,300 modules, structured into majors or minors within programmes. The detail of each module was articulated in terms of academic content, learning outcomes and assessment methodologies and this information was published online - a first for any Irish university.

At the postgraduate level, over 200 programmes were modularised in the period under review, encompassing the majority of taught postgraduate students. In addition, a new structure for thematic PhD programmes was introduced, allowing doctoral students access to, and credit for, taught modules at various levels.

By the end of June 2006, students were able to browse online through the detail of their newly modularised programmes prior to enrolling via the custom-built online enrolment system. This system brought together fee payment, accommodation booking and module selection. It allowed students to configure their own timetable by choosing all of the components of their degree - core, option and elective modules online. The provision of this level of information online to students made UCD unique amongst Irish universities.

The programme of activity engaged in by the university to advance its modularisation and semesterisation objectives has been significant. This has involved enormous effort from academic, administrative and technical colleagues. The Vice-Principals for Teaching and Learning, Chairs of Programme Boards, Directors of Graduate Schools and School Heads of Teaching and Learning offered essential academic leadership.

A number of administrative areas excelled in providing consistent and dedicated support to both staff and students as regulations, processes and procedures changed to reflect the new academic governance and modular programme structures. These included, among others:

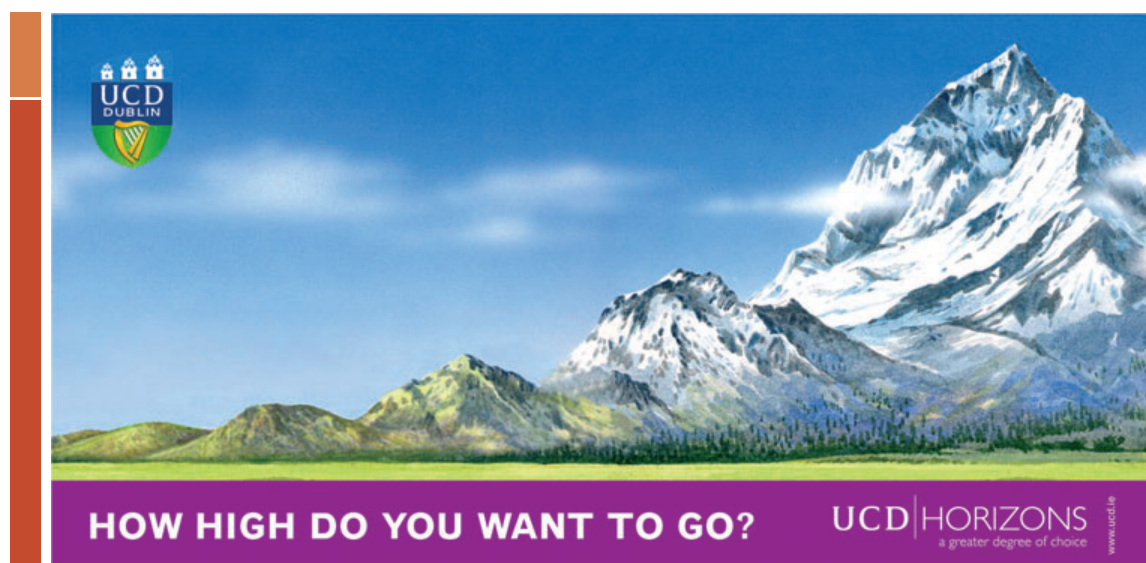
- The new UCD Programme Offices;
- The Modular Operations Team;
- The Student Services Desk;
- The Assessment and Logistics Team that supported a revised grading process and assessment procedures.

All worked together to deliver an ambitious and ultimately successful strategy.

MODULAR ASSESSMENT REVIEW

A review of modular assessment in Semester I of the 2005/06 academic year highlighted high levels of satisfaction among students and represented a sound endorsement of modularisation.

In particular, over 85% of those surveyed stated that having modules completed and assessed within the same semester reduced exam stress. Students also reported that the assessment of modules during the semester placed an increased significance on lecture attendance and completing assignments. Students also welcomed the feedback and reassurance provided by regular and continuous assessment.



UCD Horizons poster



FUTURE OBJECTIVES

Modularisation will be extended to all remaining programmes so that in the academic year 2007/08 each student, whether a first year undergraduate or on a structured doctoral programme, will enjoy the full benefits of studying in a modular, semesterised framework.

The administrative systems and support required for the successful delivery of a modular curriculum continue to be a challenge. The many administrative offices involved have delivered new systems and adapted old ones: the further refinement and streamlining of such systems is a priority for the next year.

Plans are also underway to widen participation in higher education through the development of credit-based progression pathways for adult learners and part-time students into the modular degree structure.

In line with UCD's strategic imperative to achieve excellence in teaching and learning, the implementation of a modular framework now provides the transparency at module and programme level to enable further engagement in curricular reform and development. 2006/07 will see a strong emphasis on supporting and incentivising teaching quality and assessment innovation. Student feedback on all aspects of modular study will be an important feature of programme review during 2006/07.

At School, College and programme level, the increased management information now available as a result of modularisation will facilitate informed decision making on the strategic direction of programmes and the resources required to maximise their successful delivery.

Through *UCD Horizons* 60% of students chose to deepen their knowledge and signed up for electives within their core area of study. 40% chose to spread their knowledge, and chose electives not directly related to their main areas of study.

The most popular modules chosen as electives are shown in the table below.

POPULAR CHOICES	
Module	Number of first year students
Psychology	253
Applied Languages	244
Computer Science	101
Law	100
Business Management	95
Planning and Environmental Policy	89
French	89
Sports Management	86
Politics	73
History	61
Philosophy	59
Accounting	52
Information Studies	52

STUDENT RECRUITMENT AND NEW PROGRAMMES

Clear objectives have been set to make UCD the university of choice for the best and brightest students. As part of a coherent, tightly coordinated student recruitment plan, the university has been working hard to:

- Increase the quality and number of contacts with individual prospective students;
- Increase the quality and level of information available to the individual student and their advisers.

PROGRESS TO DATE

After three years of falling CAO first preferences there was an increase of over 10% in CAO first preference applications in 2006.

The curriculum reform and the launch and marketing of *UCD Horizons* played a significant role in this increase. The first cohort of students responded enthusiastically to the opportunities presented.

The appointment of a Director of Student Recruitment, Anne-Marie Harvey, represented a further step towards more externally focused communications. The new Director is focused on reaching out to a broader range of prospective students - meeting with them, listening to them and explaining what UCD offers and how it differs from other universities.

The traditional 'Open Day' events were given a fresh new look, with an additional event being held for the first time in December. 4,500 prospective students attended this event, which combined with a further 15,000 attendees in March accounted for an impressive footfall on campus.

For the first time, UCD engaged in personal written communication with all undergraduate applicants. Prospective students were thanked for their interest in UCD and invited to contact the university to discuss their application. This was backed up by a specially designed website which provided these prospective students with a range of information to help them make their choices, including content on programme details, accommodation and campus life.



Student
Ambassadors

STUDENT AMBASSADORS PROGRAMME

'It is all about hearing the experience from someone you can relate to.'

UCD has appointed Student Ambassadors to represent all of its potential student groups: undergraduate, postgraduate, international, mature and access students. The Ambassadors offer personalised campus tours, giving prospective students an opportunity to come along and experience life at the university. The 90 minute sessions include presentations, a tour of a student's apartment and a visit to the Students' Union as well as a complimentary lunch and a chance to meet other prospective students. UCD is the first university in Ireland to offer this type of programme, which is widely utilised in universities in the United States and United Kingdom.

NEW PROGRAMMES

UCD offered 11 new programmes in 2006. Among the new Honours Bachelor Degree programmes in high demand were:

- BSc Biomedical, Health and Life Sciences
- BCL Civil Law with Politics
- BCL Civil Law with History
- BS Integrated General and Children's Nursing
- BSc Neuroscience

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ACTIVITY

In the academic year 2005/06, the number of international students attending UCD was approximately 3,250, an increase of 8% from 2004/05. These students came from 110 different countries, exceeding the 102 different countries represented in UCD in the previous academic year. Since 2000/01, there have been noticeable increases in the number of students from Canada, China, France, Germany, Great Britain, India, Malaysia, Nigeria and the United States.



The International Office has continued its policy of encouraging outward student mobility by developing the range of opportunities on offer for UCD students to study

abroad. In 2005/06, 298 UCD students studied abroad as part of the Erasmus programme while 75 students studied abroad on non-EU exchange agreements in Australia, Canada, Chile, Japan, Hong Kong, New Zealand and the United States. One notable development was the funding received from an Irish business person in South Africa to sponsor a postgraduate student exchange in the area of political science with the University of Cape Town.

PROGRESS TO DATE

In June 2006 UCD joined Universitas 21, a major international network of over 20 research-led universities in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Mexico, Sweden, China, Korea, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand. Universitas 21 will provide UCD students and staff with a wide range of mobility options, collaborative research initiatives, joint academic programmes and significant best-practice benchmarking opportunities. Membership of this consortium will allow UCD to be at the forefront of developments in the internationalisation of higher education and will significantly raise the profile of the university through association and collaboration with some of the world's finest research-led universities.

In mid 2006 UCD appointed a Director of International Strategy and Operations, Dr Erik Lithander. He will be responsible for the development and implementation of

International students at a welcome reception





International students at a welcome reception

UCD's International Strategic Plan, which is being prepared in consultation with Colleges, Schools and senior management. The International Strategic Plan will give direction to UCD's endeavours in areas such as international student recruitment and care, and the provision of high-quality student and staff mobility opportunities. It will also guide the promotion and support of the university's international research capabilities as well as the international positioning of UCD through bilateral and multilateral institutional partnerships with universities, overseas governmental agencies, funding bodies, scholarship providers and non-governmental organisations.

FUTURE OBJECTIVES

A focal point for the 2006/07 period will be the implementation of the first stages of the International Strategic Plan. This will involve the agreement on a comprehensive institutional approach to international marketing and student recruitment, as well as the implementation of a range of initiatives which will position UCD as Ireland's premier international research university.

Efforts will continue to further expand the availability of high-quality international mobility opportunities for students and staff, and there will be opportunities for involvement in a range of Universitas 21 activities at all levels of the organisation.

UCD CENTRE FOR CHINESE STUDIES



UCD has continued the policy of developing its relationship with China. February 2006 saw the appointment of Dr Liming Wang as Director of UCD's new Centre for Chinese Studies. The Centre aims to work with government, business and academia in Ireland and China to create stronger educational, cultural and commercial links between Ireland and China. The university also launched a new four year undergraduate degree based in the UCD Quinn School of Business. This honours degree programme combines Business Studies with Chinese Studies. Students on the programme will spend their third year abroad with a partner university in China.

*Dr Liming Wang,
Director, Centre
for Chinese Studies*

CENTRE FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

The Centre for Teaching and Learning exists to promote excellence and innovation in teaching at UCD.

The strategic priorities in the period under review included:

- Supporting the implementation of the university's modularisation programme;
- Encouraging and facilitating best practice in assessment;
- Supporting curriculum and pedagogical development;
- Expanding the use of the Centre's innovative model of peer-observation of teaching as an aid to continuous quality improvement.



PROGRESS TO DATE

The Centre played an important role in the implementation of modularisation, delivering workshops on the new modular curriculum and developing guidance on best practice in teaching and learning.

The Centre was particularly active in the area of assessment, developing innovative assessment practices and delivering a series of new workshops on modular assessment best practice. It also worked in association with Trinity College Dublin to conduct research into computer-aided assessment.

Problem-based learning was another area of focus. In addition to managing the design and delivery of specialist workshops, the Centre also hosted the first national training day on this topic.

Thirty members of the academic staff availed of the Centre's peer-observation of teaching process and two Schools started establishing their own versions of this scheme.

Staff also coordinated the national programme for the development of reusable learning resources in the areas of veterinary and bio-environmental science. They were also instrumental in establishing a national community of practice in this area.

FUTURE OBJECTIVES

The Centre aims to further develop its international standing. The focus of effort in the near future will be on:

- Introducing the results of the latest research in teaching and learning to UCD staff through workshops on best practice and case study dissemination;
- Expanding the use of the Centre's innovative model of peer-observation of teaching as an aid to continuous quality improvement;
- Expanding and developing programmes for postgraduate students with a teaching responsibility;
- Helping to develop an Irish community of scholars of third level teaching and learning through the medium of the Educational Developers in Ireland Network (EDIN);
- Contributing to the development of effective ways of recording and encouraging excellence in teaching – including an active contribution to the working group set up to evaluate teaching.