



UCD Registry  
Clárann UCD

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# UCD Registration 2020/21

## Review Report

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The Review of Registration is an annual process in which groups from around the University carry out a self-analysis process under the auspices of the Registration Implementation Oversight Group (RIOG). This group has been in place since the preparations for the 2007 start of year registration season, operating under the sponsorship of the Registrar.

Feedback from the student start of term surveys is also incorporated.

This document brings together the successes, challenges and recommendations identified in the individual strands of the Review of Registration 2020. The specific areas covered by the review are:

- **Curriculum Management**
- **Timetabling**
- **Module Capacity Planning and Management**
- **IT Related Systems and Developments**
- **Registration (online, manual, central)**
- **Supports for Staff/Faculty**
- **Supports for Students**

Section 2 of this document gives a summary of Registration 2020/21 while section 3 provides a more specific commentary on each area.

Section 4 contains a summary of the main recommendations/suggestions that arose from the feedback provided.

Section 5 lists the membership of RIOG.

Section 6 shows infographics of the key findings from the student start of term surveys.

Section 7 gives an overview of key student supports provided by the UCD Student Desk while section 8 gives an overview of UniShare tasks logged by the UCD College Offices.

Section 9 shares some statistics from the weekly USM Service Delivery Continuity Updates.



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## 2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overall, Registration 2020 went well despite the unique challenges presented by COVID-19.

Staff/faculty feedback shows how the University adapted to ensure that students were not adversely affected, and it highlighted the level of collaboration that was involved.

The move to remote working and learning saw rapid changes in how supports, communications and knowledge sharing were delivered to and from staff, faculty and students. As well as the usual email channel, there was a need to quickly incorporate other online communication tools such as Google Chats, Zoom and Microsoft Teams.

Student feedback, through the Undergraduate Start of Term Survey and the Graduate Taught/Graduate Research Start of Term Survey, indicates an overall satisfaction with the start of term/registration experience (average of 84%). However, respondents also noted the high level of uncertainty they faced before and during the start of term. There was positive feedback about the supports in place for students, especially the online orientation activities.

This year saw the highest ever number of responses to both start of term surveys. Section 6 gives an overview of the results and further information is available on the [UCD Start of Term Survey<sup>1</sup>](#) web page.

The following sub sections provide a brief commentary on what worked well for 2020/21 and what needs improvement for 2021/22. Sections 3 and 4 provide more information on specific areas.

While not all the feedback received is mentioned in this document, it is being reviewed by the relevant support areas and will be acted on accordingly.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.ucd.ie/students/services/startoftersurvey/](http://www.ucd.ie/students/services/startoftersurvey/)



## 2.1 WHAT WORKED WELL

### Collaboration/Support

- There was a high level of collaboration among and between Registry, Room Allocations and Colleges/Schools. It is acknowledged that remote working presents a challenge to this that needs to be carefully managed.
- The Peer Mentors helped new students settle into the start of term and connect with classmates. The online nature of orientation made this even more crucial.

### Technology and Systems

- IT Systems remained stable during the period although some slowness was reported at peak times.
- Online tools such as Zoom, Google Chats/Hangouts and Microsoft Teams were used by staff and faculty to manage communication and maintain collaboration while working remotely. The Student Desk used Google Chats/Hangouts to successfully manage student queries that would usually be carried out face-to-face or over the phone.
- The Curriculum Management System was flexible enough to handle the level of changes in configuration required for constantly changing timelines. Using Wufoo forms to streamline late curriculum submissions was beneficial.
- Orientation activities were successfully delivered using online platforms such as Zoom and Brightspace and there was good engagement from students.
- Incoming students used the UCD Mobile App to access Brightspace and check for orientation information.

### Communications/Knowledge Sharing

- The use of technology allowed staff/faculty to communicate with each other and with students in real time and provided a useful alternative to speaking in person.
- The Unified Support Model (USM) Group, in Microsoft Teams, proved useful for sharing information between staff across the University and allowed for discussion and query answering.
- The USM Remote Working Group that meets weekly via Zoom allows staff to share ideas on how to support and resolve student queries.
- Communications and support from Registry to staff/faculty regarding changes to deadlines etc worked very well.
- Communication with and between Registry and Room Allocations worked well and there was prompt attention to requests for changes or submissions of further information by all involved.
- Students found the Introduction to Brightspace Module to be useful and informative with the inclusion of the Active Bystander Programme cited as excellent or good by many respondents to the undergraduate survey.



## 2.2 WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED UPON

### Timelines and Decision Making

- Crucial timetabling and capacity management decisions were delayed or changed at short notice and the student experience was negatively impacted by inaccurate SISWeb timetables and uncertainty around how classes would be delivered. It is acknowledged that this was due to shifting government guidelines.
- Due to the unique circumstances this year, the timeframe available for Programme Verification made it difficult to fully check all Programmes/Majors before Registration went live.

### Communication/Knowledge Sharing

- Clearer terminology needed in relation to COVID arrangements, e.g., module mode of delivery vs being scheduled for online teaching.
- Key messages about COVID arrangements were easily lost due to volume of information and updates on the FAQs web page.
- Many students felt overwhelmed by the amount of information they received over a condensed period at the start of term. The online nature of delivery and fewer opportunities for interaction also contributed to this.
- Students also felt that the late communication of key information, such as how classes would be delivered, affected their ability to plan appropriately for the start of term.
- Student responses to the survey suggest that having a standard format for online classes would make it easier for them to engage with remote learning.
- Staff would find more regular updates from Registry useful.

### Technology and Systems

- Students found the information presented on the SISWeb timetable less clear than the Google Calendar version.
- Some students also found SISWeb difficult to navigate without guidance.
- Some staff/faculty experienced difficulties getting set up to use Brightspace at the start of term.

## 2.3 CONCLUSION AND FURTHER ACTIONS

The key issues and recommendations identified in this report, detailed in the sections below, can be addressed at a local level by the relevant support areas and the appropriate action decided by the area(s) responsible. All actions arising will be included in the planning for registration 2021/22.



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## 3 SUMMARY BY AREA

### 3.1 CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT

The Curriculum Management System (CMS) worked well and communications from the Curriculum Team regarding changes to deadlines etc were clear.

Staff/faculty feedback noted that late decisions about the format of the Autumn Trimester disrupted the curriculum timelines. Extending the opening of the Module Descriptor in the CMS facilitated ongoing and last-minute changes and adjustments.

Using online Wufoo forms for managing late structure and module changes removed the need to clarify requests and had the added benefit of automatically tracking requests which saved time as these did not have to be recorded separately.

### 3.2 TIMETABLING

Timetabling was a challenging experience due to the unusual circumstances this year and progress was affected by delays in decision making and various iterations of changes in response to Government guidance.

Room Allocations successfully managed a complex Autumn timetabling effort, and the Colleges/Schools thank them for the level of support they provided during that period as well as their continued efforts with the Spring timetable. The timetabling/Room Allocations deadlines did prove difficult to meet for some areas but the degree of flexibility from all concerned was acknowledged.

Some students reported inaccurate timetables at the start of term which led to missed lectures. Having to consult multiple sources of information e.g., Brightspace and SISWeb, also caused confusion. Students also felt that their SISWeb timetables were difficult to read, especially where there was a mix of online and face-to-face offerings for modules. However, many found the Google Calendar view of their timetable to be easier to read.

Based on the experience of the Autumn Trimester, it is crucial that decisions around Spring timetabling and teaching are made in a timely manner and communicated clearly.

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### 3.3 MODULE CAPACITY PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

Module capacity planning and management was impacted by the need to meet Government and University requirements around COVID-19.

Staff/faculty feedback mentioned the excellent advice available from the Systems and Data Services team in Registry on how to safely update capacities, for example COVID-19 limits on labs. Staff also acknowledged the very quick response to requests from Module Coordinators for changes to module capacities.

Feedback also highlighted the importance of Schools/Module Coordinators reviewing module capacities from year-to-year to ensure that Core/Option places can accommodate the expected intake for a given academic year.

### 3.4 IT RELATED SYSTEMS AND DEVELOPMENTS

UCD IT systems and servers were stable over the registration period with no significant outages reported.

The UCD Mobile App was enhanced and had over 11,000 unique users between 25 August and 31 October 2020, of which 7656 were new users.

The use of online Student Connectors continues to grow, especially with the move to remote working. Students can use the Connectors to look for information and if the answers are not readily available on the website, a query can be sent directly to the relevant area. The Student Desk have used a Connector for many years and, as part of the Unified Support Model (USM) project, many College/School Offices have developed their own versions to facilitate the capture, tracking and resolution of issues. Connectors across all USM Offices have had nearly 60,000 views between 1 September and 14 December 2020.

The Banner Student Information System was upgraded in March 2020. In general, staff using the new version during the registration season found it to be more user friendly. Staff at some off-campus clinical sites have reported an issue with access and this has been flagged with IT Services. The new version of Banner is web based so does not require the use of Java and is compatible with most modern browsers which benefits users working remotely.





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## 3.5 REGISTRATION

Student Records worked efficiently to get students set up for the start of term.

Online registration was stable and worked well. Responses to the start of term surveys indicate that accessing SISWeb and confirming registration was straightforward for most students.

Start Times for module registration were allocated to all students this year. While this worked well for many cohorts, some students felt disadvantaged by their start time, for example, where places were limited in Option modules. However, every effort was made to ensure equity of access to module registration for the different cohorts.

Some Schools reported higher levels of manual registration than usual due to the complexities of the Autumn timetable.

The Autumn Elective allocation process ran smoothly as did the registration to practicals and laboratories for relevant Autumn modules.

## 3.6 SUPPORT FOR STAFF/FACULTY

The level of support provided by Registry and Room Allocations was acknowledged as well as the strong sense of collegiality across the University.

Staff using the new version of Banner for the first time found the online support and training material useful and easy to follow.

Having a College Educational Technologist in place was an invaluable resource to Schools and Module Co-ordinators in their preparation for the start of the new year.

As remote working came into effect, the Unified Support Model (USM) community moved online to ensure continuity of service. The creation of a USM Microsoft Team allowed members in the College/School Offices and Registry to post queries and share key information. This has since migrated to Google Currents. The USM Remote Working Group, which meets weekly via Zoom, gives staff an essential platform where they can raise issues at a wider level and discuss shared solutions to student queries.



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## 3.7 SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

Supports for students moved primarily online due to Government guidelines around COVID-19. Data from the weekly USM Service Delivery Continuity Updates (section 9) show that students have needed more support this trimester than in the same period last year, with an increase of over 6,000 interactions year-on-year. Queries about Extenuating Circumstances show the largest year-on-year increase, most likely due to the uncertainty caused by the global pandemic.

The Student Desk successfully used Google Chats/Hangouts to manage queries in lieu of phone calls and in-person visits and answered over 3000 queries between August and October 2020 alone. The main queries coming into the Student Desk over this period were about registration and fees (see section 7 for further statistics). College/School Offices also moved their full range of supports online while continuing to provide excellent support to students.

Orientation was delivered virtually this year and significant effort went into making it a success. 177 individual undergraduate orientation activities were delivered by local programme areas. Many online resources such as YouTube videos were produced that can be reused even when orientation reverts to a campus-based format. 90% of Stage 1 respondents to the Undergraduate survey took part in orientation activities and highlights included the support provided by the Peer Mentors as well as meeting other students. The Active Bystander Programme was also well received. Responses to the Graduate survey shows that communication about the UCD GradsConnect event was considered good or excellent as was the use of YouTube as a medium for sharing information. Both incoming Undergraduate and Graduate students would have welcomed the opportunity for more small-group interaction either online or on campus.

Student feedback indicated that they would prefer information to be provided in shorter, bite-sized chunks and perhaps spread out more over the Trimester. Increased supports for students who accept later CAO Round offers was also suggested.

The UCD Mobile App was mostly used by new students to access Brightspace and check orientation information. Suggestions for what could be added include an interactive map of the UCD walks and a virtual UCARD.



## 4 OVERVIEW OF IDEAS/RECOMMENDATIONS AND ANY ACTIONS REQUIRED

This section contains a summary of the key recommendations made by the various individual strand reviews as well as any relevant actions arising.

Area	Action by	Recommendation/Suggestion
<b>Capacity Management</b>	Heads of School	Reinforce with Schools/Module Coordinators that module capacities should be reviewed year-on-year to ensure that they can reasonably accommodate expected intake.
<b>Timetabling</b>	University Management Team	Provide timely decision-making and clear communications around Spring Trimester timetabling arrangements.
<b>Supports for Staff/Faculty</b>	UCD Registry	Publicise more widely the available Registry resources and information relating to start of term preparations and activities e.g. CMS, student record set up, manual registration and relevant communications.
<b>Supports for Students</b>	UCD Registry	Provide clear and timely information about Spring registration dates.
	Orientation Advisory Group/Graduate Studies/Colleges and Schools	Further supports/orientation activities for students who accept late places and miss the main events.
	Orientation Advisory Group/Colleges and Schools	Provide more opportunities for students to interact in smaller groups either online or in person.
	Orientation Advisory Group/Graduate Studies/Colleges and Schools/UCD Registry	Manage the timing and delivery of communications to ensure provision of clear information that does not overwhelm students.



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## 5 REGISTRATION IMPLEMENTATION OVERSIGHT GROUP MEMBERSHIP FOR 2020/21

Kevin Griffin, Director of UCD Registry (Chair)

Andrew Myler, Director: Administrative Services, UCD Registry

Kate Griffin, Deputy Director: Administrative Services, UCD Registry

Ryan Teevan, Deputy Director: Administrative Services, UCD Registry

Caroline Barrett, Systems and Data Services: Administrative Services, UCD Registry

Lizanne Hutton, Curriculum Team: Administrative Services, UCD Registry

Caroline McTeigue, Support & Training: Administrative Services, UCD Registry

Emma Caron, Communications Officer, UCD Registry

Dr Fionnuala Dillane, Associate Professor, College of Arts and Humanities

John Buckley, School/Programme Office, UCD Veterinary Sciences Centre/  
Annette Forde, Director, College of Science Office

Angela Evans, Graduate School Manager, College of Engineering and Architecture  
Administration Office

Janet Carton, UCD Graduate Studies

Karen Jackman/Pauline Slattery, UCD School of English, Drama and Film

Helen McCarthy, UCD School of Biology & Environmental Science

Bronwyn O'Callaghan, Business Systems Project Manager, UCD IT Services

Eoin Hanratty, Head of IT Customer Services

Daniel Earls, UCD Commercial, Residential, and Hospitality Services

Hannah Bryson, Education Officer, Students' Union

Carla Gummerson, Graduate Officer, Students' Union



## 6 START OF TERM 2020 SURVEYS - KEY RESULTS



### UNDERGRADUATE START OF TERM SURVEY 2020/21



**RESPONDENTS: 2352**

STAGE 1 INCOMING: 1212  
RETURNING STUDENTS: 1150

**90%**  
OF STAGE 1  
RESPONDENTS  
TOOK PART IN  
ORIENTATION



**BEST PARTS**  
PEER MENTORS AND ADVISERS  
ORIENTATION TIMETABLES  
PROGRAMME ORIENTATION  
MEETING OTHER STUDENTS

**SUGGESTIONS**  
MORE STUDENT INTERACTION  
PROVIDE INFORMATION EARLIER  
SUPPORTS FOR LATE CAO ACCEPTS  
STANDARDISE ONLINE FORMAT

### ONLINE REGISTRATION

**WHAT WENT WELL**  
ACCESSING ONLINE REGISTRATION  
CONFIRMING REGISTRATION  
COMPLETING PERSONAL INFORMATION  
PAYING FEES

**WHAT COULD BE BETTER**  
REGISTRATION START TIMES  
TIMING OF COMMUNICATIONS  
PICKING OPTION/ELECTIVE MODULES  
READING/PRINTING TIMETABLES



**WHAT WENT WELL**  
ACCESSING ONLINE REGISTRATION  
CONFIRMING REGISTRATION  
NAVIGATING ONLINE REGISTRATION  
COMPLETING PERSONAL INFORMATION

**WHAT COULD BE BETTER**  
TIMING OF COMMUNICATIONS  
PICKING OPTION MODULES  
GOOGLE FORM FOR REGISTRATION  
PAYING FEES

### GETTING INFORMATION



EMAILS FROM  
UCD  
88%



ONLINE GUIDES/  
VIDEOS  
60%



CURRENT STUDENTS  
WEBSITE  
59%

% OF RESPONDENTS WHO RATED THE METHODS EXCELLENT OR GOOD

### OVERALL SATISFACTION



**82%**

OF RESPONDENTS RATED  
START OF TERM EXPERIENCE  
AS EXCELLENT OR GOOD



### GRADUATE STUDENTS START OF TERM SURVEY 2020/21



**RESPONDENTS: 905**

INCOMING STUDENTS: 601  
RETURNING STUDENTS: 304

**63%**  
OF INCOMING  
RESPONDENTS WERE  
AWARE OF  
GRADSCONNECT



**BEST PARTS**  
COMMUNICATIONS ABOUT THE EVENT  
MEDIUM (YOUTUBE LIVE)  
TIME OF THE EVENT  
DURATION OF EVENT  
SUPPORTING INFORMATION

**SUGGESTIONS**  
MORE LIVE CONTENT IF ONLINE  
SHORTER SESSIONS OVER TRIMESTER

### ONLINE REGISTRATION

**WHAT WENT WELL**  
ACCESSING ONLINE REGISTRATION  
CONFIRMING REGISTRATION  
NAVIGATING ONLINE REGISTRATION  
COMPLETING PERSONAL INFORMATION

**WHAT COULD BE BETTER**  
TIMING OF COMMUNICATIONS  
PICKING OPTION MODULES  
GOOGLE FORM FOR REGISTRATION  
PAYING FEES



**WHAT WENT WELL**  
ACCESSING ONLINE REGISTRATION  
CONFIRMING REGISTRATION  
NAVIGATING ONLINE REGISTRATION  
COMPLETING PERSONAL INFORMATION

**WHAT COULD BE BETTER**  
TIMING OF COMMUNICATIONS  
PICKING OPTION MODULES  
GOOGLE FORM FOR REGISTRATION  
PAYING FEES

### GETTING INFORMATION PREFERRED METHODS



EMAILS FROM  
UCD  
91%



ONLINE GUIDES/  
VIDEOS  
73%



GRADUATE STUDIES  
WEBSITE  
66%

% OF RESPONDENTS WHO RATED THE METHODS EXCELLENT OR GOOD

### OVERALL SATISFACTION



**85%**

OF RESPONDENTS RATED  
START OF TERM EXPERIENCE  
AS EXCELLENT OR GOOD

[www.ucd.ie/students/services/startoftermssurvey/](http://www.ucd.ie/students/services/startoftermssurvey/)



## 7 UCD STUDENT DESK - START OF TRIMESTER 20/21 UNISHARE STATISTICS





## 8 UCD COLLEGE OFFICES – START OF TRIMESTER 20/21 UNISHARE STATISTICS



## 9 USM SERVICE DELIVERY CONTINUITY UPDATES STATISTICS

