Education Strategy
2015–2020
Our Students’ Education and Experience
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A university is shaped by its history, traditions, relationships and external influences. In UCD the ideas of John Henry Newman remain a source of our strength and we are committed to offering a liberal education that reflects the principles of our founder in ways that are new and relevant to a globally connected world. Teaching and research are of equal importance to our mission. We aim to ensure that our students are well prepared for further academic study, for career success in a global context, and for a lifetime of continuing personal development.

The UCD Education Strategy is grounded in the University Strategic Plan 2015–2020. We are 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 curriculum, and our educational approaches provide learning opportunities for the wider community. This encourages and motivates us to continually improve so we can support students, who are the heart of our University.

In setting out our education strategy we are explaining to our future students why UCD should be their first choice and describing the excellent education and experience they can expect. To our University community, we confirm our commitment to ensuring our graduates will be equipped with the knowledge, skills, experience and attitudes they need to flourish in present and future Irish and global societies.

Over the period of the strategy we aim to deliver an education that is holistic, student-focused and research-led. Our students will have opportunities to excel outside their formal learning environment, through sport, culture and community engagement. To achieve these goals, we set out six ambitious priorities, which we will deliver through robust institution-wide educationally enriching actions.

The UCD educational experience will have both the breadth and depth to take our students and faculty beyond subject boundaries, so learning is not simply acquired but lived as an active and engaged process.

Professor Mark Rogers
Deputy President, Registrar
and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Our aim is to provide an educational experience that is holistic, one that instills in students a desire to learn and create, to question and reason, to innovate and explore, and to contribute to society at all levels.

We will achieve this through the promotion of a focused set of ambitious priorities.
Vision and Values

UCD’s Strategic Plan outlines the following vision:

“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.”

The UCD Education Strategy is shaped by our distinct traditions, relationships and external influences. The major guiding influence is our values. We want the liberal education that we offer in UCD to reflect the principles of our founder John Henry Newman, but in ways which are relevant to a globally connected world. These are represented by the following values:

A spirit of enquiry
We are committed to ensuring freedom of expression and dialogue, in a respectful and civil manner, across the spectrum of views held by our varied and diverse student communities.

Quality and depth of provision
The UCD modular curriculum offers a wide range of subjects, uniting our research tradition and heritage, articulating an approach to education that will resonate with ambitious, intellectually curious and dedicated students and faculty.

Collegiality and collaboration
This finds expression in our commitment to work with our students to understand and develop their academic experience in line with their needs and ambitions, and to ensure they are appropriately supported as individuals.

Diversity
We will work to foster a respectful, cooperative, equitable learning environment for our diverse student communities.

Integrity
This is reflected in our adherence to the highest ethical standards, and in our commitment to transparency and accountability in everything we do related to student experience.
Six priorities will enable us to deliver the principal aspects of our vision.

1. Offer students a fully outcomes-based curriculum, and enhance modular flexibility and choice aligned with learning outcomes.

2. Provide students with opportunities to develop interpersonal, intercultural and life skills within and outside the classroom.

3. Ensure students have access to excellent academic advice throughout their time in university.

4. Enable students to proactively manage their health and well-being, and develop the attributes required to make the most of their university experience.

5. Foster an institutional culture that values teaching and research equally, and embeds institutional mechanisms that facilitate, recognise, and reward excellent teaching while providing structures that enable and support educational enhancement.

6. Educate and develop graduate research students to the highest level; advancing their knowledge through engaging in original research, fostering independent thinking and developing advanced skills and attributes.

These priorities will also be actioned and achieved through policy and process directives arising from:

- The UCD Strategic Plan.
- The Academic Council, the University Management Team and the Governing Authority.
- The Higher Education Authority (HEA), Quality Qualifications Ireland (QQI), the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), and relevant Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body requirements.
Our Students’ Education and Experience
Priority 1

Offer students a fully outcomes-based curriculum, and enhance modular flexibility and choice aligned with learning outcomes.

Actions

1.1 Undertake a comprehensive curriculum review of all undergraduate and graduate programmes, and ensure that all programmes have documented and published learning outcomes and are committed to widening participation and access.

1.2 Ensure that assessment is central to programme design, through assessment that is valid and reliably measures expected learning outcomes, and by using a variety of assessment and feedback approaches within a comprehensive assessment framework.

1.3 Work with programme teams to incorporate blended learning to create flexibility and anticipate the realities of future digital worlds.

1.4 Enhance elective provision to facilitate breadth and depth through the delivery of structured and discovery electives and through the promotion of trans-disciplinary and cross-university opportunities.

1.5 Work with organisations including industry, the professions and the wider community to ensure that our graduates have the adaptable expertise required to excel in changing work contexts, and that our programmes will be responsive to societal needs and meet professional accreditation requirements.

1.6 Review our Quality Assurance framework in partnership with students, faculty, staff and external examiners, to ensure that programmatic reviews and strategic reviews of schools will further enhance our students’ academic experience.
Provide students with opportunities to develop interpersonal, intercultural and life skills within and outside the classroom.

Actions

2.1 Provide students with opportunities to engage with learning communities outside of their discipline through internships, placements and/or volunteering activities. We will develop a co-curricular award to recognize the development of skills, attributes and attitudes that will enable students to flourish at UCD, in the workplace and in society.

2.2 Work to retain all our students and ensure that they progress to achieve their full potential by facilitating access to the appropriate academic and pastoral supports.

2.3 Encourage students to gain an international study experience to enhance their language and intercultural skills by offering opportunities to study abroad through JYA and ERASMUS or through arrangements with partner universities.

2.4 Support the integration and inclusion of international students and promote the contribution that a diverse cohort of students brings to the university community through exchange of ideas and sharing of different cultural experiences.

2.5 Encourage students to enhance their personal development by acting as peer mentors, student ambassadors or student tutors.
Ensure students have access to excellent academic advice and support throughout their time in university.

Actions

3.1 Provide personalised support for students’ learning through the introduction of an academic advisory programme.

3.2 Ensure that students are aware that UCD programmes are research-based and intellectually challenging, and that the University expects students to fully engage in all academic activities.

3.3 Provide enhanced support to students through improved data systems so that students, faculty and staff can view the holistic student journey to allow for the appropriate interventions.

3.4 Provide opportunities for students to become partners in their own learning and create an environment where they can take responsibility and ownership of their learning.

3.5 Review academic regulations and targeted communication systems with students so that they have accurate information and guidance that can be clearly understood in relation to programme requirements at all stages of their degree.
Enable students to **proactively manage their health and well-being**, and develop the attributes required to make the most of their wider university experience.

**Actions**

4.1 **Work in partnership with student health and counselling services** and student advisers, and in alignment with the Healthy UCD initiative, to support the well-being of all our students.

4.2 **Encourage students to become members of student societies, clubs and other related activities.**

4.3 **Facilitate the development of an inclusive community** in university Residences, with Residential Assistants and peer to peer support so that social activities across campus reflect the diverse cultural mix of our students.

4.4 **Encourage all students to take part in sport, exercise and other healthy lifestyle activities offered by UCD.**

4.5 **Enhance current systems to facilitate students in providing feedback on their wider university experience.**
Foster an institutional culture that values teaching and research equally and embeds institutional mechanisms that facilitate, recognise and reward excellent teaching and supervision while providing effective and enabling structures that support educational enhancement.

Actions

5.1 Establish a Centre for the Study of Higher Education to provide a focus for research and scholarship in Higher Education. The Centre will draw together the extensive and wide range of expertise from across the University to promote and conduct rigorous evidence-based research into the policy and practice of higher education.

5.2 Support the professional and career development of all faculty and staff engaged in teaching, through the provision of flexible accredited programmes of study (face to face and online) and specialist CPD support to enhance new approaches to learning, teaching, curriculum development and research supervision.

5.3 Recognise and reward faculty and staff who demonstrate excellence in teaching and in supporting student learning through the introduction of new Teaching and Learning Awards and University Teaching Fellowship schemes.

5.4 Ensure that the University benefits from effective leadership in teaching and learning.

5.5 Ensure a balanced, coordinated and coherent approach to gathering and acting on student feedback.
Priority 6

Educate and develop graduate research students to the highest level; advancing their knowledge through engaging in original research, fostering independent thinking and developing advanced skills and attributes.

Actions

6.1 Realise the full potential of the structured PhD through engagement by students, faculty and staff while adhering to the highest research integrity and ethical standards:
   – Highlight the wide range of training opportunities in discipline-specific and transferable skills modules.
   – Build awareness of the employment opportunities within and outside academia and encourage students to engage with a programme of personal and professional development within their programme.

6.2 Embed student and supervisor evaluation into the PhD experience.

6.3 Ensure timely progression from Stage 1 to Stage 2 PhD; monitor completion rates and completion times.

6.4 Support supervisors with opportunities for training and development.

6.5 Build and maintain active graduate education networks in Ireland, Europe and globally.

6.6 Embed an integrated quality assurance culture where student, supervisor and support staff are fully informed of, and engage with, quality enhancement procedures.
“Our aim is to provide an educational experience that is holistic, one that instills in students a desire to learn and create, to question and reason, to innovate and explore, and to contribute to society at all levels.”