

Mission & Purpose

The overarching purpose of Access & Lifelong Learning (ALL) is to be the 'bridge to inclusion' offering connections, engagement and building relationships between communities that are 'distant' from higher education, and the University community.

This is given expression primarily by:

- developing and implementing a suite of responses to widen access and ensure participation by diverse student cohorts, including students with disabilities, mature students, part-time learners, and students from communities experiencing disadvantage
- supporting and enabling the University to integrate and embed the principle of equity of access throughout the institution.

This work is guided by a belief that an inclusive university entails all aspects, including the educational experience, student supports and facilities, as well as the built and technological environments, being designed around the needs of all students, thus ensuring that access is embedded and mainstreamed throughout the University and, as a result, is promoted, supported and the responsibility of all (Kelly, 2017). Fundamental to this approach is the understanding that equality of access incorporates both entry to UCD and access to an inclusive learning environment, designed for the full range of students, rather than a perceived notion of a typical or so-called 'traditional' student.



Access & Lifelong Learning
Work Plan

2017/2020

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Access & Lifelong Learning

University For All

Work Plan 2017/2020

Introduction & Context

This Access & Lifelong Learning Work Plan 2017-2020 sets out the key goals, activities and initiatives that are prioritised for implementation over the next two years, which are designed to support the University to become “a pre-eminent diverse and inclusive scholarly community of students, faculty and staff” (UCD, 2015). In addition to this objective, it is intended that by 2020, 33% of undergraduates will be drawn from communities experiencing low progression rates to higher education.

This Work Plan is informed by the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (2011), the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019 (2015), and the University’s commitments in the HEA/UCD ‘institutional compact’, which addresses the five national policy targets, one of which concerns Participation, Equality of access, and Lifelong Learning¹ (HEA, 2013).

The National Access Plan identifies key goals, including mainstreaming the delivery of access, the collection of

accurate data, development of coherent pathways and entry routes, and the forging of HE/community partnerships. It sets out specific targets to increase the participation by under-represented groups, i.e. **1)** entrants from socio-economic groups who experience low participation in HE, **2)** first time, mature student entrants, **3)** students with disabilities, **4)** part-time/flexible learners, **5)** further education award holders and **6)** Irish Travellers.

Crucially, the National Access Plan also identifies integrating and mainstreaming access as a key goal. Acknowledging the priority attached to the establishment of access infrastructure in higher education institutions (HEIs), the HEA states that “the next step is, to integrate the principle of equity of access more fully into the everyday life of the HEIs so that it permeates all faculties and departments, and is not marginalised as the responsibility of the designated access office” (HEA, 2015, p. 25).

Key Goals

1. In collaboration with the UCD Widening Participation Committee, support all facets of the University to **develop an institution-wide, universally designed and inclusive approach** to access and participation.
2. In collaboration with UCD Estates and IT Services, support the development of responses to ensure **accessibility of the built and technological environment**.
3. In collaboration with University and Community partners, implement a coherent suite of **pre-entry outreach initiatives** to increase access and widen participation by under-represented student cohorts.
4. Facilitate the University to continue to support and expand the range and size of **scholarships and financial supports** to meet the needs of under-represented student cohorts.
5. In collaboration with UCD Admissions, and UCD Recruitment **promote, embed, and adjust/increase the range of entry routes** to facilitate the study requirements of under-represented student cohorts.
6. **Prepare and orientate students** beginning their studies, ensuring that they are ready to engage successfully with all aspects of University life.
7. In collaboration with UCD Alumni Office, **foster an access alumni network** to help graduates to keep in touch with the Access & Lifelong Learning Centre, through a range of alumni activities, opportunities and supports.
8. Develop a model of best practice for **post-entry access supports** that complements and aligns with mainstream University supports, and enables independent learning and active engagement with all aspects of campus life.
9. Support the University community to offer a suite of **part-time study options**, which extend learning to students to advance their academic, personal, and professional education goals, utilising the resources and expertise of a world-class research university.
10. Develop **research and data evidence** to underpin policy, service development and provision.
11. Develop **operations, processes and infrastructure**, to enable effective, value-added service delivery that is aligned with the University’s strategic objectives, and offers an open, welcoming and effective environment for all.
12. In collaboration with UCD HR and the Bursar’s Office, ensure that the required human, financial, training and development **resources** are allocated.
13. Promote a **culture of creativity and innovation**, which encourages and facilitates the generation of ideas, and new approaches to policy and services development.
14. In collaboration with UCD Communications, develop strategies to **increase awareness** of the University’s achievements in widening participation, through publications, events and promotions.
15. **Represent the University** nationally and internationally in advocating and showcasing, widening participation in higher education.

¹ The others include, excellent teaching and learning and quality of the student experience; high quality, internationally competitive research and innovation; enhanced engagement with enterprise and the community and embedded knowledge exchange; and enhanced internationalisation.