



University College Dublin



Ireland's Global University

Strategy 2015-2020

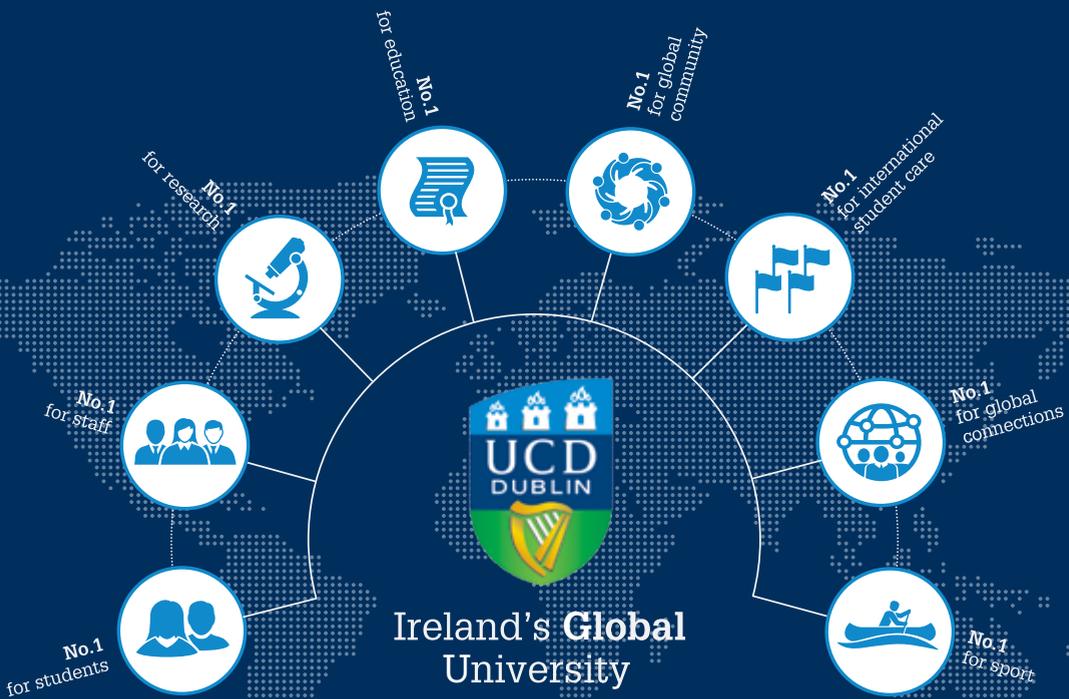



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Dear colleagues and friends of UCD,

One hundred and sixty years ago UCD was founded as an independent university, and the great nineteenth century educationalist, John Henry Newman, was appointed as the first rector to establish and shape its future. From these humble beginnings, Newman envisioned the growth of “*a flourishing University, which for a while had to struggle with fortune, but which, when its first founders and servants were dead and gone, had successes far exceeding their anxieties*”.

UCD has indeed flourished over these 160 years, making a unique and substantial contribution to the creation of modern Ireland, counting amongst its graduates three Presidents, four Taoisigh, five ministers in the current cabinet and six of Ireland’s European Commissioners. UCD’s contributions to business, science, the arts, culture and sport over this period are equally impressive, and the great author, James Joyce, remains our most well-known alumnus. At the same time, UCD has grown to become Ireland’s largest and most globally engaged university, attracting more first preferences from Irish students than any other university in the country, becoming the destination of choice for international students coming to Ireland and educating some 5,000 students at locations outside Ireland.

While our achievements are impressive, we cannot rest on our laurels. During the last 160 years the world has changed (and continues to change) at an extraordinary rate. Since the 1980s the Internet has revolutionised global communication and the way business is conducted. The Global Economic Crisis of 2008 demonstrated the extent to which countries and economies around the world are now interconnected. Multinational companies and organisations are increasingly multicultural and internationally mobile in the headquartering of their operations.

Over the same period of time, the global university environment has changed. Students have become increasingly internationally mobile, with many undertaking part or all of their university education in another country. Appreciation of the benefits of educating university students in a research intensive environment, together with

the benefits to society of the knowledge and innovation generated by universities, has seen an increasing emphasis on the need for academics to be undertaking both teaching and research at the highest level.

The competitiveness of Ireland is dependent on the competitiveness of its universities, as it is the universities which educate our future leaders in all spheres of life and generate the intellectual property and innovation which provide the country with its competitive edge. However, the flourishing of Ireland requires more than just material contributions. The study and discussion of people, society, culture, languages and the creative arts are also characteristics of a flourishing society. As Ireland’s largest university, with its great strength and diversity of disciplines, UCD has a duty to make significant contributions in each of these domains. This strategy sets out our ambition for contributing to the flourishing of Ireland and the world.

This strategy is the result of a strategic planning process undertaken by our University community over the last eight months. The strategy states clearly our mission, values, and our vision for what UCD should be by 2020. Ten key objectives are then set out. These objectives will shape our planning and decision making at all levels of the University, in order to ensure we achieve the vision. In our planning processes we will use reflexive decision making which engages the entire University community, so that our actions are responsive to conditions, needs and opportunities at every level. The strategy also introduces six exciting major strategic initiatives which will be undertaken at University level in pursuit of the objectives. We will review progress against the objectives annually, and update plans as necessary to ensure our success.



Professor Andrew J Deeks
President, University College Dublin



Our Mission

Our mission is to contribute to the flourishing of Dublin, Ireland, Europe and the world through the excellence and impact of our research and scholarship, the quality of our graduates and our global engagement; providing a supportive community in which every member of the University is enabled to achieve their full potential.

Our Values

Our values are excellence, integrity, collegiality, engagement and diversity.





Our Vision For 2020

Our **vision** for 2020 is that:

UCD will be a preeminent, diverse and inclusive scholarly community of students, faculty and staff who, while contributing to the development of Ireland, have global standing, understanding and impact. UCD will continue to be an excellent research-intensive university, where a comprehensive suite of strong disciplines forms the foundation for high quality interdisciplinary research, scholarship and innovation. Through this combination of world-leading disciplinary and interdisciplinary research, we will vigorously tackle significant global issues and challenges.

Our graduates will be imbued with a knowledge of the past, and will be capable of critically interrogating the present and of imagining the future. Through a holistic student-focused and research-led educational experience which has both breadth and depth, they will be equipped with the knowledge, skills, experience and attitudes they need to flourish in present and future Irish and global societies.

Highly engaged locally, nationally and internationally, UCD will be known around the world as Ireland's Global University. As such, we will be truly global in our comprehensive range of disciplines, in the reach and impact of our research and innovation, in our holistic educational experience, in the diversity of our University community, in our engagement with all sectors of society and with all regions of the world, and in the quality and extent of our campus and facilities. We will be distinctive in our agility, innovativeness, commitment to justice, inclusiveness and friendliness. We will bring the best of the world to Ireland, and the best of Ireland, including its distinct cultures, to the world.



To achieve this vision we will pursue ten key objectives



1. Increase the quality, quantity and impact of our research, scholarship and innovation.



2. Provide an educational experience that defines international best practice.



3. Consolidate and strengthen our disciplines.



4. Conduct strong interdisciplinary research and education in important areas of national and global need.



5. Attract and retain an excellent and diverse cohort of students, faculty and staff.



6. Build our engagement locally, nationally and internationally.



7. Develop and strengthen our University community.



8. Further develop world-class facilities to support the vision.



9. Adopt governance, management and budgetary structures which enable the vision.



10. Overcome financial, human resource management and other external constraints.

In pursuing these key objectives
we will undertake
six major strategic initiatives



1. Tackling global challenges



4. Engaging globally



2. Defining educational excellence



5. Building partnerships



3. Reimagining our campus



6. Increasing agility and effectiveness

We expect that success in achieving our vision will see us solidly in **the world top 100 universities by 2020.**

Objectives

Our ten key objectives will shape planning at all levels of the University and will allow us to measure progress towards the achievement of our vision. Each College, School, Centre, Institute and Support Unit will develop its own action plan to contribute to the achievement of these objectives.

A young man with light brown hair and blue eyes is looking intently at a molecular model. He is holding a white stick with a red and yellow ball attached to it. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

Objective 1

Increase the quality, quantity and impact of our research, scholarship and innovation

Research and scholarship are at the heart of the University, and epitomise the identity and reputation of University College Dublin. The knowledge they generate enables our nationally and internationally leading activities in innovation, enriches the education of our students and delivers impact economically, socially, culturally and in the formation of public policy.

Our vision for UCD in 2020 is built on a foundation of excellent and important research, delivering answers to challenges of global significance in which UCD and Ireland can play a leading role. We recognise that many of these challenges require long-term approaches, and we will value and promote fundamental discovery research as well as application-oriented research.

We believe that it is important to capture and convey the impact of research, scholarship and innovation, and we will spearhead the development of a national articulation of this impact. Recognising the particular impact a research-intensive university can deliver through its portfolio of innovation activities, we will further develop our already-strong portfolio of innovation programmes, patent development, spin-out companies and technology transfer.

Over the lifetime of this strategy we will adopt actions to increase the quality, quantity and impact of our research, scholarship and innovation to levels equal to or exceeding those of a comparator group of world top 100 universities. In measuring our progress against these objectives we will use quantitative metrics including publications, citations, research income, PhD students and patents, paying appropriate attention to disciplinary norms. We will also recognise high quality work that is not captured by such metrics, tracking esteem indicators and transformative contributions. We will take steps to define, capture and convey the impact of our research, innovation and scholarship both nationally and globally.

Objective 2

Provide an educational experience that defines international best practice

Our students are the core of our University. The capabilities of our graduates underpin our reputation. We strive to give our students a holistic education, instilling in them a desire to learn and create, to question and reason, to innovate and to contribute to society at all levels.

UCD is the 'University of First-Choice' for Irish students and the 'University of Destination' for the largest number of international students coming to Ireland. We lead the national agenda through our open and modular curricula at both undergraduate and graduate level, which endeavour to balance the need for depth and focus with the benefit of ensuring opportunities to maintain and develop wider interests. Our educational approaches also provide learning opportunities for a wider community who wish to experience the challenge of university education.

We will increase our national advantage in this area, further developing our portfolio of undergraduate and graduate programmes and co-curricular activities to define international best practice and to become an exemplar for university education around the world. Our approach to education will further combine depth and breadth of learning with opportunities to develop the skills, knowledge, experience and attitudes needed for our graduates to flourish in an increasingly global society.

Through our research intensive environment, a UCD education will be further enriched by the quality of our research and innovation and will develop our students' capacity for critical enquiry and original thinking. This approach will extend across all of our student cohorts, occasional, flexible, undergraduate and graduate, whether in taught programmes or in research. Recognising the value of diversity in the University community, we will systematically build on this diversity for student learning and institutional excellence. Our inclusive approach to student learning will extend into the wider University and community life.

Success will be measured through: student experience surveys; the demand for our programmes and the quality and diversity of our student intake; student performance and progression while in the University; and graduate employability and progression to further education. These measures will be gathered through robust institutional data, through stakeholder reviews and through engagement with our students and alumni.

Objective 3

Consolidate and strengthen our disciplines

Since the foundation of the University, UCD has built strength across a range of disciplines. Over the years the number of these disciplines has increased, so that we now have a disciplinary base unmatched in Ireland, and one that rivals the greatest universities in the world.

The breadth and strength of our disciplines is not only fundamental to our reputation as a research-intensive university and our ability to deliver depth to our educational experience, but also underpins our success in interdisciplinary research, education and innovation.

We will consolidate our disciplines through internal discussion and external comparison, and review our academic structures to ensure they are aligned with our disciplines. We will then work to strengthen these disciplines.

Success will be measured through rising research performance, education quality and student experience metrics in each area, together with improved measures of reputation. We expect that our disciplines will be ranked within the world top 100 by 2020.

Objective 4

Conduct strong interdisciplinary research and education in important areas of national and global need

The breadth of our expertise is one of the hallmarks of UCD. The ability to harness that expertise across disciplines will underpin our ability to meet national and global needs through our research and innovation activities and through the education we deliver to our students.

UCD has led the way in Ireland in conducting interdisciplinary research in areas of global importance. We have identified priority research themes and built interdisciplinary research institutes and centres. Our themes are aligned with national strengths and global opportunities and challenges. In education, our *Horizons* structure has allowed undergraduate students to access a broad mix of modules across the University, and it has provided opportunities for study across traditional disciplinary boundaries. The introduction of structured PhDs has opened up corresponding opportunities at graduate level, and we have a variety of interdisciplinary taught Masters programmes.

We will build on our success, regularly reviewing our research themes and educational curricula to ensure appropriate positioning and profile and to facilitate external engagement. We will ensure that our structures, policies and processes incorporate sufficient flexibility and adaptivity to support novel interdisciplinary research and education in the rapidly changing global landscape, and to exploit synergies with and between our disciplinary and interdisciplinary activities. Further development of thematic PhD programmes and thematic cross-disciplinary structured teaching around our research themes will leverage the benefits of interdisciplinarity for our educational programmes and our students.

Success will be measured through rising research education and engagement metrics for each research theme, particularly those metrics relating to impact and student experience.

Objective 5

Attract and retain an excellent and diverse cohort of students, faculty and staff

UCD values excellence and understands that excellent performance requires excellent people working in a supportive environment. Diversity, in all its forms, cultivates the exchange and development of ideas, an experience and understanding of cultural differences at all levels and a challenge to the status quo. The UCD community values these concepts and believes that diversity fosters excellence. Over the period of this strategy, UCD will continue to attract excellent and diverse students, faculty and staff from around Ireland and around the world, and will put in place appropriate support measures to develop and retain the members of our community.

UCD has the largest number and percentage of international students among the Irish universities and compares well with leading international universities for international faculty. We see continued growth in the numbers and quality of our international students and faculty as being a critical element in the development of the UCD community and in fostering excellence in our educational and research programmes.

In support of this goal, we will work to further raise the profile of UCD nationally and internationally. We will review our student recruitment programmes to ensure emphasis on excellence and widening participation and set annual targets for ensuring diversity in student recruitment. We will review our staff recruitment procedures to ensure that internationally benchmarked excellence is the standard we set for all of our recruitment activities.

UCD has been in the vanguard of supporting students from socio-economically disadvantaged communities and students with disabilities. UCD also has a long tradition of encouraging mature

students and we value in particular the contribution they make to the dynamic of our classes. We will continue to grow this valuable part of our community.

To ensure we retain our excellent and diverse cohort of students through to graduation, working in partnership with our various stakeholders, we will ensure that we have in place a comprehensive suite of student support measures and that our student services are world-class.

To ensure we retain our excellent and diverse faculty and staff, we will put in place a comprehensive performance development programme, having undertaken a full review of our promotion procedures, training processes and leave provisions. We will work to ensure that all members of faculty and staff are enabled to achieve their full potential and are appropriately rewarded for their contribution to our mission, vision and community, and together, we will promote gender balance and equality of opportunity among students and employees of the University. Furthermore, we will engage with leading edge national and international diversity programmes to ensure that we achieve the benefits of diversity throughout the University and at all levels of leadership.

Success will be measured by the quality and diversity of student admissions which will be measured by including students' prior educational achievement, progression success and other measures of student quality and success, together with measures of gender, race, nationality and socio-economic disadvantage. Corresponding measures will be put in place to evaluate the quality and diversity of faculty and staff recruitment, and the career development and retention of faculty and staff.



Objective 6

Build our engagement locally, nationally and internationally

A critical focus of this plan will be to develop UCD's engagement both within Ireland and further afield, and through this, to improve our national and international impact. UCD has made a unique and unrivalled contribution to the development of modern Ireland since the foundation of the State. This has been based on successful engagement with Irish society on every level and across every sphere of activity. Similarly, in recent times, UCD's engagement internationally has grown substantively. Now, in support of our vision for 2020, it is critical that UCD further builds these national and international engagements in a coordinated and strategic manner.

We will continue to build our portfolio of strategic, holistic and mutually beneficial partnerships with industry, public service and community organisations. We will work with local and national authorities to meet shared objectives, capturing the value of a great public university to city and country. We will engage our local community, sharing the benefits of the campus and the activities it houses.

Equally, we will develop our relationships with recognised colleges and partner universities nationally and internationally. We will engage globally through UCD Global Centres in key regions, working with government agencies, partners, alumni and the Irish diaspora in each region to deliver on our mission.

Success will be measured through our portfolio of strategic partners and through metrics of engagement activities locally, nationally and internationally.

Objective 7

Develop and strengthen our University community

Central to our mission and vision is the building-up of a supportive and inclusive community of students, faculty and staff, alumni and diaspora.

Community has always been a distinguishing feature of UCD. Testament to this is the frequency with which our students pay tribute to faculty and staff for their support and dedication. Our students form lifelong friendships in class and through extra-curricular activities, which form invaluable networks that support graduates throughout their careers. Our community of faculty and staff take a pride in and make a commitment to their students and to the contribution the University makes to society.

We will work together to make UCD an attractive, friendly and accessible environment, which encourages all members of our community and their families to spend more time on the campus.

We will continue to develop extra-curricular activities and increase the participation of students in the management and development of the student experience.

To further enhance our staff community we will improve the communication and decision making processes within the University. The development of reflexive and inclusive decision making processes will distinguish UCD as a university characterised by effective engagement with changing conditions, needs and ideas across the campus, generating a high degree of responsiveness and commitment. We will provide a wide range of opportunities for faculty and staff interaction across Colleges, Schools and Units, at both professional and social level, so as to enhance both well-being and the effectiveness of communication across the University.

To build on our affinity with our alumni we will expand our social alumni networks. Conscious of the benefits of two-way exchange, we will foster greater engagement between our faculty and alumni through a programme of events aimed at sharing expertise in this wider community.

Success will be measured through satisfaction surveys and focus groups, through increased alumni and external involvement in University events and through increased participation in student mentoring initiatives.



Objective 8

Further develop world-class facilities to support our vision

As UCD continues to develop as a university of preeminent international standing, it is imperative that our facilities match this level of ambition. UCD has made significant progress in recent years in developing world-class facilities, and the campus now represents a significant strength and area of competitive advantage for the University. Recent developments emphasise this, including the newly opened UCD O'Brien Centre for Science and the UCD Sutherland School of Law. Our Student Centre and many of our sporting facilities can also justifiably be categorised as world-class.

However, there is a lack of uniformity to the condition of our buildings, equipment and other facilities. Throughout the period of this plan we will work towards putting in place, maintaining and improving our facilities, equipment and services right across the University, to support world-class research and a research-led and engaged student experience.

We are equally determined to put in place facilities which contribute significantly to the building of the University community, and which promote engagement with our wider community. To the greatest extent possible, we wish to house

schools and support units in contiguous space, and to ensure that each has appropriate space to facilitate engagement and the exchange of ideas amongst faculty and staff.

We will put in place a campus development plan which will emphasise a rigorous process of prioritisation, establish clear timelines and set out a compelling case for our priorities. This plan will form an important basis for our funding campaigns which will focus on securing both government and philanthropic finance for our developments.

Success will be measured by the development of a new campus development plan, significant progress towards the realisation of that plan, the formulation of ongoing maintenance programmes for buildings and equipment, and the creation of a fund for substantial capital investments and maintenance.

Objective 9

Adopt governance, management and budgetary structures to enable the vision

Irish universities, like many universities in the western world, have traditionally been governed and managed by committees of peers, and sustained for the most part by exchequer funding.

However, the higher education environment is now significantly more competitive than in the past, sources of funding and activities have diversified and accountability to funders is now more formalised.

These factors necessitate that universities act in a more business-like manner. In many cases this has resulted in a more centralised or 'managerial' approach to the operation of universities. This approach sometimes fails to fully utilise the capabilities of leadership at unit level and the commitment and enterprise present within the organisation.

We will work to put in place appropriate governance, management and budgetary structures which strike a balance between devolved decision making and empowerment and appropriate central oversight and strategic direction. We will perform functions centrally when they are more effectively performed that way, and perform functions locally when that

is the most effective approach. Recognising the critical importance of communications to support this objective, we will put in place appropriate communication structures that reflect and facilitate the dialogue required.

Equally, we will strive to put in place a fair and equitable mechanism to allocate budgetary resources to all of our units. It is of fundamental importance that units clearly understand their budgetary horizon in order to facilitate effective multi-annual planning.

Success will be measured through increased faculty and staff satisfaction with management, budgetary and administrative processes as determined through staff satisfaction surveys and an improvement in the ratio of direct and indirect costs in running the University.

Objective 10

Overcome financial, human resource management and other external constraints

The significant impact of the global economic crisis on Ireland has generated substantial ongoing challenges for the University in terms of financial and human resource management. Equally, the constraints on the national exchequer have led to a tendency for government to employ a restrictive approach to budgetary and human resource policy in the universities. This approach has significantly compromised the autonomy of our universities and threatens to undermine our ability to conduct world-class research and education and to act in an independent and entrepreneurial manner to develop alternative non-exchequer funding streams.

To overcome these financial challenges we will work with the Irish Universities Association (IUA) and with government through the Department of Education and Skills and the Higher Education Authority (HEA) to develop and agree a sustainable funding mechanism for the universities in Ireland which covers the full cost of providing a world-class research-led university education. Additionally, we will work to generate additional non-exchequer income by attracting increased numbers of non-EU and graduate students, by the further provision of professional development programmes and the performance of research and consultancy contracts. Success

will be measured by a significant increase in the annual income per Irish and EU student, and increased income from non-EU students, from professional and executive education and from non-exchequer funded research and consultancy.

In the area of human resource management, we will work with the IUA and with government through the Department of Education and Skills and the HEA, to address public pay policy and other public service employment constraints to provide opportunities for development, advancement and appropriate reward for our faculty and staff, and to allow us to employ the number of staff required to achieve our vision. Success will be measured through increased flexibility in the employment of staff, and a removal of the constraints on the number of core staff we employ.

To ensure that the independence of the University, our ability to use funding effectively, and our ability to act in the best interests of the country are not jeopardised, we will work closely with government ministers, the Department of Education and Skills and the HEA to ensure that policies are informed by our knowledge and experience of the sector, and that those policies do not adversely impact on our ability to deliver our mission and vision.





Major Strategic Initiatives

In pursuing these objectives we will undertake six major strategic initiatives. These initiatives will be managed and overseen by the University Management Team and its subgroups, working in partnership with the Academic Council and the Governing Authority.



1. Tackling global challenges:

We will strengthen our disciplines and on these disciplines build multi-disciplinary research and education in areas which reflect UCD's strengths and which make significant contribution to identified national and international priorities. We will ensure our Colleges and Schools are built around disciplines and we will work to ensure that these disciplines are world-class. We will further develop research themes aligning with UCD's strengths and global needs, and align our Institutes and Centres to these research themes, paying particular attention to the themes highlighted in the EU Horizon 2020 programme. We will ensure the structure and policies of our Institutes and Centres incorporate sufficient flexibility and adaptability to cope with changing priorities.



2. Defining educational excellence:

We will build on the work we have already done to establish an approach to education that supports all our students to achieve academic excellence and to equip them with the social, intercultural and generic skills to succeed in a diverse society. To enhance the *UCD Horizons* modular structure, we will conduct a robust curriculum review of our undergraduate and graduate offerings, informed by our vision for 2020 and by best international practice in curriculum design, pedagogy and effective student learning. This will be underpinned by a broader educational environment leveraging intellectual, cultural, social and sporting opportunities which will allow students to develop important new national and global perspectives.



3. Reimagining our campus:

Recent development of the campus buildings and surroundings have demonstrated the potential for creating an environment that matches best international comparisons and supports the needs of our community. We will refine, enhance and execute a campus development plan which supports the vision, engages our staff and our students and opens our University to the wider community. The campus will be a vibrant and active place seven days a week.



4. Engaging globally:

UCD's world extends beyond our campus, beyond our city and our borders. Our students and graduates benefit from a UCD education that enables them to thrive and contribute in an increasingly global community. Our faculty engage in international research collaborations, sharing and contributing to a global bank of knowledge that aims to impact on society. In order to expand our global engagement, we will create a network of UCD Global Centres, each of which will provide a hub of research and education connections for our students, faculty, alumni and partners.



5. Building partnerships:

The ethos of UCD has always been embracing and inclusive, and we have established a range of effective partnerships. We value the mutual benefit of engaging with wider society. Through this initiative, we will build further holistic, strategic partnerships with public and non-governmental agencies, educational institutions, industry, community and professional organisations, in a structured way so that we can maximise our relevance and impact on society, while at the same time augmenting our student experience and researcher engagement.



6. Increasing agility and effectiveness:

Building on the considerable efficiencies that have already been achieved, we will ensure that our teaching, research and administrative processes and procedures are efficient and fit-for-purpose. We will conduct a comprehensive review of these processes using modern methodologies, and based on this review, we will identify and implement any changes necessary to bring UCD's processes to a standard of excellence as benchmarked by relevant international comparators.

We will develop an implementation and resourcing plan for each of these major initiatives, and report progress against each plan annually. Success will be measured by progress against the key objectives.







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