UCD Teaching & Learning
Report 2007-2012

Contents

LIST OF FIGURES & TABLES

UCD has placed a strong
emphasis on developing world-class standards of
education for its students by enhancing teaching standards,
creating innovative curricular structures and
rewarding excellence in teaching and
educational leadership

Introduction

In its current and previous University Strategies (2005-2008, 2009-2014)[1], UCD has placed a strong emphasis on developing world-class education for its students by enhancing teaching standards, creating innovative curricular structures and rewarding excellence in teaching and educational leadership. This report demonstrates the contribution made to the achievement of these goals by UCD Teaching & Learning over the past five years and it highlights a range of projects developed in tandem with Schools, Colleges and Support Units during this period.

Within the last decade Irish higher education has undergone major changes with the introduction of modularisation and semesterisation, the accompanying paradigm shift from teaching to learning and the much clearer articulation of learning outcomes at module and programme level. Coupling this learning–focused approach to teaching with the research-informed skills of its academics has allowed UCD to deliver a standard of education to its students that is internationally recognised. UCD was the first Irish university to achieve a fully modular programme structure, and also to encompass many of the key international changes in 21st Century higher education. Fundamental to these changes has been a heightened appreciation of how students learn and the ability to adapt educational approaches to capitalise on and develop these learning capabilities. Identifying students' own unique learning strengths can be crucial in assisting them to develop effective study skills, to learn in ways that fit best with their preferred method of acquiring and processing information and in developing critical thinking and intellectual maturity. This is not a new concept and UCD's founder, John Henry Newman, differentiated between instructional learning being primarily those things which are committed to memory which have little or no effect on the mind itself and education which Newman felt was *a higher word; it implies an action upon our mental nature, and the formation of a character; it is something individual and permanent.*[2]

This report is a showcase of a variety of projects and initiatives developed and/or supported since 2007 by UCD Teaching & Learning who have ensured that all of these initiatives have their origins in an evidenced-based approach to educational design and development. This has allowed us to create effective learning environments in which students can not only successfully acquire new knowledge, but also emerge as self-motivated, reflective learners, capable of perceptive intellectual judgement. Equally important, these projects serve to demonstrate the considerable abilities of the UCD academic community to design and deliver programmes of the very highest standards in ways that ensure equally high levels of learning in their students. What is particularly noticeable about the suite of initiatives in this report is that they go far beyond the 'good ideas' of individual academics and represent well-researched, evidenced-based projects, frequently delivered by academic teams, both within and across disciplines. Teaching excellence is also dependant on the expertise of support staff, and this report also demonstrates the essential contribution made by the wider community of educational champions (both academic and support staff) within the classroom and across the university.

A crucial element underpinning the development of teaching and learning at UCD over the past five years has been the consistent use of robust research and scientific-based pedagogic enquiry upon which to create and support evidence-based approaches to learning. The use of a wide range of institutional data has also provided reference points to judge success of teaching initiatives and to support existing pedagogic research to guide and frame new approaches. Furthermore the projects show the important work of individual scholars who have developed a research-based approach to their pedagogical methods and to broader policy issues in higher education. An impressive body of such research has now been completed in UCD. A marked acceleration in this activity can be attributed to the introduction of the UCD Fellowships in Teaching & Academic Development scheme in 2007, which has now supported eighteen UCD Fellows. UCD also coordinates five Teaching Fellows from institutions across the Dublin Regional Higher Education Alliance.

Above all, this report demonstrates the importance that UCD places on the quality of education that it offers its students. As Deputy Registrar for Teaching & Learning it has been my great pleasure to work with the staff in UCD T&L and with the wider academic and support community who have brought the projects in this report to fruition. Individually and collectively they have brought enthusiasm, skill and ingenuity in providing the students of UCD with an excellent learning experience from their first day in university to their final graduation and who have engendered in their students a love of learning that will last for the rest of their lives.

Professor Bairbre Redmond
*Deputy Registrar Teaching & Learning
and Dean of Undergraduate Studies*

---

1 UCD Strategic Plan 2005-2008 *Creating the Future*; UCD Strategic Plan to 2014 *Forming Global Minds*
2 Newman, J.H. (1959), *The Idea of a University.* New York: Image Books, p.99

Section 1 **Context and Background**

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 fulfills their potential.[3]

UCD is Ireland's largest single-campus institute of higher education and educates a wide and diverse group of student learners in terms of age, nationality, educational background and disciplinary area of study. The flexibility of learning opportunities presented by its modular curriculum underpinned by a learning outcomes approach has had a strong re-forming influence on teaching and learning practices and in the design, delivery and assurance of a high quality learning experience.

The availability of the HEA Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF) cycle 1[4] provided a welcome level of investment to support the strategic re-alignment of teaching and learning practices and to facilitate the embedding of modularisation.

Funding was used to establish Fellows in Teaching & Academic Development, who undertook pedagogic research into strategic aspects of the student learning experience. The outcomes of this research informed the development of UCD's current Strategic Plan *Forming Global Minds* The availability of a second cycle of Strategic Innovation Funds (SIF) provided the basis for sustained and wide-reaching teaching and learning transformation projects, within UCD and within the region through UCD's participation in the Dublin Regional Higher Education Alliance. (DRHEA).

A key element in the design and implementation of the projects developed with the support of SIF funding has been ensuring their longer-term sustainability. As this report demonstrates, the vast majority of these projects have now been mainstreamed and have extended beyond the end of SIF funding in 2011.

UCD STUDENT PROFILE

TABLE 1A: UCD STUDENT POPULATION 2011/2012

	Irish Students	International Students	TOTAL
Undergraduate	14,523	3,209	17,732
Graduate	5,294	1,907	7,201
UCD Total	**19,817**	**5,116**	**24,933**

TABLE 1B: UCD UNDERGRADUATE NEW ENTRANTS 2011/12

Undergraduate Degree Entrants	Number	Percentage
Under-represented groups (i.e. students from under-represented socio-economic groups, students with disability, mature students, part-time students, FETAC progression)	573	13.6%
International Entrants	810	19.2%
Total Undergraduate New Entrants	**4,214**	**100%**

3. UCD Strategic Plan 2005-2008 Creating the Future, p.8
4. Strategic Innovation Fund see http://www.hea.ie/en/sif

FIGURE 1: UCD STUDENTS BY SUBJECT AREA

1.1 STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Over the last five years, the development of both core UCD projects and collaborative intra-institutional projects in the area of teaching and learning have been informed richly through regional connections in the form of the Dublin Regional Higher Education Alliance, and internationally through UCD's membership of Universitas 21, a consortium of global research intensive universities.

Through DRHEA, the Enhancement of Learning strand of activity has provided opportunities for UCD to contribute to teaching and learning developments within the region, through the exchange of good practice and participation in networked groups addressing issues of e-learning, research-informed teaching, learning outcomes and academic development.

Internationally UCD is an active member of the Universitas 21 Teaching & Learning network which has provided a conduit for the dissemination of UCD teaching and learning research and practice-based initiatives through international network conferences, as well as opportunities for the exchange of good practice with similar research intensive universities. Since 2007, UCD scholars and senior managers have contributed actively to the annual U21 Teaching & Learning conference.

1.2 UCD EDUCATION STRATEGY

The UCD Education Strategy 2009-2014 continues to provide an institutional reference point for the targeted enhancement of teaching and learning. Building on the successful implementation of the modularised curriculum (2005-2008 Strategy) it has prioritised enhancement of the learning experience by:
- Fostering early and lasting student engagement;
- Excelling in teaching, learning innovation and academic development;
- Stimulating creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship and active citizenship

Institutional activities that have supported the achievement of these key strategic teaching and learning objectives include the mainstreaming of on-line student evaluation for all taught modules and the implementation of an institutional annual student experience survey the results of which can be internationally benchmarked. UCD policies which recognise teaching excellence in the promotional structures and the commitment that all newly appointed academic staff receive appropriate training and professional development in university teaching and learning also contribute significantly to the achievement of UCD's strategic objectives.

UCD's commitment to developing teaching and learning activities to align with these key strategic priorities was endorsed by the recent IUQB Institutional Review Report[5] which commended UCD for: *Its visionary approach to education that aims to prepare students to play a role as Irish and global citizens* and *Its increased prioritisation of teaching and learning.* Furthermore the Report acknowledged that the development and implementation of UCD's educational vision is supported effectively by UCD Teaching & Learning: *The scope and capacity of the centre have been expanded, as well as the resources posted on its webpage. The centre seems to be widely recognised for its competence and ability to support teachers.*

The nature of educational practice in UCD is dynamic as it is influenced strongly by wider social, technological, economic and policy changes. This report illustrates the progress that UCD continues to make in building capacity for university-wide educational transformation. It also demonstrates the university's on-going commitment to the delivery and enhancement of teaching and learning in a manner which is responsive to learners, to the needs of staff and to the evolving socio-political dimensions of Irish higher education, as elaborated in the Hunt Report (2011)[6].

---

5. Institutional Review of Irish Universities 2009-2012 - Review of UCD, Spring 2011 - Review Team Report, p.13 & p.28
6. National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 - Report of the Strategy Group (2011)

Section 2 **Supporting Transition**

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.[7]

The learning outcomes emphasis of UCD's curriculum brings the development of students' learning skills and educational outcomes centre-stage by making the scaffolding of student learning achievement more explicit in curriculum design, teaching, learning and assessment practices. Consequently there has been a strong focus on developing initiatives which support phases of student learning transition throughout their academic life at UCD; starting with transition into higher education and continuing with transition and progression to the point of graduation. Two major initiatives were developed and/or supported by UCD Teaching and Learning under this theme – Focus on First Year and Active Student Learning.

2.1 FOCUS ON FIRST YEAR

The major 'Focus on First Year' initiative (Figure 2 and Table 2) explores the development of the most effective curricular structures, assessment strategies and academic supports for first year students across all undergraduate programmes. Such activities need to be underpinned by clear evidence of why some students fail to engage in their studies to the end of their degree programme and what needs to be developed to address such retention issues.

FIGURE 2: FOCUS ON FIRST YEAR

Students do not distinguish between the structural elements of the organization when they need information, guidance or assistance, whether in or out of the classroom. Every effort should be made to support a more holistic experience for students at all stages of their experience, but particularly during the transition points to and through the first undergraduate year.[8]

ACADEMIC PRACTICE
• First Year Assessment Projects
• Focus on First Year Podcasts

LEARNING SKILLS
• "Learning for Success"
• Writing Centre

RETENTION
• Research study on "Reasons why students leave"
• Academic Analytics

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.[9]

---

7. UCD Strategic Plan to 2014 - *Forming Global Minds, p.14*
8. Krause, K. (2005), Serious thoughts about dropping out in first year: Trends, patterns and implications for higher education. *Studies in Learning, Evaluation, Innovation and Development*, 2(3), 55-67.
9. UCD Strategic Plan to 2014 - *Forming Global Minds, p.15*

TABLE 2: FOCUS ON FIRST YEAR - SUITE OF ACTIVITIES

LEARNING SKILLS	PURPOSE	OUTCOMES/RESULTS	DURATION
SKILLS 4 STUDY CAMPUS – LEARNING FOR SUCCESS	*'Learning for Success'* is a first year engagement module, which is delivered using a blend of face-to-face sessions combined with interactive online materials (Skills 4 Study Campus) covering a range of academic skills. The module aims to support the development a of range of learning and practical skills which in turn assist students make the transition into university life.	• Successful pilot with 360 first Arts students in 2011/12. • Rolled-out as a core module to all 1600 first Arts students in 2012/13. • A longitudinal evaluation is underway to measure the impacts on student retention, achievement and progression.	Funded June 2011 – June 2013.
WRITING CENTRE	A successful President's Teaching Award application, led to the Writing Centre being established in the School of English to initially offer a writing support service to undergraduate students in the Colleges of Arts and Celtic Studies and Human Sciences. The 'drop-in' writing clinics, which are delivered by experienced tutors, provide student-centred, one-to-one assistance with written work. These sessions are student-directed, responding to problem areas identified by students and as evidenced by the marked-up assessed work.	• Experienced tutors drawn from seven different Schools offer approximately 110 half-hour sessions per semester. • Student response has been overwhelmingly positive. 100% of the students who have availed of the service have said that they would recommend it to other students. • Student-identified benefits include: analysis of errors; methods for organising writing; discussing personal concerns about writing on a one-to-one basis. Planning is underway for a permanent Writing Centre that will offer support to the entire undergraduate and postgraduate communities.	Funded January 2011 – June 2012. Now mainstreamed.
RETENTION			
REASONS WHY STUDENTS LEAVE	Retention of students in the first year is a key UCD performance indicator. [10] The Reasons Why Students Leave study is a qualitative investigation into reasons why students exit from the first year of their programme and UCD. Its aim was to provide UCD with key information to improve support services provided to students. The final report is available on the UCD Teaching & Learning website at http://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/Reasons%20Why%20Students%20Leave.pdf	This study concludes that a 'bundle of influences' combine to influence first year students decision to leave. Two main groups are identified: • "students who are not academically prepared, make the wrong course choice, encounter academic and social difficulties in integrating into the university and become disengaged." • "students who fail to get the points required for their preferred course, continue through first year, succeed in passing their first year exams, reapply for their preferred course and withdraw prior to the commencement of second year." It identified recommendations in relation to student preparedness (pre-admissions), academic and social integration, engagement with support services.	Research completed in 2011.

10. Blaney and Mulkeen (2008) reported a 14.5% exit rate among first year entrants in UCD, from 1999-2007.

TABLE 2: FOCUS ON FIRST YEAR - SUITE OF ACTIVITIES - *CONTINUED*

RETENTION *(CONTINUED)*	PURPOSE	OUTCOMES/RESULTS	DURATION
ACADEMIC ANALYTICS	Academic Analytics is a dynamic online data-set, developed within UCD Registry, to identify "at-risk" students by analysis of accurate on-line information including: information relating to students' registration, academic performance to date and quantifiable engagement with student learning resources such as Blackboard and the Library. Used with other systems of student support (e.g. peer-mentoring, student advising, 'Learning for Success' modules) it assists support staff to identify students who may be "at risk" and intervene to offer extra support at the earliest opportunity.	• The data set has proven to be particularly useful to larger programmes (e.g. Arts and Science) where students are at a higher risk of disengaging and non-completion, and on-going monitoring is challenging and resource intensive. • The innovative design of Academic Analytics means that a variety of data sets can be combined and interrogated in a number of different ways.	Funded 2011. Now mainstreamed.
ACADEMIC PRACTICE			
FIRST YEAR ASSESSMENT - REVIEW AND REDESIGN	In 2010 an analysis of assessment practices across all first year programmes, international research and good practice in assessment led to the development of assessment design principles for first year learning. The implementation phase is a strategic project, Redesign of Assessment in the First Year (2011-2014) working with Programme Teams and Schools to identify redesign approaches based on the first year Assessment Design Principles. Concurrently the Fellows for Teaching and Academic Development are undertaking a University-wide research project to examine what factors influence academic staff in their choices of assessment approaches in first year. These multi-faceted interventions for assessment practices are research-informed and customised to the needs of UCD.	• Profile of current assessment type, quantity and timing for first year programmes university-wide. • Assessment Design Principles for First Year Learning. • Agreed action plans for new and enhanced approaches to assessment in five programmes, with a further four programme embarking on the revision process in 2013/14. • Development of staff knowledge and skills of curriculum and assessment design. • Understanding factors that influence staff choices of assessment methods. See http://www.ucd.ie/ teaching/resources/assessment/ firstyearassessment/ http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/projects/ assessmentredesign/#d.en.114889 http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/projects/ exploringassessmentinfirstyear/	Funded 2010 - 2012. Now Mainstreamed.
FOCUS ON FIRST YEAR PODCASTS	The "Focus on First Year" audio podcast series addresses relevant topics for enhancing the first year through the provision of practical guidance, shared case studies and existing good practices. See http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/ showcase/	• Ten short episodes were designed and recorded by UCD academics for UCD academics. • Episodes addressed included transition to university; assessment; peer mentoring; providing effective feedback; and group and peer-work. • Episodes were released monthly during term-time via ITunes and the UCD Teaching & Learning website from where they may still be accessed.	Funded 2011 - 2012. Now available as a resource.

2.2 ACTIVE STUDENT LEARNING – A SHIFT IN EMPHASIS FROM TEACHING TO LEARNING

Projects to promote active student learning at UCD have been reflective of both the shifting emphasis internationally, from a teacher-focused to a student-focused approach to learning [11,12] as well as the University's education strategy, which promotes the development of curricula that *stimulate creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship and active citizenship.*[13] Taken together both of these drivers highlight the importance of more active student engagement with their learning and have informed a range of evidence-based practice projects at UCD to promote active student learning. This approach to learning encourages students to develop, for example, their self-directed learning skills, skills of enquiry and to learn from and with other students. Examples of the key projects that have aligned with this approach to learning are illustrated in Figure 3 and Table 3. Many of these projects and the resulting research have been undertaken collaboratively with other academic colleagues.

FIGURE 3: ACTIVE STUDENT LEARNING

...meaningful learning occurs when people actively try to make sense of the world - when they construct an interpretation of how and why things are – by filtering new ideas and experiences through existing knowledge structures...[14]

ACTIVE STUDENT LEARNING AT UCD

LEARNING AS ENQUIRY
• Enquiry & Problem-based Learning

LARGE CLASS TEACHING
• Blended Learning
• Student Response Learning

INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM
• Choice of Assessment Methods

PEER LEARNING
• Peer Tutoring
• Graduate Teaching Assistants

UCD is committed to adapting our approach to teaching, learning and assessment to stimulate creativity and innovation.[15]

11. Biggs, J.,Tang, C (2011), Teaching for Quality Learning: What the student does (4th Ed). SRHE: Berkshire.
12. Chickering, A.W, Gamson, Z.F (2011), *The Seven Principles of Teaching and Learning* https://www.msu.edu/user/coddejos/seven.htm
13. UCD Strategic Plan to 2014 - Forming Global Minds, p.14
14. Snowman, J, Bielier, R. (2000), *Psychology Applied to Teaching* (9th ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 291
15. UCD Strategic Plan to 2014 – *Forming Global Minds*, p.164

TABLE 3: ACTIVE STUDENT LEARNING - SUITE OF ACTIVITIES

LEARNING AS ENQUIRY	PURPOSE	OUTCOMES/RESULTS	DURATION
ENQUIRY & PROBLEM BASED LEARNING (EPBL)	Funded under the HEA-SIF1 Transforming Student Learning theme, the aim of the EPBL project was to embed the skills of enquiry, problem-based learning, information literacy and critical thinking skills into curricula across UCD. The project team worked with staff around the design and delivery of modules in, for example, English, Geography, Physics, Physiotherapy, Radiography, Nursing and Engineering. The project benefited from strong international collaborations with the University of Manchester, UK, and the Finnish PBL Network, PROBELL. See Enquiry Based Learning Project Web Page: http://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/UCDTLI0041.pdf	• Thirty-eight new EPBL modules (circa 1,900 students) were designed and implemented across many disciplines in UCD. • Workshops and curriculum design activities were delivered in UCD and made available to all the DRHEA collaborative partners. • In addition to conference presentations and peer-reviewed publications, there was a major publication arising from the project.[16] • A collection of UCD case studies was also produced to assist in the dissemination of the outcomes of this SIF 1 funded project, see http://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/UCDTLI0041.pdf	Funded 2007 - 2009. Now mainstreamed.
LARGE CLASS TEACHING			
BLENDED LEARNING	The large class teaching project in first year Geography adopted a blended learning approach to supporting students to be more active learners. The overall aim of the project was to enhance the first-year experience of teaching and learning by fostering student engagement, incorporating generic learning skills and encouraging social networks for learning. A variety of different learning formats and resources were designed to cater for different learning styles; 100% continuous assessment was introduced to improve engagement; and active and peer learning was encouraged through short in-class activities, individual and group lecture preparation work (online) and enquiry-based tutorial activities.[17]	An analysis of questionnaire results and focus group evidence suggested that: • Assessing the module by tutorial participation and a range of continuous assessments throughout the semester played an important role in keeping students engaged and motivated. • Student engagement appeared to have been much higher than in modules delivered in a more traditional manner, evidenced by the time students spent preparing for lectures, the work that they did with classmates outside the lecture/tutorial and their use of the electronic medium. • Students embraced the social learning networks, facilitated through the online discussion board, and adopted a regulatory role with each other to ensure that work was completed on schedule and to a relatively high standard.	Funded 2007 - 2008. Now mainstreamed.
STUDENT RESPONSE SYSTEMS (CLICKERS)	Research has suggested that two major components of active learning include self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation. The aim of this project, involving a large first year Macroeconomics class, was to increase student engagement in the lectures, as measured by frequency of participation and levels of self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation. See Student Response Systems in Macro-economics: http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/projects/archive/studentrespons-esystem/	The project was successful on a number of different levels: • The 'clickers' technology was successfully implemented in a large class teaching situation. • It provided lecturers with a previously unheralded level of interaction with their students and also had the unexpected advantage of providing students with more control over their learning environment by allowing them to establish ground rules in relation to laptop use and noise levels. • The project also highlighted the importance of adapting teaching methods to maximise the impact of the technology, and the possibility for more student-centred approaches to teaching large groups.	Funded 2009 - 2010. Clickers now available as a resource.

16. Barrett, T., Moore, S. (2011), *New Approaches to Problem-Based Learning in Higher Education:* Revitalising Your Practice in Higher Education. London: Routledge.
17. Moore, N., Gilmartin, M. (2010), *Teaching for better learning:* A blended learning pilot project with First-Year geography undergraduates. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 34 (3), 327-344.

TABLE 3: ACTIVE STUDENT LEARNING - SUITE OF ACTIVITIES - CONTINUED

PEER LEARNING	PURPOSE	OUTCOMES/RESULTS	DURATION
PEER ASSISTED TUTORING	A project was developed in Chemical Engineering to facilitate senior undergraduate Engineering students becoming peer-tutors to the students in the earlier years of their programme. Peer-Assisted Tutorials provide a supportive environment for active and independent learning. Students undertake homework in advance of the tutorial and the focus of activity in tutorials is around problem-solving in small groups. A small percentage of the module grade is awarded for tutorial attendance, participation and homework. The Peer-Tutors can gain an elective accredited module in this area as part of their learning experience.[18]	For the tutees: • Improved preparation for and participation in tutorials. • Enjoyed working in small groups, reporting improved confidence in asking questions and learning from each other. For the tutors: • Improved their own knowledge of the subject matter. • Gained valuable group facilitation skills.	2010 - 2011. Now mainstreamed.
GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTS	The role of tutors and demonstrators in enhancing the active participation of undergraduate students in experiential and discussion-based learning is key in many of the UCD curricula. Coordinated through UCD Teaching and Learning, the development of local School-based training of graduate teaching assistants (GTA) and tutors was initiated. The 5 ECTS credit module aims to provide GTAs with an introduction to some key teaching and learning issues and enables them to develop their teaching based on a critical review of relevant literature and feedback from their students or peers. While the overall learning outcomes for the GTA modules are consistent across Schools, the exact content and structure of the module varies from School to School, due to the specific needs of students and tutors in each. See Guidelines for the Design and Delivery of a School-based Module to support UCD Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA): http://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/gta_guidelines.doc	• Seven new School-based accredited modules for GTAs were designed, developed and implemented as part of an approach to sustain discipline-specific support to undergraduate student learning. • The accredited modules form part of Structured PhD programmes. • School-based staff were supported by UCD Teaching & Learning to design and deliver the modules through co-delivery, resource development and the introduction of an accredited module for the module coordinators as part of the Graduate Diploma in University Teaching and Learning.	Funded 2011 - 2012. Now mainstreamed.
INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM			
CHOICE OF ASSESSMENT METHODS	The overall objective of this project was to adopt an inclusive approach to assessment by developing a choice of assessment methods within a cross-section of modules. A total of nine modules from diverse range of disciplines participated in the project and implemented choice of assessment methods with their students. Key considerations in the design of the choices of assessment methods included: ensuring equity in the assessment methods and alignment of learning outcomes, assessment criteria, marking procedures and feedback. The project was formally evaluated through student questionnaires and interviews with the module coordinators.	A survey of student participants revealed that: • Students felt empowered by the process and that having some control in relation to their assessment reduced their anxieties and allowed them to play to their strengths. • The vast majority of students were happy with their assessment choice and were positive about the equity of workload between the assessment methods in their module. A Practitioner's Guide, incorporating the experiences of staff and students involved in the Choice of Assessment Methods project, was used to showcase and disseminate the outputs to the university community. http://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/Practitioners%20Guide.pdf	Funded 2009 - 2011. Now mainstreamed.

18. Kieran, P., O'Neill, G. (2009) Peer-Assisted Tutoring in a Chemical Engineering Curriculum: Tutee and Tutor Experiences, *Australasian Journal of Peer Learning.* 2 (1) 40-67.

Section 3 **Effecting Transformation**

3.1 ENHANCING TEACHING

A commitment to the notion of "enhancement of teaching" has gained strength in higher education internationally over the last number years. At its simplest enhancement of teaching helps academic and support staff to design and provide teaching environments in which students learn best. Such environments also have to take account of students' learning strengths, disciplinary specialisms, new approaches in pedagogy, increasing learner diversity as well as the demands for more flexible curricular structures and a greater use of effective educational technology. At UCD, over the last three years we have focused on developing an integrated suite of formal and informal opportunities for teaching enhancement (Table 4). The focus of each of these strands of activity reflects the University's Education Strategy and is informed by contemporary research and practices of teaching enhancement in higher education internationally. These initiatives support a richness of teaching expertise, knowledge and skills and along with a commitment to support better student learning, are the basis of an enhancement led approach to teaching.

FIGURE 4: EFFECTING TRANSFORMATION

Institutions can create a culture of teaching excellence by providing the necessary resources, infrastructure, development opportunities and climate in which individual and teams of teachers can prosper…. A teaching excellence that is informed by professional development, … points up the importance of knowledge, responsibility and autonomy.[19]

ENHANCING TEACHING
- Teaching in Higher Education qualification
- Workshops with international/local speakers
- Fellows in Teaching & Academic Development
- Online teaching resources
- Teaching Profiles

RECOGNISING TEACHING EXCELLENCE
- President's Teaching Awards
- College Teaching Awards
- Awards for Supporting Student Learning

UCD will ….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.[20]

---

19. Skelton, A. (2005), *Understanding Teaching Excellence in Higher Education*. London: Routledge, p.73 & 138
20. UCD Strategic Plan to 2014 – Forming Global Minds, p.17

TABLE 4: ENHANCING TEACHING - SUITE OF ACTIVITIES

INITIATIVE	PURPOSE	OUTCOMES/RESULTS	DURATION
WORKSHOPS	An annual programme of workshops is provided for academic staff. These range from strategic policy/practice sessions with international speakers to targeted group sessions for School Heads of Teaching & Learning on institutional teaching and learning topics, as well as pedagogic workshops which are open to all staff: see http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/academicdevelopment/workshops/.	In 2011/12 strategic policy/practice sessions included: • "Enhancing Learning in the First Year" (Keynote: Professor Terry May, Emeritus Professor, Caledonian Academy, Scotland) October 2011. • "Re-designing Assessment Strategically" (Professor Stephen Marshall University of New South Wales) April 2012. Including these strategic policy sessions over 200 academic staff attended 11 workshops/seminars during the course of 2011/12.	Core activity by UCD T&L.
ONLINE TEACHING RESOURCES	A comprehensive range of online teaching resources are available through: http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/resources/. Resources cover the full spectrum of teaching activities from delivering an effective teaching session, to developing particular aspects such as assessment or to the design of curricula at module and programme level. The structure of the resources allows academic staff to access practical advice and guidance on key topics as well as directions to further research-based information. In addition to the teaching resources available on the website, UCD Teaching & Learning has established a wiki based Open Educational Resource (OER). The OER hosts a number of educational resources and materials derived from the T&L collection of programmes and workshops.	An analysis of website usage statistics 2011/12 indicates that the resource pages accounted for just under 40% of top 100 pages viewed. The *Assessment; Module Design and Enhancement;* and *Teaching Toolkit* sections receive the highest number of page views. The material contained in these sections aligns closely with the strategic projects initiated by UCD Teaching & Learning since 2009. The OER has received almost 270,000 hits since its launch in June 2010 and has 90 registered users.	Core activity by UCD T&L.
TEACHING IN HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATION -ACCREDITED PROGRAMMES	A formal teaching in higher education qualification has been offered since 2004. In the last 3 years, the programme has been revised to take account of UCD's credit-based curriculum structure to permit flexibility and accessibility for academic staff according to their professional requirements and their career stage. More recently the programme has been re-formed to focus on the provision of a Professional Certificate (15ECTS) and a linked Professional Diploma (30ECTS). The Professional Certificate provides staff with strong foundational skills in teaching in higher education, whilst the Professional Diploma is focussed towards supporting those with curriculum development or advanced pedagogical needs. See http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/academicdevelopment/teachingqualificationoverview/professionalcertificateor-diplomainuniversityteachinglearning/	• An analysis of student feedback has demonstrated very high level of satisfaction with the programme. • There is a positive correlation between completion of the accredited programmes and subsequent progression to academic leadership roles. • Student Numbers over the past 3 years: 2010/11 – 25 2011/12 – 17 2012/13 – 30 Total number of graduates -34	Core activity by UCD T&L.

TABLE 4: ENHANCING TEACHING - SUITE OF ACTIVITIES - CONTINUED

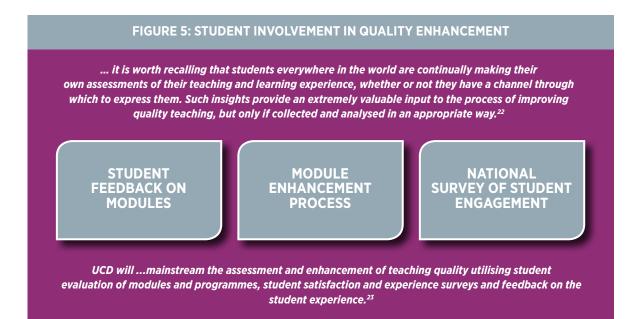| INITIATIVE	PURPOSE	OUTCOMES/RESULTS	DURATION
FELLOWS IN TEACHING & ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT	A mature Fellowship programme is in place, established in 2007, it provides a structure for staff with academic leadership capacity to engage in practice-based research on strategic teaching and learning enhancement themes. Since 2007, 18 fellows have been appointed on a 2 year cycle and the outcomes of their work have been published internationally and have informed the development and implementation of UCD's current Education Strategy. See http://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/ucd%20 fellowships%20report%202007-09.pdf http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/fellowships/	Strategic themes addressed by the Fellows to date include: • 2007-2009 - First Year Experience; Using Assessment for Student Engagement; • 2009-2011 - Critical Thinking in University Curriculum; Development of General Electives; • 2011-2013 – Factors Effecting Staff Choice of Assessment. Outputs include: • 5 peer-reviewed articles, 2 book chapters, 30 international conference presentations, and 13 national conference presentations.	Biennial award.
TEACHING PROFILES	As part of UCD's strategic parity of esteem for teaching and research, Teaching Profiles have been developed to showcase the teaching expertise of academic staff in a visible and accessible way. Teaching Profiles are published alongside Research Profiles and include achievements, expertise, responsibilities as well as student feedback results. http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/ academicdevelopment/teachingprofiles/	Some benefits of the online teaching profile: • Provides a greater integration between Teaching & Learning and Research; • Improved sharing of teaching practice and innovation across the university; • A familiar on-line system which allows academics construct a concise teaching portfolio; • Alignment of the profile sections with evidence required for Teaching & Learning applications for promotion thus improving the efficiency and transparency of the promotions process.	Core activity by UCD T&L.

3.2 RECOGNISING TEACHING EXCELLENCE

Formal recognition of excellence in teaching plays an important role in modeling good practice, encouraging innovation and rewarding staff initiative. As part of its strategic commitment to *excel in teaching, learning innovation and academic development*[21], UCD recognises and supports those who successfully enhance the quality of education through their outstanding teaching and educational leadership both within the academic and professional domains (Table 5). Recognition of academic staff for teaching excellence takes the form of a President's Teaching Award and College Teaching Awards. Recognition of professional staff is through Awards for Supporting Student Learning.

TABLE 5: RECOGNISING TEACHING EXCELLENCE - SUITE OF ACTIVITIES			
	PURPOSE	**OUTCOMES/RESULTS**	**DURATION**
PRESIDENT'S TEACHING AWARD	This prestigious award is made through competitive selection to recipients who have a clear track record in teaching and learning including adoption of leadership roles in curriculum design, programme development and peer mentoring in Teaching and Learning. President's Teaching Award recipients undertake a funded strategic project over a period of two year.	The most recent awardees (2010) developed: • A Writing Centre to support the development of students' academic writing skills. See http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/projects/drop-inwritingclinics/ • A module on Teaching Skills for doctoral students. See http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/awardsgrants/presidentsteachingaward/	Biennial award.
COLLEGE TEACHING AWARDS	College Teaching Awards are made annually and targeted towards supporting the development of staff by acknowledging specific efforts made by recipients in teaching and learning, appropriate to the current stage of their career. Successful recipients receive a bursary which may be used for attendance at teaching and learning events external to the University.	Since 2008, 25 College Teaching Awards have been made, and many of these recipients have developed their potential further and become: a National Teaching Award winner; UCD Fellows in Teaching & Academic Development (2011-2013) and Dublin Regional Higher Education (DRHEA) Teaching Fellows (2012). See http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/awardsgrants/collegeteachingawards/	Biennial award.
AWARDS FOR SUPPORTING STUDENT LEARNING	In modern higher education, professional staff have a role in enhancing and supporting excellence in the student learning experience, through: direct contact with students for advisory and guidance purposes; the development and implementation of supported student learning initiatives or professional support for the implementation of responsive initiatives to support learning enhancement and innovation. Recipients are awarded a small bursary in recognition.	Since 2010/11, 12 such awards have been made covering achievements as diverse as: student advisory activities, library services, mid-semester review (retention), and e-learning technical support. See http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/awardsgrants/assl/winners11-12/	Biennial award.

---

21. UCD Strategic Plan to 2014 – Forming Global Minds, p.17

3.3 STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

In order to evaluate the educational impact of its programmes and students' satisfaction with the overall UCD experience, it is essential that the University has a means to collect and analyse information about its key activities.

FIGURE 5: STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

... it is worth recalling that students everywhere in the world are continually making their own assessments of their teaching and learning experience, whether or not they have a channel through which to express them. Such insights provide an extremely valuable input to the process of improving quality teaching, but only if collected and analysed in an appropriate way.[22]

STUDENT FEEDBACK ON MODULES	MODULE ENHANCEMENT PROCESS	NATIONAL SURVEY OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

UCD 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.[23]

TABLE 6: STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN QUALITY ENHANCEMENT - SUITE OF ACTIVITIES

INITIATIVE	PURPOSE	OUTCOMES/RESULTS	DURATION
STUDENT FEEDBACK ON MODULES	The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 identified students as having *"a major contribution to make in influencing the design of curricula and in reviewing and providing feedback on them".[24]* In 2009-10 a Student Feedback on Module pilot project was initiated to test the implementation of a university-wide standardised online module feedback survey. In 2010-11 the University approved the rollout of the system to all modules (approx. 3,300) university-wide. The results aggregate automatically and are made available to the Heads of School in order to promote responsibility for the quality of modules. The module coordinator receives the quantitative and qualitative data for their own modules, which is also uploaded automatically to their online Teaching Profile. Module Coordinators and Schools are encouraged to review the feedback and let students know how their comments have been used. http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/resources/moduledesignenhancement/ucdstudent-feedbackonmodulessurvey/	Important benefits of the university-wide student feedback system include: • All students are now afforded an equal opportunity to provide feedback on their experience of modules. • Individual lecturers as well as School management teams have regular and clear information from students regarding the quality of the teaching and learning environment. • Best practice resources have been developed and disseminated to support academic staff to interpret and respond to feedback and communicate changes made back to students. • Excellence in teaching and curriculum design can be systematically identified and showcased. • Reduced manual effort on the part of individual academic staff and Schools through the provision of systems support.	Core University activity (supported by UCD T&L).

---

22. OECD (2012). Fostering Quality Teaching in Higher Education: Policies and Practices, An IMHE Guide for Higher Education Institutions, OECD Publishing, p.21
23. UCD Strategic Plan to 2014 – Forming Global Minds, p.17
24. National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 – Report of the Strategy Group, (January 2011: Section 3.2)

TABLE 6: STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN QUALITY ENHANCEMENT - SUITE OF ACTIVITIES - CONTINUED

INITIATIVE	PURPOSE	OUTCOMES/RESULTS	DURATION
MODULE ENHANCEMENT PROCESS	Academic peer review of educational design and delivery is vital in developing and maintaining quality educational standards and high levels of students learning. Following a successful pilot in 2008-09 with the Colleges of Arts and Celtic Studies and Human Sciences, the Module Enhancement Review process has been rolled-out in all UCD Schools/Colleges. This bi-annual process is a short subject-based peer review of module design and delivery. It is a synoptic yet holistic process which allows schools to self-evaluate the quality and standard of modules offered. The review process is informed by the Module Enhancement Report which integrates a number of key data sets into a single summary level report (e.g. registration data, grade distribution, module descriptor and student feedback results). http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/resources/moduledesignenhancement/guidetomoduleenhancementinucd/	Important outcomes from the Module Enhancement process include: • The use of qualitative and quantitative data ensures a holistic review process and evidence-based decision about the design and teaching of modules. • The Module Enhancement Process is now embedded into the academic cycle and is led locally by Vice-Principals for T&L and Associate Deans for T&L. • The process generates greater academic discussion about modules at subject/school level. • The Module Enhancement and Student Feedback processes represent a clear shift towards greater accountability, transparency and proactive engagement on matters concerning the quality of the teaching and learning.	Core University activity (supported by UCD T&L).
NATIONAL SURVEY OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT	Building on the successful implementation of the Student Feedback on Modules system university-wide in 2010-11, the next step for UCD was the introduction of a university-wide Student Engagement Survey. The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is a well-established survey instrument which has been used extensively in North America to collect information from first and final year students about their College experience, participation in programmes and personal development. The NSSE also facilitates institutions to compare and benchmark their results with other comparable institutions internationally. In April 2011 UCD piloted the NSSE with a sample of first and final year students. Following review and further research, the Australian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE), which is closely linked to NSSE, was administered to all first and final year students in March 2012.	Important benefits of the university-wide student engagement survey include: • The results provide an estimate of how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from attending UCD. • The survey results point to areas where UCD is performing well and aspects of the undergraduate experience that could be improve. • In addition to university-level results, College and Programme level results can also be generated and compared. • Longitudinal data supports better understanding of the institutional policies and educational practices required to facilitate engagement and better learning.	Core University activity.

Section 4 **Perspectives on the Future**

The projects and initiatives outlined in this report confirm the commitment, autonomy and capacity of UCD to continue to adapt and deliver a high quality learning experience, which is locally and nationally relevant as well as internationally connected and bench-marked. UCD strives to achieve and extend excellence in its teaching and learning activities thus contributing to national developments in higher education policy and to the wider reputational quality of Irish higher education in a global context.

The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030[25] provides a blueprint for the strategic development of Ireland's Universities and Institutes of Technology into the future. Emphasising the need for a responsive and adaptive mass higher education system with clear and shared objectives across institutions, the report highlights a number of priority areas for teaching and learning. Many of UCD's strategic developments in the domain of teaching and learning are consonant with the objectives set out in the National Strategy and indeed are already embedded.

In the context of a mass higher education system, the continuing expansion of higher education for current and future generations of learners, alongside challenges of access and maintaining quality are challenging policy issues at national level. Indeed the interface between second-level and third-level education has been the subject of particular recent attention (Hyland, 2011[26]) in terms of access, attainment and learning orientation. UCD has already begun to address issues of access

and attainment. The development of broad based programme entry structures provides students with the time and exposure to the main aspects of their discipline before committing to a specialised disciplinary pathway. Concept modules are now widely used in semester 1, to introduce students in the early-transition phase to the underpinning broad disciplinary concepts of their programme and learning at university-level. Continuing to develop and enhance this significant student learning transition to higher education, as well as points of transition within programmes to the point of graduation, will remain a major priority for the future.

In supporting the University to deliver a high quality learning experience, UCD Teaching & Learning will continue to ensure that institutional teaching and learning initiatives are internationally informed in terms of policy and best practice and localised to meet the context of UCD and it's community of learners.

Achieving educational transformation is best supported by an enhancement ethos which acknowledges the dynamic, challenging and complex aspects of teaching and student learning as a dialogical process and in equal measure encourages and channels innovation for the benefit of learners and staff. The strategic positioning of teaching and learning at institutional level and in the sectoral policy framework as enhancement focused is central to the on-going transformation process within higher education and to the quality challenges posed by mass higher education.

TABLE 7: BENCHMARKING AGAINST THE NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION	
NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION (2011): OBJECTIVES FOR TEACHING & LEARNING	**UCD STRATEGIC INITIATIVES FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING**
Excellence in the teaching and learning experience and learning environment	Reward and recognition structures for excellence including: Fellowships in Teaching & Academic Development (**2007** onwards); College Teaching Awards (**2008** onwards); President's Teaching Awards (**2009** updated from 1996)
Research-informed teaching	Research informed teaching guided by pedagogic research of UCD T&L staff, Fellows and other scholars - disseminated through UCD Teaching & Learning;
Clear routes of progression through programmes including access	Programme progression and flexible pathways, through modular curriculum since **2005**
Better preparation of first year students	Prioritisation of the first year experience: UCD Fellowships since **2007** and University Focus on First Year Projects **2010**
Development of generic skills across all taught provision	Development of generic skills through Personal Development Planning (PDP) initiative in conjunction with UCD Careers (**2010**); Learning for Success module (**2011**)
Development of the quality assurance framework	Development of a quality enhancement approach to teaching: Module Enhancement (**2008** onwards) and Student Feedback on Modules (**2009**)
Training and development of competent higher education teachers	Accredited provision for academic staff in teaching and learning in higher education since **2004** and further enhanced **2012/13**

25. National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 – Report of the Strategy Group (2011)
26. Entry to Higher Education in Ireland in the 21st Century, Hyland, 2011

Appendix 1
UCD Teaching & Learning Team (2007-2012)

Professor Bairbre Redmond, Deputy Registrar Teaching & Learning and Dean of Undergraduate Studies
Ms Áine Galvin, Director of Teaching and Learning

Ms Judith Archbold, Teaching and Learning Projects Officer
Dr Terry Barrett, Lecturer in Educational Development
Ms Leonora Harty, Teaching and Learning Projects Officer (maternity cover from July 2012)
Mr David Jennings, Lecturer in Educational Technology
Mr Ross Loughnane, Programmes Administrator
Ms Elizabeth Noonan, Director of Academic Development
Dr Geraldine O'Neill, Senior Lecturer in Educational Development

FORMER TEAM MEMBERS
Ms Diane Cashman, Educational Technologist (2006-2009)
Ms Alexandra Grabowski, Teaching and Learning Projects Assistant (2008-2011)
Dr Tim McMahon, Lecturer in Educational Development (2002-2012)
Ms Bernice Molloy, Teaching and Learning Projects Assistant (2011-2012)
Dr Paul Surgenor, Lecturer in Educational Development (2008–2012)

Appendix 2
Index of Reports, References and URLs

**This appendix lists UCD Teaching and Learning reports, resources and web links referred to in the report.
For further information on all publications (fellows and staff) and reports from UCD Teaching & Learning please see:
www.ucd.ie/teaching**

UCD TEACHING & LEARNING REPORTS AND RESOURCES:
A qualitative investigation into the reasons why students exit from the first year of their programme and UCD:
http://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/Reasons%20Why%20Students%20Leave.pdf
Choice of Assessment Methods:
http://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/Practitioners%20Guide.pdf

Enquiry Based Learning Practitioner's Guide:
http://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/UCDTLI0041.pdf

Fellowships in Teaching & Academic Development:
http://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/ucd%20fellowships%20report%202007-09.pdf

First Year Assessment Resources:
http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/resources/assessment/firstyearassessment/
http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/projects/assessmentredesign/#d.en.114889
http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/projects/exploringassessmentinfirstyear/

Guidelines for the Design and Delivery of a School-based Module to support UCD Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA):
http://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/gta_guidelines.doc

Teaching Resources:
http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/resources/

Web Links for UCD Teaching & Learning
(www.ucd.ie/teaching)

Academic Development Workshops
http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/academicdevelopment/workshops/

Awards for Supporting Student Learning
http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/awardsgrants/assl/winners11-12/

College Teaching Awards
http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/awardsgrants/collegeteachingawards/

Module Enhancement
http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/resources/moduledesignenhancement/guidetomoduleenhancementinucd/

Student Feedback on Modules
http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/resources/moduledesignenhancement/ucdstudentfeedbackonmodulessurvey/

Student Response Systems in Macro-economics
http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/projects/archive/studentresponsesystem/

Teaching Fellowships
http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/fellowships/

Teaching Profiles
http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/academicdevelopment/teachingprofiles/

Teaching Skills for Doctoral Students
http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/projects/learningtoteachteachingtolearn/

Writing Centre
http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/projects/drop-inwritingclinics/

Teaching Qualification
http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/academicdevelopment/teachingqualificationoverview/
professionalcertificateordiplomainuniversityteachinglearning/